The Nature and Development Foundation (NDF) is training thirty Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in the timber industry on compliance with Forest Law Enforcement Governance and Trade (FLEGT) across six regions of Ghana.

The company by company approach of capacity-building being organized with financial assistance through FAO-EU FLEGT Programme, is helping the SMEs comply with the FLEGT regulations.

The SMEs are being trained to organize their internal control processes to align with the Ghana Wood Tracking System (WTS), a prerequisite for legal wood trade.

The training also implied that, the enterprises had been given a foretaste of the Timber Validation Division (TVD) audit as NDF is using the TVD audit check list to provide some form of mock audit for these companies.

During the visits, the companies are advised and, where possible, assisted to close their non-conformances when identified.

More Artisanal Timber Millers Trained Under VPA

It has been observed that the domestic markets currently have a considerable proportion of wood that is felled without a proper permit. In many instances, the wood is felled illegally.

This is necessary to intervene by training more artisanal timber millers who can supply legal wood to the domestic market.

This falls in line with the dictates of the Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) signed between Ghana and the European Union (EU) which does not only demand that all lumber exported into the EU market follow legal procedure but also that the domestic market and other trade partners undertake their trade as required by the relevant national laws and regulations.

For that reason, during the implementation of the 15-month project known as ‘Supporting Knowledge and Regulation of Overland Timber Trade and Promoting Domestic Legal Timber Supply Through Strengthening’
Defining Legal Cocoa, Step to Addressing Deforestation – Chris Beeko

Director for the Timber Validation Department of the Forestry Commission, Mr. Chris Beeko, has called for a definition of legal cocoa in Ghana. According to him, this was a necessary first step to addressing the problem of deforestation caused by cocoa farming in the country.

Cocoa is Ghana’s top cash crop commodity and also the main source of livelihood for majority of farmers. However, current research indicates that between 2000 and 2014 in Ghana, about 84,813 hectares of forest lands were destroyed inside protective areas and this has doubled within unprotected areas due to illegal farming of cocoa in forest areas.

Speaking at the Tropical Forest Alliance 2020 Side Event in Accra, Mr. Beeko noted that in the effort to deal with this problem there was the need for the agricultural sector to come up with a definition that will spell out what constitutes legal cocoa and for that matter legal consignment. He said beyond that, there was also the need for a multilateral recognition of the definition of legal cocoa and consignment.

Mr. Beeko bemoaned the fact that there are currently no provisions in the legislative framework to restrict cocoa farming to designated land use areas and therefore underscored the need for a legislative instrument in the country to help in solving the problem of deforestation caused by cocoa farming.

“The cocoa sector also needs a legally binding instrument to regulate it,” he said.

Co-ordinator of Forest Watch Ghana, Mr. Samuel Mawutor, said that key lessons to be drawn from the VPA implementation process were the deliberative nature of the whole process.

Continue on back page

Forestry Commission on Hundred Percent Yield Policy

The Forestry Commission (FC) has disclosed that, lack of trust and indiscipline on the part of some small scale timber contractors are the reasons behind the Commission’s decision to call for 100% harvest of timber under the Timber Utilization Contract (TUC).

Speaking at a “Dialogue Meeting on Strategizing to Address Domestic Market Oppong Sasu, Head of Donor Relations of the Forestry Commission, disclosed that, “Some of the small scale timber contractors end up going outside their allocated areas and some even harvest different trees.”

For that reason, the Commission has made it a policy to ensure that the concessionaire in the contract is made to pick 100% of all trees for proper supervision. “We cannot hold a third concessions after the end of the TUC duration,” Mr. Sasu added.

His statement came after Mr. Kwame Appiah, Representative of the Domestic Lumber Traders Association (DOLTA) requested that, the Associations members be allowed to harvest what the TUC party fails to pick at the end of the contract.

To that end, a Legal Practitioner with expertise in the Timber Industry, Mr. Clement Akapame, advised that members of DOLTA make contacts with the TUC parties for consideration at the negotiation level for inclusion in the contract.

Though not a law, the 100% harvest of yield is being employed by the Commission as a means of protecting the forests from abuse as part of its sustenance measures.

Representatives from the various timber industry organizations came together to dialogue on means of ensuring only legal timber is used at all levels of the timber trade.

The Dialogue Meeting, funded by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the European Union (EU), Sweden Sverige, and UKaid, is part of the project, “Innovation for Improved Forest Governance in West Africa, Demand and Supply Side Solution in a Changing Landscape,” and being implemented by NDF, an NGO in environmental protection and forest sustainability.
Community Forest Monitors schooled

Forest monitors in twelve communities in the Western region have been sensitized on how to monitor forests in their areas to improve Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) and Reduction of Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD+).

The community monitors were trained on how to gather information on selected themes onto android-enabled gadgets to raise alerts on forest infractions. The devices are expected to be hooked on to a bigger national platform on Independent Forest Monitoring to collate all alerts that will be generated.

Topics covered at the workshop included timber right which gives a concessionaire authority to log trees as well as good operations on Timber harvesting. Timber transport, illegal farms in forest reserves, obligations, which involved SRA and Compensations, were also highlighted.

This training forms part of activities under the project ‘Strengthening the capacity of Non State Actors (NSA) to better engage in FLEGT and REDD+ processes’.

Out of several issues discussed on forest monitoring, a recurring concern raised throughout the workshop was on incentives and authority for the community monitors.

In response, the Assistant District Manager of Juaboso Forest District, Mr. Baba Mussa Iddrisu, alleged that the community monitors were easily bribed by illegal loggers and eventually ended up being aids in illegal activities. This is one of the main problems the FC has faced with local community monitors, he added.

>>> Continue on Page 5

Riparian Buffer Zone L. I. Gathers Momentum

Steps are afoot to ensure the speedy passage of the Riparian Buffer Zone Policy into a Legislative Instrument (L.I.) to protect the natural vegetation and water bodies from destructive human activities.

At a Riparian Buffer Zone Workshop organized by Tropenbos Ghana in Accra as part of consultations to whip up support for the Instrument, Madam Bernadette Adjei, Chief Legal Officer of the Water Resources Commission (WRC), said efforts are being made to ensure that in the next few months, the instrument will be ready for Parliamentary consideration.

She said, the Water Resource Centre, together with Tropenbos Ghana and other agencies, are mopping up consultations with traditional rulers and other stakeholders. “We are engaging with and seeking the consent of local authorities as part of the steps being taken to finalize the processes leading to the passage of the policy into a Legislative Instrument,” she disclosed.

A Riparian buffer zone generally encompasses undisturbed native strip of vegetation either original or established that borders streams and rivers, ponds, lakes and wetlands.

Riparian vegetation normally occurs along and around water bodies and serves as buffer zones with several ecological, socio-economic, and cultural values. But with human activities such as agriculture, urbanization, logging, mining activities, and livestock population and poor agricultural practices that have degraded the vegetation.

However, human induced and land use activities such as uncontrolled logging, mining activities, human settlements, urbanization, livestock populations and poor agricultural practices have degraded these areas.

In view of the importance of Riparian Vegetation to the ecology and human lives, the various stakeholders are keen on ensuring the passage of the L.I. that would enforce the strict adherence to the policy.

The L.I. prescribes buffer widths within which human activities could be undertaken along intermittent and perennial streams, wetlands and forest reserves.

To this end, the promoters of the L.I. would be forwarding Legislative Instructions to the Attorney Generals Department, with rigorous follow ups and sensitization of members of Parliament before the Draft Bill is laid before Parliament’s Subsidiary Legislation Committee.
Tropenbos Ghana Launches Two Books

Two books produced by Tropenbos Ghana with the aim of facilitating and promoting the governance of Ghana’s forest resources have been launched at the Forestry Commission Training Centre (FCTC) near Ejisu in the Ashanti Region.

The books, entitled ‘Guidelines for Overland Timber Export’ and ‘Potential Artisanal Timber Milling in Ghana; Source Book’ were launched as part of activities marking the close-out workshop for the project ‘Supporting Knowledge and Regulation of Overland Timber Trade and Promoting Domestic Legal Timber Supply Through Strengthening Artisanal Milling in Ghana’.

Dr Kwakye Ameyaw, immediate past president of the Ghana Institute of Foresters (GIF) launched the books on behalf of the Chief Executive Officer of the Forestry Commission (FC), Mr. Kojo Owusu Afrifie, also known as Sir John.

‘Guidelines for Overland Timber Export’ was produced with the aim of supporting the regulation of the overland timber export in Ghana in order to achieve the desired results under the Forest Law Enforcement Governance and Trade (FLEGT) initiative.

The book provides information to all actors involved in the Overland Timber Trade as to what is required of them in relation to the trade so as to ensure their compliance to these regulations.

These actors include the regulator, the exporter, law enforcement agencies such as the police and customs officials as well as the trader and consumer.

On the other hand, ‘Potential Artisanal Timber Milling in Ghana; Source Book’ examines the issue of chainsaw milling and how Artisanal Timber Milling can help curb the illegal timber menace and presents a study conducted to ascertain the prospects of Artisanal Timber Milling in addition to other related information.

Over forty participants drawn from academia, industry, forestry and research sectors, attended the close-out workshop for the project which was implemented by Tropenbos Ghana with support from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

The two-pronged project was aimed at supporting the regulation of the Overland Timber Trade (OTT) by providing support to the relevant stakeholders with appropriate guidance in undertaking their duties as regulatory institutions or timber traders while at the same time increasing the supply of legal lumber on the domestic market by widening the net of trained artisanal timber millers who can supply legal lumber on the domestic market.

This is neither due to the fact that, the Overland Timber Trade is mostly done through factors that it is mostly an undocumented ‘backdoor’ kind of trade that leaves forestry officials with no clue as to how much lumber, meant to meet the domestic lumber needs of Ghanaians, has been unlawfully carted out of the country’s domestic timber markets.

Source: Tropenbos Ghana

30 SMEs Equipped to Comply with FLEGT

FLEGT programme.

The training programme was thus designed in view of the fact that, industry’s role in determining the success or failure of the whole FLEGT program in Ghana is critical.

Significantly, the NDF staff noted that, a section of timber industries especially SMEs in Ghana do not fully understand FLEGT requirements and have inadequate capacity to meet legality requirements and thus are apprehensive of the outcome of FLEGT on their businesses.

According to NDF, the less inclusive and less active involvement of timber SMEs in the FLEGT VPA processes have always been recognized as a major bottleneck. However, the joint training is aimed at

Continued from Front Page

This project by NDF is therefore seen as greatly contributing to the smooth and successful roll-out of the FLEGT VPA process in Ghana.
Community Forest Monitors schooled

Mr. Musah Musah Idrissu admonished the selected monitors to desist from that act and be zealous in their efforts to complement the Forestry Commission in protecting the forest.

Effective NSA participation in FLEG-VPA and REDD+ processes in Western Africa is mostly limited to large forest and timber companies and a handful of international and national NGOs.

To be able to include the diversity of concerns and needs as well as strengths of various stakeholders, it is important to involve all stakeholders, including Non-State Actors (NSAs) in these forest governance processes.

It is therefore expected that engagements in these processes will give NSAs the opportunity to share and express their interests, concerns, views and ideas and offer constructive criticism and suggestions for alternative forest governance options that will strengthen FLEG-VPA and REDD+ processes.

Source: Nature & Development Foundation

Ghana Launches Timber Transparency Portal

Civic Response, in collaboration with the Forestry Commission of Ghana, has launched the Ghana Timber Transparency Portal; a web interface which makes information on logging in Ghana available to the public, in Accra.

The Ghana Timber Transparency Portal which forms part of governance reforms in the forest sector provides information on the various valid logging permits, timber logging companies and their areas of operation, information on exports of timber from Ghana, as well as other periodic reports that are generated from time to time.

This public portal links to the electronic Ghana Wood Tracking System (GWTS), which is a complete database of information on timber production process in Ghana. The portal is expected to be subsequently expanded to include other relevant public information on forest management and timber logging in Ghana.

Delivering the keynote address, a Deputy Minister for lands and Natural Resources, Benito Owusu-Bio noted that the portal will make Ghana’s FLEG license process credible. “We are at the verge of exporting FLEG licensed timber, the climax of the FLEG VPA journey. The Ghana Timber Transparency Portal offers us the opportunity to demonstrate the transparence, credibility and integrity of the FLEG license issuance process,” he emphasised.

Co-ordinator of Forest Watch Ghana, Samuel Mawutor, was certain that the portal will facilitate CSOs’ efforts towards working to ensure improved forest governance. “This credible feedback to forest managers and to track the progress Ghana is making in reform forest governance. It also presents Civil Society the opportunity to track the commitment of the Forestry Commission to improved forest governance on its own charter,” he said.

He commended Civic Response and its partners for working together to develop the portal and made the assurance that Civil Society would use the portal to improve awareness of local communities and the public on forest and legality issues in Ghana in order to ensure Ghanaians become better

The Ghana Timber Transparency Portal was developed as a result of collaboration between Civic Response and the Forestry Commission under the Civil Society-led Independent Forest Monitoring (CSIFM) Project with funding from the EU, Swedish International Cooperation Agency and UKAid under the FAO-EU FLEG Programme.

The portal can be accessed via the url: _HYPERLINK “http://www.ghanatimbertransparency.info” www.ghanatimbertransparency.info_

Source: Civic Response
More Artisanal Timber Millers Trained Under VPA

Continued from Front Page

Artisanal Milling in Ghana, a total of 45 small-scale millers derived from milling groups at Ejura, Begoro and Assin Foso were trained on Artisanal Timber Milling Techniques.

The project also undertook an analysis of the viability of Artisanal Timber Milling (ATM) and conducted a survey on small-scale millers in Ghana based on which a book, Potential Artisanal Timber Milling in Ghana; Source Book was produced.

It is well aired educational programmes on the guidelines for the Overland Timber Trade and the Voluntary Partnership Agreement on Akina Radio at Techiman and on the Communication Centre of the Sokoban Timber Market at Kumasi.

Additionally, the capacity of 73 personnel from the regulatory agencies, namely, the Ghana Police Service, the Customs Division of the Ghana Revenue Service (GRA), the Timber Industry Development Division (TIDD) of the Forestry Commission and timber traders were built on guidelines on the Overland Timber Trade.

Meanwhile, a video documentary on the Overland Timber Trade has been developed under the project to educate Ghanaians on the trade in a bid to help curb the illegality associated with the trade.

Source: Tropenbos Ghana

SMEs Trained on Completion of Input-Output Volume Forms

The Nature and Development Foundation (NDF), in collaboration with the Timber Industry Development Division (TIDD) of the Forestry Commission (FC), has provided hands-on training for sixty (60) timber companies on the calculation and completion of the input and output volume analysis form.

The training, held in zones of three to cover six regions of Ghana (Central and Western, Ashanti and Brong Ahafo, Eastern and Volta), is part of the project: “Innovation for Improved Forest Governance in West Africa; Demand and Supply side solutions in a changing landscape” which is receiving funding support from the FAO-EU FLEGT PROGRAMME.

During the trainings, Mr. Abban Bansu, the Sunyani Area Manager for Timber Industry Development Division (TIDD), explained to participants the steps in calculating the volumes and subsequently completing the form, emphasizing that it was inappropriate for companies to engage TIDD officers to complete the forms on their behalf.

He said this was because, the officers may not be privy to their actual input volume, the product (lumber) would be sold to you at 10 (ten times) the price when an officer is able to detect your flaw.

With the introduction of the input-output volume analysis form by the TIDD, it has been noted that, completion of the form has been a major tussle for most SMEs to the extent that, TIDD officers who are to inspect the forms turn around to complete the forms for the companies.

This was noted by NDF during their visits to timber companies and thus collaborated with the TIDD to address the issue through training.

At the training, Dr. Richard Gyimah of the Timber Validation Department also enlightened companies on some practices which are non-conformances to the Ghana Wood Tracking System and urged companies to desist from such practices.

He warned that the system would flag them out should any non-conformance be detected on their path.

Source: Nature & Development Foundation
Putting the brakes on deforestation – a toolkit for forest conversion laws

ClientEarth has developed a legal toolkit to help decision-makers use laws to reduce forest conversion and minimise the environmental and social impacts of deforestation.

Reducing forest loss, protecting community rights and strengthening legal processes are key issues to address when formulating new forest conversion laws.

Using legal analysis from nine tropical countries, the toolkit identifies key legal risks associated with unclear forest conversion laws that can threaten people and the environment.

The toolkit gives lawmakers guidance about the questions they should ask themselves when writing or reforming forest conversion laws on five key areas that must be addressed: Clarity around the allocation of land, Effective permits for those clearing forests, Strict rules for timber from forest conversion, Protection of the environment and Recognition of communities’ rights.

ClientEarth lawyer Clotilde Henriot said, “Forest conversion laws should set out what is allowed, what is forbidden, and what rules must be followed to gain access to forested land and gain permission to clear it for another purpose.”

Rules governing forest conversion are often scattered between existing laws on everything from the environment and land to mining and agriculture. But when these laws contradict one another, or are silent on important areas, deforestation is left ungoverned. This has led to an increase in illegal activity.

Half of all timber that is traded internationally comes from forest conversion and nearly two-thirds of that is thought to be illegal, according to a report by Forest Trends.

While action from the EU and voluntary commitments from the private sector might go some way to solving the problems around deforestation, they won’t halt it alone. Between 2000 and 2010, tropical countries experienced a net forest loss of 7 million hectares per year.

Strengthening the law is one of the key ways to reduce deforestation. Using this legal toolkit, governments have a starting point to reform laws around forest conversion that will help protect people and the planet.

Source: ClientEarth

Forest and Wood-based Industry Associations in Africa Synergize

Timber industry associations from West Africa have met with their counterparts from other sub-regions of Africa in Libreville, Gabon, to share experiences and identify trade opportunities, improve on their skills and build capacity in administration and managerial duties.

The interactive meeting, that took place at the African Summit for Forest and wood-based industry associations, was organized by Global Timber Forum (GTF) and supported by Union des Forestiers, Industriels du Gabon et Aménagistes (UFIGA) and Nature and Development Foundation (NDF).

The summit, which lasted for two days, saw about seventy (70) participants, twenty-one (21) of which were from West Africa, and nine representatives of timber associations from Ghana, exploring avenues in the timber industry on the continent.

The West-Africa participants were supported by NDF to attend the summit under the project: “Innovation for Improved Forest Governance in West Africa: Demand and Supply side solutions in a changing landscape” which is being funded by the FAO-EU FLEGT PROGRAMME.

The representatives from Ghana came from the Ghana Timber Association (GTA), the Kumasi Wood Cluster (KWC), the Furniture and Woodworkers Association of Ghana (FAWAG), the Woodworkers association of Ghana (WAG) and the Domestic Lumber Trade Association (DOLTA).

Making a presentation on a survey conducted through Africa on the challenges and needs of timber workers and trade associations, Mr. George White, the Projects Director for GTF revealed that the challenges and needs of the timber industry on the continent are virtually the same.

Continue on back page.
Forest and Wood-based Industry Associations in Africa Synergize

He disclosed that, the challenges ranged from access to raw materials, lack of efficient technology and machinery to land tenure, skills and market, urging the industry to greatly collaborate amongst themselves to learn to find best solutions to constraints that confront them in the sector.

Delegates from Ghana, Liberia and Cote d’Ivoire expressed their profound appreciation to NDF for supporting them to participate in the summit, observing that, the lessons learned from other associations and the contacts created would be very helpful in management of their associations and capacity building of their members.

Source: Nature & Development Foundation

Defining Legal Cocoa, Step to Addressing Deforestation

“Platforms for engagement such as Forest Watch Ghana and Contact Group were available to reflect on issues before negotiation meetings. This approach can be adapted,” he said. He also emphasized on the need for transparency to ensure success.

The Side Event was organised by Civic Response together with its partner Fern, alongside the TFA2020 event to discuss the lessons learned from the FLEGT VPA processes in the forestry sector which are relevant for the agricultural sector.

Source: Civic Response

ABOUT NDF

The Nature & Development Foundation (NDF) was legally established in November 2013 in Ghana. It was born out of the long presence of WWF in Ghana and across the West African region as a non-profit organization, limited by guarantee.

The foundation has a mission to help build a society in which human development and nature conservation complement each other. It also believes that, ways exist to balance the needs of development with sustainable land uses that do not threaten forest biodiversity and forest dependent livelihoods of the region.

NDF understands that it must not limit itself to working only with those in the forest industries itself, but must engage more widely in multiple sectors and processes if it is to achieve its mission.

Though currently active in Ghana, it aims to increase its activities in Cote d’Ivoire and Liberia in the future. For more information visit www.ndfwestafrica.org Or call TEL: +233-302-518-710

ABOUT ClientEarth

“ClientEarth is a public interest environmental law organisation, founded in 2007. Their work combines legal approaches with scientific and policy analysis to create practical solutions to the most pressing environmental problems (www.clientearth.org).

ClientEarth’s Climate & Forests programme works to influence the development, implementation and enforcement of legal frameworks and policies. They seek to improve the operation and effectiveness of law in the EU and in non-EU focus countries with a view to minimising the impacts of agriculture, extractive industries and illegal logging on forests. They focus both on the substance and procedure of laws so that they become effective and equitable mechanisms to protect forests. The improved use and management of forests can contribute to a reduction in inequality and to tackling poverty, particularly for forest dependent communities.

Since 2012, ClientEarth has been working with national lawyers in Ghana, Gabon and the Republic of Congo to empower civil society organisations (CSOs) for them to take part in processes of law reform and implementation. Voluntary Partnership Agreements (VPAs) contribute to those processes and are therefore been an integral part of the focus of their work in country. This body of work is funded by the UK government under a DFID-FGMC (Forest Governance, Markets and Climate) grant.”