



Seventy TIDD Officials Trained

Over 70 Graders, Timber Inspectors and Area Managers of the Timber Industry Development Division (TIDD) of the Forestry Commission (FC) attended a training workshop at Sefwi Wiawso in the Western Region as part of a capacity building programme.

The aim of the workshop was to up-grade their knowledge following the introduction of the Electronic Wood Tracking System (eWTS) under the FLEGT/VPA Initiative by giving them hands-on training on new tools and software being utilised by the system.

The 70 participants were trained in three batches, each of which was trained for three days during which they were taken through new models of the eWTS. Each participant had access to a laptop on which they accessed the system and entered data. They also tried their hands on mobile applications developed for the system which they would be using at their various check points.

Representatives from the Atta Marie Group of Companies (AMGC), who developed the software for the eWTS, gathered suggestions and proposals from the participants on how the system can be improved. The company would be holding a follow-up meeting with the participants to address the issues raised.

The workshop was funded by the FC and is part of FLEGT /VPA capacity building activities.

Editorial

Benefit Sharing, the Key to a Successful REDD+

The proverb that “people living by the riverside should not wash their hands with spittle” is a well known adage among Ghanaians and this proverb is repeatedly cited anytime members of a community think they have been denied access to a resource that is theirs by birth.

Consequently, a lot of conflicts bordering around outright denial or inadequate access to the benefits of a resource by resource rich communities have marred the success of many projects based on the utilisation or preservation of natural resources. Consequently, Benefit Sharing is often addressed as an afterthought, as a form of “wound dressing” after a lot of damage has already taken place.

It is therefore refreshing that the REDD+ Initiative, rather than throwing caution to the wind, is addressing issues on Benefit Sharing as an integral part of the Initiative.

It is laudable that the Forestry Research Institute of Ghana (FORIG) has already carried out research and identified the various stakeholders who should benefit from the implementation of REDD+ activities in their communities (see story on page 4).

The Synergy welcomes the decision by the REDD+ Secretariat to undertake further stakeholder consultations in a bid to validate the results of the research. Such consultations would ensure that the true beneficiaries are identified to benefit from the initiative to avoid any future conflicts resulting from the rightful people being denied benefits from the initiative.

Ghana's Wood Tracking System Comprises Four Stand Alone Models

Ghana's Electronic Wood Tracking System (eWTS) being implemented under FLEGT/VPA by the Forestry Commission (FC) is based on a comprehensive toolkit developed by the Atta Marie Group of Companies, the systems software consultant, that covers chain of custody, forest certification and legality assurance.

This toolkit forms the basis for the four stand-alone models, namely, GWTS Forest, GWTS Industry, GWTS Sales and GWTS Audit that comprise the eWTS.

GWTS Forest contains a register of all legal forests under the Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) made up of timber from Natural Forests On-Reserve, Natural Forests Off-Reserve, and Forest Plantations. It also contains tools for the measurement and quantification of standing forests as well as tools for the measurement and tracking of logs to processing locations.

GWTS Forest captures source registration data and identifies harvest areas taking into consideration locational information and origin of forests. It identifies the harvesting agent and other associated documents.

GWTS Industry records the transformation of logs into processed wood products in addition to the movement of processed wood products. It also has the capacity to capture processing information through an 'input/output' document for specific 'production unit' periods. It records each mill along with its main production lines which may include sawn wood, veneer, plywood, and moldings among others.

GWTS Sales records the sale of finished products to both domestic and international markets and calculates and records all associated volumes, taxes, commissions and payments. Local sales are covered by an Inspection Certificate (Local) while export sales are covered by an export contract, an Inspection Certificate (IC) and an export permit prior to shipment.

GWTS Audit analyses and reconciles wood quantities and quality through the supply chain and supports verification of the compliance of the supply chain with legality standards.

It integrates source documents recorded by GWTS Forest and provides traceability throughout the supply chain; providing real time reconciliation between products and identifying discrepancies which it compares to permissible limits based on a table of user defined tolerances.

GWTS Audit is equipped with a flagging system designed to identify the status of 'out of range' wood product values; with white signifying that the wood item is within permissible levels, orange signifies the wood item is outside permissible levels whilst blue indicates that a discrepancy has been audited and cleared.

Other additional functions of the GWTS is the generation of forest statistics at the district, regional and national levels; aggregated by species, company, domestic sales source, and export destination.

Obviously, the checks and balances put in place under the GWTS would go a long way to check illegal logging and thus reduce deforestation while the statistics provided would help Ghana to determine the amount of carbon stored within its forests.

This information could be used by the REDD+ Initiative in the implementation of its activities. REDD+ also stands to benefit directly from the reduction in deforestation and forest degradation due to a curtail in illegal logging as a result of FLEGT activities thus providing synergy between the two initiatives.

Meanwhile, the FC is testing the BioLite CampStove, a thermal-electric device, as a possible solution to the lack of electricity supply for the charging of mobile phones in the forest by field workers working under the eWTS which employs the mobile phone as a basic component of the system. The device has the capacity to convert thermal energy produced by wood fuel (twigs) during cooking to electrical energy for charging mobile phones.

Photographs of the device depicting its functions are shown at the right column of this page.



The thermal– electric BioLite CampStove,



The BioLite CampStove being used to cook



Cooking and charging a mobile phone



For REDD+ to succeed, Benefit Sharing is a Must !

A mechanism that promotes and ensures Benefit Sharing is a must if the REDD+ Initiative currently being implemented by the Forestry Commission is to succeed.

This is in view of the fact that a well designed Benefit Sharing Framework would serve as an incentive for action and hence build support and legitimacy for the implementation of the project.

A robust Benefit Sharing Framework should among other things establish clear incentives for all participating stakeholders, enhance forest conservation and ecosystem services rendered by forests.

This would eventually enhance the capacity of forest fringe communities to reduce deforestation while at the same time cater for their livelihood needs as well as aspirations for sustainable development.

These outcomes would ultimately support FLEGT activities since the inclination to harvest illegal timber would be greatly diminished.

However, there is the need for precautions to be undertaken to ensure that benefits from the REDD+ Initiative trickle down to individuals and communities actually involved in the project to prevent such benefits from being hijacked by the elite in society.

REDD+ benefits comprise two main categories; financial incentives and co-benefits.

Financial incentives comprise direct financial benefits from carbon credit schemes and voluntary markets that have been earmarked for emissions reduction in participating countries.

Co-benefits imply additional benefits resulting from REDD+ implementation such as biodiversity conservation, enhanced livelihood and environmental services due to improved forest management, soil fertility enhancement and the protection of watersheds.

Both financial incentives and co-benefits would support the FLEGT/VPA Initiative.

This is because financial benefits would reduce illegal logging since communities would now have an alternative source of income whilst co-benefits would promote sustainable logging as a result of proper forest management practices adopted by forest fringe communities under the REDD+ Initiative.



Benefit Sharing Under REDD+

What Needs To Be Done

There is the need for the REDD+ Initiative being implemented by the Forestry Commission (FC) to undertake further stakeholder consultation in a bid to validate the recommendations of the Forestry Research Institute of Ghana (FORIG) for a Benefit Sharing Framework to be implemented under the project.

The stakeholder engagement exercise is also expected to determine the specific percentages for benefits that should be allotted to each stakeholder.

In addition, there is the need to set up governmental structures and distribution channels that would ensure transparency in the disbursement of financial benefits and equity in benefit sharing.

Consequently, reforms are required on Regulatory, Policy and Legal Frameworks for Benefit Sharing and Tenure (tree, land and carbon) to ensure that the principles of equity are embedded in Ghana's REDD+ Sharing Mechanism.

Meanwhile, an additional funding has been provided by the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) to finalise Ghana's REDD+ readiness project.

Part of this funding is expected to be used to fund the envisaged stakeholder dialogue on the benefit sharing recommendations made by FORIG.

It would also be used to fund the design of government structures and distribution channels for REDD+ Benefit Sharing.

Four Benefit Sharing Schemes Identified Under REDD+

Four Benefit Sharing Schemes have been identified to form the basis for a Benefit Sharing Framework to be implemented by the REDD+ Initiative under the Forestry Commission (FC).

The four schemes are based on key findings and recommendations from a study conducted by the Forestry Research Institute of Ghana (FORIG) who were commissioned to develop a Benefit Sharing Framework for the project.

They are the Constitutional Timber Revenue Benefit Sharing, the Modified Taungya System (MTS) Benefit Sharing, the Commercial Private Plantation Revenue Benefit Sharing and the Community Resource Management (CREMA) Benefit Sharing.

The study found out that, most often, farmers and forest fringe communities whose activities contribute to emissions reduction are not rewarded and hence should be considered beneficiaries under the Constitutional Timber Revenue Benefit Sharing.

The study also recommended that the strong community participation model under CREMA could be suitable for the implementation for a REDD+ Initiative in a community forest.

FORIG recommended that the key stakeholders who should benefit from any REDD+ Initiative include farmers, local communities, land owners, including owners of stool lands and family lands, district assemblies, the private sector and the FC.

It is expected that, the CREMA Benefit Sharing would among other things provide potential structures for dispute and conflict resolution, promote sustainable forest management and wildlife conservation.

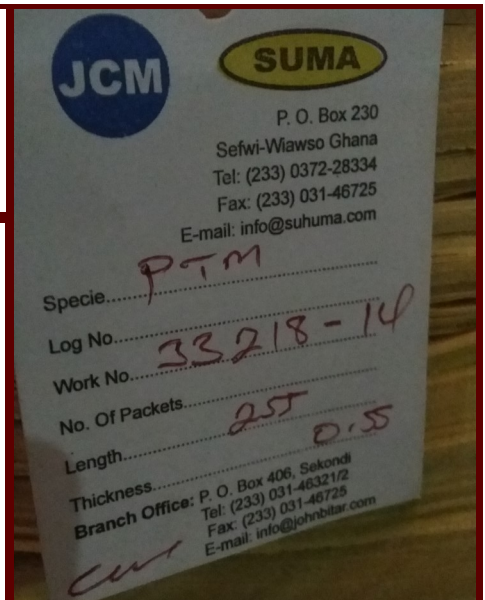
Furthermore, it is also expected to build social cohesion among communities since the processes and structure of CREMA allow for democratic decision making and problem solving.

In addition, activities such as eco-tourism, sustainable utilisation of non-timber forest products and alternative livelihoods would be enhanced.

The MTS Benefit Sharing is expected to enhance carbon stocks by increasing forest plantation cover and promoting the cultivation of food crops before canopy closure in addition to introducing alternative livelihoods.

FORIG also recommended that a Community Revolving Fund be established in forest fringe communities as a Benefit Sharing Scheme since it would ensure a long term benefit from REDD+ activities.

It would also provide financial support for viable alternative livelihood activities in addition to supporting continuous forest management activities by individuals.



Upcoming events

- Training programme on carbon accounting for forest managers scheduled for 13 to 20 April
- GIS laboratory to be established by REDD+ Secretariat on April 28 with computers donated by the Food and Agriculture Organisation.

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