

The FLEGT

Forest Law Enforcement Governance and Trade
Newsletter

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EU States To Reject Ghana's Licensed Timber ...Over Sustainability Issues



A team of Ghanaians made up of representatives of government, the private sector and civil society, who toured some European countries to discuss the FLEGT processes, how far it has come and the value addition that stakeholders outside have when they market the FLEGT

product, has disclosed that out of the twenty-eight European Union (EU) member countries who trade in timber, only two recognize the FLEGT license in their public procurement policies.

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Ghana Denies “Timber Laundering” Claims

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Admitted Farms and Villages Take Over Forest Reserves

Admitted farms and illegal cocoa farms in forest reserves are said to have extended in size by an average of 15,000 percent since the time of reservation to 2019,

This was revealed in a research finding done in three forest reserves, Krokosua Hills and Sui River forest reserves in the Western North region and Tano Offin forest reserve in the Ashanti region.

The study was to determine the extent of encroachment by admitted farms and also identify the driving and underlining forces that promote cocoa farming in forest reserves and protected areas.



FLEGT Message House in the offing

The concept of Forest Law Enforcement Governance and Trade (FLEGT) action plan under which Ghana has signed a Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) with the European Union (EU) is fairly new.

Ghana signed the agreement in 2009 and after strenuous efforts such as; revision of the legal framework related to forests, capacity building of various stakeholders amongst others, licensed timber products are yet to be placed on the EU market.

To ensure that the concept is well-articulated, consumers of FLEGT licensed timber and all relevant stakeholders, especially those in the European market, require better information and understanding of the scope and specific implications of Ghanaian FLEGT licensed timber.

It's thus envisioned that the success of Ghana's FLEGT licensing will depend to a large extent on a clearly written, concise and specific communication strategy that details how markets for FLEGT licensed products will function.

Through this, a "message house" is being "built" by the relevant sectors (government, private and NGOs/Civil Society), to ensure that all relevant information, facts and figures are made available to stakeholders, the best way possible.



The FAO EU FLEGT Programme is supporting the "message house" project with the objective of developing private sector-focused messages to be carried by Ghana's overall FLEGT licensing communication strategy.

The Kumasi Wood Cluster (KWC) and Ghana Timber Millers Organisation (GTMO) are the lead agencies for executing the project on behalf of the private sector over a period of six months. As a communication strategy, the project's activities involve collecting data from timber

exporting companies to produce reports and case studies that communicate facts and figures.

Some of the specific activities include a review of draft messages and relevant facts and figures with timber trade associations. The 'pillars' of these messages had been collaboratively developed by the three sectors (government, private and NGOs/Civil Society), led by the Global Timber Forum (GTF).

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ATUMPAN"- "The Talking Drum" Project Launched



©ECG Project Consultant, Mr. Samuel Mawutor, presenting details of the "Atumpan" project to audience

The need for strong and clear precursory information to the trade destinations, especially the European Union (EU) as far as issuance of Ghana's Forest Law Enforcement Governance and Trade (FLEGT) license is concerned, is on the ascendancy.

A major lesson drawn from the launch of FLEGT License in Indonesia was an assumption that the EU will market FLEGT timber, which was false.

the nature of messages that should be delivered and type of engagements that should take place before, during and after the issuance of the FLEGT licenses from any country.

This project "Atumpan", which literally means the talking drum, has been launched in Accra to help address the need for effective information sharing on Ghana's FLEGT-VPA, which is a priority area for Ghana as the country gets closer to issuing the license.

The overall objective of the project is to "prepare civil society to effectively contribute to the sharing of information on Ghana's FLEGT-VPA processes, milestones and outcomes, in anticipation of FLEGT licensing".

The twelve months project implemented by Ecocare Ghana and supported by FAO EU FLEGT Programme is also to ensure that targeted audiences have a better

process and its implications.

The project consultant at Ecocare Ghana, Mr Samuel Mawutor, said, the challenge is that "many Ghanaian stakeholders have not organised their messages they need to be communicated or are not using effective means to reach target audiences in the wake of FLEGT licensing".

Also, "some key consumers and regulators in the EU, do not have enough information on Ghana's FLEGT licensing setup and the value addition of the multiple stakeholders' continuous involvement in this scheme".

Mr Mawutor however proposed that documenting key case studies on Ghana's FLEGT through short videos and info-graphics as well as engaging the media both locally and internationally, could give stakeholders clearer knowledge on the FLEGT-VPA.

Ecocare Ghana believes "it is better to take longer time for the real transformational things to be done than to rush through the process and produce a license that does not address the underlying challenges of the sector".

Source: EcoCare Ghana

Liberians Embrace Ghana Timber Trade Association's Preparedness for FLEGT licensing

Members of the Liberia Chainsaw and Trade Dealers Union (LICSATDUN) embarked on a four day exchange study tour in Ghana to learn about how timber trade associations are building the capacity of their members to comply and thrive in the soon coming FLEGT licensing era.

The Liberians have described actions of various timber trade associations in Ghana as worth emulating.

The ten-member delegation stated that the tour was very insightful and an eye-opener on the trade of legal timber in Ghana, pledging to adopt it in their country.

Ghana has advanced in the VPA implementation process and Timber trade associations have been very instrumental, necessitating the need to share experiences and lessons learnt with others, hence the tour by its Liberian counterparts.

Beginning the encounter through a conference in Accra, the team was taken through the administrative set-up of the Domestic Lumber Traders Association (DOLTA) and Domestic Lumber Millers Association (DOLMAG) and how their members are being prepared for the FLEGT licensing.

An officer of the Timber Validation Department (TVD) of the Forestry Commission, Mr. Mawuli Doe, also explained Ghana's Wood Tracking System to the Liberians.

The team then visited the Woodlow Timber Company Limited in Assin Fosu and Sir Charles Timber Company Limited in New Edubiase to learn about the transition from chainsaw operation to a legal small mill, and the marketing experience of these small scale timber firms.

They also had the opportunity to be educated on how timber harvesting permits and input-output data entry are done by officials from the Forest Service Division (FSD) and the Timber Industry Development Division (TIDD) respectively.

Next on the study tour was the Sokoban Wood Village in Kumasi where the Liberians were exposed to the legal trade of timber and the administrative set up of the Ghana Sawm Timber Sellers Association (GSTSA).

On the drying of wood to produce quality wood products, the Liberians were taken to the Forestry Commission Training Centre (FCTC) to learn a technique in drying wood (Smoke Drying Method).

The tour ended with an education on how Ghana



©NDF Dr. Abubakari Attah of the FC Training Centre educating the Liberians on the smoke method of drying wood

has structured its wood tracking system for FLEGT licensing and how trade associations and members are preparing for compliance.

The study tour is part of FGMC funded project of Building the Capacity of Small and Medium Timber Enterprises in Ghana and Liberia to supply and trade in legal timber and implemented by the Nature and Development Foundation with funding from the Ukaid.

Source: Nature and Development Foundation

Forest Enterprises Trained to be Legally Compliant under Ghana's VPA

The need to improve the readiness and build capacity of Small and Medium Forest Enterprises (SMFEs) has become critical as Ghana prepares to issue FLEGT licenses to cover timber and timber products for exports to the EU markets.

Ghana is also preparing to roll out its Legality Assurance Systems (LAS) which includes a Wood Tracking System (WTS) and subsequently issue Export Permits to other destinations besides the EU. Domestic Timber Inspection Certificates (DoTIC) will cover domestic market products.

Studies have shown that the capacity and readiness of industry is low among the SMFEs. This is attributed to communication gaps between regulators and industry, inadequate understanding of the processes of the FLEGT Licensing, lack of IT skills for using electronic documentation required under the WTS and absence of practical training for the SMFE staff and workers.

Kumasi Wood Cluster (KWC), a Non-Governmental Organisation in the forestry sector, has been providing the training to the SMFEs to address their challenges in order to

products to the export and domestic markets.

Activities undertaken were made possible through financial support received from the FAO-EU FLEGT Programme.

So far, 117 small and medium companies from ten industry and trade have been trained to understand the legality requirements under LI2254 and Ghana's VPA action plan.

Representatives of the companies were trained using a combination of classroom type learning, on-the-job coaching and hands on practice to help them understand and appreciate what timber companies are expected to do to be legally compliant.

Participants were trained on the legality standards and the definition of legal timber or



©KWC Adras sawmill involving women in production

comprising all the seven principles, 23 criteria and indicators.

The companies after being trained were 'mock audited' using a prepared legality check list based on the Ghana Legality Assurance Systems (GhLAS).

Women in the Timber Sector Form Association



© NDF Gender advocate, Madam Susana Opong educating women on the concept of gender

Women from timber trade associations in Ghana have come together to discuss common issues that affect them in the sector.

Dominant in their discussions was the less recognition given to their contributions to the overall performance of the sector though they work along different sides of the timber production and supply chain.

According to the women, whenever there is an

inventory of activities within the sector, those activities that women engage in were not usually counted and valued. To them, more visible activities undertaken by men are recognized than women.

They explained that their complaints are, "not because the women are few, but the less credit given to what women in the sector are able to do".

With these concerns, the women were

encouraged to come together to form an association as a way of enhancing or building their influence in the sector.

The women came from associations such as the Domestic Lumber Traders Association (DOLTA), Domestic Lumber Millers Association (DOLMAG), Woodworkers Association of Ghana (WAG), Ghana Sawm Timber Sellers Association (GSTSA), the Ghana Timber Trade Association (GTA) and Furniture and Woodworkers Association of Ghana (FAWAG).

Educating the women on the concept of gender and how it applies to the sector, the Programmes Manager of COLANDEF- a gender advocate unit, Madam Susana Opong, said, in the forestry sector, especially in Ghana, it has been recognized that, division of labor and role is based on sex (female /male) and this has brought about the low recognition and value placed on the ownership and role of women in the natural resource sector.

Madam Opong endorsed the need for women in the sector to build a platform for representation and voice in decision making to bring such practice under control.

At the end of the meeting organized by the Nature and Development Foundation (NF), the women formed an eleven member interim committee to spearhead the association.

The meeting was funded by the UKaid under their Forest Governance, Market and Climate (FGMC) Programme as part of implementing the project, "Building the Capacities of Small-Medium Forest Enterprises (SMFEs) in Ghana and Liberia to Supply and Trade in Legal Timber".

Source: Nature and Development Foundation

Admitted Farms and Villages Take Over Forest Reserves

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It was discovered that two admitted farms had turned into a community in the Sui River forest reserve.

The extension, according to the researcher, Dr. Lawrence Brobby, largely occurred between 2011 and 2019, with the Krokosua Hills Forest Reserve recording the highest.

This, he said, has led to a seven hundred percent increase in deforestation in the three reserves after 2010.

Presenting details of the findings, Dr. Brobby explained that one of the underlining forces behind cocoa-led deforestation is the increase in population as against limited alternative livelihoods for communities on the fringes.

He said over ninety percent of communities along forest reserves live on agriculture and this has caused the land per unit ratio to decrease due to the populace size, driving many into the

Dr. Brobby proposed that alternative livelihoods like snail rearing that are less dependent on agricultural lands will go a long way to prevent community members from entering forests.

He also recommended that laws regarding protection of the forest must be enforced.

"If we see people clearing new areas, the forestry Commission should send their task force to arrest them and destroy the farms. But if we fold our arms and look on, others will be motivated to join the destruction" he warned.

He reiterated that illegal farming in forest reserves can be more destructive than illegal logging activities and called on the Commission to give equal attention to illegal cocoa farming in



©TBG

"When a tree is felled, it can regenerate with time but if the whole forest is turned into a cocoa plantation, the whole area will be lost and turned into a different vegetation" he emphasized.

The research work was conducted for Tropenbos Ghana with financial support from the European Union.

EU States To Reject Ghana's Licensed Timber Over Sustainability Issues

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This, according to them, is due to a miscommunication on the EU market that FLEGT licensed timber is only about legality but not sustainability.

In an exclusive interview, the Director of the Timber Validation Department (TVD) of the Forestry Commission, Mr. Chris Beeko, who was also part of the European tour, said, though there are elements of sustainability incorporated in the definition of Ghana's legal timber, such as the Social Responsibility Agreements (SRA), the word "legal" means something different on the minds of those who buy timber on the EU market and this is making it difficult for the FLEGT to make headway on the market.

The myth, Mr. Beeko said, has unfortunately placed the FLEGT license second to certified timber in majority of member states' procurement policies.

The TVD Director recommended that, for Ghana to be able to penetrate the European market with the FLEGT License, she has to place less emphasis on the "LEGALITY" terminology. He added that, "The FLEGT License legality is probably a misnomer" and advised that in marketing the License, "the focus should rather be on telling the content and coverage of the definition instead of the terminology".

He called for an urgent need to refocus policies if the objective of the FLEGT initiative is to be realized. "Best incentive for partner countries to make the effort is an assurance that there is actually a green lane that leads to the market" he admonished.

"Certified timber is a known brand and construed to be sustainable. Unfortunately, we go into the market with a name that does not help us. People do not know the brand of legal timber. If I had my way, we would start selling the FLEGT license as something that is beyond legal" he stated.

Mr. Beeko concluded that though Ghana has come a long way with the FLEGT process, it still has a hurdle or two to cross to make it complete.

In a related development, a communication working group of Civil Society Organisations on the FLEGT/VPA has emphasized that there is a communication gap with regards to how the FLEGT was previously communicated and that must be closed.

They said Ghana's FLEGT process must be extensively marketed in all spheres to clear the misconception created on the EU market that "FLEGT is legality and not sustainability".

The communication working group proposed a



identification of areas strong in sustainability and highlighting them through effective

communication.

Story by: Communication Team

Journalists Prepared Towards Issuance of FLEGT License



©CR Journalists being prepared towards the issuance of FLEGT License

Civic Response, with support from its partner Fern, has organised a capacity building workshop for journalists from across the country.

The workshop is part of efforts to enhance their knowledge on natural resources governance issues in Ghana, and most importantly to prepare journalists towards the issuance of the Forest Law Enforcement Governance and Trade (FLEGT) license in Ghana.

The FLEGT license is a special license expected to cover legal timber trade on the domestic market and most especially exports from Ghana into Europe in accordance with an agreed Legality Assurance System.

The three-day capacity building workshop, which was held in Accra for 30 journalists focused on equipping the media towards informed and reliable reportage on Ghana's

Astute environmentalists including Dr. Steve Manteaw and legal practitioners from Taylor Crabbe Initiative (TCI), who facilitated various sessions of the training, took participants through the legal, social, and environmental frameworks of natural resources and environments governance in Ghana.

Participants say the training was enlightening and promised to form a coalition of reporters in the natural resources and environments sectors for a more dedicated reportage.

Ghana has completed most prerequisite processes needed for the issuance of FLEGT licences, including the implementation of electronic wood tracking system, and the enactment of a legislative instrument to govern Ghana's forest sector. Given this, it is anticipated that Ghana will soon start issuing FLEGT licences and therefore the need to equip the relevant sectors towards its arrival.

Timber Companies Receive Personal Protective Equipment



©NDF Staff of Akwasi Nyarko Timber Company Ltd. Claud in their Perspex signs with some NDF staff

The mock auditing was carried out using the Timber Validation Department (TVD) audit principles checklist.

During the exercise (mock auditing), it was observed that most of the companies engaged under the project were not complying with requirement of workers safety as staffs were seen working without protective gears.

Meanwhile, ensuring that workers of timber companies are healthy and safe is a prerequisite under the

FLEGT/VPA programme.

Earlier, the observance of the non-compliance to safety and health requirements on the path of the companies led NDF into training the companies on the need to ensure safety and health at the work place.

The training was done in collaboration with the factory inspectorate division and the Timber Industry Development Division of the Forestry Commission.

The beneficiary companies have now been provided with reflector jackets, safety overall, safety boots for the

factory and safety boots for the forest. Arc files were also given to enhance documentation and record keeping of the companies.

The companies were also given a Perspex sign bearing the name of their company and logos of the sponsor as a way of ensuring visibility for the project.

In a related development, action plans were developed for the timber companies during the mock auditing and these were reviewed to ascertain if identified gaps during the mock auditing have been duly corrected.

Beneficiaries expressed their appreciation and motivation to follow the right procedures in their operations.

This action is funded by ukaid under their Forest Governance Market and Climate (FGMC) programme.

Source: Nature and Development Foundation



Forest Enterprises Trained to be Legally Compliant under Ghana's VPA

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Action plans on how identified gaps on non-compliances must be addressed.

They were also taught to capture data along their supply chains and to ensure such data are well documented and stored.

Companies trading on the domestic market had the opportunity of practicing how to undertake standard measurements of timber logs and lumber and to convert measurement from the imperial system to metric to enable them calculate the volumes of their materials.

Those working in off-reserve areas benefited from compensation and Social Responsibility Agreement (SRA) negotiation and payment implementation. Some of the trainees who had no

were also introduced to IT in data capturing and storage as well as how to create email addresses, send and receive e-mails as a means to improving their data storage and business communication.



Through the training, a small timber processing company, Adras Limited, has successfully adapted the work procedures developed by KWC to demonstrate how it receives timber in the factory and uses data capturing templates to document its operations to be able to prove its compliance with the LAS and WTS.

Adras has successfully been "audited" by the Timber Industry Development Division (TIDD) and Timber Validation Department (TVD) of the Forestry Commission on the GhLAS meaning that its products will be issued with FLEGT licenses when Ghana begins to implement the FLEGT-VPA. Several small companies are able to process and supply the domestic market with legal timber.

KWC assistance is still being extended to few companies that have few legality challenges along their timber supply chains and will in due course master the process adequately.

World Conservation Body Cautions Ghana over Mining in Atewa Forest



© Global Wildlife Conservation

water source, housing the headwaters of the Birim, Densu and Ayensu Rivers, which provide water to local communities as well as to millions of people downstream, including Accra.

They say, they are deeply concerned that strip mining for bauxite would irreversibly damage the Atewa Forest, resulting in species extinctions and highly degraded water sources,

recognizing the strong opposition from communities around Atewa,

and from Ghanaian civil society, to mining in Atewa Forest;

The IUCN appreciates the establishment of a Forest Reserve at Atewa in 1926 and its formal protection by the government of Ghana in the decades following independence. They were also appreciative of the commitment of the President of the Republic of Ghana to the achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

However, they stressed that mining bauxite in the Atewa Forest is fundamentally inconsistent with international commitments.

Source: <https://www.iucncongress2020.org/>

The *International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)* has admonished the Government of Ghana to immediately and permanently halt all mining-related operations and other destructive activities in Atewa Forest and establish a national park over the entirety of Atewa Forest to ensure its conservation in perpetuity.

The world conservation body urges the donor community to provide the financial assistance needed to build a world-class protected area in the Atewa Forest, as well as for supporting green developments within the landscape.

The IUCN warned that in the event that the Government of Ghana does not implement the provisions of the first operative paragraph, it will strongly request all companies in the mining sector not to participate in any mining activities in or near Atewa Forest and all companies using aluminium to ensure that no aluminium from Atewa Forest enters their supply chains.

It will also request the Aluminium Stewardship Initiative to assist companies to ensure that aluminium from Atewa does not enter their supply chains and urge their member companies not to become involved in mining activities in or near the Atewa Forest.

The IUCN says it will further urge all financial institutions to ensure that they provide no finance in any form for any mining or other destructive activities in or near Atewa Forest and requests the Director General, in view of the extreme urgency of the situation in the Atewa Forest, to provide a special report to the next session of the World Conservation Congress in **Marseille, France, from 11-19 June 2020** on the implementation of this resolution.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature says it is aware that the Atewa Forest in the Eastern Region of Ghana is one of the most important places in West Africa for biodiversity conservation, being a rare example of 'upland evergreen' forest, with over 100 species listed in the Threatened or Near Threatened categories of the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.

ClientEarth Launches new Briefing on REDD+

A new briefing on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD+) and enhancing forest stocks has been launched by ClientEarth.

The brief, produced together with national legal partners, is one of the only international initiatives to reduce emissions.

The summary explores whether laws in Ghana, Liberia and the Republic of Congo promote and support socially responsible REDD+ projects.

Focusing on four rights – transparency of information and decision-making, public participation, land tenure rights and equitable sharing of benefits, the briefing highlights how laws in all three countries could go further.

The briefing is available here: <https://www.documents.clientearth.org/libraries/download-info/how-can-redd-promote-support-social-safeguards-in-national-laws/>

REDD+ provides an opportunity to strengthen national laws to ensure the initiative works for people and the environment.

Law and Policy Advisor, Caroline Haywood, says, "Starting REDD+ projects without strong laws puts the cart before the horse – it opens up the possibility of bad projects, because there is no baseline to which all REDD+ projects must adhere."

Currently, ClientEarth is supporting NGOs and local communities in Ghana, Liberia and the Republic of Congo to understand the laws relevant to REDD+ so that they can actively participate in REDD+ discussions.

REDD+ works by offering financial incentives to countries to prevent deforestation and has the potential to be a game changer for climate change mitigation, if it can keep forests standing and offer financially viable alternatives to deforestation and logging.

But REDD+ projects have not always worked well for environment and people – early projects led to rights violations, particularly of communities' land ownership and forest use rights.

Other REDD+ projects have been accused of gaining financial reward for only limited additional forest protection.

Source: **ClientEarth**



Ghana Denies “Timber Laundering” Claims

Some European Union (EU) countries are accusing Ghana of practicing timber laundering by reintroducing illegal lumber into the system in the name of confiscated timber.

According to them, Ghana should remove confiscated timber from her legality definition, as the word “confiscated timber” already makes the source of the timber illegal.

The accusation according to Mrs. Doreen Yeboah, who was part of representatives on a tour to Europe to discuss Ghana’s FLEGT processes, was demystified by the Ghanaian delegation.



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FLEGT Message House in the offing

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A list of exported products and profile of thirty-five exporting timber companies have been compiled and a photo catalogue of the exported timber products, companies’ facilities, logging operations, Social Responsibility Agreement (SRA) contributions and selected national infrastructure being developed in support of the private sector messages to be carried.

Also, verification studies to assess companies’ compliance with the legality standards for FLEGT licensing have been undertaken. Representative companies have been selected based on factors such as their sizes, number of employees, log input-output volumes and export volumes.

The exercise made use of the Timber Validation Department’s (TVD) audit protocol documents to verify respective companies’ compliance with the set of principles, criteria and indicators under the Ghana Legality Assurance System (GhLAS).

The project has so far recorded significant achievements. Through the selection criteria of representative companies and the mock audits, companies have revisited their compliance with the legality standards and are readying themselves for FLEGT licensing.

Source: Kumasi Wood Custer

The delegation explained that, Ghana has a well-defined process for dealing with confiscated and abandoned timber which is clearly enshrined in the national laws and the Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA).

The group however proposed the need for Ghana as a country to intensify education for stakeholders locally and international trade federations who are to receive the FLEGT License on the issue of confiscated timber; and the processes taken to get such products back into the systems for export.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Doreen Yeboah, advised colleagues from various Civil Society Organisations (CSO) to double-check information and reports before putting them online to save the country’s image.

She said, most of the false information communicated by the outside world about Ghana are said to be sourced from CSO reports.

Story by: *Communication Team*

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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 Ukaid



The Department for International Development (DFID) was set up in 1997 and leads the UK’s work to end extreme poverty. DFID tackles global challenges including poverty and disease, mass migration, insecurity and conflict. It works to building a safer, healthier, more prosperous world for people in developing countries and in the UK too. It employs around 2,700 staff who work in offices in London, East Kilbride and globally.

DFID is responsible for

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- roving the lives of girls and women through better education and a greater choice on family planning
- preventing violence against girls and women in the developing world
- elping to prevent climate change and encouraging adaptation and low-carbon growth in developing countries

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FAO-EU FLEGT PROGRAMME

