



OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES

CIVIL SOCIETY MONITORING OF THE VOLUNTARY PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT IN GHANA

FAO/ACP

Lead Author:

Eric Lartey (Friends of the Earth-Ghana)

Contributors:

Isaac Noble Eshun (Forestry Commission)

Alexander Asare (Forestry Commission)

Arthur Blundell (PhD) (International Consultant)

July 2012

Acknowledgements

The Authors express their sincere gratitude to the European Union which sponsored the ACP-FLEGT project that produced this publication. They also thank the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation staff in Rome and Accra for facilitating the implementation of the project. Appreciation also goes to the Forestry Commission under the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources of Ghana which acted as the recipient organisation to the project. Other organisations which contributed expertise towards the publication include the Tropenbos International (Ghana), RUDEYA, Forest Certification Group, Kumasi Wood Cluster, Friends of the Earth Ghana, FORIG, TVD and the RMSC. Individuals who played a key role in ensuring the smooth implementation of the project are Robert Simpson, Fernando Salinas, Art Blundell, Sophie Lemaitre, Henrietta Appiah and Godwin Cudjoe all of UN-FAO as well as Messrs Samuel Afari Dartey, Edward Obiaw, Valerie Fumey-Nassah and Chris Beeko of the Forestry Commission. Finally, the Authors express their sincere thankfulness to the GTA, NFF-G, Sokoban Wood Village and Forest Communities who contributed immensely in generating the background information which form the backbone of the publication.

Table of Contents

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations	5
1. Introduction.....	7
2. About the Guideline	8
What is the purpose of the guideline?	8
Who is the guideline for?	8
How to use this guideline.....	8
3. What is Monitoring: VPA Context	8
4. Policies, Legislation and Lessons that underpin Civil Society Monitoring of the VPA	9
5. What Needs to be Monitored in the VPA and at What Level?	11
5.1 Output Monitoring	11
5.2 Process Monitoring	12
6. Civil Society Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for VPA	19
Step 1: Establish the Purpose and Scope of M&E.....	22
Step 2: Identify Performance Questions and Indicators.....	22
Step 3: Assign Responsibilities	23
Step 4: Financial Resources.....	23
Step 5: Collect Information	23
Step 6: Information Analysis and interpretation of results.	26
Step 7: Communicate Monitoring Findings to VPA Operators	26
Step 8: Lessons Learnt from Evaluations	27
7. Annexes.....	30

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

ACP	Africa Caribbean and Pacific
CBO	Community Based Organization
CE	Chief Executive
CFC	Community Forest Committee
CRMC	Community Resource Management Committee
CS	Civil Society
CSO	Civil Society Organization
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FIP	Forest Investment Programme
FLEGT	Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade
FoE-Gh	Friends of the Earth-Ghana
FORIG	Forest Research Institute of Ghana
FSD	Forest Services Division
GSGDA	Ghana Shared Growth and Development Agenda
IM	Independent Monitoring
JMRM	Joint Monitoring and Review Mechanism
LI	Legislative Instrument
LSRAC	Local Social Responsibility Agreement Committee
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MoP	Manual of Procedure

M-SIC	Multi-Stakeholder Implementation Committee
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
NLBI	Non Legally Binding Instrument
RMSC	Resource Management Support Center
SRA	Social Responsibility Agreement
TLAS	Timber Legality Assurance System
TRMA	Timber Resources Management Act
TUC	Timber Utilization Contract
TVD	Timber Validation Department
VPA	Voluntary Partnership Agreement

1. Introduction

The European Union (EU) launched the Forest Law Enforcement Governance and Trade (FLEGT) Action Plan in 2003 to combat illegal logging through trade mechanisms. The EU FLEGT Action Plan is cognizant of the role of timber consumer and producer countries and defines a set of actions for both parties to contribute efforts to fight illegal logging. The principal instruments proposed in the EU-FLEGT Action Plan are the bilaterally negotiated Voluntary Partnership Agreements (VPAs) between timber producing countries and the EU. These agreements establish control and licensing procedures to ensure that only legal timber and timber products from partner countries enter the EU market.

Successful implementation of Ghana's FLEGT/VPA aimed at curbing illegal logging requires a credible Legality Assurance System (LAS). In addition to the technical requirements of the LAS, a credible LAS must include coordinated Civil Society (CS) and community-led monitoring processes. There have been massive structural changes in the form of policy, legislation and institutional reforms at the national level. Despite these changes, coordinated measures and systems of ensuring participation of civil society in monitoring the implementation processes is insufficient¹. The ACP-FLEGT Support Programme of the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) promotes the implementation of the EU FLEGT Action Plan by improving forest governance, providing technical assistance, and building capacity by funding projects in ACP countries. In pursuit of this objective, this guideline aims to synthesize and disseminate best practices and lessons learnt from projects funded by the ACP-FLEGT Programme in Ghana that could help civil society groups (NGOs, forest fringe communities, academia, community based organizations and other grassroot structures) to monitor and evaluate various elements and implementation processes that are defined in the Legality Assurance System of the VPA. The Ghana LAS system grants aggrieved producers who are refused legality licenses the right to file complaints with the auditing Conformity Assessment Bodies. This is a window of opportunity for CSOs to raise concerns about any alleged illegalities if they believe that operators are not acting in compliance with the law. Ghanaian civil society groups are encouraged to establish networks to monitor the functioning of the LAS.

¹ Eric Lartey (2012). National Forest Law Enforcement, Governance And Trade Processes: Influencing the Trajectories of Participation in Timber Producer Countries. Conference paper presented at the Faculty of Science, University of Copenhagen. 19pp

2. About the Guideline

What is the purpose of the guideline?

The TVD of FC validates consistency of compliance of the responsible bodies of FC (TRAU, FSD, RMSC, TIDD, etc.) and private operators in order to ensure legality. The TVD also monitors the timber supply chain and thus ensure only legal timber is utilized and conducts reconciliations of the data within the WTS and between WTS and other audit evidence/data sources in respect of wood products destined for export and domestic market. Civil society groups have been keenly interested in ensuring transparency, participation and accountable governance of the forestry sector through the Voluntary Partnership Agreement, right from the onset of negotiations, through ratification and systems development. This interest in monitoring VPA processes calls for a solid understanding of the principles of monitoring and evaluation of the process. This guideline provides a systematic methodology and explains the necessary steps required to develop and implement a systematic M&E procedure for the VPA. It also provides information on external monitoring and focuses on the VPA outputs as well as the processes in its preparation. It draws lessons from best practices and tested approaches from VPA related hands-on projects in Ghana. This Guideline has been produced as a practical resource document as well as for training purposes.

Who is the guideline for?

This operational guideline has been prepared primarily to serve as a reference material for forest fringe communities, NGO practitioners, public institutions and industry actors who are interested in monitoring the implementation of the VPA and other related programmes.

How to use this guideline

The guideline has been prepared to complement the VPA and especially the LAS. It is also coherent with the timber verification protocols that have been developed by the FC. The Guideline is therefore not a stand-alone document, but should be used complementarily with the LAS document and other monitoring and evaluation tools. It draws heavily on the VPA between the EC and the Republic of Ghana, civil society transparency reports, and other guidelines on best practices for sustainable forest management.

3. What is Monitoring: VPA Context

In generic terms, monitoring is the regular gathering, analyzing and reporting of information that is needed for evaluation and/or effective management of a programme or project. Evaluation is a selective and periodic exercise that attempts to objectively assess the overall progress and worth of a programme. Evaluation uses the information gathered through monitoring and other research activities and is carried out at particular points during the lifetime of the programme or project.

In the context of Ghana's VPA, a community and civil society-led Monitoring is an organized way of collecting, analyzing, and verifying information at the local/community, district and national levels to be used by local governments, national government agencies (the TVD, Independent Monitor), non-governmental and civil society organizations for corrective action and decision making in the course of VPA implementation.

4. Policies, Legislation and Lessons that underpin Civil Society Monitoring of the VPA

An integral part of Ghana's new Forest and Wildlife Policy (2012) is the institution of a new governance system based on transparency, equity and the involvement of local people, especially forest-fringe communities². It stresses on the intention to put efforts on increased institutional transparency, consistency, and credibility so as to foster responsiveness, accountability and the rule of law in forest and wildlife resource management. Transparency could be augmented by the involvement of independent monitoring and auditing of systems to verify the legality of timber in producing countries. Independent monitoring makes verification systems more credible and less prone to corruption.

The VPA requires monitoring of the impacts on CSOs and communities. It further allows CSOs and communities to monitor broad impacts albeit vaguely worded Section 1 of Article 16.

"Ghana, where feasible, shall endeavor to encourage stakeholder consultation in the implementation of this Agreement".

Further, according to Section 2 of Article 17 of the VPA, both parties (the EU and Ghana) place emphasis on monitoring the impacts of this Agreement on forest communities and other stakeholders. The two parties are jointly committed to working together to develop an impact monitoring framework that meets the needs of both parties. This further calls for civil society efforts to monitor the extent to which parties to the agreement are addressing impacts on forest fringe communities and the industry. Further justification for monitoring is demonstrated through the Ghana Shared Growth and Development Agenda (GSGDA). It envisions improved environmental monitoring and reporting and strengthened functional partnership and participation in environmental management with civil society³.

² Government of Ghana. Final Draft Forest and Wildlife Policy. 39pp

³ Government of Ghana. Ghana Shared Growth and Development Agenda (2010-2013). 278pp

A principal weakness of the VPA between Ghana and the European Union as regards civil society involvement is a reflection that, the issues have not been fully considered & much attention is needed in developing the modalities at the implementation phase.

There are opportunities for civil society organizations (NGOs and communities) to play an independent monitoring and verification roles. Through ACP-FLEGT projects, the Resource Management Support Center (RMSC) of the Forestry Commission and Friends of the Earth-Ghana (FoE-Gh) have both justified the need to clarify monitoring roles and grant legitimate monitoring and participation of NGOs and forest communities in VPA. In the midst of these policies and legislative inadequacies, this document present guidelines for civil society to monitor the VPA progress.

One of the important contributions that local forest communities can make towards the implementation of VPA is to enhance the reports of independent auditors with primary field data. Communities can provide information to third parties and support monitoring of the VPA's implementation. Forest fringe communities can perform this function provided they are adequately trained and motivated to collect, analyze, interpret and transmit information.

Under the auspices of the FAO ACP-FLEGT support programme, some key lessons can solidly inform the monitoring modalities for civil society groups.

- There is a proposed monitoring, verification and reporting framework that was consultatively identified for forest fringe communities. Extracted version of Friends of the Earth-Ghana's proposed framework is crafted to guide civil society groups interested in monitoring (See Table 1).
- The RMSC of the FC has developed integration protocols that will facilitate civil society involvement in the VPA. The RMSC has also analysed and prioritised the integration of civil society in the implementation of the VPA.
- The Forestry Research Institute of Ghana (FORIG) documented incentives that could motivate communities to monitor forest operations at the community level. Training should always be complemented with provision of material incentives such as measuring tapes, field boots, machets, rain coats and others.

- Aside from these initiatives, Forest Watch Ghana is developing a VPA transparency matrix for CSO monitoring of access to information.

5 What Needs to be Monitored in the VPA and at What Level?

Monitoring the VPA could be envisaged at three levels: community, district and national levels. Communities bodies and Environmental NGOs should perform monitoring activities at all levels. They must monitor through their constituencies at the grassroots level. Community members could perform monitoring activities effectively at the community and district levels. However, there are two broad ways in which monitoring could be done: output monitoring and process monitoring. These two forms must be understood and combined in a complementary manner to achieve the optimum monitoring objectives.

5.1 Output Monitoring

Output monitoring involves detailed planning of VPA compliance investigation activities and following progress on the basis of predetermined indicators. However, this alone will be insufficient to observe the actual achievement of objectives and impacts. See Table 1 for a typical example of output monitoring matrix. Examples of VPA issues that civil society can make conscious efforts to monitor could be:

- Supply of legally verified timber to the domestic market
- Effective implementation of the Legality Assurance System
- Implementation of procurement policy on timber for the domestic market
- Compliance to all VPA related legislations
- Conformance to indicators set for verification of timber in the LAS

Primarily, what civil society groups need to be interested to monitor is the implementation commitments by each party to the agreement (Ghana and the EU) (See Annex 1) and the VPA implementation plan. The implementation plan is usually updated at the periodic JMRM meetings between the two parties. A range of possible impact monitoring indicators have been proposed in this guidelines (See Annex 2) but this should not be a limitation for other monitoring indicators.

This is intended to improve local governance and promote transparency and accountability by providing information that can facilitate evidence-based decision making in the VPA process at the national level.

5.2 Process Monitoring

This continuously observes whether the VPA is likely to achieve expected impacts. This form of monitoring is encouraged because it will promote innovations towards combating illegal logging and it needs open processes, where at the outset only general objectives can be defined, but concrete solutions and appropriate approaches will gradually emerge during implementation. To this end, monitoring is oriented on impacts throughout the entire implementation chain and therefore the likeliness of impacts could be observed at early stages of implementation. Emphasis is placed on those outcomes, which are decisive factors for the achievement of results: the effectiveness of activities, organizational procedures and changes in the behaviour of stakeholders or target groups. Process monitoring in the VPA is highly relevant because it intends to enhance engagement of CSOs in the process.

It serves to monitor and evaluate the performance of the parties to the agreement, institutions, processes, laws, government agencies and other stakeholders. In relation to the VPA, Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) will provide government officials, development partners and civil society with better means for learning from modalities that did not work as well as those that worked in the past. The entire LAS will be open to external monitoring by an Independent Monitor (IM). The purpose of the intervention of the IM will be to identify weaknesses and recommend systemic reforms in the LAS. An example is the development of the wood tracking system (WTS) from which the Forestry Commission has learnt a lot of mistakes bordering on software/system development, contractual issues, legislation/permit issues and stakeholder consultation. Results of monitoring these processes will lead to improving service delivery, planning and allocation of resources, transparency and accountability to key stakeholders. An expanded non-exhaustive list of VPA impact areas developed through the efforts of the Joint Ghana-EU team has been compiled to serve as a guide (See Annex 2).

Table 1. Civil society output monitoring matrix for timber harvesting operation and transportation based on the VPA between Ghana and the European Union

Principle*	Criterion*	Performance	Indicators	Means of verification	Sources of information	Who should collect information	Expertise/training requirement	Material resources required
<i>Source of timber</i>	<i>TUC area identified and mapped</i>	<i>Operation within boundaries of TUC</i>	<i>Operations /felling put side TUC boundary</i>	<i>Field inspection report , compartment closure report</i>	<i>District FSD Post-harvest checks , harvesting schedule , yield map</i>	<i>FSD, RMSC, CFCs community groups</i>	<i>Interpretation of Maps Log marking, Post-harvest assessment</i>	<i>Transport , stationery , GPS, camera ,</i>
	<i>Notices/ Written Consent of Land Owners advertised especially for off reserve areas</i>	<i>Posting of notices/dissemination of information for TUC area bidding Pre felling inspection done</i>	<i>Compliance with posting and prefelling requirements</i>	<i>Copy of advert, Length of time for placement of adverts Signed consent form by farmers /Landowners</i>	<i>FSD reports Evaluation reports Prefelling inspection report</i>	<i>CFCs, CSO, DAs, Traditional authorities /landowners , farmers</i>	<i>Requirements for seeking consents and advertisement. Prefelling inspection</i>	<i>TUC bidding & Permit Process</i>

<i>Timber rights allocation</i>	<i>Timber right allocated though competitive bidding</i>	<i>Competitive bidding process(CBP) transparent (Public disclosure of CBP report)</i>	<i>Presence of CSO, TAs and Landowners in allocation meeting CBP report available to stakeholders</i>	<i>TRAU/TREC meeting reports CBD evaluation reports</i>	<i>FC TRAU/TREC</i>	<i>CSO, TAs, Landowners, CFCs</i>	<i>Competitive bidding procedure</i>	<i>Photocopying costs, transport and accomodation costs</i>
	<i>Timber rights allocated though salvage permits and confiscated lumber</i>	<i>Area allocated for salvage permits meets standards</i>	<i>justification for salvage</i>	<i>Assessment report Certificate for confiscated lumber issued</i>	<i>District and regional FSD reports, RMSC assessment reports</i>	<i>CSOs, CFCs, landowners</i>	<i>Standards / conditions/ justification for salvage permits Procedure for assessing confiscated lumber</i>	<i>Material costs</i>
<i>3.Timber harvesting operations</i>	<i>3.6. The logger executed and complied with the relevant Social Responsibility</i>	<i>-payment of stumpage fees /land rent</i>	<i>timeliness of payment -amount of payment</i>	<i>-payment receipts disbursement reports</i>	<i>-district FSD -timber firm -NGO</i>	<i>-Unit Committee/LSRAC/ NGO representative/CF C</i>	<i>Stumpage payment procedure, knowledge on MOPs/calculation of SRA</i>	<i>Transport, telephone,photocopying cost, computer, internet, camera, GPS handset</i>

	<i>Agreement</i>	<i>-implementation of social obligations of loggers</i>	<i>-timeliness of fulfilment -quality of implementation</i>	<i>-TUC document -SRA document -evidence of service provided -infrastructure -minutes of meetings</i>	<i>-district FSD -Unit committee -LSRAC -Stool chief -District Assembly -NGOs</i>	<i>- CFC/ Unit Committee/NGO representative/</i>	<i>SRA negotiation process, TRMA, LI1649, TUC allocation process</i>	
		<i>-respect of cultural rights</i>	<i>-number of infringements on taboo days -sacred sites compromised</i>	<i>-field inspection reports</i>	<i>-community members -district FSD -Farmers -NGOs</i>	<i>-Community members/NGO representatives</i>	<i>Community by-laws, traditional norms, sacred areas</i>	
	<i>3.7. Compensation was paid to affected farmers in</i>	<i>-compliance with compensation</i>	<i>-quality of damage assessment</i>	<i>-damage assessment report</i>	<i>-district FSD</i>	<i>-Community members, NGO representatives</i>	<i>Forest operation procedures and standards, TRMA</i>	<i>Transport, telephone, photocopying cost, computer, internet,</i>

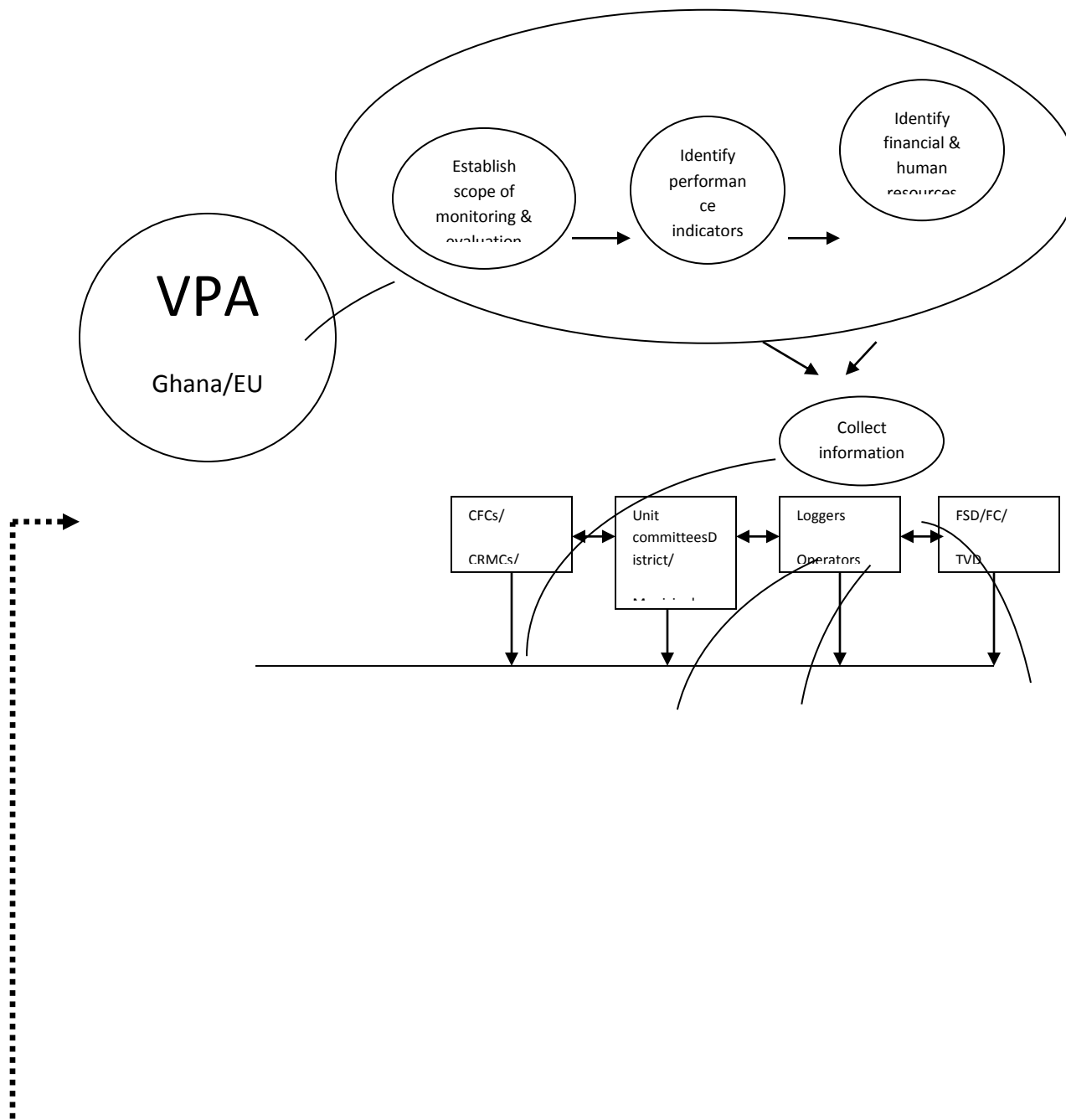
	<i>respect of crop damage if any</i>	<i>payments</i>	<i>report -level of conflict between the logger and farmer</i>	<i>-payment receipt -field interviews</i>	<i>-Farmer -NGO</i>		<i>Land valuation Board rates</i>	<i>camera, GPS handset</i>
	<i>Trees felled were within approved yield</i>	<i>Timber harvesting Inspections</i>	<i>No of trees felled outside yield</i>	<i>LMCC, TIF, marked stumps</i>	<i>District FSD/Timber firm/ RMSC</i>	<i>CFCs/ community members</i>	<i>Sample of approved yield , Log and stump markings</i>	<i>Approved yield doc transport,</i>
<i>4.Transportation</i>	<i>4.2. Timber was transported within the periods permitted by law</i>	<i>Transportation of timber in contravention to the law</i>	<i>Compliance to the law</i>	<i>-letter from the CE of Forestry Commission - community reports, interviews</i>	<i>-Logger -district FSD -Community member</i>	<i>NGO, CFC, community members, opinion leaders</i>	<i>LI 1649</i>	<i>Transport, telephone, photocopyig cost, computer, internet, camera, GPS handset</i>
<i>Revenue disbursement</i>	<i>Revenue accrued shared according to laid down constitutional</i>	<i>Total stumpage amount collected and declared</i>	<i>Disburments made in Compliance with law</i>	<i>TIDD stumpage disbursement book AOSL reports</i>	<i>TIDD , FSD Administrat or of stool lands</i>	<i>CFCs , TAs, CSOs -NFF,</i>	<i>Constitutions of Ghana. FC laws and regulations</i>	<i>Telephone and stationery costs , computer</i>

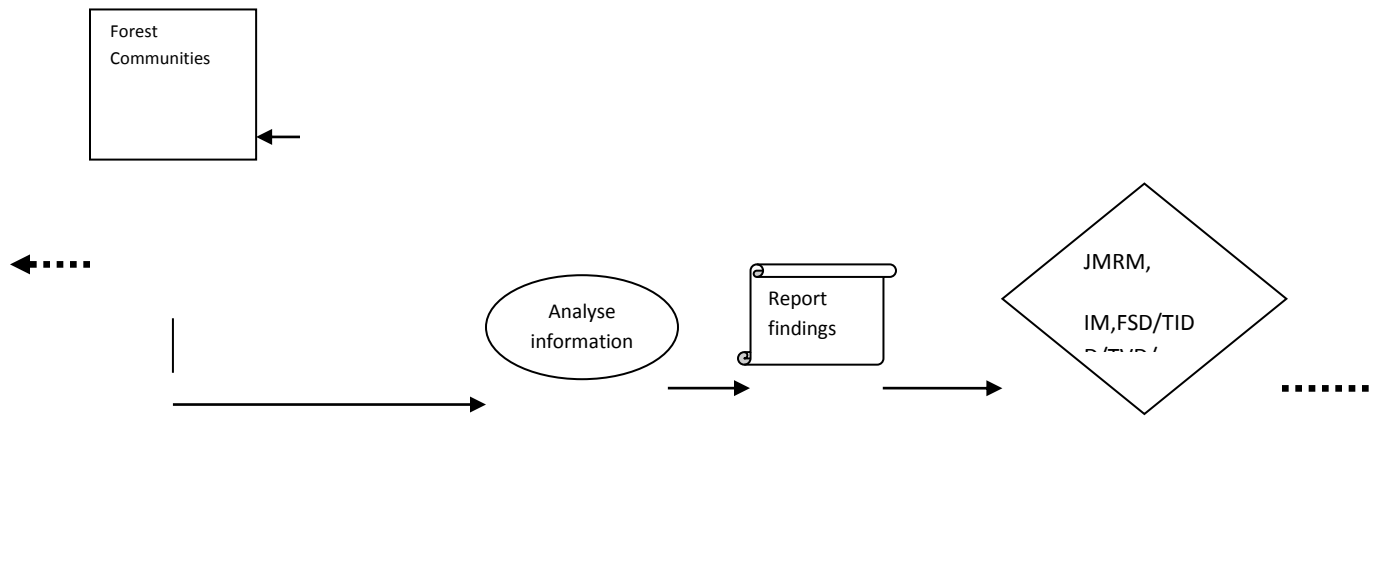
	<i>arrangements</i>							
--	---------------------	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

6 Civil Society Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for VPA

The M&E framework as shown in Figure 1 sets out the monitoring, reporting and evaluation procedure for NGOs, forest community groups, community resource management committees/community forest committees in the planning and implementing external M&E. The M&E procedure must be tailored to the specific needs and outputs of the VPA, taking into account the objective, inputs, outputs, activities and interests of the parties to the Agreement.

Figure 1: Model for civil society monitoring of the VPA process in Ghana (Source: Authors construct, 2013)





Findings, recommendation & lessons for correction of deviations

Step 1: Establish the Purpose and Scope of M&E

Specifying the purpose and scope of the M&E helps to clarify what can be expected of the M&E procedure, how comprehensive it should be, and what resources and time will be needed to carry out the monitoring.

The scope of the M&E may be determined by answering some of the following questions:

- What is the purpose of M&E?
- How much resources are available for the M&E?
- What type of information is required by stakeholders in relation to the VPA?
- What is the level of monitoring expertise available? Does the NGO or community group need special training to collect and analyze information?
- Are local communities and other stakeholders optimally and advantageously participating in the M&E procedure?

While performance questions help to decide what should be monitored and evaluated, indicators provide the actual measurements under M&E and determine what information needs to be gathered.

Step 2: Identify Performance Questions and Indicators

A VPA performance question could be used to focus on whether parties to the VPA (the EU and Ghana government) are performing as planned in the agreement. Performance questions should be guided by the overall objective of the agreement as stated in Annex 1 “to provide a legal framework aimed at ensuring that all imports into the EU member states from Ghana of timber products covered by this Agreement have been legally produced and in doing so to promote trade in timber products”. Decision should be taken on the type of information that is needed to monitor progress and evaluate the status of achievement of the Agreement.

Indicators are measurements that can be used to assess the performance of parties, institutions and processes as enshrined in the agreement. Indicators should be guided by performance questions and linked to the overall purpose of the M&E. Examples of indicators can be found in Table 1.

Step 3: Assign Responsibilities

Organizing responsibilities means deciding which stakeholders or individuals may be involved in the monitoring and evaluation process and clarifying and assigning roles to communities as well as NGO practitioners. Civil society groups and communities may need to be trained in the different aspects of M&E procedures. Training should be delivered based on the identified and assessed capacity needs. NGOs have a broad spectrum of expertise bordering on forest management, democratic governance, forest governance, law, financial management, contract management, etc. It will be ideal to assign roles that best fit the specific NGO or community capacities that will largely depend on field experience and knowledge. Where expertise is lacking, it is recommended that specialists or consultants are recruited to bridge the knowledge gap.

Step 4: Financial Resources

M&E will require financial resources in accordance with the scope of the monitoring that is being evaluated as well as the M&E purpose, performance questions and indicators. Among the items that should be included in M&E costs are:

- M&E training
- M&E meetings and other participatory exercises
- Staff field allowances/per diems
- Fees and expenses for consultants
- Reporting and publicizing findings

Step 5: Collect Information

Information is the oxygen that gives life to the entire M&E process. However, selecting methods of data collection should be done with tact and should be approached in a systematic fashion. A combination of

various methods works best. Rarely is any one method entirely suitable for a given situation. The use of multiple methods and sources of information (triangulation) helps to validate M&E findings and provides a more balanced and holistic view of the VPA performance and achievements.

The performance questions and indicators will provide guidance in deciding what data/information to gather and the methods to be used. Data can either be primary (field interviews, field measurements), or secondary (literature, documents from the FC e.g. MOPs, permits, many of which are published on the internet.

A decision on whether to use primary or secondary data (or both) should be based on the specific data requirements (M&E purpose, performance questions, indicators). Does some or all of the necessary data already exist as secondary data? If the answer to this question is 'no', or if the available secondary data does not completely provide all the data required, then primary data will need to be gathered. Both primary and secondary data can be gathered from a variety of sources including communities, private timber companies, individuals, the Ministry, Forestry Commission, Forest Services Division and Timber Industry Development Division. To increase the credibility of collected data, triangulation, and multiple data collection methods should be employed. Where possible, photographs and other suitable means should be used to confirm information. Within the methodology, the sampling procedure must be chosen carefully to avoid biases. This must also be informed by the available human, material and financial resources.

- **Document Review**

Documents and reports provide a rich source of information for M&E. Key documents that can be used to assess project performance include:

- VPA annual reports prepared by the JMRM
- VPA implementation roadmap/schedule
- Published FLEGT licenses
- Technical reports (e.g. TIDD reports), correspondence, records and budgets
- NGO/Media reports and articles
- Statistics, reports, case studies and other documents published by government, business, research and other institutions
- IM reports
- M-SIC minutes and reports
- Aide Memoires

- **Interviews**

Interviews are face-to-face meetings with individuals and/or groups, which, in this context, are usually fairly informal and semi-structured. While interviews can often be time-consuming, they can provide a rich source of data, particularly in regard to qualitative and sensitive information that may not be readily available in official documents.

Important tips for conducting interviews

- Clearly explain what the purpose of the interview is.
- Prepare a short checklist of themes in advance and ask simple questions using plain language.
- Introduce yourself and let the other parties introduce themselves.
- Be objective, open-minded and listen carefully to both what is being said and what is not being said.
- Use open questions so that the answer cannot just be a plain ‘yes’ or ‘no’.
- Avoid leading questions and never help respondents with answers.
- Encourage participation of ‘quiet’ respondents but never intimidate by asking questions such as ‘What do you think?’
- Do not raise expectations.

✓ **Surveys and Questionnaires**

Surveys and questionnaires provide a way of obtaining information from a large number of people. Questions should be relevant and simple to answer.

If the interviews, survey or questionnaires are being used to collect a lot of information or information that is complex, it may be appropriate to get a consultant or research institution to provide professional assistance in designing the questions and processes.

✓ **Field Visits**

Visits to the field (forest, mill, checkpoint, port), can provide valuable first-hand information about the VPA impact on communities, artisanal millers, SMEs and industry. Field visits also helps to appreciate the field working methods that are being used. Field visits should be openly done.

There should be room for agreement. MOU should be signed: company, FSD and Civil society group.

✓ **Expert Opinion**

Obtaining the views of experts who are knowledgeable about particular aspects of the VPA activities can in some instances provide valuable insights that may not be revealed by other methods of data collection.

Step 6: Information Analysis and interpretation of results.

Information should be interpreted with facts. To ensure that the information gathered will be effectively used, the assessment or analysis of the data/information should be properly organized and carried out for each performance question using the associated indicator(s). In this regard, the performance questions and indicators can provide important assessment tools for the analysis. A final comparison with the outputs and impacts of the project should then be made. In this way performance, progress and achievements of the project can be assessed. In some cases, several participatory meetings may need to be arranged to get more feedback, or consult experts in the field to make sure you have accurately evaluated the information. It may also be valuable to compare relevant aspects of other similar projects to the project that is being monitored – in this way the experiences and lessons learnt during other projects can be shared.

Step 7: Communicate Monitoring Findings to VPA Operators

The evaluation reports, and/or summaries of these reports, should be widely distributed and presented to decision-makers and key stakeholders – including those who were consulted in the M&E process. Reports/ concerns could be submitted to the TIDD, FSD, FC, TVD, the appointed Independent Monitor.

Important communication tips are:

✓ Ensure clarity of message for specific audiences

The interests and concerns of different audiences will vary and as a result, evaluation reports will need to be adapted to the specific needs of each audience. Reports should communicate different levels of details according to the audience being addressed. A message for the JMRRM may require key findings or concerns outlined in a brief and concise manner. Messages for community constituencies may require dissemination through community durbars, simplified posters and flowcharts. NGOs and the Forestry

Commission may also require a detailed message at an operational level in order to improve the day-to-day implementation of the VPA.

✓ **Consider location and time**

To ensure maximum participation by all the relevant stakeholders, careful consideration should be given to where and when meetings are held (e.g. JMRM, M-SIC, International conferences, working group meetings, national forest forums to give feedback on evaluation report findings. It would be valuable to present reports at a time when the recommendations can be fed into decision-making meetings. Besides meetings, there are many other ways to communicate the findings, lessons learnt and recommendations to your broader stakeholder group.

Step 8: Lessons Learnt from Evaluations

Knowledge gained through M&E lies at the core of the VPA learning process. M&E provides information and facts that, when analyzed, understood and accepted, become knowledge that can be used to improve VPA implementation. Besides learning about the progress/achievements of the VPA, it is essential to correct all identified deviations in allocation of subsequent licenses and also feed this knowledge back into ongoing and future national programmes and policies such as FIP, NLBI and REDD Evaluation of the VPA can help to bring development partners together, and when this occurs the learning from M&E goes beyond VPA to stakeholders involved in other programmes e.g. FIP, REDD and NLBI.

List of Literature Consulted

Department of Water Affairs and Forestry/Danida (2005): Project Monitoring and Evaluation

Forestry Commission (2011).XX

Forestry Research Institute (2010). Final Report Development of a Monitoring and Evaluation System for Non-Legally Binding Instrument (NLBI) on all types of Forests in Ghana

Friends of the Earth- Ghana and FAO (2012). Improving Forest Governance through Community Level Participation and Community Based Forest Management Systems. Project final Report

Friends of the Earth-Ghana (2012). Improving Forest Governance in Ghana's Forestry Sector. Achievements and Lessons. ACP-FLEGT Pilot Project.

Ghana Aide Memoire (2013). Fifth session of the Joint Monitoring and Review Mechanism. Accra (28th-31st May)

Government of Ghana and the European Community (2009). Voluntary Partnership Agreement between the European Community and the Republic of Ghana on Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade in Timber Products into the Community

Hummelbrunner, R. (2005). Process Monitoring of Impacts: Towards a new approach to monitor the implementation of Structural Fund Programmes

Lartey, E., Anderson, T.K., Boon, E.K., Lartey, H.A. (2012). Forest Law Enforcement Governance and Trade Processes in Ghana: Strengthening the Weak Elements of Community Participation. Compendium

on the Experiences from the Voluntary Partnership Agreements Process in West and Central African Countries. Food and Agriculture Organization and Ghana Forestry Commission

7 Annexes

Annex 1: Monitoring Matrix for Parties' General Commitments in the VPA

Article	Key Commitment	Responsible Party	Means of verification	Indicator	Mode of collection	Knowledge/ expertise	Who can monitor?
4	Make information available to the public	Ghana & EU	Websites, reports, minutes	Quality of information	Official letters, website, interview, meeting	IT, HR , simplified poster and brochure development	NGO/ NFF
13	Verify the legality of timber sold on domestic markets and of imported timber	Ghana	TVD reports IM reports Audit reports	Frequency of illegalities	Website, interview, document review	Timber verification, auditing	NGO, CFCs
14	Evaluate progress made in implementation	Ghana & EU	Evaluation report,	Quality of report	Direct request, website	FLEGT/VPA	NGO, NFF< communities
15	Activities implemented under this Agreement are coordinated with existing and future relevant	Ghana & EU	National Development	Level of complementarities	Desk study, sector	Forestry, governance, Policy	NGO

	development programmes and initiatives		programmes	with programmes	review,		
16-2	Promote appropriate strategies, modalities and programmes in consultation with relevant stakeholders in the implementation of this Agreement.	Ghana	strategies	Level/quality of consultation	interview	FLEGT/VPA	NFF, Community, NGO, CBOs
16-3	Will hold regular consultations with stakeholders on the implementation of the agreement	EU	Minutes/reports	Quality of consultation	Desk study, interview	Participation	Community, NGO
17-1	Develop a better understanding of the livelihoods of potentially affected indigenous and local communities as well as the timber industry, including those engaged in illegal logging well as the timber industry, including those engaged in illegal logging	Ghana & EU	Research reports on enterprise, access to raw materials, employment levels	Sustainability of livelihoods	Document review	FLEGT/VPA	NGO, Community
17-2	Will monitor the impacts of this Agreement on those communities and other actors	Ghana & EU	Monitoring reports,	Quality of monitoring, appropriateness, sustainability of safeguards	Document review, websites, direct request	FLEGT/VPA	Community, NGO, CBO
18-1	Encourage public and private procurement policies	EU	Policies	Effectiveness of implementation	Survey, document	Public /private procurement policies	NGO

					review, desk study		
18-2	Promote FLEGT-licensed products to the European timber market	EU	TIDD reports	Market share on the EU market	Website	FLEGT/VPA, Timber trade	NGO
19-3d	JMRM shall assess the social, economic and environmental impacts of this Agreement, in accordance with relevant good practice and criteria to be agreed by the Parties and address any issues raised as a result of the assessment	Ghana & EU	Impact assessment reports, Developed safeguards	Quality of assessments, appropriateness, sustainability of safeguards	document review, websites	FLEGT/VPA Impact analysis	NGO
19-3f	Provide appropriate recommendations on capacity-building needs for the successful implementation of the Agreement	Ghana & EU	Reports	List /quality of recommendations	Document review	FLEGT/VPA	NGO, Community, CBO
19-3g	Review developments in public procurement policies	Ghana & EU	Review reports	Effectiveness of implementing public procurement policy	Survey, website	Procurement policy on timber for the domestic market	NGO
20-1	Regularly issue public summary reports based on the findings of the Independent Monitor as explained in Annex VI	Ghana & EU	Summary reports,	Accessibility timelines/quality of report	Website, posters . brochures direct request	FLEGT/VPA knowledge	NGO/NFF

20-2	Will ensure that the workings of the JMRRM are as transparent as possible and that reports and aide memoires arising out of missions are jointly prepared and distributed to the Parties and made public	Ghana & EU	Aide Memoires, consultations	Accessibility timelines/quality of report	Website, direct request	IT, internet, Communication	NGO/NFF
20-3	Make public a yearly report	Ghana & EU	Published report,	Accessibility timelines/quality of report	Website, posters direct request	IT, internet, Communication	NGO, CBO, Community

Source: Author's construct (2013) based on the VPA

Annex 2: Potential impact areas to consider for monitoring

Impact area	Issues to consider for monitoring
1. Production of legal timber	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Revised and harmonised legislative framework ▪ Timber originates from approved sources ▪ Encourage use of timber from legal sources ▪ Illegal chainsaw activities significantly reduced ▪ VPA should, on a sustainable basis, reduce or minimise the impact of illegal logging/illegal chainsaw activities in our forests ▪ Address illegal logging activities and provide legal timber to the domestic market ▪ Operation of Legality Assurance System (LAS) ▪ Policy to supply legal timber to the domestic market
2. Timber trade and markets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identifiable/verifiable legal timber on the domestic market ▪ Develop and structure domestic market ▪ Guarantee access to reliable EU market ▪ Enhance exports to other markets especially the US ▪ Procurement policy for the supply and use of legal timber ▪ Verification of legality of import of timber (and goods in transit)
3. Stakeholder involvement in forest management and forest policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increased capacity of stakeholders to participate in policy processes ▪ Sustainable funding of forest fora ▪ Existence of operational and effective consultative

making	<p>mechanisms/platforms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increased stakeholder consultation and participation
4. Rights of access and forest tenure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Security of timber right holdings ▪ Address community's security of tenure, community management of forest resources ▪ Improved and equitable distribution of benefits ▪ Timeliness of flow of benefits to stakeholders ▪ Transparency in allocation of resources (TUCs)
5. Livelihoods (mitigation of adverse social impacts)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Social safeguards in place ▪ Job losses and employment opportunities ▪ Improved livelihood of affected forest fringe communities
6. Law enforcement and Compliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reduction in forest offenses ▪ Compliance with forestry laws including timber rights allocation ▪ Community awareness of yield allocation and removals to monitor SRAs and royalties ▪ Enhanced capacity of FC to enforce forest laws and regulations
7. Accountability and Transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ease of access of stakeholders to Revenue generation and disbursement report ▪ Accountability in use of forest royalty by traditional authorities and district assemblies ▪ Publication of post-harvest monitoring report ▪ Ease of access of stakeholders to relevant information ▪ Transparency in non-state actor structures and programmes

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reduction of corruption and informal payments (to be reworded)...
<p>8. Institutional effectiveness and efficiency</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reduction in transaction costs ▪ FC and its subsidiaries and VPA related institutions and stakeholders effectively deliver on their mandate ▪ Enabling environment for independent monitoring ▪ Timber Validation Council operate effectively ▪ Institutional synergies and linkages for effective forest governance ▪ Linkages with other forest governance sector initiatives, REDD+, NLBI and FIP

Source: Timber Validation Division, FC (2013)