FOREST WATCH GHANA

Lessons learnt in advancing tenure and other rights

Current VPA Implementation Status

- 2007 – Aug. 2009; VPA negotiation with later CS involvement through VPA Multi Stakeholder Implementation committee
- 2009: Ghana signed & ratified VPA
- 2010: VPA Implementation plan designed by FC & discussed with SH with specific roles for CS agreed on
- 2011 - 2012: Establishment of 2 new institutions – Timber Validation Division and Timber Validation Council
- 2011 – 2013: Development & testing of WTS delayed but in progress. WTS to be field tested in November 2013
- Appointment of Independent Monitor outstanding
- October 2014: Export of FLEG license timber

CS Participation in FLEGT / VPA

- Forest Watch Ghana (FWG) a coalition of ≥ 35 NGOs in the forest sector formed in 2004 had already started advocacy campaign and demands for law enforcement good governance in the forest sector.

- 4 Campaign objectives: Fair Access to forest resources, Fair Benefits sharing, Participatory governance and Greater CS activism around NR law enforcement, transparency and accountability

- Basis for FWG participation in VPA

Strengths – VPA processes & CS Participation

- Ensured legality definition is not diluted with prevailing illegal practices on award of timber rights

- Ensured effective stakeholder participation in and enrichment of decision making & arriving at acceptable decisions on contentious issues-bad laws, TRFs payment

- Space for stakeholder participation in forestry issues has come to stay

Weaknesses - VPA processes & CS Participation

- VPA MSIC has no decision making powers. Decisions made by MSIC is not binding on Government e.g arbitrary use of Ministerial powers / applying bad sessions of laws undermines spirit of VPA and good governance

- Forestry Commission (Govt.) is the convener of MSIC meetings. Undue delays in convening meetings poses challenges for meeting timelines for agreed processes and monitoring processes and outputs

- Unrealistic timelines inhibits effective consultation

Threats - VPA processes & CS Participation

- Bilateral nature of VPA creates room for exporting illegal timber to other countries outside EU and US

- Individual interests in maintaining status quo for personal gains: commitment vs will

- Radical measures required to put legal timber on Domestic market

Opportunities - VPA processes & CS Participation

- Enforcing governance reforms in the sector

- Industry to compel government to respect due process, issue legally acceptable timber rights to enable industry restore its credibility and integrity

- CS to learn more about more technical areas of the WTS / CoC for monitoring compliance with WTS

Opportunities - VPA processes & CSO Participation

- Reducing the global trade in illegal timber if VPA moves beyond bilateral to multilateral like other global conventions

- Communities receive a fair share of income from timber trade

- Improve forest cover through community led initiatives

Main lessons learned in advancing tenure and other rights

- Public officials are not interested in advancing community tenure & rights. CS has responsibility to drive this agenda
- Community tenure is intricately linked to security of land tenure and both need to be addressed in tandem. Captured in new Forest & Wildlife Policy
- CS piloted models provide evidence for advocacy for community tenure and rights
- Community lands are not recognised as part of investment

Main lessons learned in advancing tenure and other rights

- Other rights include access to forest resources; compensations for destroyed crops and payment of SRAs
- Communities will assert and defend their rights once they know it. CS has responsibility of educating communities on their rights and responsibilities and those of other SH
- Increasingly, policy makers are listening to CS because of useful contributions / inputs & providing solutions and not just criticism. This confidence provides good opportunity to get policy makers to buy in on community rights
- Policy analysis, documentation of policy gaps, engagement with policy makers make policy review to include community rights more acceptable