

SEMINAR REPORT 2016



**Georgetown FLEGT Seminar:
Sharing Regional Lessons on VPA Processes
Transitioning from Negotiations to Implementation**

**Pegasus Hotel, Georgetown, Guyana
28th – 29th September, 2016**

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Georgetown FLEGT Seminar: **Sharing Regional Lessons on VPA Processes**

Transitioning from Negotiations to Implementation

Date: 28th to 29th September, 2016

INTRODUCTION

In March 2012, the Government of Guyana formally entered into the process of negotiating a Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) with the European Union (EU), under the auspices of the global Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) Action Plan. The Action Plan adopted in 2003 sets out a programme of actions that forms EU response to the problem of illegal logging and trade in associated timber products.

The recent evaluation of the FLEGT Action Plan shows that despite successes in the deliberative processes that the FLEGT VPAs have promoted, it has taken a long time to place FLEGT-licensed timber on the market. This seminar therefore seeks to promote the exchange of experience and lessons learned from countries that are in the implementation phase.

Official negotiations between Guyana and the EU began in December 2012, and the Guyanese National Technical Working Group (NTWG) has since spearheaded widespread consultations with Government agencies, civil society and private sector stakeholders throughout the country.

Inspired by Illegal Logging Conferences hosted by Chatham House in London, Palladium, via the IDL group, launched

a series of global experience sharing seminars and conference events in 2011. This series of events was designed to create an in-country space for discussion and the exchange of ideas, experience and research around forest governance in the timber-producing countries. The first regional seminar in South America and the Caribbean was held in Georgetown in November, 2014 and it attracted participants from around the world.

This regional seminar, the second in the series, was held in Guyana on 28-29th September 2016 with the theme “Sharing Regional Lessons on VPA processes: Transitioning from negotiations to implementation” brought together speakers and participants from 10 countries taken from Government, Civil Society, the Private Sector, the NGO Community and Academia. The event was organized by the National Technical Working Group and the FLEGT Facilitation Support Office in collaboration with other partners (APA, EFI, FAO, Iwokrama and IUCN).

As the VPA negotiation process nears conclusion in Guyana, the seminar was aimed at facilitating the sharing of experiences with countries that have transitioned from the negotiation to the implementation phase. The event was intended to foster

dialogue, deepen understanding, broaden communication, increase opportunities for a deliberative process, situate issues within a wider context and facilitate local access to the perspectives of international experts.

The seminar was attended by over 90 participants from Guyana, Suriname, Honduras, Guatemala, Liberia, Ghana, and the European Union. Thirty six percent (36%) of the participants were female.

Upon conclusion of the seminar, participants went on a one-day field trip to view sawmilling operations along the East Bank Demerara of Guyana.

The seminar agenda which was designed through a consultative process, included a broad range of topics and included: an opening ceremony; four technical sessions during which presentations were delivered according to specific thematic areas; a panel discussion and; a working group session. The foregoing report captures the proceedings of the seminar.

Moving forward, the outcomes of the seminar will be publicly disseminated in order to have the widest possible impact.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Guyana's robust management of its forestry sector and its low annual deforestation rate of 0.06% are seen to be special pluses in moving into the implementation phase.

During the technical sessions and discussions throughout the seminar, focus was placed on Guyana's path towards achieving FLEGT VPA status whilst benefitting from the lessons learnt by other countries that had achieved implementation status. Based on these experiences, it was recognized that transitioning from the negotiation to the implementation phase could take as long as ten years (as in the case of Ghana and Honduras) while Guyana works towards achieving implementation status by the year 2018. The experience of other countries revealed that along the way, various opportunities and challenges present themselves, the process needs to be a highly participatory one and there is a crucial need for technical and financial support. Political buy-in is also essential for the transition from the negotiation to the implementation phase of the FLEGT VPA process.

OPPORTUNITIES

Indonesia's experience with the VPA implementation process has revealed that there is improved Governance in the timber sector, harvesting is only done under licence and illegal logging has reduced significantly. Ghana is of the view that the decreasing market for illegal timber resulting from global

initiatives to combat deforestation, will make way for legal timber. In Guyana's case, it is foreseen that the VPA implementation will create access to new markets, strengthen forest governance and sustainable management, promote better law enforcement and facilitate the development of systems to ensure the legality of Guyana's timber and thus entry into the EU market. It will also facilitate moving onto the next phase of the Guyana-Norway agreement. Guyana's robust management of its forestry sector and its low annual deforestation rate of 0.06% are seen to be special pluses in moving into the implementation phase.

The experiences of other countries have shown that civil society is an essential pillar in promoting transparency, accountability and other aspects of 'good governance' in the VPA implementation process. To contribute effectively, civil society must be strong, have a good mix of different groups, be willing to network and be aware of their respective roles. In the case of Ghana, in achieving consensus during the consultations, there were representatives from the different constituencies who reported back to their respective groups. In Liberia, a decision was taken by the Government to include the private sector, Government partners, forest groups and other stakeholders in the discussion.

Private certification and the FLEGT VPA processes were felt to be mutually reinforcing during the transition from negotiation to implementation stage. Honduras's experience is that private certification can be part of the process of ensuring legality with respect to the TLAS. In Ghana's case, legislation regarding timber legality was established through an Act of the country's parliament and their experience with TLAS has indicated that it can provide opportunities for business improvement, forest governance improvement, capacity improvement, and intra and intersectoral collaboration. They however found that strong political and Governmental support is however required and that the implementation of TLAS can be impacted by policy issues, technical issues and capacity issues. In the case of Guyana, with its involvement in various conservation initiatives such as REDD+, the Green Economy and the FLEGT VPA, the potential exists for synergies among these initiatives with regard to legislation, monitoring and other issues.

CHALLENGES

An evaluation of the EU-FLEGT action plan revealed that: VPAs are complex and resource-intensive; VPAs have variable political commitment in partner countries; the private sector is insufficiently engaged and; work on financing and investment is not extensive. In the case of Honduras, there was insufficient finance to move the process forward at the required pace. In Liberia, there were challenges in the coordination of stakeholders to ensure effective implementation of the VPA and ►



there was insufficient capacity building of institutions and stakeholders to understand the FLEGT VPA implementation process. Challenges in civil society involvement in Liberia included conflicting interests of stakeholders, inadequate commitment of time and effort, and opposing loyalties. In addition, the larger the group, the more complicated it was to manage. As such, structures and regulations needed to be developed to govern the participation of civil society.

With regard to the participation of indigenous groups, in Honduras there was the absence of a clear mechanism for application of the law concerning indigenous peoples, a lack of clarity regarding their land rights and criminalisation of indigenous people in defending these rights. In moving forward, the new Government had to create a space for their specific needs to be addressed in the VPA process, including their labour rights within the forestry sector. In the case of Guyana, there are claims by its indigenous peoples that they are insufficiently represented on the NTWG and that their specific culture and language are not being taken into consideration fully. A major concern is that their livelihood is severely impacted by multiple land use e.g. the same piece of land being used

for logging and mining. Among their demands, the indigenous peoples require that the FPIC protocols be applied to the implementation of the VPA, that they be involved in the independent monitoring of the VPA implementation and that consultations be conducted in the indigenous languages in communities as appropriate. Challenges in the involvement of the indigenous communities in Guyana, have however included differing positions of the various groups, varying levels of understanding of the FLEGT VPA process and their role in this process, and insufficient networking among the groups. Periodic changes among the Village Council officials were also found to be a challenge with regard to continuity in the participation of indigenous peoples.

In the global arena, Guyana is also faced with a number of significant challenges. The developed nations have timber procurement policies that are not favourable for Guyanese timber due to their environmental accreditation requirements and FLEGT licensing will not guarantee acceptance of Guyanese timber into certain markets. The UK in particular, does not accept Guyana's greenheart due to the misconception that Guyana's forest is not sustainable. Added to this, are limitations to the

size of logs that could be exported. There is a general lack of awareness of Guyana's forest sustainability and the absence of forest certification adds to poor perception.

NEED FOR SUPPORT

The experiences of the various countries that have transitioned from the negotiation to the implementation phase have indicated that there is a high demand for financial and technical resources during the transition. In the case of Honduras, the absence of funding slowed up the process. With regard to Ghana, capacity building costs were supported by international sources, however there were other in-country costs for which the Government had to identify funding. In the case of Liberia, they are currently addressing their resource needs (human, material, and financial) in preparation for FLEGT licensing by late 2017/early 2018. Work is also in progress in developing systems (including LAS) and guidelines and procedures on legality verification, reviewing the VPA communication strategy, and establishing systems for monitoring the VPA.

Guyana estimates that approximately USD 10 million will be required for achieving FLEGT License status. This includes financial and technical support required for capacity building and other costs. Stakeholders will however first need to be aware of their expected roles in the FLEGT implementation process and also be able to identify their specific needs for capacity building so as to facilitate their involvement.

The various country experiences revealed that a key ingredient for the successful transition from the negotiation to the implementation phase of the VPA was political ►

support. It was found that special efforts need to be made to engage both members of the Government and the opposition in an open and participatory process that will ensure continuity of the VPA process during changes of Government. In the case of Honduras, civil society played a significant role in ensuring continuity during the changes in Governmental structures resulting from elections and they continue to work along with their Ministry of Foreign Affairs to ensure continuity after elections. In the case of Liberia, the process is highly participatory and members of the opposition are involved in the discussions. In Ghana, to ensure continuity, both the Government and the opposition are engaged through a Parliamentary Select Committee on Lands and Forestry.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Common conclusions during the evaluation of the EU-FLEGT action plan were that VPA implementation should be adjusted on the basis of capacities and willingness and trade/strategic significance of partner countries and it should adopt a more flexible approach to producing country support where VPA implementation is less feasible. It should also adopt a phased approach to VPA implementation, enhance engagement of the private sector in VPA negotiations and implementation, improve communication, and address the informal/domestic market.

The need for a highly participatory approach during the VPA negotiation and implementation stages were found to be crucial and achieving consensus among civil society groups is essential during the VPA implementation



process. In the case of Guyana, there is the need to develop and implement a communication strategy to ensure that all stakeholders understand the FLEGT VPA process and their respective roles in the implementation of the VPA. Structures and legislation also need to be developed to govern the participation of the various stakeholders and consideration should be given to developing an accord to guide inter-organizational behaviour and the mechanisms for engagement among the various stakeholders.

Very high on Guyana's agenda is the urgent need to change its image globally through advocacy by the Government, the private sector and civil society in communicating the true facts about Guyana's efficient forest management and low level of deforestation. In particular, the Government needs to actively pursue the resolution of the current impasse with the UK Environment Agency with regard to their non-acceptance of Guyana's greenheart in their procurement. In moving towards FLEGT implementation, Guyana also needs to actively follow up on the outstanding activities identified in the Guyana-Norway no-

cost extension that will have a direct impact on the timelines for achieving FLEGT licensing. Other follow up steps include capacity building, field testing of the Legality Definition and GTLAS, and keeping abreast with the constantly changing market-based legislation within the timber sector. Finally, in preparation for FLEGT licensing, Guyana will need to improve the level of efficiency, quality and reliability within the timber sector and be very proactive in market promotion at both the local level and at the level of the EU.

Guyana estimates that approximately USD 10 million will be required for achieving FLEGT License status. This includes financial and technical support required for capacity building and other costs.

OPENING REMARKS



Joslyn McKenzie

Permanent Secretary within the Ministry of Natural Resources Guyana:-

Delivered opening remarks in which he reflected on the need to finalize the voluntary partnership agreement (VPA) between Guyana and the European Union Forest Law Enforcement Governance and Trade (EU FLEGT). Negotiations for the VPA had commenced in 2012 and the conclusion of this phase is critical to the development of the Forestry Sector in increasing its competitiveness, Mr. McKenzie stressed.



James Singh

Commissioner, Guyana Forestry Commission:-

In making his remarks, reaffirmed Guyana's support for the EU FLEGT Action Plan. He noted that Guyana's forestry sector is governed by a robust system. Recent data from Independent Forest Monitoring indicates that Guyana has a low annual rate of deforestation of only 0.06%, mainly attributed to mining. Despite these positive data from the forestry sector, there are still gaps that need to be addressed. He acknowledged the role of the EU FLEGT VPA as an important step for getting Guyana's timber into the EU market and also for improving governance within the sector.



Ron Rimmer

Acting British High Commissioner:-

In delivering his remarks, reaffirmed the UK's support for the forest law and trade processes in Guyana while acknowledging the important role that the EU FLEGT VPA will play in strengthening sustainable management of forests and the processing of legal timber for the local and export markets. He further commented on the High Commission's efforts in trying to resolve the current impasse that exists with regard to the UK Environmental Agency's non acceptance of Guyana's greenheart in its procurement of timber.



Christof Stock

Head of Development Co-operation EU Guyana Office:-

Identified sustainable development as being one of the guiding principles of the EU FLEGT Action Plan and listed the three priorities of the VPA as being: strengthening forest governance; promoting better law enforcement and; developing systems to ensure the legality of Guyana's timber that would lead to FLEGT licensing and thus entry into the EU market.



FIRST SESSION: EXPERIENCE IN TRANSITIONING FROM NEGOTIATIONS TO IMPLEMENTATION

OVERVIEW

The session was chaired by **Mr. James Singh, Commissioner, Guyana Forestry Commission** and presentations were delivered by 3 key speakers. A 4th speaker – from Indonesia, was unable to attend the seminar and in the place of his presentation, two films on the Indonesia situation were shown.

Presentations delivered were:

- Overview of outcomes of Independent evaluation of FLEGT Action Plan: **Mr. Albert Losseau, European Union**
- Overview of Guyana's VPA process: **Mr. Mohindra Chand, National Technical Working Group**
- Update on implementation of VPA in Liberia: **Hon. Harrison Karnwea, Managing Director of the Liberian Forestry Development Authority**

KEY ISSUES

REVIEW OF THE FLEGT ACTION PLAN REVEALED BOTH ITS SUCCESSES AND ITS SHORTCOMINGS

Three reviews of the FLEGT Action Plan were conducted within the past 14 years. Among its successes are 6 VPAs under implementation and 9 under negotiation. The Plan was found to be: highly relevant; enjoying broad support; generating good cost benefit; improving forest governance; reducing the demand for illegal timber; aiding trade and political leverage; aiding coordination and; facilitating innovations in hard and soft law measures, trade agreements, development cooperation and stakeholder engagement. Shortcomings of the plan were identified as: weak planning and monitoring; coordination inefficiencies; VPAs are complex, resource-intensive and with variable political commitment in partner countries; the private sector is insufficiently engaged and; work on financing and investment is not extensive.

Common conclusions on VPAs are that they should: adjust VPA implementation on the basis of capacities and willingness and trade/strategic significance of partner countries; adopt a more flexible approach to producing country support where VPA implementation is less feasible; adopt a phased approach to VPA implementation; enhance engagement of the private sector in VPA negotiations and implementation; improve communication and; address the informal/domestic market.

GUYANA IS WORKING TO ACHIEVE FLEGT LICENSING BY THE YEAR 2018

Formal negotiations with the EU on a FLEGT VPA commenced in 2012 after recognizing the potential benefits for the Guyana forestry sector. The Guyana Forestry Commission (GFC) was identified as the lead agency for the process and a broad-based National Technical Working Group (NTWG) was formed. A FLEGT Secretariat was also established. To commence the process, a joint (Guyana – EU) road map was ►

developed and extensive stakeholder consultations were conducted. The outputs of these discussions were fed into the four negotiation sessions held with the EU to date (December 2012, July 2013, April 2015 and March 2016). Guyana acknowledged the support received from: DFID in setting up the FLEGT Facilitation Support Office and the Grant Mechanism; the European Forest Institute (EFI) in the review of the TLAS and developing key annexes to the VPA; and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in enabling stakeholder consultations, development of the communication and consultations strategy and undertaking the initial scoping of impacts study. Among the next steps is the urgent need to expand its communication and consultation with all stakeholders to better understand and engage in the FLEGT VPA process. Other follow up steps include field testing of the Legality Definition and GTLAS, capacity building, determination of the type of support required for FLEGT implementation and determination of the roles of stakeholders in the implementation phase. Guyana is currently working towards acquisition of FLEGT licensing by the year 2018.

During the discussion session following the above presentation, a concern expressed was that FLEGT licensing takes a very long time (approximately 10 years) to acquire after initiation of the process. In the interim, Guyana's timber continues to have non acceptance into the EU market. It was noted however that the acceptance of Guyana's timber into other markets, is contingent up the respective country's checks to balances. There were also varying views as to whether Guyana's indigenous peoples and

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loggers are adequately represented on the NTWG. With regard to capacity building, it was highlighted that the various stakeholder groups in Guyana will need to identify their specific needs. On the issue of Amerindian Land Titling, the principles that apply to this process are being integrated into the definition of Legality for the VPA process. However, until approval is granted for the land applied for, such land continues to belong to the state.

LIBERIA TO ACHIEVE FLEGT LICENSING BY LATE 2017/EARLY 2018

Liberia commenced formal negotiations for a FLEGT VPA in 2009 and is estimated to achieve FLEGT licensing by late 2017/early 2018. To facilitate this process, a number of resource issues (human resource, equipment, finance, etc.) need to be urgently addressed. Work is currently in progress in developing systems including LAS and guidelines and procedures

on legality verification, reviewing the VPA communication strategy, and establishing systems for monitoring the VPA. Challenges include the smooth coordination of stakeholders to ensure effective implementation of the VPA and capacity building of institutions and stakeholders to understand the FLEGT VPA Implementation process.

During the discussion that followed the above presentation, it was noted that Liberia does not have any "indigenous peoples". However, there are vulnerable communities that could be affected by the FLEGT VPA process. As such, these communities were actively engaged in the consultation process and are also part of the Liberia Implementation Committee (LIC).

INDONESIA IS THE FIRST COUNTRY TO ACHIEVE FLEGT LICENSING

Indonesia was the first country in Asia to negotiate and ratify the FLEGT VPA and it is currently on the brink of exporting its timber into the EU market, having reached agreement with the EU on their readiness to issue FLEGT licenses from November 15, 2016. There is improved governance in the timber sector and harvesting is only done under licence. Illegal logging has reduced significantly within the past few years and loggers are issued with a verification certification for compliance. Annual monitoring is done by an established body while independent monitoring is done by NGOs. Indonesia is a large exporter of furniture and raw materials for making furniture. The industry also has a certification system for furniture produced from sustainably managed forests. ■

SECOND SESSION: LESSONS LEARNED FROM CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF VPAS

The session was chaired by Mr. Claus Eckelmann, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and presentations were delivered by 3 key speakers:

- The role of civil society in the transition from negotiation to implementation: *Mr. Samuel Nketiah, Tropenbos*
- What role for indigenous people's groups during VPA implementation?: *Joint statement by representatives of indigenous groups (presented by Laura George – Amerindian Peoples Association)*
- Opportunities and challenges for addressing the rights of indigenous people through the FLEGT VPA: *Mr. Donaldo Allen, Confederacion de Pueblos Autoctonos de Honduras*

KEY ISSUES

CIVIL SOCIETY IS AN ESSENTIAL PILLAR IN PROMOTING TRANSPARENCY, ACCOUNTABILITY AND OTHER ASPECTS OF 'GOOD GOVERNANCE' IN THE FLEGT VPA IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

Civil society is an intermediate social space between the state, the economy and the private sphere. It is linked to, but relatively independent and autonomous from these three spheres. It includes formal and informal organizations and is an essential



pillar in promoting transparency, accountability and other aspects of 'good governance in the VPA implementation process. To contribute effectively, civil society must be strong, have a good mix of different groups, be willing to network and be aware of their respective roles. Achieving consensus among civil society groups is important for the VPA implementation process. Challenges in civil society involvement include conflicting interests of stakeholders, inadequate commitment of time and effort, and opposing loyalties.

During the discussion that followed the above presentation, it was noted that the participation of civil society can be both a risk and an opportunity. The larger the group, the more complicated it is to manage the group. As such, structures and regulations need to be developed to govern the participation of civil society.

GUYANA'S INDIGENOUS PEOPLES DEMAND GREATER REPRESENTATION IN THE FLEGT VPA PROCESS

Indigenous peoples make up over 10 % of Guyana's population and are said to be legal owners of about 14% of Guyana's land mass. Indigenous groups support the sustainable use of forest resources for livelihoods and economic purposes. While they were involved in the VPA stakeholder consultations, challenges in their involvement include: the differing positions of group members; absence of terms of reference that outline their mandate; varying levels of understanding of the FLEGT VPA process; lack of finance for capacity building and consultation within their communities and; inadequate networking among the groups. Guyana's indigenous peoples are also of the view that their representation on the NTWG is inadequate, the ►

timelines for the roadmap are too short and representation on issues surrounding land conflicts and customary land tenure have not been clearly addressed. Recommendations in moving forward include: involvement in field testing the VPA implementation; independent financing for capacity building among indigenous groups; involvement of indigenous peoples in independent monitoring of the VPA implementation and; both participant and observer status in the next round of VPA negotiations.

During the discussion following the above presentation, the view was expressed that indigenous peoples should not be lumped together with other members of civil society since they have specific needs due to their culture and language. There were also varying views regarding the level of coordination and commitment among the various indigenous groups and periodic changes among the Village Council officials were found to be a challenge with regard to continuity in the participation of indigenous peoples in the FLEGT VPA process. It was also clarified that the indigenous peoples representatives on NTWG were selected by their own constituencies and that land tenure issues are not intended to be addressed under the FLEGT VPA process but by a specific unit within the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples Affairs. The application of Free Prior Informed Consent (FPIC) in relation to the indigenous peoples, was also seen by one participant as having the potential to delay



the FLEGT VPA process. Another participant expressed the view that there appears to be some bias towards Amerindian loggers who receive the most benefits under the REDD+ agreement while other loggers do not receive any benefits.

THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES OF HONDURAS DEMAND GREATER REPRESENTATION IN THE FLEGT VPA DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

In Honduras, the forest law involves the indigenous people in the protection and management of the forest where they live and also in the approval of its transformation, industrialization and commercialization. In the VPA process the indigenous people: demand greater representation in the decision-making process; expect that respect is shown for their land rights and traditional way of life; expect that the principles of FPIC are applied and; that their

rights are integrated into the respective legal instruments at the national and international levels. Challenges encountered in the VPA process are: absence of a clear mechanism for application of the law concerning indigenous peoples; lack of clarity regarding their land rights; criminalization of indigenous people in defending these rights; illegal operations and; excessive influence of the wood industry.

During the discussion following the above presentation, the presenter emphasized that civil society cannot make decisions for the indigenous people – they are a vulnerable group and they are different. In the case of Honduras, the new Government has created a space for their specific needs to be addressed in the VPA process, including their labour rights within the forestry sector. ■



THIRD SESSION: TIMBER LEGALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEMS (TLAS)

Timber legality assurance will be achieved through stringent systems for tracking, tagging, and transporting logs.

OVERVIEW

The session was chaired by Ms. Vanessa Benn, Iwokrama International Centre. Presentations were delivered by 3 key speakers:

- Linkages of existing forest certification schemes to TLAS Honduras: *presentation prepared by Mr. Fausto M Zelaya, Coordinator of the Independent Forest Monitoring in the National Commission of Human Rights and presented by Ms. Glenda Rodrigues, Honduras*
- Reflections from Ghana on implementing the TLAS: *Presentation prepared by Dr Richard Gyimah, Ghana Forestry Commission and*

presented by Dr Alhassan Attah, FLEGT Facilitator, FLEGT Facilitation Support Office, Guyana

- Update on Guyana's TLAS: *Mr. Kenny David, NTWG*

KEY ISSUES

PRIVATE CERTIFICATION CAN BE PART OF THE PROCESS OF ENSURING LEGALITY WITH RESPECT TO THE TLAS

The Honduras Human Rights National Commission and Independent Forest Monitoring body support the participation of civil society at the local level and conduct research on legalities in the production chain of wood. Private certification can be part of the process of ensuring legality with respect to the TLAS. There are two types of certification schemes – for Forest Management and for Chain of Custody. In countries with weak forest governance and inadequate legal frameworks, the combination of both approaches could be more effective than each one separately. The TLAS ensures that all companies

operate under the same rules. Private certification and the FLEGT VPA processes can be mutually reinforcing.

OTHER COUNTRIES CAN LEARN FROM THE LESSONS EXPERIENCED BY GHANA IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ITS TLAS

Ghana's VPA process commenced in 2005 and the country is scheduled to issue FLEGT licenses in 2017 – the first sub-Saharan African country to issue FLEGT licenses. Ghana's experience with TLAS has indicated that it can provide opportunities for business improvement, forest governance improvements, capacity improvement, and intra and intersect oral collaboration. Lessons learnt also reveal that: existing national systems that are able to deliver on the requirements of TLAS may be retained to avoid over-engineering of business process; timber industry players' concerns on the TLAS should be addressed early in the process; there should be a balance between regulatory and business control measures; industry self-regulation of the TLAS should be encouraged since Government budgets ►



are decreasing; the level of investment in timber traceability should be commensurate with the value of the asset being tracked; strong political and Government support is required; ongoing documentation and the existence of management plans are crucial for FLEGT licensing and; the implementation of TLAS can be impacted by policy issues, technical issues and capacity issues.

During the discussion following the above presentation, the presenter informed that legislation regarding timber legality in Ghana was established through an Act of the country's parliament. Ghana's TLAS has undergone one audit that identified gaps and is due to undergo a second audit shortly. The process of acquiring FLEGT licensing has been a long one for Ghana (approximately 12 years) with its expected completion in 2017. It is hoped that other

countries will learn from Ghana's experience in making their implementation shorter.

GUYANA'S TLAS ARE ON TRACK FOR FLEGT LICENSING

In Guyana, verification of FSOs involves – routine verification, consolidated verification, and verification for issue of FLEGT license expected to be carried out by the Timber Legality and Trade Unit (GFC). Annual audits will be conducted for static verifiers and routine verification will be carried out for dynamic verifiers. Timber legality assurance will be achieved through stringent systems for tracking, tagging, and transporting logs. There are also established systems for dealing with the exportation and importation of wood products, in transit wood products, and confiscated timber.

During the discussion following the above presentation, a number of

issues were raised. It was noted that the Environmental Protection Act (EPA) imposes certain sanctions on the timber industry that make it difficult for operators in Guyana to comply. The FLEGT Secretariat in Guyana is currently addressing this issue with the EPA. In addition, logs are extracted from sites that are sacred for Guyana's indigenous peoples which constitutes a breach of their customs. It was noted however, that in the FLEGT VPA negotiation process, consideration is being given to the use of land for traditional purposes. One participant expressed the view that the indigenous people are not ready for FLEGT licensing and that they need more time to deliberate on the process. Finally, participants were made aware of the complaint mechanism that exists through the Guyana Forestry Commission for reporting any breaches of the regulations governing timber operations. ■

FOURTH SESSION:

PANEL DISCUSSION: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES IN TRANSITIONING FROM NEGOTIATION TO IMPLEMENTATION PHASE

OVERVIEW

A panel discussion was held, chaired by *Mr. Lawrence Lachmansingh*, Event Facilitator. Questions posed by the chair focused on key issues that arose during the previous sessions. In addition, questions were posed by the participants. Panel members were:

OVERVIEW

- Mr. Samuel Nketiah
(Tropenbos Programme
Ghana)
- Hon. Harrison Karnwea
(Forestry Development
Authority, Liberia)
- Mr. Mohindra Chand
(National Technical Working
Group, Guyana)
- Mr. Kenny David (FLEGT
Secretariat, Guyana)
- Ms. Glenda Rodriquez,
(Progressio Honduras)

KEY ISSUES

Below is a summary of the responses to the questions posed during the panel discussion. Responses are grouped according to the specific themes arising out of the questions.

ACHIEVING FLEGT LICENSING STATUS

Achieving FLEGT status took a long time in the case of Liberia because it involved numerous stakeholders each of whom had different



concerns and expectations. The Government also wanted to have its own way and did not cater for extensive stakeholder participation. In the case of Honduras, the Government did not fully understand the importance of the process. To speed up the process, capacity building of the stakeholders was required. In Ghana's case, individual attitudes and the level of understanding impacted the process. To shorten the process, consultation should have used the structures already existing under the national forest programme.

MULTI-STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT IN THE FLEGT VPA PROCESS

In Guyana, there has been a high level of multi-stakeholder involvement in the FLEGT process. It was recognized that the

conventional way of governing the forest could no longer apply – the need for a participatory approach was essential. The communication strategy defines the modus operandi for engaging the different levels of stakeholders in the consultation process. While distance proved a challenge in fully engaging loggers in the previous consultations, the NTWG is currently visiting them in their respective locations. In engaging the members of civil society and the private sector in the FLEGT implementation, it was agreed that these sectors will first need to decide on what it is they wish to gain from the process. While the Guyana Forestry Commission is the overall regulatory body in Guyana, it is the responsibility of everyone to monitor the forest and to report their concerns to the Commission. ►

In the case of Ghana, in achieving consensus during the consultations, there were representatives from the different constituencies who reported back to their respective groups. In Liberia, a decision was taken by the Government to include the private sector, Government partners, forest groups and other stakeholders. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs first engaged the EU then other partners were brought on board. In Honduras, financial issues impacted the process initially however; consultations were held with civil society organizations who then contributed to the development of legal documents and a communication protocol in relation to the FLEGT VPA process. The Government also recognized that time had to be allowed to disseminate the documents among the various communities to ensure that their concerns were reflected.

CAPACITY BUILDING AMONG STAKEHOLDERS

Capacity building of stakeholders is currently being addressed in Guyana, however stakeholders first need to know what will be expected of them during the FLEGT implementation process. They also need to identify their capacity building needs. The indigenous peoples in particular, have specific needs in view of their language and culture. The view was also expressed that there should be capacity building among the policy makers to allow them to understand the indigenous peoples' systems for managing the forest.

In the case of Liberia, special efforts were made to build the capacity of the relatively young forestry personnel that were put in place

in the transition that followed the change in Government. After the new Government took office there were dramatic changes with regard to the ownership of concessions - all pre-war concessions were cancelled.

COUNTERING POLITICAL RISKS

In Honduras, there were two elections during the FLEGT VPA process. Civil society played a significant role in ensuring continuity during the changes in Governmental structures. In anticipating the outcome of the next elections, civil society continues to work along with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to ensure continuity after the elections.

In Liberia, transparency is rooted in the forestry sector, thus elections are not likely to impact the FLEGT VPA process. The process is highly participatory and members of the opposition are also involved as the Government maintains an open approach to the process. In Ghana, despite the division between the two major political parties, this division is not reflected at the civil society level in their engagement in the FLEGT process. To ensure continuity, both the Government and the opposition are engaged through a Parliamentary Select Committee on Lands and Forestry.

SYNERGY BETWEEN REDD+, THE GREEN ECONOMY AND FLEGT

In light of Guyana's involvement in other conservation initiatives such as REDD+, the Green Economy and now FLEGT, the strategy moving forward will be to tap into synergies existing among these initiatives in light of the resource constraints within Guyana. As such, when

FLEGT eventually comes on stream, the intention is to conduct audits that are all encompassing for the various initiatives so as to have a common outcome and avoid duplication of efforts.

FLEGT IMPLEMENTATION

In Guyana, after signing and ratifying of the FLEGT VPA, a separate unit will be established to follow up on its implementation. A joint monitoring committee that has the involvement of various stakeholders will be established. It is recognized that funding will be required for capacity building and other costs. In addition, the level of efficiency, quality and reliability within the timber sector will need to be improved in order to gain access to markets. In general, Guyana will tap into the experiences of other countries in avoiding the pitfalls of the FLEGT implementation process.►

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DEFINITION OF LEGALITY

In defining “legality” within the timber sector, in Liberia there is a transparency law that has to be adhered to. In the case of Ghana, civil society commissioned a study to analyse the laws operating within the industry and were able to identify the existing gaps and inconsistencies. This then led to defining legality. In defining the term, the concerns of civil society in ensuring that FPIC is applied was taken into account and consultations were also held with the National House of Chiefs who are the custodians of the land.

POTENTIAL ECONOMIC GAINS FROM FLEGT LICENSING

In examining the economic gains that could be achieved from FLEGT licensing, Ghana expressed the view that the decreasing market for illegal timber resulting from global initiatives to combat deforestation, will make way for legal timber.

Ghana has already begun to identify efficiency gains to be made within its timber operations and have begun to address these e.g. by shifting its timber operations closer to the source of lumber. In Guyana, any effort to assist timber operators in improving the quality and operational cost of their entities will be contingent upon the availability of funding. The cost of producing FLEGT-compliant timber is not yet known, however access to new markets will be an advantage. There will also have to be very proactive efforts in market promotion at both the local level and at the level of the EU.



THE COST OF ACHIEVING FLEGT STATUS

Guyana estimates that approximately USD 10 million will be required for achieving FLEGT License status. A number of stakeholder groups have conducted their own studies with regard to the supporting mechanisms required – including incentives for compliance and also creating an enabling environment. Other stakeholder

groups will have to identify their needs so that these could be reflected in the NTWG discussion of the support measures annex with the EU.

With regard to Ghana, capacity building costs were supported by international sources, however there were other in-country costs for which the Government had to identify funding. ■

FIFTH SESSION:

THE INTERNATIONAL TIMBER MARKET

OVERVIEW

The session was chaired by *Dr. Alhassan Attah, FLEGT Facilitator – Guyana. Presentations were delivered by 3 key speakers:*

- Global timber market trends: opportunities and challenges for the Guyana timber industry: *Mr. Roderick Aitken, Aitken & Howard Ltd.*
- Integrating the work of the Independent Forest Monitor under the Guyana-Norway Memorandum of Understanding with that of the Independent Auditor under the VPA: Lesson for REDD+ and FLEGT linkages: *Ms. Pradeepa Bholanath, Guyana Forestry Commission*
- Updates on Legislative developments to reduce trade in illegal timber: *Francisco Grotewold, Executive Director, Gremial Forestal Guatemala*

KEY ISSUES

GUYANA HAS TO ADDRESS A NUMBER OF CHALLENGES IN PREPARATION FOR FLEGT LICENSING

The Guyanese timber market faces a number of challenges: developed nations have timber procurement policies that are not favourable for Guyanese timber due to their environmental accreditation requirements; there is poor perception of tropical timbers and in particular Guyanese greenheart; there is lack of awareness of Guyana's forest sustainability; the absence of forest certification adds to poor perception; FLEGT licensing is not equivalent to certification of

sustainability undertaken by the voluntary certification schemes such as FSC. Therefore, FLEGT Licensed timber will not guarantee acceptance of Guyanese timber into certain markets, particularly for private sector procurement. It was noted that a well intended legislation that prevent companies from exporting sizes larger than 150mm x 300mm has a negative impact on the Guyanese timber sector.

Opportunities for Guyana however include: its historically low forest degradation rate; strong forestry management principles; its cost effective work force and; greenheart being the only timber with a "B Grade" that design engineers in Europe can use. Guyana thus needs to change the current perception of its forest industry by communicating the facts through proactive media communication, online communication and responses from forestry bodies/senior officials to counter negative publicity. NGOs and Government advisory groups should conduct desk-based research and there needs to be increased inter-Governmental pressure. In the long term, Guyana should actively pursue the finalization of FLEGT licensing and move towards a national standard on sustainability in conjunction with an independent certifying body. During the discussion following the above presentation, a burning issue was the non-acceptance of Guyana's

Opportunities for Guyana however include: its historically low forest degradation rate; strong forestry management principles; its cost effective work force and; greenheart being the only timber with a "B Grade" that design engineers in Europe can use.

greenheart into the UK market by the Environment Agency's procurement policy, due to the misconception that Guyana's forest is not sustainable. Some participants felt that the UK, as a partner in the FLEGT VPA process, is engaging in double standards. The presenter informed that this matter should be actively pursued at the political level. In relation to changing the negative image of Guyana globally despite its efficient management of its forest, it was agreed that the Government, private sector and civil society will need to advocate collectively in communicating the true facts on Guyana's forests to the international community.

THE POTENTIAL FOR SYNERGIES EXISTS BETWEEN THE GUYANA-NORWAY REDD+ PROJECT AND EU FLEGT

In 2009 Guyana and Norway signed a Memorandum of Understanding on REDD. The Agreed Areas of Work include EU FLEGT VPA as a REDD+ Enabling Activity. As a requirement of the MOU between Guyana and Norway, it was stipulated that Independent Forest Monitoring (IFM) should be followed by the monitor and the host institution as a set of minimum standards to be adhered to. It covers the significant drivers of deforestation and forest degradation by covering all stages of the chain of ►

custody as it relates to logs and lumber - harvesting, transportation, processing, and export. REDD+ and LCDS integrate FLEGT VPA as REDD+ governance of which forest governance is one aspect. In addition, Guyana's Intended Nationally Determined Contribution has mainstreamed EU FLEGT VPA as a REDD+ Strategy under Forest Governance as an Unconditional Contribution. REDD+ programmes such as IFM are thus regarded as good preparatory platforms for EU FLEGT. As such, in moving forward, synergies should be established with IFM. Guyana has been granted a no cost extension to complete three outstanding activities centred on governance before moving on to the next phase of the partnership. These activities are: the initialing of the FLEGT VPA by Guyana under the EU FLEGT VPA process; application of candidacy by Guyana under Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) and; the advancement of remaining areas of work involving indigenous peoples.

During the discussion that followed the above presentation, much focus was placed on the current status of the Guyana-Norway Initiative. Participants were

informed that the previous phase of the Agreement ended in 2015 and that the progression onto the next phase is contingent upon the three outstanding activities outlined above under the no-cost extension. One participant expressed a concern that the conversation thus far has not addressed the need for reforestation. In response, the audience was informed that a specific unit within the GFC has responsibility for forest resources management, including reforestation. However, it was reiterated that timber harvesting in Guyana is conducted on a selective logging basis which limits extraction to 20m³ per hectare which is far above the current industry's performance. It was also suggested that an awareness session be held with the National Toshias Council and other stakeholders to elaborate on the process for timber harvesting – including the need for reforestation as may be applicable to the specific type of trees.

A further concern was expressed about the importation of softwood (pine) into Guyana from North America.

WITHIN THE TIMBER SECTOR, MARKET-BASED LEGISLATION IS CHANGING CONSTANTLY AND COUNTRIES NEED TO STAY ABREAST OF THESE

The Global Timber Forum (GTF) is a platform that groups associations and federations within the private sector that are involved in forest activity. Among its functions, the GTF provides technical expertise in accessing funding to support private sector engagement. It also provides a voice for the forest private sector. Important parameters about the timber industry are that: it is a highly regulated sector; various levels of permits are required for it to be legal; transaction costs for these permits are high; policies focus mostly on controls; controls established are not always supported by technical data; products from plantations receive the same treatment as products from natural forest. Within the sector, market-based legislation is changing constantly and more countries are likely to introduce laws within the next decade. Moving forward, exporters need to focus on understanding their own legal system so that they can assure their customers about the legal compliance and quality of their products. ■



WORKING GROUPS AND FEEDBACK TO PLENARY

OVERVIEW

During the second day of the seminar participants had the opportunity to discuss further, some key aspects of the FLEGT VPA process that were pinpointed during the sessions. The groups were divided into four thematic areas and provided with a list of questions to guide their discussions. Highlights and recommendations of the presentations and discussions are detailed below:

THEMATIC AREA 1: STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT DURING IMPLEMENTATION

RECOMMENDATIONS

NATURE OF STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT:

- A group should be formed to spearhead consultations and be guided by established terms of reference
- Conduct a stakeholder analysis and national workshop, as a mechanism to ensure that stakeholders are adequately represented
- Identify stakeholder support needs prior to implementation

THE ROLE OF STAKEHOLDERS:

- Engage a learning institution (the University of Guyana) to: conduct research to identify existing gaps; provide capacity building and; long and short term training
- In relation to indigenous groups: they should be guided in terms of FLEGT requirements; be assisted in facilitating the communication

link and; be provided with capacity building in marketing and promotion

- Civil society can assist in monitoring and transparency both officially and unofficially

OTHER GROUPS WHOSE ENGAGEMENT WOULD BE CRITICAL:

- High involvement of the media as tool for information dissemination

RESOURCE CONFLICTS IN GUYANA:

- Resource conflicts exist between logging and mining and also multiple land use (e.g. the same piece of land being granted for different uses)
- Establish a multi-stakeholder group to be used as a platform to address conflicts
- Consider incorporating existing mechanisms formulated and used by other stakeholder groups

- Review and enforce existing policies and mechanisms
- Increased collaboration and coordination between agencies

WHAT GUYANA LEARNT FROM THE SEMINAR:

- The weaknesses of the FLEGT VPA negotiation and implementation processes
- How to address political challenges – engagement at a parliamentary level to build awareness and keep members informed on the process
- Communication through briefings and direct invitation
- Not to depend on donor funding but to also consider national sources (piggy-back on using resource persons involved in other national but related sessions and take advantage of other organised meetings)



THEMATIC AREA 2: HOW SHOULD GUYANA MANAGE ITS TRANSITION FROM NEGOTIATIONS TO IMPLEMENTATION

STRUCTURES TO PUT IN PLACE FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF FLEGT VPA:

- Establish a grievance/complaint mechanism unit comprising various stakeholder groups
- Put measures in place to assist small concession holders and indigenous communities to promote better management practices, especially as it relates to finance and technical support

CHANGING PERCEPTIONS ON FOREST MANAGEMENT:

- Establish a level playing field for all stakeholders as it relates to monitoring of the forest
- There should be accelerated positive public relations and collaboration between Government agencies and private sector agencies

- Utilize the services of embassies overseas to change the image of the forest sector
- Promote sustainable management of Guyana's forests
- Make a special effort to report factual information so as to leave no room for negative publicity
- The EU should play a more active role in providing funding and technical support for implementation
- The Guyana Forestry Commission should play a more forceful role in monitoring larger concessions rather than impose sanctions on smaller concessions
- Government agencies should be more efficient in their operations so as to support successful implementation

REFLECTION OF FPIC PROTOCOLS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE VPA:

- FPIC protocols should be applied in the implementation of the VPA
- There should be more community engagements
- Consultations should be conducted in the indigenous languages in communities as appropriate

WHAT GUYANA LEARNT FROM THE SEMINAR:

- International best practices and pitfalls
- That there should be no limit to consultative efforts, especially as they relate to representation



THEMATIC AREA 3: DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING THE GUYANA TIMBER LEGALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

INCLUSION OF THE DOMESTIC MARKET REQUIREMENTS IN THE GTLAS AND THE ROLE OF PRIVATE VOLUNTARY CERTIFICATION IN THE GTLAS:

- All timber flows should follow one system and this should be the benchmark for the national market whereas any Forest Sector Operator has the option of meeting other international requirements such as the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification or Programme for Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) Schemes
- The only difference between the national and international market is that an FSO will be issued a FLEGT License when timber products are exported under the EU-FLEGT VPA

INVOLVEMENT OF STAKEHOLDERS IN GTLAS AND REFLECTION OF THEIR RIGHTS IN THE VPA:

- Institutional and technical support can be given to the groups in discussion under the Annex VIII-Supporting Measures in the form:
- Information being translated into local dialects

- Continuation of group sessions within communication on EU-FLEGT
- Distribution of videos and user friendly hand-outs
- Encourage the use of contracts between loggers and Village Councils
- Enhancement of networking and coordination of the flow of information between indigenous groups and civil society. A communication strategy between these groups should be considered

CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING THE WOOD TRACKING SYSTEM:

- While from previous audits, the system was shown to be a robust one, a challenge highlighted is the time taken to submit the relevant documents to Guyana Forestry Commission from indigenous communities.
- The time should be lengthened since most indigenous communities are within remote locations and transportation is a limiting factor

ESTIMATED COST OF IMPLEMENTING THE SYSTEM:

- Implementation requires e.g. producing licences and verifying the system. It is not possible to estimate the cost of the implementation phase at the present time
- Promotion of coordination of meetings within relevant stakeholder groups to obtain their feedback on how to access funds for the supporting measures

MARKET PROMOTION FOR THE GTLAS:

- Private sector needs to be more involved in the decision making process and marketing of lesser used species

RESPECTING THE RIGHTS OF LOCAL AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLE IN THE VPA:

- More international seminars should be held with broad-based participation including indigenous communities and civil society
- This will help to build capacity, raise awareness, transfer knowledge and build a strong nation to promote good governance

THEMATIC AREA 4:

INTEGRATING THE WORK OF THE INDEPENDENT FOREST MONITOR WITH THAT OF THE INDEPENDENT AUDITOR UNDER THE VPA

SHOULD THE INDEPENDENT AUDITOR BE SEPARATE FROM THE IFM?

- Having both IFM and IA perform audits could ensure focus is split into separate areas to complement each other. However this could be very costly, time consuming and can create confusion
- One audit should be sufficient however the timing should be yearly for the first three years and every two years thereafter
- If IFM is used for the audit, the cost will most likely be covered by Norway, however if IA does the audit they will have to seek funding for the process
- One audit would be cost effective, take less time and provide more clarity

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR INTEGRATING THE IFM AND THE IA:

Challenges:

- Being able to integrated the current monitoring systems into a national system
- IFM is broad and reflective of REDD+ whereas IA is focused on legality issues
- Having the capacity and technology to be able to easily access the rate of deforestation
- Miners are mining on forest concessions in some situations trying to find a balance

between the mining activities and logging

OPPORTUNITIES:

- Building capacity on forest monitoring, having good monitoring systems in place
- Consulting with indigenous communities
- Some communities have strong monitoring systems currently in place such as CMRV, and environmental monitoring program through the WWF

FINANCING OF THE INTEGRATION OF THE IFM AND IA:

- Funds will need to be sourced from other donors if the IFM and IA are integrated
- Currently IFM is funded by Norway whereas IA may have to secure funding for its future work

CAPACITY FOR IA IN COUNTRY:

- Presently there is no capacity in-country for IA. However there could be a balance of both local and international personnel to facilitate capacity building in country as in the case of Liberia

STRENGTHENING COHERENCE BETWEEN NATIONAL ASPIRATION AND THE AUDIT MECHANISM?

- Ensure that the forest is well managed
- Ensure that legality of the forest is maintained

- Sourcing markets and trade
- Identify multi use of the forest
- Be able to track the impact of deforestation
- Ensure that logging is being done in a sustainable manner
- Legality definition should be included in the narrative of the audit mechanism
- Communities are not fully aware of the FLEGT VPA process, they should have a training of trainer's program to transfer knowledge to members of their respective communities.

WHAT GUYANA LEARNT FROM THE SEMINAR:

- Guyana should take its time to discuss issues and learn early lessons
- Inclusion of indigenous groups in the FLEGT VPA process is not only a challenge for Guyana but other countries as well
- Understanding the roles of large and small logging companies
- All stakeholders should benefit from the FLEGT VPA process

At the end of the group presentations, a proposal was put forward that an accord should be developed to guide inter-organizational behaviour and the mechanisms for engagement, as Guyana moves from the negotiation to the implementation stage of the VPA.

MAJOR CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES



MAJOR CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES THAT AROSE DURING THE SEMINAR WERE THE FOLLOWING:

1. In order to change the current negative image of Guyana globally despite its efficient forest management practices and low level of deforestation, the Government, private sector and civil society need to advocate collectively in communicating globally the true facts on Guyana's forests. In particular, the Government needs to actively pursue the resolution of the current impasse with the UK Environment Agency with regard to their non-acceptance of Guyana's greenheart in their procurement.
2. Guyana needs to develop and implement a communication strategy to ensure that all stakeholders understand the FLEGT VPA process along with their respective roles in the implementation of the VPA. All effort should be made to include the various stakeholder groups. Structures and legislation need to be developed to govern the participation of the various stakeholders and consideration should be given to developing an accord to guide inter-organizational behaviour and the mechanisms for engagement among the various stakeholders.
3. Stakeholder groups need to identify their specific needs for capacity building to facilitate their involvement in FLEGT implementation.
4. To contribute effectively, civil society must be strong, have a good mix of different groups, be willing to network, share information and be aware of their respective roles. Achieving consensus among civil society groups is important for the FLEGT VPA implementation process.
5. The culture and language of the indigenous people must be given special consideration during the engagements with this group and these aspects should be reflected in the various documents and processes leading up to FLEGT implementation.
6. In moving towards FLEGT implementation Guyana needs to actively follow up on the outstanding activities identified in the Guyana-Norway no-cost extension that will have a direct impact on the timelines for achieving FLEGT licensing.

Guyana also needs to capitalize on the potential for synergies with existing conservation initiatives taking place in-country and also learn from the valuable lessons experienced by other countries.

To safeguard against political risks, special efforts should be made to engage both members of the Government and the opposition in an open and participatory process that will ensure continuity of the VPA process during changes of Government.
7. Guyana needs to actively pursue the identification of funding for the implementation of the VPA.

Credits

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