

## Advancing a legal and sustainable global timber trade through the EU FLEGT action plan



Report on lesson sharing workshop of community forest committees from the  
New Edubiase and Nkawie forest districts held on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2015

Royal Lamerta Hotel, Kumasi

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## Introduction

The Nature and Development Foundation (NDF) in partnership with the National Forestry Forum – Ghana (NFF-G) since 2013 have jointly executed different activities under the project “Advancing a legal and sustainable global timber trade through the EU FLEGT action plan”. These activities included community sensitization on forestry and natural resources management especially FLEGT and Ghana’s Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) with the European Union. The community sensitization activities were followed by 10 district forums, five regional forums and one national forum. Following the successful implementation of these forums in 2013/2014, a decision was taken to support communities that committed to take further voluntary action in the protection of forest resources. Two forest reserves were selected – Asenanyo in Nkawie forest district and Numia in New Edubiase forest district both in the Ashanti region of Ghana. A series of training workshops were undertaken to prepare selected community volunteers to engage forest users, observe infractions and report same to the district forestry office or the appropriate authority. A total of 17 communities surrounding these two forest reserves were reached, four in Nkawie and 13 in New Edubiase. Each community was visited at least twice by NDF and NFF-G by way of monitoring of their activities. Full reports of the activities and the monitoring activities undertaken by NDF and NFF-G are available upon request. With the knowledge that these 17 communities were located in two forest reserves, were spread out and the mode of engagement was new, the project partners agreed to provide a platform for all participants to share lessons and experiences in the work they had executed within those few months. The programme for the day’s activities is presented as Annex II.

## Introduction of participants

The meeting was facilitated by the Coordinator for the project, Mr. Glen Asomaning. All participants were given the opportunity to introduce themselves indicating their constituency and interest in the meeting. Key among them were the Ashanti Regional Manager for the Forestry Services Division, the two district managers and their assistants, the Director and staff of Nature and Development Foundation, the Coordinator and staff of National Forestry Forum amongst others. An average of eight participants represented each of the 17 communities where this pilot took place. A full list of participants is attached as Annex I.



Cross section of participants at the meeting

### Statement from Nature and Development Foundation - Mr. Mustapha Seidu, Director

Mr. Seidu acknowledged the authorities from the Forestry Commission present and thanked them for their leading role and valuable contribution the Forestry Commission is playing in the protection of forest and forest governance in general. He acknowledged the initiatives taken by the participating districts in bringing communities together to support in forest law enforcement and recognized the role of civil society organizations as being complementary to what the FC is doing. He reiterated the support of the FC as an essential part of sustainability and hence the need for NDF to use already established processes rather than creating new ones.

To the communities, he indicated their significance as custodians of the forest and by law the owners of the forest based on Ghana's land ownership, with government managing the forest on their behalf. He thanked the participants for leaving their busy schedules to share their experiences learned over the period of the piloting. He gave indications of a continuation of the project based on the acceptance of a proposal submitted to the International Tropical Timber Organization.

He noted the piloting which is meant to empower communities as being in tandem with Ghana's Forest and Wildlife Policy, Ghana Shared Growth and Development Agenda, and the Voluntary Partnership Agreement. To achieve Sustainable Forest Management (SFM), the role of communities fringing forest reserves cannot be overlooked. The procedure and formality to achieve SFM is however not unilateral, but multilateral including education, provision of facilities etc. Any action that will enable communities to be heard and be able to contribute to the protection of forests should therefore be supported. He deduced empowerment as being analogous to education. Empowered people acquire capacity to



challenge, but knowing that two heads are better than one, he asked participants who have been empowered through the project to help the Forestry Commission and other environmental NGOs in forest protection. This happens to be the fundamental reason for all of NDF's engagement with communities; to empower communities and provide the tools and ideas to be able to support in the protection of forests. He was optimistic that participants will be able to share with other participants especially forestry authorities of what has been learned and what can be added by the end of the programme. He indicated the interest of NDF to continue the process once the necessary funding is secured. He ended his statement by welcoming all participants to the day's activities.

### Introductory statement by Mr. Kwabena Owusu Nkwantabisa – District Manager, New Edubiase

The District Manager for New Edubiase forest district acknowledged all present including Forestry Commission, NDF and NFF-G and members of the forest committees. He gave a brief history of the community forest committees in the New Edubiase district and the decision by the district to involve communities in forest protection. The different groups identified the proximity of communities to the forest as a strength; they suffer the most in case of forest loss as well as benefit the most from presence of the forests. The district, NDF and NFF identified the willpower of communities to help in forest protection. These actions are also backed by forest laws which put a responsibility of inhabitants to support in forest management. He also made reference to the collaborative forest management objective of the forest and wildlife policy. He talked about the different training sessions provided communities as well as the inauguration of the committees and the distribution of safety gadgets for them. He again reiterated the purpose for the gathering as being lesson sharing from the different groupings.

### Introductory statement by Nana Poku Bosompim – District Manager, Nkawie

He started by coining a slogan for the group; he proposed "Yenhwe ma ensei" at the mention of Community Forest Committees (CFC) which translates at "We will not look unconcerned". He reiterated the responsibility of all citizens to protect national resources. He also reemphasized the role of forest fringe communities as major stakeholders in forest decision making, in forest management and conservation. He explained the revenue distribution highlighting SRAs as benefits derived by communities from forests. He reiterated the position of CFCs as a social force.

### Introductory statement by Coordinator –National Forestry Forum – Ghana – Mrs. Doreen Assumang Yeboah

On her part, she gave a brief history of their engagement with NDF starting from the local, district, regional and the national forums which was titled "Involving local communities in the FLEGT discourse". The forums were followed by the piloting of community forest monitoring activities which included training and actual on-the-ground work. She thanked the two district managers for their support and reception during the activities. She restated the voluntary nature of the work. Reference was made to the visit of Mr. William Hanna, the EU representative in Ghana who visited Kansakrom with the government delegation to familiarize himself with community work being carried out toward FLEGT





implementation in Ghana. The NDF and NFF project is proud to be selected by the FLEGT facilitator in Ghana for that purpose. She encouraged the participants to be steadfast in their work as they strive towards the protection of the forest resources.

### Lesson Sharing by Community representatives

Mr. Glen Asomaning gave a brief presentation on the purpose for the monitoring and evaluation activities of the community piloting project. He explained the objective of the whole exercise as harnessing the power of communities to protect the forest. The vision of NDF was that if all members within forest fringing communities were to understand and help in forest protection by reporting incidences of suspected or occurring illegalities, these illegalities will be completely eliminated. The elimination of these illegalities will result in increased financial resources through Social Responsibility Agreements and maintenance of the right environment for the successful cultivation of special crops such as cocoa. This session was meant to highlight the successes and challenges as presented by representatives of the communities.

The communities are Sianaa, Menang, Dotom, Samankrom, Bereku, Bonkro, Bronikrom, Aboaboso, Aboabo No. 2, Krobo, Kwame Adu, Nsata, Subriso and Brekete from the New Edubiase forest district surrounding the Numia forest reserve. Representatives from the Nkawie forest district came from Kansakrom, Akotaa, Bayerebon, Pakyi and Domeabra surrounding the Asenanyo forest reserve.

### Successes and preconditions for success as narrated by community representatives

- Communities have acquired general knowledge on forest protection
- Committee members have supported forestry authorities in forest patrols and monitoring
- Some have helped in boundary clearing
- Members helped to arrest illegal operators, which resulted in a reduction in incidences of illegal operations
- Forestry authorities are more responsive now; they therefore feel more encouraged
- Referenced training provided and its connectivity to their livelihoods
- Members have provided information that has led to arrest of illegal operators
- They have understood that forest protection is a shared responsibility
- Some communities have expressed the interest to replant identified degraded areas if permitted
- Knowledge of Social Responsibility Agreements have deepened e.g. Dotom,
- One group through concerted action managed to stop an illegal logger who dumped timber along the way out of fear
- One group has opted to assist persons who wish to prepare lands with fire to avoid bush fires
- There is need for unity and collaboration to be successful; there is strength in numbers
- One community, Bonkro, has successfully driven away illegal loggers from the area thereby protecting the endangered rock fowl (*Picatharthes sp.*)
- Once the whole community decides to support the action, it is easy to drive illegal operators away

- Where appropriate, there is need to involve traditional authorities, sometimes just information is sufficient
- Prior training is essential before formal engagement



Representatives from the Menang community presenting their lessons and experiences

#### Challenges as narrated by community representatives

- Loss of income to locals who benefit from illegal operations such as mortar production and carriage
- Some illegal operators carry offensive weapons
- Forest committee members received threats
- Some forestry officials especially some range supervisors have sometimes not responded to calls: Some forest guards are responsive, others are not
- The action is voluntary and therefore they require adequate protection
- They lack formal means of identification
- There is fire risk to forest which they are not trained for
- The expanse of the forest sometimes makes it difficult to fully patrol and report incidences
- Some are collaborating well with the staff of the FC
- Initial stages of work was very difficult because the communication of their presence was yet to reach illegal wood workers
- Cessation of charcoal burning has resulted in the loss of livelihoods

- There are communication gaps between committee members and with forestry authorities
- Physical barriers have been raised by some communities but they have not received the approval of the local police

## Lesson sharing by District Managers

### Successes

Forest laws have been explained to beneficiaries. A good example is Social Responsibility Agreements which is well understood in many forest communities. Many communities are taking their own initiatives to stop illegal activities. The District Manager hoped that as the action is intensified, the communities will take their own actions in support of the forestry commission.

### Challenges

Communication: All stakeholders need to understand clearly the purpose of the action. Many reports of illegalities come at night because many of the incidences happen at night.

A lack of unity amongst committee members: Unity amongst members is a bit lacking in some communities. There is need for courage which was lacking when the project started. Once the front is broken, the courage of the individuals goes down.

Misunderstanding of tasks: There is a lack of understanding of the roles amongst some committee members. Reporting channel is sometimes not right.

In spite of the teething challenges which were observed at the inception of the concept, he felt the positives outweigh the negatives and hoped that the involvement of communities in the protection of forests will continue. He thanked all present for availing themselves for the meeting.



District Manager for New Edubiase – Mr. Kwabena O. Nkwantabisa giving a presentation at the meeting





## Lessons learned

Engage the Forestry Services Division: The lack of support from FSD in the monitoring will make achieving success very difficult. With a staff strength of 51 for the entire district, it makes being effective without the support of communities very difficult.

Adopt the gradualist approach: In creating community forest committees, there is need to adopt a gradual approach. Because there are no dedicated staff solely assigned for community engagement, taking on too many communities may not achieve the desired results. It is best to start with a few, dedicate time for them and upscale once the results start to show in these communities.

Dedication: Committee members need to be really dedicated and understand why they are doing this as it is voluntary.

Empowerment does not happen in a day: Without the necessary logistical support, success may be elusive. T-shirts, cutlasses, raincoats, wellington boots, and torch lights helped a lot. He asked for unity among committee members,; there is strength in numbers.

## Way forward

Unity and respect for each other is essential, to fill communication gap, he asked committee members to talk to the appropriate authorities for assistance and information and engage authorities as they engage. Empowerment activities must be sustained. Transparency among committee members is essential for success. The provision of alternative livelihood activities and options to communities fringing forest especially committee members will help sustain the action.

The District Manager for Nkawie, Nana Bosompem asked that members report to the police and then the forestry office in case they are threatened. He also asked that the work goes beyond illegal timber lumbering. He asked that they pay particular attention to illegal farming and illegal mining especially in the Asenanyo forest reserve. He asked members to be active all year round and not only when authorities are about visiting. He reiterated the commitment of the FSD to continue the work with the communities even when the project comes to an end.



Forestry Commission Staff Present at the meeting

### Statement on experiences of project implementation from NDF

NDF's statements were based on different monitoring activities that had been undertaken prior to the meeting. Mr. Glen Asomaning advised members who have fallen to temptation to allow perpetrators to abscond to desist from such acts in the future. Basing his arguments on the successes achieved which was indirectly saving the district some monitoring resources, he asked forest authorities present to start discussing a way to take up the activities including budgetary commitments from FC's internal resources to ensure sustainability. Once this is established, then sustainability of the action becomes achievable. He further explained the vision of NDF for this project as harnessing the power of entire communities to provide information and approach illegal operators including the negotiation of SRAs.



Workshop facilitator and Ghana project coordinator – Mr. Glen Asomaning

### Observations from Regional Manager – Forest Services Division – Ashanti Region

He acknowledged the difficulty of forest monitoring. He appreciated the numbers present and felt encouraged that he had those large numbers supporting forest management. He gave an illustration on how forest protection was carried out in the past highlighting how forest laws were respected. He reiterated the need for collaborative forest management involving communities in forest monitoring. He acknowledged the understanding of forest monitoring displayed by participants. Mention was made briefly of communities as owners of the forest and therefore being in a position to better manage the resource. The training has helped members present to be well informed. At least four loggers have expressed their happiness at the levels of understanding shown by communities.

He appealed to participants to use the power they have acquired responsibly. The spirit of volunteerism has been demonstrated, he indicated. He expressed his joy at the lessons shared by participants – referring to it as cross-fertilization helping each group to adopt and adapt each other's strategy. He has seen and learned a lot from the day's activities. He asked that more communities are roped in to also support with forest management through forest monitoring. He again stated the need to look beyond illegal logging and focus on the general forest management including water protection. On sustainability, he restated that the idea of CFCs were initiated by the RMSC and stated that the region will once again reintroduce the concept to other districts. He concluded his statement by thanking NDF for the initiative and support provided and asked that the exit strategy is communicated ahead of time to avoid any vacuum when the project ends.



Forest Services Division - Regional Manager for Ashanti Region – Mr. Oduro Banie

### Closing – NDF

The facilitator thanked all participants including Forestry Commission staff, committee members, National Forestry Forum – Ghana staff and other NDF staff for their active participation throughout the meeting and for the various roles played to make the day's meeting a success. He reiterated the commitment of NDF to reengage the communities once the submitted proposals are accepted. This was followed by lunch and departure.





Participants after the meeting

## Annex I: Participant list



Participants list.pdf

## Annex II: Programme

Advancing a legal and sustainable global timber trade through the EU FLEGT action plan

Programme for Community forest monitoring pilot lesson sharing workshop

9.00 – 10.00	Arrival and registration
10.00 – 10.20	Snack
10.25 – 10.30	Statement from NDF
10.30 – 10.35	Statement from NFF
10.35 – 10.45	Introductory statements by : New Edubiase DM Nkawie DM
10.45 – 12.20	Successes and challenges from all communities – one community representative each
12.20 – 12.40	Successes and challenges with community involvement in forest monitoring; advisory note for committee members New Edubiase (DM) Nkawie (DM)
12.40 – 1.00	Way forward – NDF/NFF
1.00 – 1.05	Observation – Regional Manager – Forestry Services Division
1.05 – 1.10	Closing remarks – NDF
1.10	Lunch and departure