



Communication on the EU FLEGT – VPA Process in Guyana

“The single biggest problem with communication is the illusion that it has taken place”- George Bernard Shaw.

Communication and its importance can never be underestimated in any multi- stakeholder process since if done well can add great momentum to the process being completed within stipulated timelines. Feedback mechanisms at every stage of the process are needed. Too often communication is not complete and information is given out, but there is no system to establish whether the receivers have truly understood the process and ultimately the message. The members of the NTWG realise the value of having a very robust communication system under the FLEGT process.

It is envisioned that all concerns raised by the Indigenous and other relevant stakeholders will be taken into consideration as far as is practicable as the process moves forward.



The second of five Working Group discussing the Communication Strategy at the FLEGT Indigenous Workshop

Having formally started negotiations with the EU on its Flegt Process which essentially seeks to improve

the supply of legal timber and to increase the demand for responsible wood products, with the first such negotiation being held in December of 2012, there have been great efforts made in the area of Communication.

There are four Sub Committees under the National Technical Working Group, one of which deals exclusively with



Deputy Commissioner of the GFC addressing the participants at the Workshop with Indigenous Communities on FLEGT

communication and has written into the TOR for this Committee specific areas of communication which needs to be addressed during this process. This Sub Committee is expected to be operational throughout the VPA process. It was highlighted at the Sub Committee and ultimately the NTWG level that because of the diversity of stakeholder groups and the level of expertise needed to ensure effective communication, a consultant should be brought in to develop a Communication Strategy under the FLEGT process.

There began the process of developing a suitable Terms of Reference for this Communication Strategy. The Committee first met in January of 2012 with the aim of drafting a suitable TOR for this Strategy. Once completed, it was agreed at the next meeting of the NTWG that consultation on the

drafted TOR should be done by as wide a cross section of stakeholders as possible, within the timelines set under the Roadmap.

Because of the number of Indigenous Communities which are involved in the logging industry in Guyana, the NTWG recognised that their input would be very critical to this process and will require much effort. Further discussions with the Indigenous and Civil Society Constituency Group resulted in the decision to hold a two days workshop with as many as thirty indigenous communities and four participants from each community. The communities were selected by the members of the constituency group since it was clear that they would be very knowledgeable and therefore most suitable at identifying those communities which were heavily dependent on forest activities and will ultimately be affected by this Agreement once signed.



Keen attention being paid as a Community leader voices his concerns on the Strategy

The Communication Strategy, one of the items on the Agenda for the Workshop was given much attention during the Workshop. The workshop involved the participation of over one hundred participants from twenty eight communities. There were many community leaders who participated in the workshop and were able to share in a very

candid way what were some of their concerns on the area of communication and the Communication Strategy being developed.

The Workshop helped in capturing the views of the Indigenous Communities as it relates to communication on the FLEGT program in Guyana. It also clearly showed that there are areas which more focus will have to be placed on such as; capacity building and training. The level of capacity within many communities needs to be raised in order for this process to be as effective as is envisioned.

It was also pointed out that the consultant will need to have a very good knowledge of local communities and what are the issues that affects their livelihoods in the area of logging. He/she will need to consult in a very direct way with locals who have this knowledge if communication will take place in a way that benefits all the parties.

The Communication Strategy will need to be discussed among various stakeholder groups before a final position is reached for most effective communication.

Source: Guyana Forestry Commission, March 2013

