

2017

CIVIC RESPONSE ANNUAL REPORT



Prepared by Civic Response

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ABOUT CIVIC RESPONSE

Civic Response is a leading natural resource and environmental (NRE) governance policy advocacy organisation working to entrench resource rights.

Founded in 2003 in Accra, Ghana by a group of activists with experience in resource rights campaigns both locally and globally, Civic Response undertakes activities which address the policy needs of communities who depend directly on natural resources, particularly forests.

Our Mission

Civic Response seeks to change social arrangements that entrench marginalisation, exclusion and division as well as provide advocacy and networking support to self-organised citizens' groups in the natural resource and environment sector.

Our vision

We envision a just, productive, pluralistic and tolerant society collectively in control of its resources and systematically improving development opportunities for all citizens' and communities.

Our History

Civic Response is a product of the thoughts of the founding members on how to contribute to the country's development. The original concept as the name reflects is broadly about helping Ghanaian communities live to their civic and democratic responsibilities. The focus was on individual rights (not necessarily on resource rights) and promoting power of civic institutions.

'Student Parliament Project' was one of the first projects Civic Response embarked on in 2003. The aim was to improve the politics of student movement. However, following a workshop convened by CARE Ghana in

Kumasi in the same year, seeking to create a forest sector advocacy group, the need arose to provide a secretariat for this forest sector advocacy group (now called FWG) and Civic Response was unanimously agreed on by the participants in that meeting to host the FWG secretariat. This caused Civic Response to shift into natural resources governance and has remained as such with focus on forest governance which employs lots of Ghanaians in both the informal and formal sectors. Notwithstanding, Civic Response has been closely following processes in the oil and gas sector and is part of the campaign against mining in forest reserves.

Our Work

Currently, our work is divided into three main programmes:

Forest Governance: Forests are at the core of Civic Response's work.



Under the Forest Governance programme we advocate for forest sector policy and legislative reform based on community tenure, management and enterprise. We seek forest management systems that provide just, democratic and sustainable development at local and national levels.

Minerals Governance: The focus of Civic Response in the minerals sector is the salt sub-sector and mining in forest reserves. The salt sub-sector has many community rights challenges including the displacement of communities from their livelihood sources by big companies with interest in salt winning but has received little advocacy attention.



Nevertheless, from the year 2016, we started paying more attention to mining in forest reserves and we have become a major part of the campaign against mining in forest reserves.

Climate Governance: Civic Response has been part of the climate change/REDD+ discourse since 2006 because of the long-term impact of government decisions on communities and also the need to bring the on-going global discussions on climate change and their consequences for forest-owning communities into dialogue with government.



The overall objective for our climate governance work is that democratic and development-rights based responses are adopted and implemented. It is worth mentioning though that, our climate governance programme focuses on mitigation.

Civic Response has also worked over the years in the following thematic areas:

- Water rights campaign (access, distribution, privatization)
- Campaign by the people of Ada to regain control of their Songhor Lagoon which has been their main source of livelihood
- Frequency spectrum: this is directly linked to the struggle by the people of Ada over broadcasting right to operate a community radio; an awareness that communities' access to frequency spectrum as a natural resource is an issue. Community Radio has become an important and strategic tool for communities to make their issues known, advocate and demand accountability globally and locally. It is an area still of interest to Civic Response.
- Health delivery, national health insurance
- Education

MEET THE TEAM

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Name
Kyeretwie Opoku
Dzodzi Tsikata
Eiblin Ni Chlerigh
Coleman Agyeyomah

OUR STAFF

Name	Position
Kafui Denkabe	Administrator
John Azumah Kebir	Accountant
Albert Katako	Head of Programme
Samuel M. Mawutor	Programme Officer
Elvis Oppong-Mensah	Programme Officer
Obed Owusu-Addai	Programme Officer
Jemima Opare-Henaku	Communications Officer



**Kafui Denkabe
Administrator**



**Albert Katako
Head of Programme**



**John Azumah Kebir
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**Jemima Opare-Henaku
Communications Officer**



**Obed Owusu-Addai
Programme Officer**



**Elvis Opong-Mensah
Programme Officer**



**Samuel Mawutor
Programme Officer**

OUR ACTIVITIES, SUCCESSES & CHALLENGES IN THE YEAR

FOREST GOVERNANCE

1. Civil Society-led Independent Forest Monitoring (CSIFM)

Ghana signed the Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) with the European Union (EU) in 2009 and proceeded to develop systems for the trade in legal timber in both the domestic and export market. The Forestry Commission (FC) saw the development of the systems as purely technical and, therefore, the domain of the FC but Civil Society identified monitoring of the governance elements in VPA implementation including processes leading to the issuance of credible and transparent FLEGT licences as areas of concern and subsequently set processes in motion to achieve this. This gave birth to Civil Society-led Independent Forest Monitoring. Below are the activities undertaken in 2017 under CSIFM and achievements:

IFM International Conference: Since CSIFM concept is new to Ghana, Civic Response convened a two-day international conference on Independent Forest Monitoring (IFM) from 10th to 11th of May, 2017 at Ange Hill Hotel, East Legon, Accra. In attendance were 78 participants including 15 women from Cameroon, Cote D'Ivoire, Liberia, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, United Kingdom, Belgium, Netherlands, Indonesia, Turkey and Ghana.

The objective of the conference was to offer a platform to share lessons and experiences, discuss challenges, dangers and opportunities for Independence Forest Monitoring as well as to build a consensus on the way forward and strategize for the



Participants at IFM conference



Dep. Min. delivering address at the confab

future of IFM on the continent. This conference provided opportunities for Ghanaian participants to assess options, approach and structure for CSIFM in Ghana.

The conference was opened by the Deputy Minister for the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources, Hon. Owusu Benito Bio. Key officials from the FC made presentations at this conference and also participated in panel discussions. This paved the way for further discussions between Civic Response and MLNR/FC on conceptualizing IFM in Ghana.

Benefits of CSIFM: The VPA identified lack of law enforcement as one of the major challenges in the forestry sector. CSIFM is seen by Civic Response as complementing FC's effort at law enforcement. It provides community monitors with the framework to report forest infractions happening on the blind side of the FC to them for corrective actions to be instituted and implemented. Since CSIFM is new in Ghana, it is important to distil and share the benefits/added value of CSIFM in complementing the law enforcement efforts of the FC for acceptability of the concept into national framework. This would be the next phase of Civic Response's engagement with the FC.

Independent Forest Monitoring in Real Time: The International IFM workshop provided opportunity for Civic Response to discuss tools to be used for CSIFM with Rainforest Foundation UK (RFUK). Civic Response signed an MoU with RFUK to use the Forestlink platform for Real Time Monitoring (RTM) and reporting of forest infractions in Ghana in November 2017. By the close of 2017, RFUK had trained six Civic Response staff on operationalizing RTM using the Forestlink platform developed



Community members receive training on data gathering using android devices.

by RFUK. This system is already in use in Ghana by Friends of the Earth–Ghana (FOE-Gh), FODER in Cameroon and GASHE in Democratic Republic of Congo.

Subsequently in November 2017, Civic Response trained 35 Community monitors (including 5 women) from 15 districts on the use of RTM tools. The training was on how to use android

mobile phones to report forest infractions happening in their communities via SMS to the Forestlink platform hosted by Civic Response.

By the end of December 2017, community monitors had sent in over 200 alerts to the platform for verification, which is done at three levels:

- ✚ This first level verification is usually done by a local NGO staff based in the district where the alert is sent from or a staff of the NGO deploying RTM. It is triggered when community monitors report an illegality through the alert received on the Forestlink Platform. The verification assesses if the alert raised is valid or not, that is if indeed a law has been violated. This level of verification, therefore, screens out bad or irrelevant alerts from actionable alerts.
- ✚ The second level verification happens when the first level verification is done by a local NGO and not directly by the NGO deploying RTM. In this level of verification, a staff of the NGO deploying the RTM visits the community to examine the evidence and collect more evidence to properly verify an infraction when it is confirmed by the local NGO.
- ✚ The third level of verification is done in conjunction with the forest authority (FSD in this case) at the district level to enable him/her accept the fact that an infraction

has taken place and institute the necessary corrective action(s). At this level, the forest authority is part of a field team (made up of CSOs and forest regulator) who investigate the specific verified infractions reported. The team examines the evidence collected and cross-references with relevant documents to establish if the infraction is truly an illegality. The forest authority subsequently denounces or issues corrective instructions to whoever is found to have been in violation of the law.

CSO participating in TVD Audits as Observers: One critical element of Ghana's Legality Assurance System (GhLAS) for legal timber products is verification. The results of verification, whether good or bad, will contribute greatly to public opinion of the transparency, integrity and credibility or otherwise of Ghana's FLEGT licensing system. Public awareness of how bad verifications are addressed builds stakeholders' confidence in the credibility and integrity of the GhLAS. In 2014, Civic Response initiated discussions with the Forestry Commission (FC) to enable CSOs participate in audits of the GWTS as observers to have a better understanding of the processes, how it links compliance with community rights such as implementation of SRAs, negotiation and payment of compensations, awards of timber rights, yield allocation, and fulfilment of fiscal obligations of industry members. In a stakeholder meeting held in April 2017 at the FC Boardroom, the FC announced to all stakeholders (industry, CSOs and FC) that it has become an accepted norm for CSOs to participate in Timber Validation Directorate (TVD) of the FC audits as observers as part of government's commitments to demonstrate transparency in the operations of the GhLAS. These transparency provisions are part of the bill before Parliament. In November 2017, this bill was passed into law.



Participants keenly listening to instructor

For effective CSOs participation in TVD audits, CSOs need to be conversant with TVD legality verification standards. Thus in June 2017, Civic Response facilitated and convened training for eighteen (18) representatives (including 3 women) from 12 organisations. The training was undertaken by Resource People from Proforest, Civic Response and the Timber

Validation Directorate (TVD) of the FC. The training was in two parts: theoretical and practical fieldwork including mock auditing. The topics for the theoretical sessions included:

- Introduction to FLEGT and Ghana's VPA
- Ghana Legality Assurance System
- Ghana legality standard (principles and criteria)
- The verification process
- Performing the audit
- Roles of civil society in the verification of legal timber
- Auditor behaviour – characteristics of a good Observer/Assessor

The fieldwork enabled the trainees to experience practical audits in some timber companies in the Sefwi Wiawso District of the Western Region of Ghana. Following these trainings which ended in September 2017, six of the trained CSO observers participated in TVD audits held in three districts in Brong Ahafo Region in November 2017. The focus was in the following areas:

- Was the scope and depth of the audit enough to cover all the relevant areas of compliance?
- How did the audit team go about gathering evidence?
- Are these evidences properly triangulated?
- How does the audit team communicate their findings?
- Does the wording of the corrective actions communicate the gravity of the identified non-compliance?

Forest Sector Transparency: Ghana being the first country to sign the VPA did not have an annex on transparency which should have spelt out transparency obligations of government. Subsequent countries who signed the VPA with the EU did have a transparency annex. In 2012, Civic Response initiated discussions with the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources on transparency of forest sector information that should be in the public domain. The Ministry requested for the type of information that CSOs would like to see in the public domain and Civic Response subsequently convened meetings of forest sector NGOs to agree on the information needs of CSOs which was presented to the Ministry. In 2014, the Ministry committed officially to making information available to CSOs on request. CSOs tested the commitment of the Ministry by requesting for information but faced serious obstacles which were brought to the attention of stakeholders. In 2016, Civic Response mooted the idea of a web portal on the Ghana Wood Tracking System (GWTS) to make information available to the public in real time and eventually sourced funding from the FAO-EU FLEGT programme when the concept was accepted by the Ministry.

In 2017, in a stakeholders meeting comprising MLNR, FC, timber industry, and CSOs, a consensus was reached on information to be accessed from the GWTS through the web portal. These are: i) source of timber; ii) timber rights allocation; iii) timber harvesting operations; iv) transportation; v) timber processing; vi) social obligations; vii) fiscal obligations, and viii) timber trade.

These transparency requirements are now part of a new legislation: Timber Resource Management and Legality Licensing Regulations, 2017 LI 2254 passed by Parliament in November 2017 (section 76 of LI 2254) and it puts the FC ahead of other government agencies as far as transparency is concerned and ahead of the passage of the Right to Information Bill.

The web portal would have several advantages for both industry and government. It is expected to:

- ✚ Make due diligence requirements & information easily accessible to the international timber buyers, Competent Authorities etc.
- ✚ Reduce the burden on timber industries to provide these information
- ✚ Enhance credibility of Ghanaian timber industries in the international arena/market
- ✚ Provide platform for industry to share product information, market products, etc. with the local and international community.
- ✚ Ownership of GWTS would be with FC showing FC's commitment to demonstrating transparency.
- ✚ Enable FC to ensure complete pre FLEGT license due diligence and credibility of FLEGT licenses issued.
- ✚ Ensure integrity and credibility of GWTS
- ✚ Enhance FC's ability to fulfil the transparency requirements of LI2254

2. Development of National Database for Social Responsibility Agreements (SRAs)

This action was initiated in 2016 as part of Civic Response's forest governance framework. Our interactions with forest fringed communities had revealed that most of them do not benefit from SRAs either because industry members take advantage of their ignorance of the legislative provisions to comply with SRA or some chiefs hijack the SRAs for themselves in addition to receiving royalties.

SRA has become a legal requirement. Following several meetings with the Forestry Commission in 2017, Civic Response and FC agreed on the framework, template and roll out of the national SRA database to serve as source of evidence for tracking industry compliance/fulfilment of SRAs. The database would be informed by timber permits issued by FC and would also provide information for communities to use to

negotiate SRAs, as well as hold accountable those companies who fail to comply with SRAs. The roll out starts from 2018.

3. Supporting Communities to Realise Tree Tenure Rights

In 2015, Civic Response undertook a national study titled, “Forest communities opt for tenure reforms that strengthen their ownership and control of forest resources: a study of land and tree tenure situation in Ghana.” This study revealed the preferences of farmers across the country for modalities and benefit sharing arrangements for tree tenure. In 2016, the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources (MLNR) recruited a consultant who undertook a similar study incorporating Civic Response’s work and came out with the draft national policy framework for tree tenure.

In 2017, Civic Response was part of a small stakeholder team put together by MLNR to develop guidelines for the implementation of the Consultant’s work. The essence of this action was to create incentives for farmers and land owners to maintain trees on their farms and improve forest cover through nurturing of trees. A key objective is to ensure farmers and land owners receive significant financial benefits from timber trees on their farms. It is expected that when the tree tenure guideline and benefit sharing regulation is completed with legislative backing in 2018, it will become the main national benefit sharing scheme in the forestry sector.

4. Developing Guidelines for District Assemblies use of forest royalties

Strategic Direction 6.1.2 of the 2012 Forest and Wildlife Policy says “Decentralize forestry governance system to local levels to ensure transparency, accountability and equity and to define the roles of Traditional Authorities, local government (District Assemblies), NGOs, Community Based Organizations (CBOs) in forest and wildlife management.” District Assemblies are one of the constitutional beneficiaries of forest royalties; receiving 55%. However, the Constitution did not prescribe what the District

Assemblies should use the forest royalties for. Earlier studies conducted by Civic Response in 2017 revealed that most District Assemblies have used it to fill in the gaps in their administrative overheads and have hardly been transparent or accountable in its use. There have been on-going discussions among forest stakeholders on the need to develop guidelines for District Assemblies' use of forest royalties which should address issues of transparency, accountability as well as ensure part of the forest royalties is ploughed back into forest resource governance and management.

Accordingly, Civic Response recruited a consultant to develop a draft guideline for District Assemblies' use of timber royalties in consultation with eight District Assemblies, the Ministries of Lands and Natural Resources, and Local Government. The draft guideline would be taken through wider stakeholder consultations in 2018 before being finalized for implementation.

5. Media Engagement

In 2017, Civic Response engaged the services of a media consultant to make four video documentaries:

- ✚ A video documentary on the impact of Civic Response's work as seen from the perspective of the key stakeholders we work with: Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources, Forestry Commission, Communities, and CSOs.
- ✚ A video documentary on causes and impact of Climate change to use in engaging communities on climate change discourse.
- ✚ A training video on SRA which communities can watch to stimulate local level discussions on whether they are negotiating SRAs the right way or not and learn the right approaches from the video.
- ✚ A training video on compensations which communities can watch to stimulate local level discussions on whether communities are negotiating compensations for destroyed crops correctly or not and learn the correct approaches from the it.

Also over the period, Civic Response had several media engagements to discuss issues on natural resources. On 15th February 2017, Civic Response and FWG issued a press statement to commend the Minister for initiating steps towards sanitizing the forest sub-sector. The full statement can be find on civicresponsegh.org as well as: http://loggingoff.info/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Press-Release_sanitizing-the-Forest-sub_sector_EDITED

Following this publication, there were a number of statements and directives from the Presidency and the Hon. Minister of Lands and Natural on sanitizing the forestry sector including the cancellation of doubtful contract signed by the then government with a private mining company in December 2016 just before it went out of power; and banning small scale surface mining. It is difficult to say if these follow up directives were as a result of the press statement but we believe it contributed to it especially when in 2016, CSOs had sent a petition to the Presidency complaining about illegalities associated with the same company mining in the Tano Offin Forest Reserve.

MINERALS GOVERNANCE

Our focus in 2017 was on advocacy campaign against mining in forest reserves. A review of the guidelines for mining in forest reserves was initiated by the Chamber of Mines through the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) with the intention of passing the guidelines into policy and law. Kasa facilitated a CSOs' discussion on the issue in May 2017 which enabled CSOs including Civic Response and Wacam to make inputs, analysing why the guidelines could not be passed into law. Reasons given include the following:

- ✚ The 2% mining in forest reserves as captured in the guidelines is neither backed by any policy nor by law. It was purely a Chamber of Mines lobby. Therefore, passing the 2% lobby into law would be legalizing an illegality and undermining the provisions in the 2012 Forest and Wildlife Policy (FWP).
- ✚ The 2012 FWP and the Forest Development Master Plan which is the vehicle for implementing the FWP clearly indicates intensions and milestones for ending mining in forest reserves.
- ✚ The provisions in the guidelines has further intensions to take up more space in the forest reserves to accommodate logistics of the mining companies and therefore further removal of forest cover.

There has been no further information from the EPA on the next steps nor the final conclusions from these consultations.

CLIMATE GOVERNANCE

Our work in climate governance in 2017 focussed on participation in the policy dialogue processes through the national REDD+ steering committee, the World Bank's Dedicated Grant Mechanism (DGM), and the SDG 13 and 15 platforms. The objective of Civic Response in these spaces are to ensure discussions on carbon rights and benefit sharing schemes from the carbon market respect communities' rights and ownership of forest resources. It is also to ensure that significant portions of the finances from the carbon money goes to farmers as incentives for them to maintain and grow more forests for carbon sequestration. Civic Response is represented on the SDG 13 sub group. Civic Response being the secretariat for Forest Watch Ghana has responsibilities for convening the SDG 15 sub group. Civic Response convenes FWG general meetings 3 times a year and will add on an additional day to the agenda to convene the SDG 15 sub group meeting.

DONORS		
<p>FAO - EU FLEGT PROGRAMME</p> 		
OUR PARTNERS		
		
		



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