

Analysis of gender impacts of the Ghana Voluntary Partnership Agreement with European Union



Foreword from Fern

There is a growing body of research, evidence and awareness that the forest sector, as in other natural resource sectors, is prone to policies and practices that disempower women and undervalue women's contribution to natural resource management. While recent academic literature on forests and gender abounds, only rarely is this work taken up and used in practical ways to begin to shape future policies.

For over two decades Fern has been working with civil society groups to strengthen community ownership and improve the way forests are managed, with the aim of ensuring resources are used for the benefit of local people, the environment and the climate. Part of this work has included creating political space within Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade Voluntary Partnership Agreement (FLEGT VPA) processes, so that the concerns, perspectives and interests of vulnerable groups influence the way forest resources are managed and distributed. During this time, gender issues have received only scant attention.

Fern commissioned this study of gender issues in Ghana's FLEGT VPA as a tentative first step to redressing the imbalance. It offers TAYLOR CRABBE INNIATIVE's observations about how gender issues have been dealt with in Ghana's VPA (which is virtually not at all) and thoughts about how they might be addressed as the process progresses. There is more to do, in terms of analysis and especially in terms of action. We hope this study will encourage readers to tackle gender issues within FLEGT VPA processes globally.



As a tool for forestry sector reform, the Ghana VPA has the potential to ensure that gender issues, which have hitherto been overlooked, are brought to bear in the sector's programmes and activities.

Summary

Historically, forestry policies and institutions in Ghana have been gender-blind¹, making the sector patriarchal. The work culture and environment within the forestry sector, particularly in timber production is not gender-friendly and has created a *de facto* natural selection system which is skewed towards male-dominance. A study published by the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) in 2007 observed that, "*socio-cultural perceptions characterize the work environment in the forestry sector as both male and female staff (66.7 per cent) stated that there is not enough confidence placed in women and that men are perceived to be more capable.*"² Lack of promotion opportunities and career progression are some of the challenges, which could

¹ Gender-blind refers to the failure to recognise that the roles and responsibilities of women and men are ascribed to, or imposed upon, them in specific social, cultural, religious, economic and political context.

² Ardayio-Schandorf, E. (2007): Gender Mainstreaming in Forestry in Africa: The case of Ghana. A paper submitted to the FAO



be improved through training, motivation, promotion, and attitudinal changes towards women to attract and retain females in the forestry sector. Ardayfio-Schandorf (2007) observed that, *“Unwittingly, in Ghana women tend to fill lower paid and less responsible positions in value chains than men, and the forestry sector is no exception.”*³

Our analysis shows that the EU-Ghana Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) is also generally gender-blind. At best it could be described as gender-neutral.⁴ In the text of the agreement, there is not a single mention of gender issues. Throughout the negotiation and system-development phases of the agreement, the structures set up for the process have not responded to gender issues. The Ghana Timber Validation Department (TVD) is the main department responsible for facilitating VPA implementation. It has no female management and technical staff, and none of its nine internal legality verification auditors is a woman.

The Ghana Multi Stakeholder Implementation Committee (MSIC) is the highest political and technical advisory body for the Ghana. None of its current 21 members are female. Arguably, only the civil society element of the VPA processes has shown any attempt to have a gender balance in terms of representation and participation. The Civil Society Legal Working Group (LWG)⁵ meetings averaged between 20 and 23 per cent female participation.

³ Ardayfio-Schandorf, E. (1995): Women and Forest Resource Management in Ghana. Paper presented at Workshop on Women, Environment and Development, organized by ELCI, Accra.

⁴ Gender-neutral refers to a situation where policies and institutions avoid distinguishing between roles and responsibilities according to peoples sex or gender, in order to avoid discrimination arising from impression that a particular gender is more suited than the other

⁵ A platform for Civil Society in Ghana to discuss and make inputs into on-going forestry programmes and policies

As the first country to sign and ratify a VPA with the EU in 2009, Ghana has become a learning point for many of the other timber-producing countries involved in VPA discussions. Ghana’s VPA seeks to promote sustainable forest management, improve rural livelihoods and equity, and enhance a good governance environment (Attah & Beeko, 2008).⁶ As a tool for forestry sector reform, the Ghana VPA has the potential to ensure that gender issues, which have hitherto been overlooked, are brought to bear in the sector’s programmes and activities. Strategies to achieve this potential include:

- Mainstreaming gender into FLEGT-VPA processes
- Building the capacity of stakeholders working on the FLEGT-VPA to understand gender issues
- Implementing Affirmative Action to improve women’s participation in the FLEGT-VPA processes.

In order to monitor the extent to which the gap between men and women working in the forestry sector is growing or shrinking, there needs to be concerted efforts to collect gender disaggregated data in the short, medium and long term. This should cover all aspects of the work, including opportunities, trends and challenges. This will be useful in evaluating progress made over time and help in future planning and strategising.

⁶ Attah, A., Beeko, C. (2008): VPA information brief to the Board of Commissioners. Forestry Commission.

1 Introduction

The European Union (EU) Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) Action Plan aims to improve forest governance in partner countries and eliminate illegal timber from the EU market. An important instrument to achieve this is the Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) between timber exporting countries and the EU. One critical component of the VPA is improving forest governance, particularly, stakeholder participation, accountability, law enforcement and transparency in the forestry sector. Hence, while the EU-Ghana VPA creates the opportunity to secure market access in the EU for Ghanaian timber products, the VPA also aims to strengthen the pillars of good governance. Several reports of Ghana's VPA process illustrate the enthusiasm and interest that civil society organisations (CSOs) and other non-state actors such as landowners, trade unions, student groups, women groups, people with disability and a whole range of actors, exhibited during the initial stages. This enthusiasm translated into effective multi-stakeholder engagement that produced positions which were widely accepted as being respectable and participatory.

As the first country to sign and ratify a VPA with the EU in 2009, Ghana has become a learning point for many of the other timber-producing countries involved in VPA discussions. Ghana has also provided valuable lessons in stakeholder participation in multi-stakeholder processes, which is at the core of all VPA negotiations. The VPA negotiation processes in Ghana also brought to the fore discussions about how to engage with non-state actors and how non-state actors can work jointly with the government to address a common agenda.

Despite the positive steps forward, gender issues have not been at the front of Ghana's FLEGT-VPA discourse, probably due to long periods of policy, legal and institutional inertia. Lack of political commitment has been one of the main reasons why policies and institutions have not responded to gender issues in the forestry sector.



1.1 Objective of the briefing note

This briefing note seeks to highlight how gender issues have been addressed (or not addressed) in Ghana's VPA, to provide reflections and stock-taking now that the potential impacts of the agreement are clearer. This paper will also contribute to literature on gender and forestry in Ghana, as well as provide a reference point for other VPA countries.

1.2 Structure of the briefing note

The paper is grouped into four sections:

- **Background, structure and methodology**
- **Gender in Ghana's forestry sector**
- **Ghana's VPA and emerging gender issues**
- **How to address the emerging gender issues in Ghana's VPA.**

1.3 Methodology

The briefing note is mainly based on a desk study and interviews with key experts, who have been active in the VPA processes in Ghana. Key forestry documents such as the Forest and Wildlife Policy (2012), the Ghana-EU VPA, the Forest Development Master Plan, and relevant laws were reviewed.

2 Gender in Ghana's forestry sector

Ghana has ratified and attempted to operationalise several international and regional conventions and treaties on gender. In 2001, the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs (MOWAC) was established to initiate policy and promote gender mainstreaming in order to achieve gender equality and empowerment of women in all sectors. Ghana also adopted Affirmative Action Policy in 1998 to accelerate equity between men and women. Quotas of a minimum of 40 per cent representation were established in the medium and long term. For government appointees to District Assemblies it was 30 per cent and 50 per cent for Unit Committees.⁷

Since the adoption of this policy, tremendous improvements have occurred in women's participation in academia, politics, professional institutions and other vital national institutions. Over the past 10 years, Ghana has had a female speaker of parliament, two female chief justices and three successive female attorney generals. However, these improvements seem to have eluded the forestry sector, despite this sector adopting its own Gender Policy in 2004.

Ardayfio-Schandorf (1995) observed that, "Traditionally, Ghana's forestry sector has been considered as gender-blind". The rigorousness of forestry work, especially the unforgiving nature of the tropical landscape and terrain, and the sheer labour intensiveness of forestry operations have in practice tended to exclude women. This is compounded by long years of ignoring gender issues within the policy, legal and institutional frameworks that regulate the sector. Lack of political will on the part of decision makers has hindered the integration of workable gender-based plans into the policy and legal framework of the forestry sector. For example, even though women, the young, the aged and those with disability gather non-timber forest products (NTFPs) from the forest for their livelihoods⁸, no conscious efforts have been made to integrate and mainstream the issue of gender-awareness⁹ in the sector.

2.1 Policy, legal, and institutional perspectives

Forestry policies and institutions in Ghana have been gender-blind since their inception, leading to the profession being male-dominated. Not much progress has been made over the years in terms of policy, legal and institutional

frameworks to effectively address this problem. The Forestry Commission Act, 1999, Act 571, and all preceding legislations have not changed the practice and culture of the Forestry Commission, even as it adopted a Gender Policy in 2004.

Ardayfio-Schandorf (2007) observed that, "it is the mandate of the government to design policies in forestry institutions, research, teaching and programmes. However, there is no explicit gender policy on recruitment, postings, promotions, or training of men and women into the various sub-professional and professional grades even though some gender sensitivity is practiced by individual Heads of Units on an ad hoc basis. As a result, the [Forestry Commission] FC's structures, processes and organizational culture are in general gender neutral and do not take into consideration, the specific needs and interests of women."

The roles, responsibilities, and working conditions of employees in the forestry sector follow the general pattern of gender imbalance in management. The Forestry Commission (FC) (2015) noted that women constitute 12 per cent of all staff, but that women make up only 7 per cent of management staff (occupying technical positions). For example, out of the 10 Forestry Service Division (FSD)

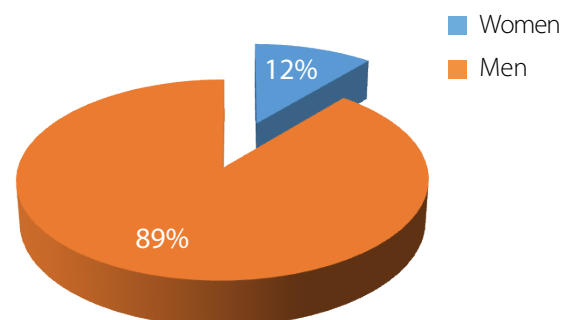


Figure 1: Gender Segregation of FC Staff

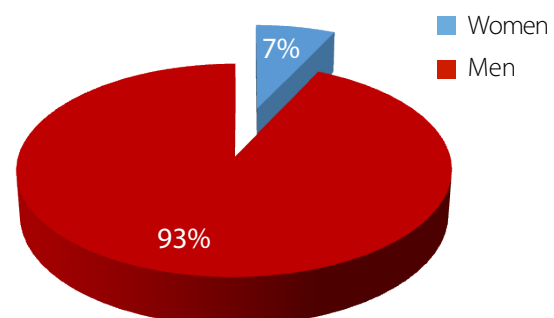


Figure 2: Gender Segregation of FC Management Staff

⁷ Ministry of Women and Children Affairs. 2005. *Strategic Implementation Plan*. Accra, Ghana.

⁸ Mayers et al, 2008: Assessment of Potential Impact in Ghana of a VPA with the EC on Forest Governance

⁹ Gender-aware is a term to describe an intervention that identifies and address the different gender needs of women and men.

regional managers, only two are women¹⁰ and only half a dozen women are among the over 46 District Managers.

At the academic level, for the past five years the average percentage intake of female students enrolled in forestry institutions has risen dramatically. However, it hasn't translated into practicing professional careers. Female forestry professionals are concentrated in academic and research institutions. This could have a positive implication for gender mainstreaming now and in the future. The work culture and environment even at academic and research institutions are, however, not particularly gender-friendly and responsive. As observed by Ardayio-Schandorf (2007), "only 40 per cent of women in academia and research institutions indicated that their working condition was good, 25 per cent said it was bad and the remaining 35 per cent were indifferent".

2.2 Gender and forest governance

Forest governance in Ghana is still very patriarchal. Women are disadvantaged even in recruitment for training programmes to become a forester.¹¹ This reflects a historically socio-cultural problem that persists under the cover of tradition. Male dominance persists in important forest governance elements such as tenure and ownership of forestlands; processes for benefit sharing; and participation in forest decision making.

Ownership and control

Traditionally, ownership and control of forests in Ghana are closely linked with ownership of lands. Lands are vested in stools and skins¹² to be held in trust for the people living on the land. Stools and skins are lifetime fiduciary positions, and are customarily only held by males. In the Volta Region of Ghana, inheritance is possible from father to daughter, but this is the only region in Ghana where that happens. There is no record of women occupying a stool or skin in the Akans of Southern Ghana or in the Northern Regions of Ghana that control more than 90 per cent of Ghana's landmass.¹³ The existing forest ownership and control structure preclude the involvement of women in fundamental decision-making about lands and forests. There are queen mothers in the Akan traditions who are the king makers,¹⁴ but they have

limited interaction with land issues. The issue of ownership and control of lands could be addressed in the legal reforms triggered by the VPA, but wider cultural shifts would be needed to ensure women (along with migrants, youth, and farmers) have rights over forests and forest lands.

Access and use of forest resources

Though they may not have ownership rights, Agarwal (2008) noted that, "women have greater access and use to forests than men".¹⁵

As the main collectors of forest products, women are more familiar with the forest than men. Men engage in timber extraction and related activities that earn the bulk of forest income, unlike women who collect NTFPs for domestic use. In Ghana and most tropical countries, due to the importance of forests, access and use is also controlled by statutory bodies and customary institutions.¹⁶

For instance, local communities in Ghana have usufruct rights to forests for domestic purposes, but would require permits from the FC for commercial exploitation. Even though legal restrictions to access and use forests are not imposed based on gender distinctions, women are more badly affected by access restrictions, mainly because they are more frequent collectors of NTFPs than men.

There are stringent commitments in the VPA to respect community rights to forest access and use, but the big question that needs to be answered is: how will these commitments be enforced? Enacting good laws has never been difficult in Ghana; the problem is how to effectively enforce them. The opportunity the VPA provides, which did not exist in the past, is an avenue to raise these concerns when they are violated. They can be raised with the Independent Monitor or with local CSOs and NGOs, so that they can be discussed and addressed at the Multi-Stakeholder Implementation Committee (MSIC) or Timber Validation Committee (TVC) level. The last resort could be to go to the EU through the Joint Monitoring and Review Mechanism (JMRM) or the EU competent authority, by lodging a formal complaint.

Participation

The sustainable use of forests clearly requires the participation of all who use it, but in practice women are often excluded from decision-making processes. Although women's needs often differ from those of men, many forestry

10 Appointment of Regional Managers changes over time, this record is as at 2016/2017

11 At the College of Renewable Natural Resources and Faculty of Renewable Natural Resources (two institutions that produce over 95 per cent of foresters in Ghana), the average percentage of female intake between 2002 and 2008 was 16.2 per cent and 38.0 per cent respectively.

12 They are literally and figuratively the embodiment of traditional institutions (Chief). In Southern and Northern Ghana they are referred to as stools and skins respectively.

13 The Volta Region covers about 9 per cent of the national landmass and 8 per cent of the population

14 They decide on who occupy the stool when it is vacant

15 Agarwal B. (2008): Gender and forest conservation: The impact of women's participation in community forest governance. Institute of Economic Growth, University of Delhi, Delhi, 110007, India

16 Forestry Commission has the mandate to regulate, manage and develop forestry in Ghana. Traditionally, the local Chief set rules on when people can go to the forest and not.

programmes such as the Modified Taungya System, tend to overlook women's specific needs regarding participation. Kermah (2013) observed that, *"timing of meetings at the community level affects the active participation of women"*.¹⁷ Most community meetings are held early in the morning when community members are yet to leave for the farm, or late afternoons when they have just returned from their farms. This timing does not favour active participation of women who would either be preparing children for school in the morning or cooking dinner for the family at late afternoon when they return from the farm. This scenario re-emphasises CEDAW's definition¹⁸ of discrimination against women which has been ratified by Ghana.

The imbalance in resource ownership and controls disempowers women in Ghana's forestry sector. This results in women and men being assigned roles based on a preconceived notion that women are not capable. This was reemphasised by a senior female forester who said that, *"the men feel confident working with their fellow men and consider women as incapable of doing the rigorous field work."*¹⁹ This probably explains why there are no women at directorship level at the FC, and why only two out of 10 regional managers and only half a dozen out of over 46 district managers are women. On the ground and at the community level, the story is no different. Women have historically not been involved in community decision-making processes around lands and forest, even though they are the most affected by those decisions. However, in recent times, due to the work of civil society organizations and local NGOs, women are becoming more involved in decision-making processes at the community level.

2.3 Gender in the value chain of the forestry sector

Looking at forestry's value chain from a gender perspective reveals the roles women play in the male-dominated sector. Men and women experience differences in the types of work they do, the level of control they have over operations, how easily they can access certain areas of work, and the costs and benefits they feel. Culture and tradition, religious beliefs, division of labour and authority, household and family responsibilities, and physical abilities also play a large part in determining what men and women do. Ardayfio-Schandorf (2007) observed that: *"Unwittingly, in Ghana women tend to*

fill lower paid and less responsible positions in value chains than men, and the forestry sector is no exception."

Webb (2016) noted that, *"Even when they do the same jobs as men, women are usually paid less"*.²⁰ Men are better paid than women because there is a perception that women are less able both physically and mentally, are risk averse and should focus on their responsibilities in the home. This has led to the value chain of forestry sector being male-dominated. The work culture and environment within the value chain of forestry, particularly timber production is not particularly gender-friendly. In a study published by Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) in 2007, it was observed that *"socio-cultural perceptions characterize the work environment in the forestry sector as both male and female staff (66.7 per cent) stated that there is not enough confidence placed in women" and that "men are perceived to be more capable."* Lack of promotion opportunities and career progression remain key challenges. These could be improved through training, motivation, promotion, and attitude changes.

Empowering women to change their roles in value chains means changing gender relations, and changing social and religious norms. It is challenging to change the way society views women: as a supply of flexible labour to be employed when needed, constrained by women's physical characteristics and household responsibilities. This pre-historic notion of women has been erroneously passed on through tradition and culture from generation to generation. The cultural norm is that women need flexibility so that they can care for their families. But ensuring women retain this flexibility should not disadvantage them. Raising awareness in government and non-government organisations about the roles of men and women in forest value chains may help develop policies and legislation that remove the barriers women currently face. The most promising opportunities to enhance the socio-economic situation of women in forest product value chains are to provide them with training to develop their skills and abilities, and to help them act collectively.

17 Kermah, M. (2013): Gender and Forestry in Ghana: A report for Forest Watch Ghana.

18 The 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) defines discrimination against women as "any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field."

19 A senior female forester's response during an interview for preparing this report

20 <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jwebb/2016/03/31/women-are-still-paid-less-than-men-even-in-the-same-job/#1fed64d94709> assessed on 16th June 2017

3. Gender issues in Ghana's FLEGT-VPA

Ghana's FLEGT-VPA has made impressive strides in improving forest governance. However, issues of gender equality were not central to this process. Some may argue the FLEGT-VPA process was gender-neutral and that issues of gender were mainstreamed in practice into the negotiation and implementation processes. However, the evidence on the ground does not support that assertion. Also, as Archbishop Desmond Tutu memorably said: *"If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor."*²¹

3.1 Reflection of gender in the EU-Ghana FLEGT-VPA text

In terms of specifics, there are no gender issues directly outlined in the EU-Ghana FLEGT-VPA. However, extensive references (twice in the body of the agreement and three times in the annexes) are made to local fringe communities whose access and use rights are likely to be infringed by timber rights. Studies²² show that women and children make up majority of these fringe communities. Article 17 of the VPA recognises the potential of the agreement to impact adversely on certain categories of stakeholders and suggestions are made to have social safeguards that will ameliorate the potential adverse impacts.

Impact monitoring of the VPA is another area where gender is relevant. Comprehensive impact monitoring of implementation will identify areas of the agreement that require improvement. One key indicator that the impact monitoring will look at is governance improvements. The extent to which the VPA has addressed governance issues will be assessed using the pre-implementation situation as a baseline. Stakeholder participation, including gender considerations, is one of the criteria that will be considered as outlined by the framework for VPA impact monitoring.

Technically speaking, the EU-Ghana VPA text doesn't mention gender issues at all, but there are systems to ensure that implementation recognises the needs of all stakeholders, this could be expected to include the specific needs of women.

3.2 Anticipated and real impacts of the FLEGT-VPA on gender

The Ghana-EU VPA recognises the link between forest law enforcement and livelihoods, and mentions the need for social safeguards for potentially affected actors.²³ It does not, however, analyse exactly what these effects are, nor spell out what exactly the social safeguards should be. It is envisaged that a legal timber trade will stimulate good forest governance and help alleviate poverty, but such co-benefits are not immediate. Mayers *et al.* (2008) concluded that, *"the implementation of EU-Ghana FLEGT-VPA is expected to, within the short to medium term, lead to significant reduction in timber production"*.

This is expected to affect families who depend on timber production jobs, because workers will be laid off. Socio-economic activities of communities with timber milling companies could virtually come to a halt. Women will be the most affected by this, as they are usually found on the factory floor and at the administrative level. They are also the first to be laid off when there is reduction in raw materials to feed the various production lines. This will negatively affect both women and children. On the other hand, long-term prospects look brighter as effective implementation of the VPA should lead to strict adherence to the rule of law and culminate in sustainable forest management which will guarantee long-term flows of benefits to the community. For the lucky few who do not lose their jobs, there will also be improvements in job security and in working conditions on the factory floor.

Stricter law enforcement is envisaged under the VPA and this is expected to affect local livelihoods (Mayers *et al.*, 2008). In the high-forest zone of Ghana, forest fringe communities use the forest to support their livelihoods. In general, enforcing forest management laws often restricts forestry activities of rural households, such as small-scale timber production; collection of fuel wood, medicinal herbs and mushrooms; and hunting. There is no doubt that women are more severely affected by this. Women depend on the forest in rural Ghanaian communities for the upkeep of their families through collection of NTFPs and other by-products of timber processing such as off-cuts and saw-dust for charcoal production. Ros-Tonen *et al.* (2010), observed that, *"in rural local communities NTFPs gathered by women make up 46 per cent of annual non-cash component of household*

21 <http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780191804144.001.0001/q-oro-ed3-00016497>

22 Ghana Statistical Service, 2010 Population and Housing Census

23 Article 17 of EU-Ghana FLEGT VPA document makes reference to social safeguards for those likely to be adversely affected by VPA

livelihoods”²⁴ This observation is further confirmed by Derkyi (2012), who also noted that, “NTFPs gathered by women in Kyekyewere community from Tano-Offin Forest Reserve constitute the bulk of household livelihoods during off-peak agricultural period”.

With her study on NTFPs, Julia Falconer (1992)²⁵ set the stage for recognition of the importance of forest resources for forest fringe communities. These had hitherto been neglected in policies characterised by a focus on industrial forest users and timber-based forest management. However, it has now been established that NTFPs play a significant role in forest fringe communities’ survival, especially women. In the short to medium term, Mayers *et al.* (2008) noted that, “with effective legitimate timber regime in VPA implementation, there will be high collateral damage to some NTFPs (especially the woody NTFPs)”. This is envisaged to adversely affect access to these NTFPs, curtailing the livelihoods of forest fringe communities, especially women.

3.3 Gender representation and participation in FLEGT-VPA negotiations

Ghana’s FLEGT-VPA negotiation has been touted as transparent, participatory, and credible. But how gender-inclusive was it? Despite the fact that a female minister signed the final Ghana-EU agreement, very few women played any critical role in the VPA process. Out of four working groups set up to support the Ghana steering committee or negotiation team, with over 30 members in total, only two had female members. The Legal Standard working group and the Timber Industry Restructuring working groups had two and one woman participant respectively.

As the process moved forward, the gender balance dropped considerably. The policy sub-committee (see graph above) had only one female representative and the VPA secretariat had none. The VPA steering committee that acted as an intermediary between the technical and political stakeholders was also not gender-representative;

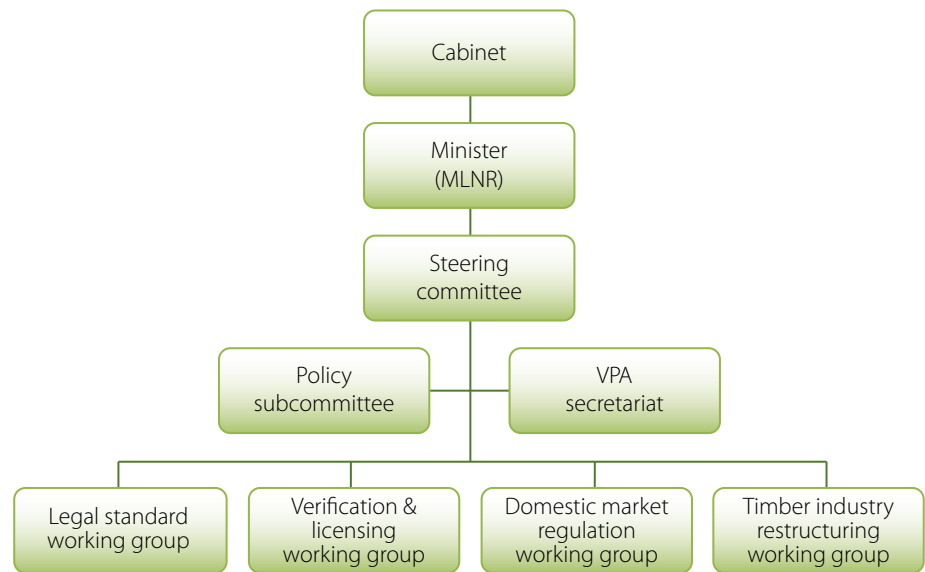


Figure 3: Ghana VPA in-country negotiation structure

there were only three women in the team of 20. This goes a long way to explaining why gender was so poorly integrated in representation and participation processes. This was confirmed by a senior TVD official who noted that, “during the VPA negotiation process, no gender considerations were factored into selection of representatives because representation was institutional-based; and various institutions were at liberty to select whoever they felt competent enough to represent their interest”. This is part of a wider trend in Ghana where women are left out of the most important political decisions.

Civil society engagement in the VPA process however showed greater gender representation and participation. The NGO Civic Response facilitated a Contact Group to feedback and agree on CSO positions during negotiations. This platform connected with groups of people including the women’s movement, the disability movement, student unions, and traditional institutions. Nevertheless, civil society has been represented since the process began by two men – a telling criticism.

Albert Katako,²⁶ one of the CSO representatives in the VPA Multi Stakeholder Implementation Committee recalls that when they were selected, there was consensus amongst civil society that gender was not an issue and that the most relevant consideration was for the representatives to effectively convey the views of civil society. Some have also argued that there were no women with relevant capacity to effectively represent the interests of civil society in the

²⁴ Ros-Tonen, M.A.F.; Derkyi, M.; Insaiddoo, T.; Bell, A.; and Ledger, J. (2010): Governance for sustainable forest-related livelihoods in Ghana’s High Forest Zone. A Report for Tropenbos International, Wageningen, Netherlands.

²⁵ Falconer, J. (1992). Non-timber forest products in southern Ghana. ODA Forestry Series 2. London: ODA.

²⁶ Albert Katako is the Head of Programmes for Civic Response and has represented civil society on the VPA multi-stakeholder implementation committee since its formation.

Table 1: Key VPA implementation structures, their roles and gender responsiveness

VPA Implementing Structures	Roles in the VPA Process	Gender Responsiveness
Timber Validation Department (TVD)	The TVD is the main body tasked with facilitating FLEGT-VPA implementation in Ghana. The TVD is headed by a director with three management level officers. There are also nine internal legality verification officers.	None of the management or technical staff at the department are women. The only women at the department are administrative support staff.
Timber Validation Committee (TVC)	The TVC is a legal body set up as part of the Timber Resources (Legality Licensing) Regulations, 2012 (L.I. 2184) to oversee to the work of the TVD. The membership of the Committee is clearly constituted by the law.	The current TVC has only two women on the committee of 12 (16 per cent representation). It is the only FLEGT-VPA implementation structure in Ghana with above 10 per cent representation.
Multi-Stakeholder Implementation Committee (MSIC)	The MSIC evolved from the VPA steering committee established during the negotiation process. It now acts as the advisory body and makes decisions on technical and policy issues alongside the Government of Ghana.	The MSIC currently has no women on the 21-member committee. At one time a woman represented the Ministry of Finance, but she has been replaced.*
Joint Monitoring and Review Mechanism (JMRM) Ghana team	Article 19 of the agreement sets up the JMRM with a core function of facilitating the monitoring and review of the VPA. Representation is by nomination by both parties.	The article that sets up the JMRM clearly makes provision for equity and parity in representation. However, the current Ghanaian team is only men.

* Referenced from mminutes of last Multi-stakeholder Implementation Committee meeting November 2016

process, but this shows a lack of gender consciousness within civil society.

Forest Forums, which began prior to the negotiations, were used by CSOs as a channel to collate and disseminate information related to the negotiations (Ledger, 2014).²⁷ This process was started by local communities and was facilitated by NGOs who in 2010 were trained on gender responsiveness. This improved their appreciation of the diversity of people participating in community forums. Issues such as time and place of meetings were jointly set by different social groups to ensure the time was agreeable to the larger community, not just elites.

3.4 Gender representation and participation in development of VPA systems

Ghana is in the final stages of developing the systems to implement the FLEGT-VPA agreement. The argument has always been made that actual FLEGT-VPA implementation is technical and hence requires expertise to be able to participate. However, due to the forestry sector's long institutional history of that discouraging women's participation, there are not many female technical experts in the sector. The implementation structures for the FLEGT-VPA merely replicate this problem.

If there are no women with expertise in the day-to-day technical implementation, what about the decision-making structures that oversee the implementation process? Again, our analysis indicates a consistent absence of women at almost all levels.

At the civil society level, the contact group continues to be relevant, albeit with limited female representation. The Legal Working Group (LWG), facilitated by TCI and ClientEarth has become a useful channel for mobilising civil society in the system development phase. Female participation in the LWG is at an average of 20 - 23 per cent,²⁸ it is far better than the existing VPA implementation structures (see table).

²⁷ Ledger, C (2014): Community Participation and Representation in VPA Processes: How communities in 9 VPA countries are represented in the FLEGT-VPA process, Fern, Belgium.

²⁸ Derived from average attendance of past three Legal Working Group meetings

4. Strategies to address emerging gender issues in the EU-Ghana FLEGT-VPA

Ghana wanted its VPA to promote sustainable forest management, improve rural livelihoods and equity, and enhance good governance (Attah & Beeko, 2008).²⁹ If these are Ghana's priorities, the VPA process should make sure gender is brought to the forefront. There cannot be improvements in forest governance if the needs of the vulnerable, particularly women, are not addressed. Agarwal (2008) observed that, *"lessons from Nepal and India have shown that when women are involved in forest management and governance, the result can be overarching."*

The EU-Ghana FLEGT VPA is silent on gender, being either gender-blind or at best gender-neutral. There is, however, an opportunity to ensure that during implementation, gender issues are considered and improved upon. To achieve this purpose, we propose three main strategies:

- Mainstream gender into implementation of FLEGT-VPA processes
- Build the capacity of stakeholders to understand gender issues
- Implement affirmative action to ensure women are involved in FLEGT-VPA processes.

4.1 Mainstreaming gender into FLEGT-VPA processes

Gender mainstreaming involves ensuring that gender perspectives and the goal of gender equality³⁰ are central to all activities including policy development, research, advocacy, legislation, resource allocation and planning, implementation, and monitoring of programmes and projects. The EU-Ghana VPA processes could learn lessons from REDD+³¹ processes in terms of gender mainstreaming such as the importance of developing a carefully thought-out strategy and systems to ensure that activities and programmes under the EU-Ghana VPA are gender-aware. Specific strategies to mainstream gender into FLEGT-VPA processes may include:

Gender mainstreaming holds promise for the advancement of women in the forestry sector at large; the FLEGT-VPA could be the tool to initiate this change in Ghana.

4.2 Building the capacity of stakeholders to understand gender issues

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) (2016) observed that, *"inadequate knowledge and capacity is preventing women from participating meaningfully in decision making and ensuring that their interests are taken onto account at all levels of the forestry sector."* This assertion is symptomatic of a deeper problem of long years of male domination, and failure to consider the needs of women in policy and institutional development. The EU-Ghana VPA creates an opportunity through its numerous proposed

Strategies	Responsibilities
Developing a gender action plan for VPA implementation	Forestry Commission
Designating a gender desk officer at the TVD to oversee gender issues	Forestry Commission
Coordinating with local NGOs, CSOs, community based organisations (CBOs) and other organisations working on FLEGT-VPA programmes and activities to integrate gender issues into their work	Forestry Commission, CBOs, CSOs, local NGOs
Ensuring that women have the opportunity and capacity to participate in all formal and non-formal VPA-related activities such as trainings, field work, Social Responsibility Agreements (SRAs) and compensation negotiations, etc., in order to enhance their contribution	Forestry Commission, CBOs, CSOs, local NGOs
Including impact of the VPA on women and men as an indicator in VPA impact monitoring.	Forestry Commission, MLNR
Concerted effort to collect gender-disaggregated data in the short, medium and long term. This will be useful in evaluating progress made and help in future planning and strategising.	Forestry Commission, CBOs, CSOs, local NGOs

29 Attah, A., Beeko, C. (2008): VPA information brief to the Board of Commissioners. Forestry Commission.

30 Gender equality, is the state of equal ease of access to resources and opportunities regardless of gender.

31 <http://www.fern.org/thestoryofREDD>

legal and institutional reforms. In order to effectively ensure that the key gender issues that affect the forestry sector are addressed, there needs to be concerted efforts to raise and build capacity of stakeholders.

A 2007 FAO study found that *“66 per cent of women interviewed indicated that there is discrimination in Ghana’s forestry sector against them whilst about 38 per cent stated the need for empowerment and training to overcome the situation.”* Gender issues are deeply embedded in traditions and customs, and require expertise to thoroughly and effectively address them. Capacity development on emerging gender issues in EU-Ghana VPA implementation is critical to ensure that they are addressed and at best mainstreamed into the process.

Some of the more specific strategies that could develop capacity to work on gender issues include:

- Training more women in the forestry sector to support the implementation of the FLEGT-VPA. This would generate more role models for women in local communities to participate in other forestry programmes
- Organising gender training programmes in the local communities that target both men and women, to ensure that men understand and can support their women, wives, sisters and daughters
- Developing the skills of women so they can independently carry out activities
- Organising local community training programmes that allow women to actively participate
- Increasing local awareness of forest laws and policies.

4.3 Implementing affirmative action to ensure women are involved in FLEGT-VPA processes

The EU-Ghana VPA could help bolster implementation of the Forestry Commission Gender Policy in the short to medium term. One key strategy in the Forestry Commission Gender Policy is affirmative action to enhance women’s participation in decision-making processes. If properly implemented, affirmative action in FLEGT-VPA processes could kick-start a revolution in both technical and non-technical aspects of forest management in Ghana. Some key specific actions which could be adopted include:

- Identifying and bringing qualified “women mentors” into key VPA implementation structures

- Setting up a quota system to give preference to women in technical trainings and practical field work
- Establishing a network of women working in forestry at district, regional and national levels, to strengthen women professionals and enable them to influence and implement gender sensitive policies
- Incentivising active participation of women through promotions and awards for those who perform exceptionally well.

In order to achieve these aims, there needs to be political will and commitment on the part of both the government and the Forestry Commission board.

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Acronyms

CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
EC	European Commission
ELCI	English Language and Cultural Institute
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations
FC	Forestry Commission
FSD	Forest Services Division
FLEGT	Forest Law Enforcement Governance and Trade
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
JMRM	Joint Monitoring and Review Mechanism
LI	Legislative Instrument
LNGOs	local Non-Governmental Organisations
LWG	Legal Working Group
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MOWAC	Ministry of Women and Children Affairs
MSIC	Multi-Stakeholder Implementation Committee
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisations
NTFPs	Non-Timber Forest Products
SC	Steering Committee
TCI	Taylor Crabbe Initiative
TVC	Timber Validation Committee
TVD	Timber Validation Department
VPA	Voluntary Partnership Agreement

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