

2021

CIVIC RESPONSE ANNUAL REPORT



FLEGT-VPA Implementation Impact Survey carried out in 2021

CONTENTS

About Civic Response.....	3
Meet the Team.....	9
Our Activities & Successes.....	11
Resource Mobilisation.....	21
Donors & Partners.....	23
Contact Details.....	24



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 enhance civic and citizens right for improved governance and accountability throughout the country for development and for resource rights to improve livelihoods of individuals, communities and national development.

'Student Parliament Project' was one of the first projects Civic Response embarked on in 2003 to improve the understanding and capacity of student movements in governance. Following a workshop convened by CARE

Ghana in Kumasi in the same year, seeking to mobilise NGOs in the forest sector for advocacy for forest governance advocacy from community to national level, the need arose to provide a secretariat for this forest sector advocacy group (now known as Forest Watch Ghana; FWG). Civic Response was unanimously agreed on by the participants in that meeting to host the FWG secretariat. This caused Civic Response to shift into the natural resources sector and remained as such with focus on natural resource governance and using same to achieve citizens' right and responsibilities in the natural resource sector. It became logical to remain in the natural resources sector as it employs lots of Ghanaians in both the informal and formal sector as well as increasing international focus and demand for legal timber. Legal timber cannot be achieved through just enforcement of forest sector laws but also citizens' mobilisation to demand respect for their rights and holding stakeholders accountable at local and national levels accountable because forest management is not only a technical issue but social arrangements as well.

Our Work

Currently, our work is divided into four 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 development. We seek forest management systems that provide just, democratic and sustainable development at local and national levels. We are also

concerned about Chinese involvement in illegal natural resource exploitation especially Rosewood and illegal surface mining. We are working with communities to monitor, document and publish findings for advocacy. Lack of tree tenure for farmers and landowners is promoting deforestation. Civic Response is advocating for farmers and landowners to

receive significant financial benefits from nurtured trees as an incentive to maintain trees on farm.

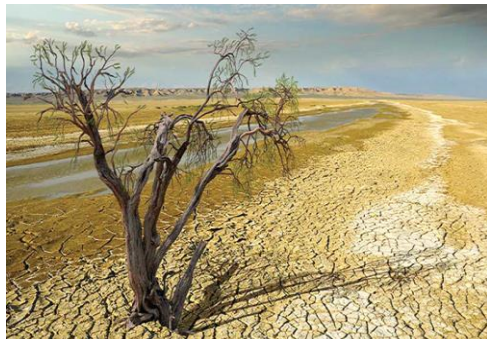
Minerals Governance: The focus of Civic Response in the minerals sector since 2016 is illegal surface mining. Civic Response in collaboration with Wacom and Kasa have been involved in evidence-based advocacy including “naming and shaming.” We are concerned about the destruction of our forest



Photo by Edem Srem

reserves by illegal surface mining with the involvement of politicians who appear to have no regard for the impact of their actions on climate change and the health of our cocoa industry. We are again concerned about Chinese involvement in the promotion of illegal surface mining and consequent environmental degradation and educating communities on how all these will come back later to affect their health and livelihoods negatively.

Climate Governance: In 2006, Civic Response got involved in the climate change/REDD+ discourse not only because of the impact of government decisions on communities in the long run but also to understand the on-going global discussions on climate change and their consequences for forest-owning communities.



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. We are working with communities to understand the causes of climate change, impact, how communities' activities contribute to climate change, and how communities can support mitigation efforts. Over the last couple of years, we are also involved in the discussions on National Determined Contributions (NDCs) with specific interests in restoration and the involvement of communities and the private sector. We are aware of the importance of forests to the achievement of the NDCs and mobilising CSOs in the sector for capacity building and monitoring the implementation of forest sector NDC priority areas.

Land Governance: Current major challenges in the land sector include large-scale land acquisition for plantation development against carbon offsetting, biofuel development, as well as other agricultural commodities. Large-scale land acquisition by companies and individuals deprives community members, whose livelihood depends on access to these lands, their source of livelihood and getting further entrenched into poverty. Large-scale land acquisition has been on the ascendency in recent times, especially across Sub-Saharan Africa.



To regulate the spate of large-scale land acquisition, the Lands Commission has developed a draft national guideline on large-scale land acquisition, which spells out the roles and responsibilities of investors in large scale land acquisition, as well as the limits of the size of land that can be acquired. It however, does not limit multiple acquisition of large scale land acquisition. The guideline has no legal backing. Studies conducted by Civic Response into some of the large scale land acquisition in Ghana has revealed that Free Prior Informed Consent (FPIC) was not applied in the large scale lands acquired by investors and farmers were left at the mercy of the investors who decided how much to compensate affected farmers. The study revealed that farmers were compensated for cash crops.

However, food crops were considered by the companies as flowers and not compensated for. The farmers were also not compensated for loss of access to their lands in situations where their lease had not expired before the land was taken away from them. Some farmers who were employed on the lands the companies had taken away from them indicated they earn less than 50% of what they used to earn when the land was in their care.

Security of land tenure for most farmers is an issue because they have no documented title deeds/agreements with the landowners on their farmlands. This makes them very vulnerable, insecure and the reason why they can easily lose the lands they are farming on to investors. Farmers are not able to undertake any long-term investments like growing trees because they lack secure land tenure. The insecurity of land tenure for farmers is one of the drivers of deforestation. Civic Response's land governance campaign focuses on advocacy for a national land governance framework that is climate conscious and socially just.

In December 2020, the President passed the land bill into law (Land Act 1036). Civic Response has been studying the Land Act so as to create community awareness on the Land Act for improved land governance and administration.

Our approach to work:

Research

We undertake research in our various programme areas (forest governance, land governance, minerals governance and climate governance) to generate evidence for our advocacy campaigns.

Capacity Building

We organise training activities for our partner organisations in the natural resource sector in order to ensure consistency in the work we do with them. Our training activities also ensure that the community-based organisations

we work with are able to identify and take up critical natural resource rights issues emanating from their own engagement with stakeholders at the local level. Our training activities also extend to local communities and sometimes government stakeholders.

Networking and Coalition Building



Civic Response currently hosts Forest Watch Ghana, the foremost coalition of organisations and individuals in the forest sector working to promote community-based resource management. We also work with networks both locally and internationally on resource rights issues. In Ghana, Civic Response is a member of the National Coalition on Mining (NCOM), Civil Society Coalition on Land (CICOL) and Kasa Initiative Ghana. We also work with the Rights and Resources Initiative (RRI) on land tenure issues, FERN on Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) issues and the International Land Coalition. Civic Response is also a founding member of the Africa Community Rights Network (ACRN), a vehicle for community tenure rights campaign in Africa.

Advocacy

Advocacy is at the core of all our programmes. Civic Response campaigns for rights-based policy formulation and implementation in the areas of forests, land, climate change, and minerals. We believe that communities must be effectively engaged in making decisions about their land and other natural resources, which serve as their livelihood. They must also have an equitable share of the benefits that accrue from the exploitation of these resources.

MEET THE TEAM

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

	
Kyeretwie Opoku	Dzodzi Tsikata
	
Eiblin Ni Chleirigh	Coleman Agyeyomah

OUR STAFF



Kafui Denkabe
Administrator



John Azumah Kebir
Accountant



Albert Katako
Head of Programme



Elvis Oppong-Mensah
Programme Officer



Belinda Boator
Communications Officer

OUR ACTIVITIES & SUCCESSES IN THE YEAR

FOREST GOVERNANCE

Forest governance is a key advocacy area for Civic Response. Below is a summary of activities implemented in 2021 as part of Civic Response's forest governance campaign:

1. Real Time Monitoring (RTM)

Since 2018, Civic Response with the support of Rainforest Foundation UK (RFUK) has been implementing Real Time Monitoring (RTM) of Ghana's forest using the Forestlink app. We have so far trained 75 forest-fringe communities in 15 districts across the country to report forest infractions using the Forestlink mobile application. However, Covid-19 restrictions in 2020 and 2021 interrupted the implementation of RTM which also led to a drastic reduction of the number of alerts being sent on the platform.



A community durbar

Thus in August 2021, Civic Response embarked on community visits to project areas in order to revamp RTM implementation in Ghana and to understand the reason behind the reduction of alerts received. Civic Response visited 49 communities in 15 districts across the country. The districts visited were Ho in the Volta Region, Jasikan in the Oti Region, Goaso in the Ahafo Region, Dormaa in

the Bono Region, Bibiani, Sefwi Wiawso, Juaboso & Aowin in the Western North Region, Kumawu, New Edubiase & Bosome Freho in the Ashanti Region, Oda, Kade & Asankragwa in the Eastern Region as well as Assin Fosu in the Central Region.

From the field visits, it was observed that the following reasons accounted for the reduction of alerts to the platform;

1. Technical Issues: Some community monitors lost the application on their phones whilst some apps were corrupted. It was also observed that some monitors sent alerts to the pilot forestlink platform specifically meant for those who uploaded the RTM app on their personal phones.
2. Feedback: Some community monitors mentioned they were discouraged from sending alerts due to the lack of feedback on the alerts sent to the platform.
3. Others also mentioned the reduction of infractions in their communities resulting in limited illegalities to be reported. They however acknowledged infractions were still occurring in nearby communities.

Community Monitors Training

As a result of the challenges identified during the community visits, Civic Response organised a capacity update, lessons and experience sharing workshop for community monitors and verifiers in October 2021 in Accra to address the challenges. The community monitors shared their experiences working on the fields, lessons learnt, challenges encountered as well as updated their skills. In all, community monitors from 14 districts shared their experiences using the forestlink App.

RFUK's Visit to Ghana

Civic Response and RFUK have been implementing the project called *Embedding Community Real Time Monitoring to Sustain Livelihoods and Forests in Central and West Africa* project since 2018. The project which aims at improving forest governance through more effective participation of forest communities and civil society (thereby improving rights and livelihoods for forest peoples and promoting stronger environmental sustainability), contributes to Ghana's VPA process.



The meeting with CSIFM platform members

In December 2021, two representatives from RFUK, Robyn Stewards (Project Coordinator – Real-Time Monitoring, Africa) and Ana Osuna Orozco (RFUK Programme Director) paid a working visit to Civic Response to discuss RTM strategy and policy advocacy goals for

Ghana as well as global project objectives of RFUK. Whilst in Ghana, the representatives held fruitful meetings with Civil Society-led Independent Forest Monitoring (CSIFM) platform members, Roberto Schiliro- Team Leader Infrastructure and Sustainable Development of EUD in Ghana as well as Oppong Sasu, the immediate past Executive Director of the Forestry Commission (FC). In the meeting with CSIFM, RFUK announced its intentions of deploying forestlink to monitor cocoa in Ghana.

2. FLEGT-VPA

Collecting Data to Contribute to Implementation of Ghana's VPA Impact Monitoring Framework Project

In 2009, Ghana signed a Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) with the European Union (EU) to trade in legal timber in both the domestic and export markets with the ultimate aim of issuing FLEGT licenses as prove of the legality of the timber. Article 17 of the VPA enjoins the parties (Ghana and EU) to develop better understanding of the impact of implementing VPA on the livelihoods of potentially affected stakeholders.

Consequently, a Joint Team on Impact Monitoring (JTIM) developed a VPA Impact Monitoring (IM) framework for monitoring VPA implementation impact in 7 key areas,

namely livelihoods, forest conditions, forest governance, market performance, forest management, revenue generation and the VPA stakeholder deliberative process.

Data gaps were identified by the JTIM which could not be filled with data from the Forestry Commission (FC) or other sources.

In order to fill the data gaps in livelihoods, VPA stakeholder deliberative processes and indicator FC 10, Civic Response in conjunction with ResourceTrust Network developed the project titled *“Collecting Data to Contribute to Implementation of Ghana’s VPA Impact Monitoring Framework”* which collected VPA impact monitoring baseline information in livelihoods, VPA stakeholder deliberative processes, and FC 10.

The overall objective of the project was to collect data on VPA Stakeholder deliberative processes, livelihoods and forest conditions to feed Ghana’s VPA Impact Monitoring framework. Baseline data on livelihoods and VPA Stakeholder deliberative processes were collected in 4 Forest Window Districts (FWDs) namely Goaso, Nkawie, Sefwi Wiawso and Akim Oda.

Key Finding On Livelihood

- Crop cultivation was the main source of livelihood for majority of households in the forest fringe communities in the four selected forest window districts.
- Wage/salaried income was the second largest and also significant.
- Farming activities, according to the study, are mostly undertaken off forest reserve areas.
- Another significant finding is the low dependence on the forest for Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP).
- The last two findings together show that dependence on the forest as source of income for households living in the forest fringe communities is low.

The following are recommendations based on the Perception Survey of the Impact of VPA Agreement Multi-Stakeholder Deliberative Processes

- The consultative and participatory environment created prior to and during the VPA's development should be sustained to get stakeholders continuous buy-in for the VPA's implementation
- While the active involvement of CSOs should be encouraged, the traditional authorities- the custodians of the stool lands- must be given a role to play in the implementation and monitoring of the VPA
- There is the need to improve and enforce laws on timber extraction to reduce illegality
- The benefits sharing arrangement through the institution of the SRA should be vigorously pursued to ensure communities within which timber exploitation is undertaken get a share to develop their communities.

This project came to an end in June 2021 with a successful closeout workshop in Accra where the special guest of honour, Mr. Musah Abu-Juam, Technical Director in charge of Forestry at the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources (MLNR) announced that MLNR had instructed the FC to stop the issuance of Special Permits for logging in Ghana's forests. The Head of Programmes at Civic Response, Mr. Albert Katako identified Covid-19 as a major challenge in implementing the project. According to him, the outbreak of the disease delayed the field work particularly the data collection. With regards to FC



Mr. Musah Abu-Juam speaking at the closeout workshop

10 which had to do with the ratio of illegal timber to legal timber in both the formal and informal sectors, he disclosed that after deliberations with the JTIM, a decision was taken to collect data on a national scale instead of the initial plan to do so in only 4 Forest Window Districts (FWDs). Unfortunately, the project could not support that. However, a small task team put together has developed the building blocks for data collection on a national scale on FC 10.

Civic Response and Resource Trust Network under the auspices of the FAO-EU FLEGT Programme with funding from EU, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) and UKAid implemented the project.

Visit by Association of Volunteers in International Service (AVSI) Foundation of Cote d'Ivoire

The FAO-EU FLEGT Programme is supporting the structuring and improvement of Cote d'Ivoire's domestic market under the VPA. As part of the process, Cote d'Ivoire realised the need to set up a purchasing centre to ensure availability of legal timber and focus on



The meeting hosted by Civic Response

formalisation and structuring of the informal stakeholders in the artisanal wood industry. Following this, in April 2021, a six-member delegation from Cote d'Ivoire made up of leaders of various wood users, artisans and manufacturers' associations paid a working visit to Ghana to understudy the Ghanaian system including experiences and lessons learnt in the wood sector and capitalise on

that to improve the restructuring and management of the sector so as to achieve a sustainable alliance of wood stakeholders in that country. As part of the visit to

Ghana, Civic Response hosted a meeting between the AVSI delegation from Cote d'Ivoire, representatives of Ghanaian CSOs and the Legal Working Group in forestry. The delegation was interested in understanding the role(s) CSOs play in the formalisation of legal forest sector business and trade in Ghana, particularly regarding the implementation of FLEGT as well as relationship between CSOs, local communities, government agencies and the private sector. At the meeting, the delegation was admonished to guard Cote d'Ivoire's forest against illegal mining so as not to fall into the same fate as Ghana where illegal mining is a menace destroying forests and water bodies. Illegal mining poses a major threat to the timber industry due to the fact that industry players are not allowed to salvage the timber before the commencement of the illegal mining activity.

3. SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AGREEMENT (SRA) MANUAL

Communities living within 5km radius of forests where logging is taking place are entitled to receive 5% of stumpage fees paid by timber companies as SRA payments. These communities have been admonished to use the SRA funds received for developmental projects that are beneficial to the entire community.

From our interactions with about 75 communities on their SRA projects, Civic Response realised that while most communities are doing well with their SRA projects, their accountability mechanisms need to be strengthened to be able to be transparent and accountable. The SRA projects are implemented and managed by the community SRA committees who need capacity building in records keeping, transparency, accountability, value for money among others. Civic Response therefore developed training manuals for their capacity building and has started training the SRA committees in transparency and accountability processes.

SRA provides financial incentives to forest fringed communities (whether settler communities or indigenes) as an incentive for them to protect the forest resources around them. It is also a mechanism for ensuring that all timber operations are carried out in a socially responsible manner with due respect for the rights of the land owners and fringe communities.

4. YENSORE PROGRAMME

Since 2017, Civic Response has been working with CARE Ghana under the Yensore programme which seeks to strengthen core partners' capacity to influence government and private companies in the mining, oil & gas and forest sectors. The programme seeks to deepen the focus on rights and access to productive resources and economic opportunities as well as community resilience and adaptation to climate change.

Civic Response's focus on the Yensore programme is in the forestry sector in 5 focal areas:

- Advocacy to eliminate causes of timber illegalities and promote transparency and accountability in the forestry sector, ensuring community rights are respected and enforced.
- Advocacy against mining in forest reserves;
- Supporting communities to monitor and report forest infractions in real time using Forestlink as part of ensuring forest law enforcement
- Monitoring FLEGT VPA implementation processes, and
- Maintaining FWG as the forest sector NGO coalition and the vehicle for forest sector advocacy

The Yensore programme came to an end in 2021 following successful implementation.

5. Forest Watch Ghana

In 2021, Civic Response continued to serve as the secretariat of Forest Watch Ghana (FWG), the national campaign vehicle of civil society organisations and individuals committed to the rights of poor forest users.

In its capacity as the Coalition's secretariat, Civic Response successfully organised the FWG annual general meeting and a general meeting, during which issues relevant to the forestry sector were discussed. Members also shared updates of their activities.



Tree seedlings

In 2021, the government of Ghana initiated the Green Ghana project which was aimed at restoring Ghana's depleted forest cover through tree planting. It was also to reduce the impact of climate change on Ghana.

The initiative which was launched on June 11, 2021, saw many top government officials and members of the public plant trees in their homes, schools, and other designated areas on Green Ghana Day. The target was to plant five million trees including fruits and ornamentals.

FWG members were not left out either. It came to light during the 2021 AGM that FWG members actively participated in the exercise by providing seedlings as well planting trees on the said day. It was agreed at the meeting that the tree planting activities carried out by FWG members be documented. The Green Ghana Day is expected to be commemorated on June 11 every year.

CLIMATE GOVERNANCE



In this reporting period, Civic Response worked with Kasa Initiative Secretariat in mobilising CSOs in the natural resource sector to contribute to the review of Ghana's Nationally Determined Contributions in the forest and natural resource sector. CSOs input are reflected in Ghana's NDC submitted to the

UNFCCC in COP 26.

LAND GOVERNANCE

The Land Act 1036 (2020) was passed in December 2020. Civic Response has since gone through comparing the content of the Land Bill with the Land Act to ensure consistency with the Land Bill. Civic Response has been working on developing a simplified version of the Land Act for community awareness creation.



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGS)



Within this reporting period Civic Response, as the convenor for SDG Goal 15 for Forest Watch Ghana, collaborated with the CSOs SDG platform to coordinate the input of SDG Goal 15 by members into the drafting of Non-Profit Organisations

Policy 2020 and Non-Profit Organizations Directives 2020.

RESOURCE MOBILISATION



In 2021, Civic Response undertook the following projects:

- Civic Response in conjunction with Rainforest Foundation UK (RFUK) is working together to enhance and consolidate the work on Civil Society-led Independence Forest Monitoring began under the FAO-EU FLEGT Programme. Under this project, Civic Response will support about 50 communities to monitor and report forest infractions with the use of a mobile app. This project is being implemented in conjunction with the Forestry Commission as part of its efforts to ensure law enforcement and reduce illegalities.
- Civic Response in conjunction with Resource Trust implemented the project entitled *Collecting Data to Contribute to the Implementation of Ghana's VPA Impact Monitoring Framework* under the auspices of the FAO-EU FLEGT Programme. This project aimed at collecting baseline information on identified data gaps in three VPA impact areas, namely: livelihoods, forest condition (FC 10 - volume of illegal timber and confiscated timber as "illegal removals") and VPA stakeholder deliberative processes in order to assess the impact of the VPA implementation in these three areas.
- Civic Response in conjunction with Fern (based in Brussels and London) is working on Consolidating good governance, tackling illegalities in Ghana's forest

sector. Under this project, Civic Response will be working with two sector ministries to develop guidelines for District Assemblies' use of timber royalties; document timber companies' compliance with forest sector laws, especially SRA fulfilment, and compensations for destroyed crops.

- Civic Response also worked with CARE Ghana under the Yensore programme which sought to strengthen core partners' capacity to influence government and private companies in the mining, oil & gas and forest sectors. The programme deepened the focus on rights and access to productive resources and economic opportunities as well as community resilience and adaptation to climate change. The capacity of core partners was strengthened to systematically collect and document evidence, rights abuses by extractive companies and other power holders.

DONORS		
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OUR PARTNERS		
 Forest Watch GHANA	 care	 RIGHTS + RESOURCES
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