

Securing legal domestic lumber supply through multi-stakeholder dialogue in Ghana





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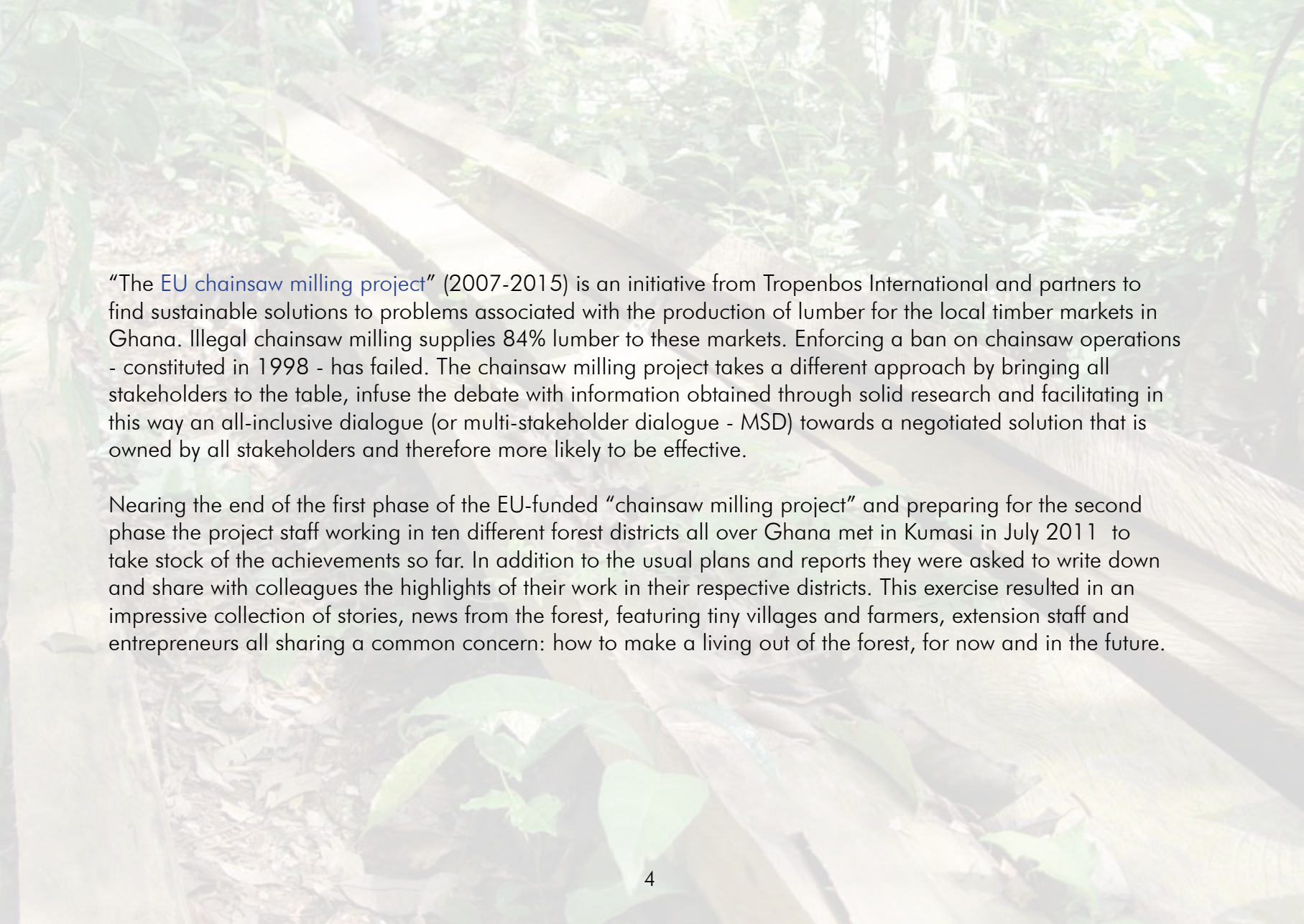
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“The [EU chainsaw milling project](#)” (2007-2015) is an initiative from Tropenbos International and partners to find sustainable solutions to problems associated with the production of lumber for the local timber markets in Ghana. Illegal chainsaw milling supplies 84% lumber to these markets. Enforcing a ban on chainsaw operations - constituted in 1998 - has failed. The chainsaw milling project takes a different approach by bringing all stakeholders to the table, infuse the debate with information obtained through solid research and facilitating in this way an all-inclusive dialogue (or multi-stakeholder dialogue - MSD) towards a negotiated solution that is owned by all stakeholders and therefore more likely to be effective.

Nearing the end of the first phase of the EU-funded “chainsaw milling project” and preparing for the second phase the project staff working in ten different forest districts all over Ghana met in Kumasi in July 2011 to take stock of the achievements so far. In addition to the usual plans and reports they were asked to write down and share with colleagues the highlights of their work in their respective districts. This exercise resulted in an impressive collection of stories, news from the forest, featuring tiny villages and farmers, extension staff and entrepreneurs all sharing a common concern: how to make a living out of the forest, for now and in the future.



The multi-stakeholder dialogue provides a vuvuzela for the voiceless

Mercy Owusu Ansah
Tropenbos International Ghana

The use of the vuvuzela was not limited to the world cup tournament in South Africa in 2010. In Ghana the multi-stakeholder dialogue (MSD) provides a vuvuzela for the chainsaw operators to give a loud voice in finding solutions for the more than a decade old menace of illegal chainsaw milling. The implementation of the EU chainsaw milling project which focuses on forest governance issues in Ghana uses an MSD to find alternatives for illegal chainsaw milling. The MSD is a neutral platform for all stakeholders to make noise through lobbying, advocacy, and media coverage.

The MSD uses structured dialogue to reduce existing levels of conflict between stakeholders. The platform provides an effective pathway for information sharing, problem definition and finding solutions at and amongst community,

district and national levels. Stakeholders are many: chainsaw operators, timber markets, sector ministries, the Forestry Commission, law enforcers, forest forums, District Assemblies, traditional authorities, farmers, land owners, NTFP users, community forestry organizations, the sawmilling industry, and many more. The MSD vuvuzela blows loud and clear – consensus on a policy direction for supplying legal lumber unto the domestic market has been reached by all stakeholders including the chainsaw operators. Alternatives to chainsaw milling go for policy considerations. The Parliamentary Select Committee grants audience to chainsaw millers. The Ministry assures stakeholders that their concerns will be considered. Picture that, law enforcers and lawbreakers blowing the vuvuzela at the negotiation table. The MSD is truly embraced by the government

of Ghana to contribute to resolving its forest management problems.





Tension resolved between stakeholders through dialogue

Ben Opoku Asare
Community Forestry Worker, Begoro (Eastern Region)

Prior to the EU chainsaw milling project in Begoro Forest District, there was tension between Forestry Commission staff and chainsaw operators who were not seeing eye-to-eye with each other. The first district meeting with all stakeholders to discuss how to stop forest degradation in Begoro was not easy to organize. We invited traditional authorities, stool land owners, farmers, carpenters, timber contractors, district assembly staff but of course also the chainsaw operators and carriers as they are important stakeholders. The project had it tough by bringing the chainsaw operators to the meeting. They were of the view that they would be arrested since they knew their operations were illegal.

The series of dialogues at district level, the reports from the national level dialogue and the discussions in the

villages that followed changed people's perception. The debate among the stakeholders gave mutual understanding and urged the need to find compromises. People gradually understood that the government has to step in for policy change and also streamline the mode of supplying lumber to the local people for domestic use. Now chainsaw operators and carriers are participating fully in the deliberations and actively helping in finding ways to supply legal lumber to the market. The chainsaw operators are now friends with the Forestry Commission and find it easier to approach the government staff for advice and discussion.





Are the gods here at last?

Charles Nketia
Community Forestry Worker, Akim Oda (Eastern Region)

Apoli is a small farming community in the Oda Forest District located near the Birim and Pra-birim Forest Reserves and surrounded by the Birim and Pra-birim Rivers. The EU chainsaw milling project has adopted Apoli as a pilot community. Previously the village experienced a chaotic situation. By virtue of its unique location between rich forests, illegal chainsaw activities had been on the increase leading to the destruction of forest and farms and sound pollution at night. Several people had been arrested. There have been various conflicts involving stakeholder groups such as farmers, chainsaw operators, forestry personnel, opinion leaders, traditional authorities etc.

Since the inception of the project, peoples' awareness has arisen to soaring heights and the village has come alive

with respect to the protection of forest resources. The multi-stakeholder dialogue has created a conducive platform where various actors meet to discuss forest-related issues that affect the community. The people are now conscious of their actions. There is a drastic reduction in conflicts between stakeholder groups. Apoli is now a shining example of a village once in distress and now in hope and peace awaiting a more secure future.





Consensus on how to address illegal chainsaw milling in support of VPA implementation

James Parker McKeown
Tropenbos International Ghana

Illegal chainsaw milling (CSM) has become an albatross for the Government of Ghana. The practice is undermining Ghana's ambitions to implement the Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) with the EU, which aims at facilitating trade in legal timber and improving forest governance.

At last, consensus has been reached by stakeholders, facilitated by the multi-stakeholder dialogue (MSD) of the EU CSM project, on a way to address illegal CSM. Since the ban on the practice in 1998, several measures have been put in place to enforce it but this has not been successful and CSM has become widespread leading to forest degradation and conflicts, sometimes characterized by violence. It is now estimated that illegal CSM provides jobs for around 100,000

people and livelihood support for more than 700,000 people.

In 2007, TBI and its partners, the Forestry Research Institute of Ghana and the Forestry Commission, with support from the EU, initiated a process to find alternatives for illegal CSM. In view of the several stakeholder groups with different interests and positions, the process employed an MSD to bring together all stakeholders including the illegal ones which enabled learning, building trust and commitment and provided information for true dialoguing. For the past two years, stakeholders have been discussing the CSM issue based on three policy options. In September 2010, stakeholders reached consensus on the option to share the domestic timber market between artisanal millers (small scale milling with improved techniques)

and sawmillers. A policy development committee has been formed to draft a proposal to fuel stakeholder discussions in how to operationalize the agreed policy option. Reaching consensus on how to address the illegal CSM menace is the first, but important step in securing legal domestic lumber supply in support of the implementation of the VPA.





Timber industry and chainsaw millers come to terms

Isaac Owusu Boakye
Community Forestry Worker, Juaso (Ashanti Region)

The two most prominent competitors in the utilization of timber resources, the industry and the chainsaw millers have agreed to jointly tackle the problems of local timber supply and dwindling timber resources in Juaso Forest District. Both parties had the opportunity to meet and dialogue at a multi-stakeholder platform created by the EU chainsaw milling project to see how best to supply legal domestic lumber in a sustainable way.

Before the inception of the project, the two parties used to accuse and condemn each other. Whilst the timber industry accused the chainsaw millers of stealing and destroying the forest resources, the chainsaw operators on the other hand accused the industry of being greedy and not having the welfare of the local people at heart by failing to supply local lumber for rural development. In order to be

able to sustain their business and ensure domestic lumber supply in a sustainable way, both parties have seen the need to join forces through multi-stakeholder dialogue to secure the forest resources base.





Joining hands for lasting impact

Emmanuel Fosu
Tropenbos International Ghana

The problems in Ghana's forests are very serious and multi-faceted and these have prompted a range of responses, the multi-stakeholder dialogue (MSD) to find alternatives for illegal chainsaw milling being one of them. There has been a similar forest-related platform for multi-stakeholder discussion at both district and national levels called "National Forest Forum" (NFF). Since 2010 these two initiatives have been integrated to build on mutual networks and achievements for sustenance and lasting impact on forest management.

The integration of the MSD into the NFF more strongly encourages the ministry and the policy makers to take outcomes of the dialogue serious. Joining hands has made more resources available to revamp existing but dormant district forest forums and expanding forest district

coverage. Finally, by merging the MSD initiative and the NFF the likelihood is higher that multi-stakeholder platforms remain in the forestry sector to guarantee civil society input in the management of Ghana's forests beyond donor-supported projects.





The forest condition is critical, we have to act now

Kow Quaison

Community Forestry Worker, Sunyani (Brong Ahafo Region)

Ghana's forest resource base is depleting at an alarming rate. Between 1900 to date it has reduced from 8.2 million hectares to about 1.6 million hectares. As a result, groups like the wood sellers, wood workers and other community forestry associations (carpenters, machine owners, carriers etc.) have for the first time a serious problem in supplying themselves with timber to sustain their industries. They are bound to find ways of addressing the dwindling forest resources as a matter of urgency.

The EU chainsaw milling project provided information, training and a platform for all stakeholders to critically examine ways of addressing the dwindling forest resource and plans are far underway by some of the groups such as the Sunyani Wood Sellers Association to acquire land to go into massive afforestation and

also take advantage of the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD plus) initiative as a way to add value to the forest resources in Sunyani forest district. Evidently, one can say that a near-disaster in the sector is necessary for all stakeholders to act and address a critical situation.





A step in the right direction!

Nana Afia Hodibert
Community Forestry Worker, Tarkwa (Western Region)

The Obogu community in the Juaso Forest District of Ashanti Region prides itself as the first community to form an association with the aim to supply legal lumber to the domestic market. This may not sound revolutionary but actually is when one realizes that most of its members are actually former illegal producers of chainsawn lumber. This success comes about as a result of the high commitment of the forest stakeholders in the community to support initiatives that seek to secure legal domestic lumber supply through multi-stakeholder dialogue. The community realized that illegal production comes with a price, most notably a destroyed resource base, and that forming an association that represents their legitimate interests in viable rural livelihood opportunities will increase their chances of securing a piece of the

development cake. This cake may take the form of degraded forests available for afforestation, access to forests, and exploring alternative livelihood options just to mention a few examples.

The formation of the Obogu Wood Workers Association quickly yielded the first result. It has attracted support from the Bamboo and Rattan Development Programme to go into bamboo plantation and processing which would serve as an alternative livelihood support to the members of the association. These forms of alternative livelihood impact positively on the livelihood of the stakeholders and decrease their engagement in illegal chainsaw milling activities. Furthermore the association is actively lobbying with the district authorities to get access to land to start an afforestation programme. "Organizing ourselves is a step in the

right direction. It helps in voicing our legitimate interests, attracting support and in channelling positive energy towards curbing illegal chainsaw activities for the sustainable management of our forest resources."





Promising future for illegal chainsaw millers

Evans Mensah Sampene
Tropenbos International Ghana

“We know chainsaw milling is illegal but we need the extra income”, you often hear in the forest fringe communities where incomes are generally low and employment opportunities scarce. To explore the potential of viable livelihood opportunities in forested areas, other than illegal ones, a study was commissioned by the EU chainsaw milling project. The increasing degradation of the resource base and the imminent implementation of the Voluntary Partnership Agreement in the forestry sector of Ghana, that could negatively impact chainsaw operators and lumber carriers as most affected vulnerable group, made the study all the more urgent.

Stakeholders with help from the project survey team have been able to identify several promising alternative livelihoods, such as crop farming and petty trading

that can be pursued in all the selected pilot communities. The study further identified capacity gaps that need to be filled for these livelihood options to be successfully tapped. The near future will show if the EU chainsaw milling project is able to foster the right environment for the most affected vulnerable groups to engage in viable livelihood strategies and wean them from illegal chainsaw milling.





The truth at last: the need to review the ban on illegal chainsaw milling

Seth K.A. Duodu

Community Forestry Worker, Assin Fosu (Central Region)

It has become obvious that the chainsaw milling menace in Ghana cannot be fully addressed without taking a second look at the laws and policies that banned it.

The multi-stakeholder dialogue on chainsaw milling, which provides the opportunity for stakeholders to examine the causes and consequences of illegal chainsaw milling, recognizes the ambiguity in the law – most notably section 30 to 32 of LI 1649 of 1998. In this section the first portion talks about the use of chainsaw milling for domestic and community purpose, the second portion bans chainsaw milling for commercial purpose while the third portion bans chainsaw milling entirely. The ambiguity and the changed thinking in Ghana and internationally on how forests should be managed made all stakeholders to recommend a review of

the legislation banning chainsaw milling including legislation on tree ownership and benefit sharing.

Sometimes we have to accept that laws are trespassed not because people are wrong but because the laws are flawed. The good thing is that laws are not cast in stone: they can be changed and improved!





Alternative livelihood options save a biodiversity hotspot at Kyekyerewere

Lawrence Fosu
Community Forestry Worker, Nkawie (Ashanti Region)

Kyekyerewere is an admitted settlement that shares a common boundary with a Globally Significant Biodiversity Area in the Tano-Offin forest reserve in Nkawie Forest District. The land for the community was carved out when the area was constituted as a forest reserve. Population increase and the emergence of chainsaw milling in the communities over time put immense pressure on the adjoining forest. The EU chainsaw milling project has created the awareness in the community that timber production in the area around the community is not an option as the costs of biodiversity loss will be too high. This equation awakened those people who were involved in illegal chainsaw milling and prompted the search for alternative livelihood activities that are not wood based.

The non-wood based activities identified in Kyekyerewere include growing of cash and food crops, livestock rearing, bee-keeping, snail rearing and mushroom production. Those who are interested in engaging in artisanal milling are advised to focus their attention to nearby communities such as Takoradi, Akota, and Nagode which still have abundant wood resources. For Kyekyerewere the priorities are clear: “let us conserve our biodiversity for now and for future generations.”





Addressing the chainsaw paradox, taking small but firm steps to solve a national issue

Bernard Wiredu

Community Forestry Worker, Nkwanta (Volta Region)

For the first time a consortium of organisations in Ghana with EU support has been able to bring together different groups with conflicting interest to a round table discussion to address the challenges posed by illegal chainsaw milling. The groups include the Forestry Commission, chainsaw operators, the timber industries represented by the Ghana Timber Association (GTA) and the Ghana Timber Millers Organization (GTMO), farmers, wood workers, the chiefs, District Assemblies, academia and civil society organizations such as Tropenbos International Ghana. This is done at a common platform termed the multi-stakeholder dialogue.

While the chainsaw operators see GTA and GTMO as being greedy and want to deprive them of their livelihoods, the GTA and GTMO see the chainsaw operators

as destroyers of forests who do not generate any income for the development of the nation. The Forestry Commission is considered as siding with the timber industry to the neglect of the chainsaw operators and the wood workers. Meanwhile the timber industry does not supply the local market with legal timber hereby seriously constraining the growth of the Ghana building sector and as such the national economy at large. The chainsaw operators supply 84% of the domestic market and although their operations are illegal they are instrumental in furthering the growth of the Ghana economy, truly a paradox with serious environmental implications.

During the different rounds of discussion on supplying legal lumber to the domestic market a first step has been made: stakeholders accepted

that both the timber industry and the chainsaw operators jointly supply the domestic market. Exactly how this joint responsibility will be shaped up still needs to be discussed but the process to deal with the chainsaw paradox for once and for all has started and will not grind to a halt easily.





The eyes of farmers and traditional authorities now opened

Dorothy Dampson
Community Forestry Worker, Goaso (Brong Ahafo Region)

In Akrodie village farmers and the traditional authority have realized the need to get involved in addressing the chainsaw problem. Previously their perception was that protecting the forest resource was solely the work of government. But today by being engaged in the EU chainsaw milling project and specifically the multi-stakeholder dialogue they have come to realize that sitting unconcerned will leave them no trees on their farms to shade their cocoa and no royalties as recognition for their traditional leadership. As response the traditional authorities have educated their community members on the need to protect the two forest reserves close to their community, namely Abonyere and Bonsambepo Forest Reserves.

The farmers have realized that only legal timber contractors who have sought their

consent can fell trees on their farms. They now know that they can prevent and/or report anyone who attempts to fell a tree on their farm without their consent. They are aware that even legal timber contractors are to compensate them when they destroy their crops during their operations.

Increased awareness of farmers and traditional authorities contribute to an environment conducive for legal and sustainable forestry in Ghana.





Saved by the “Prammmm.....”

Raymond Ayepah
Community Forestry Worker, Kade (Eastern Region)

A timely intervention by one chainsaw operator at Takyiman town prevented a group of Forestry Commission staff being lynched by an angry mob. The incident occurred during a normal patrol to clamp down on illegal chainsaw activities in their forest district. The group came into contact with a Kia vehicle loaded with illegal chainsawn lumber. In their bid to arrest the vehicle, which proved futile, it hurriedly made its way to Takyiman pursued by the government officers.

Upon reaching the town an angry mob met the staff with the intension of brutalizing them. It took the effort of a chainsaw operator to calm the mob by explaining their new friendship with the Commission as a result of the multi-stakeholder dialogue created by the EU chainsaw milling project. This is a classic example of how conflict among

the forest stakeholders have moved from chaos to dialogue and hence reduction in conflicts.





Chainsaw milling marches to Parliament

Jane Aggrey
Tropenbos International Ghana

After a decade ban on chainsaw milling in Ghana with its unsuccessful implementation, the multi-stakeholder dialogue (MSD) to address the chainsaw milling challenge has called the attention of Parliament to have a second look at the ban. Ghana's forest has been plagued with illegal chainsaw milling which is a main driver of deforestation. A ban was put in place but has not been effective due to issues such as corruption, and the high domestic demand for cheap lumber. In addition, unemployment is rife in the rural areas of Ghana turning small-scale logging, even though it is illegal, into a lucrative livelihood opportunity. To stop the resulting forest degradation, the MSD has engaged stakeholders including chainsaw operators in a constructive dialogue.

On the 30th of June 2011, the assembled stakeholders presented to the Parliamentary Select Committee on Land and Natural Resources at Miklin Hotel in Kumasi the results of the dialogue so far. This was to get Parliament's recognition for the MSD and also the need to review the chainsaw ban in light of the current state of the forest and the identified key drivers of chainsaw milling such as unemployment, inequitable benefit sharing, insecure tree tenure arrangements, and weak law enforcement – all issues that will not be resolved by banning chainsaw milling.

The Sector Minister was happy with the initiative taken by TBI and its partners under the project and gave the assurance that all recommendations sent to Parliament by the MSD will be taken seriously.





The Forestry Commission committed to finding solutions

Marieke Wit
Tropenbos International

Illegal chainsaw milling has created a lot of conflicts in Ghana. Since 1998 the practice has been banned, but it is flourishing. This has resulted in an annual harvest of around 2.5 million m³, contributing to the depletion of Ghana's forest resources. Chainsaw milling is supplying cheap lumber to the domestic markets (84%) and providing livelihoods to more than 700,000 people most of them living in rural areas, surely an economic activity of significance. The Forestry Commission has acknowledged that to solve the chainsaw milling problem, all stakeholders need to be involved, including the illegal ones. Together with Tropenbos International and the Forestry Research Institute of Ghana, the Commission has embarked on a multi-stakeholder dialogue process in the framework of the EU chainsaw milling project, to bridge the conflicting

interests and reach agreement on how to supply the local market with legal timber.

Participation of the Commission as key Government stakeholder is crucial in finding solutions for the rampant forest degradation in Ghana. By having them actively involved in the process, the outcomes of the process will directly feed into policy development processes, ensuring that the policy is grounded on sound information and supported by stakeholders. This will contribute to an effective management of Ghana's remaining forest resources and protect the livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of people.



This publication was produced within the framework of the EU chainsaw milling project. This chainsaw milling project is being carried out by Tropenbos International in collaboration with the Forestry Research Institute of Ghana (FORIG) and the Forestry Commission (FC) of Ghana. It aims to find sustainable solutions to the problems associated with the production of lumber for local timber markets by involving all stakeholders in dialogue, information gathering and the development of alternatives to illegal chainsaw milling practices.

By making knowledge work for forests and people, Tropenbos International contributes to well-informed decision making for improved management and governance of tropical forests. Our longstanding local presence and ability to bring together local, national and international partners make us a trusted partner in sustainable development.

