

Areas For REDD+ & VPAs/FLEGT Trainings Identified



Participants at Mbalmayo Capacity Building Training Workshop in Round Table Discussion

The need for and domains of capacity building for the REDD+ and the VPAs/FLEGT team members have been identified. This is contained in a presentation delivered by Dr. Haman Unusa of the REDD+ Technical Secretariat lodged in the Ministry of Environment, Protection of Nature and Sustainable Development, MINEPDED.

The presentation titled: "Capacity Building for REDD+ [and] VPAs/FLEGT Technical Secretariats," was one of the papers that participants shared opinions on at the November 4, 2014 training in Mbalmayo, Nyong and So'o Division of the Centre Region.

In an introductory statement, Dr. Haman declared that "the REDD+ and the VPAs/FLEGT Technical Secretariats have similar missions geared towards the implementation and elaboration of the sustainable forest management policies. The need to develop synergetic actions is thus indispensable for a more enhanced future collaboration," he held.

He outlined a number of capacity building projects from which they have benefited such as the PRE-REDD by the Central Africa Forest Commission, COMIFAC, the MRV of

the US Forest Services and the MRV training by JICS. Training on SPOT satellite images provided by the French Development Agency and ASTRIMUM as well as the one by ICRAF on biomass measurement were also mentioned.

Expressing a strong believe on the need for training of members of the REDD+ and VPAs/FLEGT secretariats, Dr. Haman said the functioning of the two structures will boost their capacity to sensitise public institutions, Civil Society Organisations

(CSOs), International Organisations, Community Based Organisations (CBOs) and the private sector operating within the framework of the two processes. This will ensure the application of the policies developed for a successful REDD+ mechanism.

In addition, their understanding of the importance of the REDD+ and the VPAs/FLEGT processes in forest governance as well as the implementation of the activities

of the two mechanisms would be greatly enhanced through such trainings.

Dr. Haman stated, for example, that forest reserves placed under the VPAs/FLEGT process could as well be used for the REDD+ as he maintained that through their platform, actions they are carrying out are likely to be more visible.

From the discussions that followed, it came out that the training of members of the platform is indispensable and that the training needs and tools for each target group should be identified. The issue of sourcing for resources to carry on with such trainings repeatedly cropped up.

Meanwhile, in a number of clarifications, Dr. Joseph Amougou, Focal Point Coordinator of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and Head of the Monitoring, Notification and Verification Unit in MINEPDED, said Cameroon is lucky to have the VPAs/FLEGT and the REDD+ processes. According to him, the two structures have added value to the Cameroonian forest for their objectives all boil down to forest conservation and all these could only be achieved if the capacities of the stakeholders are strengthened.

The participants advised that good use should be made of the internet with the adaptation of

information gathered to suit the Cameroonian context of the REDD+ process. "The REDD+ and the VPAs/FLEGT processes are long-term projects considering that conservation efforts will remain sustained. Capacity building should therefore be a permanent tool to keep the two



Dr. Amougou Making Key Clarifications

processes ongoing," it was observed.

Dr. Amougou added that as long as we will continue to talk sustainable development, the processes will remain valid. "When we talk of REDD+, we are talking sustainability. The VPAs/FLEGT calls for the exploitation of the forest in entirely a different manner. The processes will ensure that development in all other sectors of the country is handled in a modern and different way," he stated.

Sensitisation, Information Components Of REDD+ Shared

Another domain of brainstorming and debate at the capacity building workshop was on the aspect of “Sensitisation and Information Sharing in the REDD+ Process,” as presented by Mokom Clorine of the REDD+ National Coordination..

In a brief historical analysis and acknowledging that the concept of climate change is yet to be mastered by most stakeholders, she recalled that Cameroon had engaged in the discussion of the subject since 1994 when the country ratified the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and adhered to the Kyoto Protocol in 2002.

Mokom stated that well before the R-PIN was launched, Cameroon had started talking about REDD as one of the measures to stem the adverse effects of climate change. “This... involved the provision of information to government concerning the status of REDD during the climate change negotiations. This information sharing continued during the development of the R-PIN and the Readiness Preparation Proposal (R-PP) which stakeholders eventually validated.” Referring to numerous sensitisations, information sharing, training and consultation workshops organised since 2008, Mokom told the participants that discussions at such gatherings bordered on climate change where the causes, manifestation, effects as well as adaptation measures were highlighted.

“The link between forest and climate change; what constitutes REDD+; deforestation; forest degradation; sustainable management of forest; etc, were also subject of discussion during the information sharing and sensitisation. Stakeholders were also informed about the different components of the R-PP as well as the various steps towards its development,” Mrs. Mokom Stated. Maintaining that the REDD+ is a continuous and participatory process, she talked of the stakeholders that have been part of the initiative since 2008 such as the local and indigenous population; CSOs; women and youth groups;



Mokom Clorine (R) Expounding On Sensitisation & Information Sharing

decentralised administrative bodies; traditional rulers; communicators amongst others. According to Mokom, “this approach will be used in the activities that will accompany Cameroon’s preparation for the REDD+ mechanism and particularly in the development of the future strategy.”

She outlined the various communication tools such as brochures, posters, policy memorandums, magazines, etc, that have been produced by MINEPDED and its technical partners. Other information dissemination channels such as the radio, television, internet, print media as well as mass sensitisation campaigns in markets, churches, traditional chiefdoms, council areas, specialised groups, and so on are some of the strategies being employed by MINEPDED and its partner to send across messages on REDD+ and climate change.

Mrs. Mokom stated that the REDD+ and VPAs/FLEGT communication plans should be complementary where the positive aspects are pooled for a robust and effective communication strategy for the REDD+ mechanism in Cameroon. She reiterated that “communication and information dissemination will take place throughout the process... The transparency and success of the process will depend on communication and consultations,” she told the participants.

The need for the sensitisation and communication strategy to ensure the effective teaching of environmental education at the nursery, primary, secondary and university levels came into focus during the discussions. In addition to the sensitisation and communication efforts, one of the participants proposed that all the Focal Points that touch on the issue of REDD+ should have some sort of relay services at the Regional, Divisional and Sub-divisional levels so that policies can effectively reach the grassroots.

While proposing that both modern and traditional sensitisation and communication tools should be used to foster the understanding of the REDD+ and VPAs/FLEGT mechanisms in Cameroon, the participants also came to the conclusion that the circulation of information even within the members of the platform should be improved upon.

Poor Knowledge of Laws Hamper Forestry & Wildlife Control

A forest engineer in the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife, MINFOF, Awe Central, has observed that the poor understanding of the forestry and wildlife law is at the base of all sorts of problems faced in the implementation of the National Forestry and Wildlife Control Strategy of Cameroon.

He made the revelation in a presentation of synopsis of the Strategy at a capacity building workshop of members of the REDD+ and VPAs/FLEGT teams in Mbalmayo on November 4. He said the document on national forestry and wildlife control strategy was inspired by the forestry policy adopted in 1993, the forestry law of 1994, the framework law on the environment of 1996, the Yaounde declaration of 1999 and the poverty reduction strategy document of 2002.

Awe noted that the objective of the strategy is aimed at increasing revenue for the state and local communities, guaranteeing the respect of rights of local communities, creating employment, forestalling economic distortions, ensuring sustainability of forest production and preserving the biodiversity and ecosystems.

He recalled that the forestry sector in Cameroon represents 11 percent of the PIB, 20 percent of the total state income and occupying the second place after oil in terms of ranking. "The Cameroonian forests covering 22.5 million hectares of land, is part of the vast and rich forest massif of the Congo Basin. The forest and wildlife sector has evolved since 1992, the year the then Ministry of Environment and Forestry was created," he reminded the participants.

He however identified a series of problems besetting the smooth

implementation of the strategy ranging from the poor knowledge of the laws and regulations as well as procedures and methods of control in force. The absence of a national control strategy for the exploitation of forestry and wildlife products; pitfalls in follow-up and control due to organisational lapses marked by incompetence and lack of equipment; poor collaboration with partner administrations such as MINJUSTICE, MINATD, MINDEF and MINFI in the application of the forestry and wildlife law, were some of the difficulties highlighted by Awe.

In the face of such difficulties, Awe explained, MINFOF, over the years, has engaged concertations which have led to real and clear strategic control of defined axes based on laws and regulations in force in order to stem the incoherencies. Such strategic control axes include capacity building of the control structures; involvement of all the stakeholders; promotion of good governance; and the promotion of information, education and communication.

Elaborating on the strategic component of information, education and communication, Awe stated that knowledge on the forestry law remains poor in regards to the forestry personnel of MINFOF as well as other actors involved in the forestry and wildlife management. He said sustained efforts will be made to ensure that the law is not ignored. As moves aimed at vulgarising the forestry and wildlife control laws, he said such laws and related texts and other communication tools would be posted on the internet for consultation, amongst others.

One of the key elements of the control is the various categories of sanctions meted out to defaulting agents on the one hand and the state personnel on the other in conformity with the regulations in force. The follow-up of the strategy within the framework of the Forest Environment Sectoral Programme (PSFE) and external and internal funding opportunities were some of the issues discussed by Awe in his presentation.

Inter-Ministerial Follow-Up Committee For VPAs/FLEGT

Issues Highlighted

"The National Follow-up Committee of the Inter-Ministerial Collaboration Framework for the VPAs/FLEGT was created by arête No 126/CAB/PM of 10 September 2012 by the Prime Minister," reads part of the introductory statement of a presentation delivered by Alain Nonga Mfossi at the Mbalmayo capacity building workshop.

The committee, known by its French acronym as CNS, is a Cameroonian consultative organ charged with the study, elaboration, formulation of opinions and suggestions to the Cameroonian government on issues relating to the putting in place of the Voluntary Partnership Agreements.

In a more specific manner, Nonga said the CNS plays the role of creating and following-up studies on the impact of VPAs at the national and international level; examining problems identified in the putting in place of the VPAs as well as proposing solutions.

Ensuring the conformity of the formal framework of the agreement with the regulations of Cameroon; liaising with existing platforms in the sector; ensuring coherence of government strategies aimed at developing the sector, producing an annual report and submitting to MINFOF, are some of the duties of CNS.



Some Members Of REDD+ & VPAs-FLEGT Platform

On the organisational set up of the CNS, Nonga disclosed that the post of president is occupied by MINFOF while members include a representative each from the National Assembly, the Prime Minister's Office, MINEPAT, Trade Ministry, External Relations, MINFI and MINEPDED. A representative each from Civil Society Organisations, community management forest groups and council forest management groups are also members. Trade unions and associations operating in the forestry sector are required to provide two members to the CNS.

The CNS, assisted by a Technical

Secretariat, is made up of a Coordinator and three members. The Technical Secretariat is charged with preparing and submitting files to the CNS for examination, preparing meetings, minutes and report of activities. They are also responsible for keeping documents and archives of the CNS. The CNS that meets based on convocation by its President can only deliberate if 2/3 of its members are present.

Alain Nonga stated that the creation, duties, organisation and the functioning of the VPAs/FLEGT CNS could serve as an inspiration in the setting up of the REDD+ structures.

REDD+ & VPAs/FLEGT Have 13 Synergies – *Dr. Therese Fouda*

A lecturer in the University of Dschang, West Region of Cameroon, and a consultant of the REDD+ and VPAs/FLEGT platform, Dr. Therese Moulende Fouda, has disclosed that 13 areas of synergy grouped into three broad domains have been identified between the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation, Conservation and Sustainable Management of Forest (REDD+) and the Voluntary Partnership Agreements (VPAs) of the Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) mechanisms.

She made the disclosure in an exclusive interview granted the REDD+/FLEGT Info in Mbalmayo recently.

The occasion was one of the capacity building workshops of members of the REDD+ and VPAs/FLEGT platform in Cameroon. Dr. Fouda is serving as a moderator at the trainings.

The University Don said the first domain has do with benefits sharing, the second borders on the law and the third has to do with governance. “The law and governance is not necessarily the same thing. Experts from the Ministries of Forestry and Wildlife (MINFOF) and those of the Environment, Protection of Nature and Sustainable Development (MINEPDED) are expected to prepare papers for presentation on the identified areas of synergy highlighting what could be done to move forward the REDD+ and VPAs/FLEGT mechanisms,” she stated.

Describing the VPAs/FLEGT which is already being implemented in Cameroon as an important legal framework for the sustainable management of forests, Dr. Fouda said the process concerns MINFOF, MINEPDED and other partner ministries.

“Going by the VPAs/FLEGT mechanism, we discovered that its scrupulous implementation would help in reducing deforestation and forest degradation. If this done, it will all enhance carbon sequestration. At first, we thought of the carbon market but it is seemingly not very workable because one needs somebody to buy the carbon.

“We however discovered that there are a lot of forest conservation efforts being made by many stakeholders and which falls within the REDD+ process.

Forest conservation guarantees the availability of land and water resources which all provide services that need to be paid for. There are projects in and out of Cameroon on forest conservation within the REDD+ thus demonstrating that efforts in this direction pays. So, if eventually buyers of carbon are not available, the country can still rely on funds generated in the short-run from these environmental services to foster development,” Dr. Fouda maintained.

She mentioned the Ngoyla-Mintom forest reserve where a pilot REDD+ project is being experimented and said the sharing of benefits from that conservation initiative will also boost the work of the REDD+/VPAs/FLEGT platform. “When the forest is conserved, the field of operation of the local community and their livelihoods is extended and sustainability is therefore guaranteed. Efforts like the one of Ngoyla-Mintom can attract funding within the framework of mitigating the adverse effects of climate change,” she noted.

On benefits sharing from the exploitation of natural resources, Dr. Fouda spoke of some countries where the distribution of such resources are determined by members of the local community with the government playing only a background role. She argued that capacities of members of these forests local communities need to be reinforced to enable them better manage the royalties accruing from the exploitation of the natural resources.

“We have discovered that in the case of forest royalties, for example, communities were not and some are still not informed of what is coming to



Dr. Therese Fouda

them in terms of royalties as a result of the exploitation of natural resources in their areas. Even if some are informed, the money is unilaterally invested in wrong projects that could not improve on the livelihood of people who are in dire need of potable water, health and educational facilities as well as electricity. So, we must work very hard in the domain of capacity building of the local population in regards to management and the setting up of projects,” she averred. She told the REDD+/FLEGT Info that REDD+ will work with the VPAs/FLEGT process to draw from those aspects that are yielding fruits already. “Wood traceability by the VPAs/FLEGT process is an important aspect of control of forest exploitation on which REDD+ is banking. We don’t need to necessarily create new laws but rather to reinforce and depend on those already governing the VPAs/FLEGT for the REDD+ mechanism. We will harness the communication tools of both mechanisms,” Dr. Fouda held.