

EU FOREST LAW ENFORCEMENT GOVERNANCE AND TRADE

GUYANA'S VPA PROCESS

Stakeholder Session on FLEGT in Region Seven and Eight
Bartica Kato Campbelltown

Report

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Introduction

The FLEGT VPA having formally commenced in 2012 has continued with consultations sessions throughout the country. These sessions are geared towards receiving inputs from stakeholder groups on key aspects of the VPA such as the Legality Definition and other aspects of the Legality Assurance System.

The Chainsaw Milling Project (CMP), an EU funded Project has worked in four pilot communities in Guyana and has in this phase of its work to provide support for the FLEGT VPA process in Guyana. The CMP has been working in four communities to improve and provide alternative livelihood opportunities for its residents. In this regard, a collaborative approach between the NTWG and the CMP was used, to consult with Indigenous Communities in Region 7 and 8.

A series of three (3) meetings were planned in central communities and neighbouring communities were invited to be part of these sessions. Meetings were held in Kato, Campbelltown and Bartica and these meetings each lasted one day.

Focus was given to updating stakeholders on the EU FLEGT Programme to date and then addressing specific areas of the VPA. There were many discussions sessions to address specific concerns various communities had and efforts were made to provide as much clarifications as possible.

Interactions with the consultant on the development of the Communication and Consultation Strategy were also part of the one day sessions. A presentation was made on the development and need for this strategy and the importance of feedback from communities on what would work best at the community level; since they were the ones most familiar with the local situation.

Discussions

Each session was somewhat different because of differences in the stakeholder groupings. Differences for example included the level of knowledge of the stakeholders on the FLEGT VPA. Other differences were based on the level of commercial forest activities which were taking place or were envisioned to be taking place in the not too distant future. Perceptions on the FLEGT VPA were also varied and this required some different approaches and techniques to be utilized. Sometimes the language used was also varied based on the knowledge of FLEGT by community members.

Though many communities were not involved in logging on a commercial basis, it was agreed by all the stakeholders that there is a need to be informed about what is taking place at the national level; this was also the view of the NTWG, the steering body of the VPA for Guyana.

Region Seven and Eight

Findings

The meetings in Regions Seven and Eight were planned with a similar approach as the other session held. Participants were invited to a specific location and efforts were made to ensure the relevant documents were sent ahead of the meeting dates. This did not work as well as was expected; there was a heavy dependency on airlines for distribution. However, the facilitator was able to arrange the sessions in a manner which allowed for maximum participation of the community members.

Sessions were held in Kato and Campbelltown in Region Eight and Bartica in Region Seven. A total of thirteen communities attended the meeting held in Kato whilst a total of four communities attended the meeting held in Campbelltown. Campbelltown's Session was also attended by two members of the mining industry who were involved in logging activities over the years and were still interested in continuing. Their interest was based on what they described as a "profit making" venture.

Bartica's session was attended by both indigenous community members as well as stakeholders who were holders of State Forest Permissions. A total of twenty persons attended this session.

For the meetings held in Kato, there were a few peculiarities which needed to be dealt with in order for the sessions to be as fruitful as possible.

Firstly, the communities in the Region Eight cluster (see appendix) were more comfortable with the local dialect Patamona and provisions had to be made for a translator to be present. This need was satisfied by the facilitator. Additionally, since many of the communities were not into commercial logging, the team focussed initially on presenting the basic operation types so as to foster better understanding and participation.

The approach was similar to other regions in relation to the content of the messages to be conveyed and the feedback which was sought. Participants were updated on the Flegt process and the fact that this was going to affect exports to Europe. Once they were updated the team focussed on presenting the Legality Definition in a simplified manner for better understanding with an aim of receiving some feedback as well. Feedback was limited but there were concerns relating to land use and titles to land. There were provisions made for other avenues of feedback after the team left. This was mainly through the nearest forest station and internet whenever possible. The lack of capacity in relation to logging operations was highlighted by community leaders and a request was made to provide them with the necessary tools to be able to play a more active role in the logging sector.

Those communities which are bordering to Brazil highlighted that there were instances where persons were crossing the borders of their communities and stealing forest produce and the GFC was not aware of this. It was pointed out that the relevant persons would be informed and action taken in these areas.

There were queries relating to the possibility of community members being licensed to sell to neighbouring countries and what were the requirements for this to happen. It was pointed out that there will be one system which will govern the entire forest sector operation and all stakeholders would have to follow the same rules and regulations. What this means therefore is that the current systems for selling from one community to another would remain and if there are changes, these would be applied to all similar transactions. The licences for these transactions were very easy to acquire, it was pointed out, for indigenous or any other community.

Communication in the Kato cluster is very difficult and there were concerns relating to updates on FLEGT and the feedback mechanisms which could be put in place. To this end, the suggestions as it relates to communication and feedback included; letters, DVDs (in Patamona), brochures, flyers, posters (done in simple language) as well as the use of the radio systems which most communities have access to.

The Campbelltown meeting held with communities in that cluster (see appendix) was very informative and there were many aspects which were discussed in relation to improving the process overall.

There were suggestions on how to include the produce from mining areas, within the area, to be a part of the VPA. One miner pointed out that though he has been involved in selling timber for many years, the system to prove legality is not very transparent and persons are not sure what are the requirements. He noted that he discontinued the process of buying and selling timber since these unclear guidelines were causing his lumber to be detained and huge fines being paid to have the lumber released. It was suggested that the GFC and the miners association work closely to develop a mechanism which will ensure that forest produce originating from mining areas is easier to trace and transport. This he posited would require all the stakeholders to meet at one forum and identify ways in which this can be made easier. However, it was also noted that over the years, the lack of capacity in this region has also resulted in large fines for those who have been involved in logging activities. Therefore, if the EU FLEGT programme is to be as effective as is expected, there will have to be capacity building at various levels throughout the chain.

Stakeholders have also suggested that the EU FLEGT programme and market availability would mean that more persons would be interested in processing lumber for these markets. There was the suggestion of more training in sawmill techniques be carried out to best meet the needs of this market. It was pointed out that there has been and continues to be training in lumber processing which the GFC and other agencies have collaborated on. Additionally, the new Code Of Practice for processing focuses not only on the standards required the sector, but also what are some of the more current practices to achieving these standards.

The suggestions made in relation to communication and feedback included the use of:

- a. *The telephone*- since most communities were able to make contact this way. This would work very well for organising meetings in a timely manner
- b. *The postal service*- for packages of information for meetings. The postal service works and it even ensures greater security for packages sent; sometimes packages are lost and no one seems to be able to give an account of the same. The timelines of two weeks to one month for these packages prior to meetings was requested by stakeholders. If the timelines are closer to one month, a reminder would be appreciated they said.
- c. *The use of DVDs* - one community leader stated would, in his estimation, be able to minimise the cost of travel for the NTWG members and also community members. Once these DVDs are done in a manner that is conducive to the local situation, i.e. take into consideration the local dialect, the local culture and language, they can be effective and able to provide updates as the process unfolds. A member of the NTWG can maybe make his or her self available if there are any queries which need to be cleared up.

There was a need to clarify with stakeholders that the VPA was not yet signed and there is still ample time for suggestions and inputs to be made to the process and documents which are being developed. It was also pointed out that the Legality Definition for example, would be tested before it becomes part of the VPA. Its updating would take into consideration the comments made by all stakeholders at the level of the NTWG before an updated version is made available.

The Bartica cluster session followed the same format as the other sessions and included providing updates on the FLEGT VPA and the areas which have been drafted thus far. The Legality Definition and the Product Scope were both presented as well to the group of stakeholders. It was evident that the group had a clear idea about the FLEGT process. They stated that were given many opportunities to be part of previous sessions on the same topic area.

There were concerns about the changes to traditional uses of forests in some indigenous communities; it was pointed out that traditional uses would not change in any way. Commercial use of forest, it was explained, would be the only way they would be expected to comply with some aspects of the Legality Assurance System and the areas for compliance were largely based on the current requirements for traceability in these areas. Any additional requirements would have to be agreed by the stakeholders themselves as the VPA progresses.

SFP holders who were present at the sessions were concerned about the cost factor in terms of the VPA implementation aspect. It was explained that the cost of implementing the VPA was very real but since there were many of the systems which were in place in relation to the LAS, these costs were not expected to be too exorbitant. However, as far as possible, costs would be considered at every step of the process.

It was suggested that the GPS be used as a system of improving the traceability of logs because the traditional methods were very time consuming and these new requirements may require shorter verification periods. A GPS, it was explained, would be used and the information stored in a database. Retrieval of relevant information could easily be done and the location of stumps identified. Of course there would have to be some level of capacity built in relation to the proper use of the GPS and the cost of the instrument itself.

Communication on the VPA was in keeping with many of the previous suggestions. DVDs, television (for Bartica residents), flyers and posters, packages with relevant information and community visits were the methods of choice. The education level in communities is not so high and therefore the information given should be made simple and straightforward, one captain pointed out. Stakeholders asked that they be informed as the process continues.

Conclusion

The consultation sessions in these regions were very informative and there was a lot of information gathered which has been used to improve on various aspects of the VPA. Like many of the other sessions held, there is still a great need for follow up visits as the process continues. Additionally, the impact study, once completed, will highlight the areas where capacity building may be required and these can be addressed as the process continues.

Many indigenous communities, though not familiar with all the current logging practices, have a very great interest in understanding the FLEGT process. Therefore, the methods of communication, used to ensure that information is disseminated effectively, needs to be in keeping with what works best for these communities. Their continued inputs are therefore vital as the VPA progresses.

Annex 1

REGION SEVEN

Bartica

Agatash Small Loggers Asociation
Elvis Seeram (SFP)
Tasserene Village
Isseneru
72 Miles Kaburi Village
Guyana United Apolostic Mystic Church

Dogg Point Village
River View Village
Kartabo Sunrising Loggers Association
Lancelot Douglas SFP
Rockliffe Parris

REGION EIGHT

Campbelltown

Micobie Village
Campbelltown Village
Chenapou Villlage
Princeville

Kato

Kamana
Kopinang
Karisparu
Ministry of Amerindian Affairs -CSO
Kato
Peace Corps Volunteer in Kato
Paramakatoi
Waipa
Kanapang

Tuseneng
Maik-wak
Community Development Council
Itabac
Bamboo Creek
Chuing Mouth
Kurukabaru
Tuseneng

Annex 2

The Team members who conducted the sessions during these exercises were as follows:

For Kato and Mahdia

1. Kenny David- Guyana Forestry Commission (Team Leader)
2. Ovid Williams- Chainsaw Milling Project (Facilitator)
3. Derrick John- Chairman, National Toshias Council (NTWG member)
4. Rushelle Liverpool- Ministry of Legal Affairs (NTWG member)

For Bartica

1. Kenny David- Guyana Forestry Commission (Team Leader)
2. Rushelle Liverpool- Ministry of Legal Affairs (NTWG member)
3. Simone Beckles- Guyana Revenue Authority (NTWG member)
4. Tasreef Khan – Guyana Forestry Commission(NTWG Chair –alternate)