



RESEARCH AGENDA FOR MANAGING THE CONSEQUENCES OF VPA IMPLEMENTATION ON LIVELIHOODS

Ghana has entered into a Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) with the European Commission (EC) to export only legal timber products to Europe. Article 17 of the agreement recognizes possible adverse impacts that VPA implementation can have on actors whose livelihoods depend on forests. To minimize the potential impacts, Ghana and the EC have agreed “to develop a *better understanding of the livelihoods of potentially affected local communities as well as the timber industry, including those engaged in illegal logging*”. This proviso shall require research interventions.

This infosheet identifies some issues that need to be investigated into by the research community, to provide better insight for policy, in managing the consequences of timber legality standards on local livelihoods.

Actors’ possible response to enforcement of legality standards: Article 17 of the Ghana-EC VPA pre-supposes that the application of legality standards may impact negatively on local livelihoods. Different actors such as chainsaw operators, labourers from timber enterprises or farmers may react in their own specific way. Research is needed to identify the different responses of actors being negatively affected, including options for remedial policies.

Effective support to industry and timber trade-dependent communities: One option for remedying negative impacts of legality standards is the stimulation of alternative livelihoods activities for affected actors. However, developing alternative livelihood options to people engaged in an outlawed, but lucrative economic activity is not a straight forward issue. What constitute effective alternative livelihoods? Which people need to be assisted to develop alternative livelihoods? Insights into needs and effective support for these actors are necessary.

Managing conflicts arising from decentralized forest law enforcement decisions: As Ghana renews her interests and commitment to enforcing forest laws, many things would be happening at the district level where local stakeholders may clash over issues leading to possible conflicts among them. Research should be able to foresee some of these possible conflicts and offer suggestions for managing them.

Instruments/institutions/mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the VPA on local livelihoods:

Research is needed to be able to identify key indicators and important targets for aspects of monitoring and evaluation that will serve as a guide to those with such responsibility.

Heterogeneity of local communities: In a local community, people have different needs and aspirations. It is important to identify specific needs and interests of people so that in an attempt to address community needs, one simple package is not given to everybody but one that addresses specific needs of individuals or special groups in the community.

Stakeholder perspectives on forest law reforms for mitigating the effect of VPA implementation on livelihoods: The VPA document makes room for law reforms but there is also the need to ensure that these law reforms are fundamental and that, they reflect stakeholder beliefs and aspirations. Research is needed in this regard to be able to advise the process.

These issues can be used by research and academia as inputs for research agenda. Their outcomes could be used as justification for proposals for external funding. In tandem with the research community, decision makers may also initiate investigations into issues of particular relevance to them.

Options for balancing the resource needs of the domestic and export markets:

The domestic market alone is capable of consuming all the legal wood produced in Ghana yet the nation also has a strong drive to export. Hence, research is needed to identify options for balancing these two opposing demands.

Potential challenges in implementing legality standards in off-reserve areas: Off-reserve areas are very problematic areas in which timber resources are not well defined in the first place. Therefore, any attempt to implement legality standard may encounter serious setbacks. Hence, research is necessary to look into this and come up with some recommendations.



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