



Intellectual services procurement

Terms of Reference (ToR)

Purpose

Support for the implementation of Social Responsibility Agreements (SRA) in Ghana's forestry sector

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List of Abbreviations

AFD: Agence Française de Développement

ALA Facility: Africa and Latin America Facility of the FAO

CSO: Civil Society organisations

EFITAP: European Forest Institute Technical Assistance Project

EU: European Union

FAO: Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations

FC: Ghana Forestry Commission

FLEGT: Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade

GhLAS: Ghana Timber Legality Assurance System

GWT-DSS: Ghana Wood Tracking & Decision Support System

GWTS: Ghana Wood Tracking System

JIF: Joint Implementation Framework

JMRM: Joint Monitoring and Review Mechanism

PMU: Programme Management Unit

RMSC: Resource Management Support Centre

SRA: Social Responsibility Agreement

TLAS: Timber Legality Assurance Systems

TVD: Timber Validation Department

VPA: Voluntary Partnership Agreement(s)

1. GENERAL INFORMATION ON THE SERVICES' BACKGROUND

1.1. BACKGROUND OF EU FLEGT VPA PROGRAMME

In 2003, in a bilateral dialogue between the European Union (EU) and the main tropical timber producer countries aimed at strengthening forest governance, the participation of civil society in the implementation of their forest policies, and the elimination of illegal logging through the formalization of their forest-timber value chains, the EU adopted the Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) Action Plan.

The EU FLEGT Action Plan protects tropical forests from the devastating effects of illegal logging. Forests support 90% of the world's biodiversity, regulate water quality, and mitigate climate change by absorbing and storing close to half of the world's terrestrial carbon. Trade related to the illegal logging of tropical forests has caused the price of tropical timber to fall by more than 30% on international markets. Interpol estimates that 50-90% of tropical forest logging is illegal. In 2018, the number of financial transactions linked to illegal trade in timber products was estimated at more than 100 billion dollars (Interpol, April 2019). Illegal logging is a recurrent subject of media campaigns and damages the image of tropical timber, which accounts for only a marginal share of the global forest-timber value chain (1% of global forest production) and erodes the confidence of European consumers. In tropical countries, it is detrimental both to the maintenance of the integrity of forest ecosystems and to forest-dependent populations, considered to be the poorest on the planet.

Voluntary Partnership Agreements (VPAs) are a key component of the EU Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) Action Plan to address illegal logging. A VPA seeks to ensure that timber and timber products imported into the EU from a partner country comply with the laws of that country.

To achieve this, a partner country must first decide which parts of its national legal framework it will use to define legality for the purposes of the VPA. The country must also have, and describe in the VPA text and annexes, a system to ensure legal compliance and issue legal products with FLEGT licenses. In most cases, a country will build on existing systems to achieve this.

However, the implementation of VPAs has been impeded by several institutional and technical requirements. Until today, one country has been authorized to issue FLEGT licenses (Indonesia), and eight other countries have committed to implementing a VPA (Cameroon, Central African Republic, Ghana, Guyana, Honduras, Liberia, Republic of Congo and Vietnam). Currently, these group of eight countries are included in the EU FLEGT VPA Programme which are at different stages of progress.

In Ghana, negotiations towards the adoption of the VPA FLEGT between the EU and Ghana began in 2007. In 2009, the VPA was ratified by both parties and its implementation phase began. To ensure the credibility of the entire process and allow the VPAs to achieve their full potential, it is necessary for the EU to continue its support for their implementation. The main constraints are country-specific, but generally involve the operationalization of a Timber Legality Assurance System (TLAS), which relies on a complete national chain of transparency led by the country's administration. This presents many technical, financial, organizational and institutional challenges due to the changes in practices imposed on numerous historical or newly associated actors in the forest-based value chain.

The implementation of a VPA thus requires substantial investments and continuous, well-targeted technical and financial support. Within this framework (2021-2025), AFD is implementing, through an EU funds delegation, a program whose purpose was initially to support the eight (8) countries

mentioned above, recognized by the EU as its most committed partners in the fight against illegal logging, in the implementation of their VPAs.

This programme will complement and monitor support to FLEGT processes by international organizations, civil society organizations, multilateral agencies, and EU Member States in the current VPA partner countries, including:

- Action programmes that provide assistance to governments and financial support through calls for proposals to other stakeholders (CSOs and the private sector), funded by the EU or other donors. In particular, synergies will be fostered with the FAO Africa and Latin America (ALA) facility; the 'Forest for the Future' (F4) facility (led by the Environment, Sustainable Natural Resources Unit of the Directorate General for International Partnerships [INTPA.F.2]), which aims at promoting forest value chains and stimulating private sector investments, or the FLEGT programme for regional Asia managed by DG-ENV.
- Action programmes focused on REDD+, which support the strengthening of land governance in third countries (monitoring and control of uses to maintain forest cover).
- To avoid duplicating efforts and resources, coordination will also be ensured at country level via an information exchange mechanism involving all actors engaged in FLEGT processes and through strengthened dialogue with the FLEGT and EU Timber Regulation (EUTR) expert group.

1.2. OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE OF THE EU FLEGT VPA PROGRAMME

The overall objective of the Programme is to contribute to the sustainable management of forests.

The specific objective is to improve forest governance and law enforcement in countries implementing the VPA to limit any illegal exploitation of forest resources. This programme has four main components:

- Component 1: Institutional support covering the actions necessary for the legal and equitable supply of timber by ensuring its traceability
- Component 2: Stakeholder support focusing on NGOs, communities and the private sector to build their capacity to contribute to the implementation of the VPA in their country
- Component 3: Programme management (technical coordination, financial and administrative management, monitoring/evaluation)
- Component 4¹: Technical support by the FLEGT Africa and Latin America (FLEGT-ALA) Facility led by FAO.

EU FLEGT VPA Programme (2021-2025), aims to develop components 1 and 2 based on the following table.

Component 1/C1: Institutional support	Component 2 /C2: Stakeholder support focusing on NGOs, communities, and the private sector
Content : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The latest conclusions of JMRC and its work plans 	Content: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening the capacity and the involvement of stakeholders to contribute

¹This component was added to the Multi-Partner Contribution Agreement in May 2024 by addendum no. 1. It has been operational since October 2024.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An analysis of the VPA implementation framework • An analysis of the financing gaps • The financial and technical assistance needs identified by the partner country and the EU-Delegation 	<p>effectively to the processes related to the implementation of the VPAs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The targeted beneficiaries are: CSOs, Private Sector, Communities. • Demand-driven grant mechanism aligned with the objectives defined in each country's VPA implementation framework.
<p>Main possible activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the development and deployment of Timber Legality Assurance Systems (TLAS) VPA-compliant. • Capacity-building of administration officers in charge of forests. • Contribution to national normative and legal reform in line with VPA requirements. • Strengthening transparency, monitoring, and controls mechanisms. • Strengthening of complaint/grievance mechanisms required by VPAs. • Coordination with other forest governance initiatives at the national level. 	<p>Main possible activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuing support to independent forest monitoring. • Strengthening the compliance of SMEs and micro-enterprises with TLAS. • Improving access of SMEs and microenterprises to capital, legal supply chains and markets. • Supporting the participation of women and youth in VPA-compliant forest management and small-scale wood processing enterprises

The Programme is currently active in five countries: Ghana, Republic of Congo, Liberia, Honduras and Guyana.

In each of these countries, the beneficiaries of funding under this programme will be:

- on one hand, government institutions (component 1) for the implementation of actions to operationalize the VPAs: support to the national timber legality assurance system (LAS), adaptation of national legislation, transparency and monitoring and control mechanisms in the forestry sector, etc.;
- on the other hand, civil society organizations, communities and the private sector (component 2), in particular marginalized groups (indigenous peoples, women) and small businesses, to strengthen their capacity to effectively contribute to the VPA implementation process, and to ensure that this process does not exclude them from legality.

1.3. GOVERNANCE AND CONTRACTING AUTHORITY

AFD is the contracting authority of this programme and is leading a steering committee which includes representatives of the EU commission (DG INTPA and DG ENV), the Programme Management Unit (technical operator and the administrative and financial operator) and the FLEGT ALA Facility managed by the FAO.

AFD relies on the two operators of the Programme Management Unit (PMU) as contracting authority support:

- Eticwood/Nature+ (technical operator) in charge of the technical follow-up and the implementation of the activities in the countries included in the programme (establishing terms of reference for activities and following up on deliverables)
- e-Sud Développement (administrative and financial operator) in charge of the administrative and financial management (procurement process, financial monitoring, invoices...).

2. CONTEXT OF THE FLEGT VPA IN GHANA

2.1. FLEGT VPA IN GHANA

Ghana is a country located in West Africa, with an area of 238,535km². The forest cover in Ghana represents approximately 35% of the total land area.

Most of the forests found in Ghana are primary or naturally regenerated (around 7.6 million hectares), but there is also a small number of planted forests (approximately 297 000 hectares). In Ghana, forest ownership can be divided among public land, stool land, family land and private land. However, the management of forest resources is administered by the Forestry Commission for the benefit of the landowners. In off-reserve areas, the Forestry commission is responsible for regulating, as opposed to managing, the utilization of forest and timber resources.

The FAO estimated that the net annual change in forest area in Ghana between 2010 and 2020 was +0,05% (FAO, State of the World's Forests, 2020).

Ghana has around 2.6 million hectares of forest reserves dedicated to timber production, and an additional 2 million hectares of crop land that also produce timber. The forest sector is the fourth largest contributor to Ghana's GDP. Ghana has a strong reputation for innovation in timber processing, making products particularly suited to the European market, and around 11% of Ghana's timber exports are sent to the EU.

Ghana has ratified a VPA with the EU in 2009, and has been developing the systems needed to control, verify and license legal timber. Although VPAs are primarily concerned with international trade, Ghana chose to pursue a VPA that addresses illegal logging that infiltrates the domestic market as there was strong consensus from stakeholders in Ghana that including the production of timber for the domestic market in the VPA was critical.

A series of institutional arrangements and accompanying measures are implemented to ensure that the system is operational and that operators are able to comply with the VPA.

Key VPA-specific institutions include:

1. A Ghana-EU body called the Joint Monitoring and Review Mechanism (JMRM) oversees implementation of the VPA.
2. A Multistakeholder Implementation Committee. This Committee is chaired by a representative of the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources and members include representatives of several Government ministries and agencies that have responsibilities for aspects of the VPA. Other members of the Committee include a parliamentarian, a representative of traditional authority and representatives of civil society and the private sector.
3. The Ghana's Forestry Commission coordinates implementation activities.

Key measures set out include:

4. Strengthening of the regulatory and legal framework applicable to the forestry sector with the aim to implement all relevant policies, laws, regulations, statutes, strategies, guidelines, voluntary measures and codes of practice and conduct.
5. Developing and implementing the Ghana Timber Legality Assurance System (GhLAS) to ensure verification of compliance with the legality definition formulated in the VPA and with the supply chain controls and procedures described in the Agreement. This includes the development of a wood tracking system, control and verification, independent auditing of the system, and setting up a complaint mechanism.
6. Building capacity of all parties involved in the implementation of this Agreement, which included delivering technical training for Ministries and Government Agencies and their staff, training and building administrative capacity of logging associations and industry and training of civil society.
7. Communicating about the implementation of the Agreement by means of encouraging the involvement of all concerned stakeholders, ensuring public access to information, promoting the image of the Ghana timber and forest sector, and promoting the benefits of this Agreement for the stakeholders and the wider public.
8. Monitoring the implementation of the Agreement through the JMRRM, which has overall responsibility for monitoring the implementation of the Agreement.
9. Monitoring the social, environmental, and economic impacts of the Agreement to ensure that it achieves its intended aims.
10. Creating space for dialogue on land tenure, land use and conflicts among all concerned parties to strengthen governance and law enforcement.
11. Carrying out market improvements and industry development to ensure that the forest sector in Ghana continues to be a key contributor to the local economy, generating employment opportunities in urban and rural areas and contributing to poverty reduction.
12. Mobilization of finance mechanisms for implementing the Agreement.

Once all systems are fully operational, Ghana will issue FLEGT licences. During the 12th JMRRM that took place in Accra in November 2024, Ghana announced its intention to start issuing FLEGT licenses from 30th June 2025. The European regulation has just set 8 October 2025 as the date for Ghanaian timber to enter European territory, with the obligation to be covered by a FLEGT licence.

2.2. SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AGREEMENT (SRA)

SRAs are a legal requirement under the laws of Ghana and under the legality assurance system put in place by the Ghana-EU VPA. An application for a timber utilisation contract (TUC) must contain a proposal to assist in addressing the social needs of the communities who have interest in the applicant's proposed area of operations. The SRA obligates the contractor to provide for amenities, services or benefits to assist the communities and inhabitants of the area, at a value of 5% of the stumpage fee of timber that is harvested. It must be concluded upon the receipt of the Notice of Grant of timber right from the Minister for Lands and Natural Resources and to the satisfaction of the Chief Executive of the Forestry Commission, before the right is granted.²

SRAs are composed of two parts: the code of conduct and social obligations.

² Regulations 17(11)(b); 21(17)(b); and 26 of Timber Resource Management and Legality Licensing Regulations 2017 (L.I. 2254).

The **code of conduct** ensures that timber operations are conducted with due respect for the rights of local communities and obliges respect for local customs and beliefs, local infrastructure and livelihoods. Depending on whether the timber operation is in a forest reserve or outside the reserve, the content, the compliance requirement will be different.

The second part of Social Responsibility Agreements, called **social obligations**, requires operators to negotiate with communities on itemized materials, services, infrastructure and/or local employment they expect the timber company to provide to the community.

Compliance with SRAs is also a legal requirement under the Ghana Legality Assurance System (GhLAS), established by the VPA to certify the legality of timber for both export and domestic markets. One of the verification criteria under GhLAS is whether the logger has executed and complied with the applicable SRA. This requirement is reflected in the legal timber verification protocols, making it essential for all stakeholders—including the Forestry Commission, private sector, and civil society, to understand and uphold their roles in ensuring SRA compliance.

3. DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICE

3.1. OBJECTIVES OF THE ASSIGNMENT

The objective of this assignment is to enhance the effective implementation, monitoring and transparency of Social Responsibility Agreements within Ghana's forest sector, in line with the requirements of the Ghana-EU FLEGT VPA and the Ghana Legality Assurance System.

By building the capacity of key stakeholders, this assignment aims to improve understanding, compliance, and transparency in the negotiation, execution, and monitoring of SRAs.

The specific objectives are the following:

- To train Forestry Commission officers, especially forest District Managers, Assistant District Managers, Forest Range Managers, Range Supervisors and other key staff of the Timber Validation Department (TVD) and the Resource Management Support Centre (RMSC), on the legal and operational requirements for SRA implementation, including negotiation, approval, and monitoring processes.
- To provide technical guidance to timber contractors on their obligations under SRAs, and to support them in meeting the compliance standards required under the Ghana Legality Assurance System.
- To support SRA Committees in understanding their mandate, improving their capacity for community engagement, and enhancing transparency and accountability in the utilization of SRA resources.
- To assist Forestry Commission District Managers in accurately populating and maintaining the digital SRA portal in the GWT-DSS with executed agreements for effective tracking and verification.
- To promote collaboration among stakeholders, FC, private sector, and CSOs, in monitoring, reporting, and resolving grievances related to SRA non-compliance.
- To identify gaps and provide recommendations to strengthen the institutional framework and stakeholder coordination for effective SRA enforcement.

This assignment will ultimately support Ghana's FLEGT licensing process by ensuring that the social responsibility elements of legal timber production are properly integrated and enforced.

3.2. MAIN TASKS EXPECTED OF THE SERVICE PROVIDER

AFD is seeking the services of a Service Provider to train and build the capacity of relevant stakeholders – FC officers, private sector and CSOs on their obligations in ensuring compliance with SRAs.

The Service Provider will provide the following three core services:

- **Training Forest Range Managers on the SRA rules and process**

The Service Provider shall design and deliver training workshops for approximately 280 frontline staff of the Forestry Services Division (FSD) - District Managers, Assistant District Managers, Forest Range Managers, Range Supervisors - and other key staff of the Timber Validation Department and the Resource Management Support Centre across eight (8) regions in Ghana.

The training shall:

- Provide a comprehensive overview of the legal and procedural requirements for SRAs, including the roles of range managers in supervising compliance
- Clarify the components of SRAs—Code of Conduct and Social Obligations—and the processes for negotiation, approval, and monitoring
- Provide participants with tools, templates, and guidance to support timber operators and communities in the SRA process, and
- Strengthen the capacity of frontline officers to detect, report, and follow up on SRA implementation challenges.

- **Technical support: SRA portal use**

The Service Provider shall provide targeted technical assistance and training to Forestry Commission District Managers, Assistant District Managers, Forest Range Managers, Range Supervisors and other key staff of the Timber Validation Department (TVD) and the Resource Management Support Centre on the use of the digital SRA portal. This task will:

- Focus on ensuring that all executed SRAs are correctly and consistently entered into the portal
- Provide step-by-step training on data entry procedures, document uploads, and periodic updates
- Emphasize the role of the portal in promoting transparency, improving verification under GhLAS, and supporting monitoring by internal and external stakeholders
- Identify common data challenges and propose measures to enhance data quality, system usability, and accountability.

- **Support SRA committees to be more accountable on the use of funds**

The Service Provider shall develop and deliver training and capacity-building sessions for selected members of SRA committees across multiple regions. Specifically, out of the total number of identified and active SRA communities, approximately 1,000 committee members will be targeted for training.

These trainings will:

- Explain the purpose and structure of SRA Committees, their mandate, and responsibilities in managing community benefits

- Introduce simple financial management, record-keeping, and reporting practices to track the use of SRA funds
- Promote good governance, transparency, and inclusive decision-making in the prioritization and implementation of community projects, and
- Encourage the use of accessible communication tools to share fund usage and outcomes with wider community members.

All activities are to be implemented in close coordination with the Forestry Commission and aligned with Ghana's FLEGT VPA implementation strategy and timelines.

3.3. METHODOLOGY AND APPROACH

The service provider is not expected to follow a pre-defined methodology, but rather to propose, in its technical offer, a detailed and realistic approach that aligns with the objectives of the assignment and is appropriately scaled to the available budget.

The Terms of Reference do not prescribe a single format for delivering training. The service provider is encouraged to propose formats that are suitable for the different target groups (Forestry Commission staff, private sector actors, SRA Committees), adapted to field conditions, and mindful of resource constraints.

The technical proposal must clearly specify, for each type of training and support activity:

- The type of training format proposed (printed booklets, written modules, massive open online course (MOOC), live videoconference, etc.)
- Any existing materials that will be used or adapted, and whether new content will be developed
- Whether training will be conducted in person, remotely, or in hybrid mode
- The number of training sessions, the duration (number of days), the estimated number of participants per session (and in total), and the geographic locations for the trainings and field support
- A proposed staffing and expert mobilisation plan, including the location and availability of team members
- Evaluation feedback from participants after the training sessions
- Clearly developed KPIs to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of training
- A breakdown of how the activities will be phased and sequenced, including pre- and post-training follow-up (if relevant).

The methodology should also explain how the service provider will coordinate closely with the Forestry Commission and other relevant stakeholders to ensure the effectiveness, ownership, and sustainability of the capacity-building process.

4. DELIVERABLES

The expected deliverables (D) will be received by the PMU which will be responsible for transmitting comments on the deliverables for approval. They are listed below in chronological order.

Each report will include (i) a narrative part explaining the progress of the project, the activities carried out, and any difficulties encountered with mitigation actions taken and (ii) a financial part which will

detail the expenses incurred and will gather all the supporting documents required according to the terms and conditions. An additional part will be required once the monitoring and evaluation system is established by the EU FLEGT VPA Programme.

All reports will be drafted in English.

- **D0: Inception report:** This report will contain a workplan for the project and include a first draft of the specific annual operating plan for discussion between the Parties. The inception report will be submitted within a month after the start of the project.
- **D1: Training materials and reports:** This deliverable will include all training materials and modules used or developed (presentations, manuals, handouts, videos, etc.) and brief training reports for each session or series (including date, location, participant lists, summary of content delivered, observations and recommendations for future sessions if applicable, photos...).
- **D2.1-D2.3: Quarterly progress reports:** These reports will explain the progress of the project with respect to the three core services—training of forest range managers, support for populating the SRA portal, and capacity-building for SRA committees. Each report shall outline activities undertaken during the reporting period, identify any challenges encountered, document participation levels and stakeholder feedback, and provide an assessment of progress against planned targets and timelines. The reports should also include recommendations for course correction where necessary and highlight any emerging issues that may require the attention of the Forestry Commission or AFD.
- **D3: Final Report:** This report will summarize the findings of the various sub-reports, the lessons learned from the capacity building and training exercises and provide recommendations for addressing the gaps and challenges identified.

All reports will be drafted in English and submitted in digital format.

For all project deliverables, if circumstances prevent the service provider from providing what is requested in these ToRs, the reasons will be justified in the interim reports. The last report must contain all the documents listed above.

5. INDICATIVE CALENDAR

This contract will run for 12 months.

The following table presents the provisional timetable for the deliverables.

N° month	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6	M7	M8	M9	M10	M11	M12
Deliverables	D0	D1	D2.1			D2.2			D2.3			D3

6. EXPECTED PROFILE

The Service Provider will present in its offer its methodology and the CV of the proposed expert(s) and backstopping, as well as its financial offer.

The Service Provider shall be an organisation or consortium of experts with demonstrated experience in forest governance, stakeholder training, and community-based natural resource management. The organisation must have organisational capacity and be familiar with the implementation of the Ghana-EU FLEGT VPA and the SRA processes and procedures.

The Service Provider shall propose a team of national qualified experts to deliver the assignment. The minimum required team composition is as follows, with the relevant profiles for each team members:

Team Leader / Lead Forestry Governance Expert

- Advanced degree in Forestry, Environmental Governance, Natural Resource Management, or related field
- At least 10 years of experience in forest governance or VPA implementation in West Africa
- Proven knowledge of Ghana's forest sector, SRAs, and the Ghana Legality Assurance System (GhLAS)
- Demonstrated experience managing similar capacity-building projects and leading stakeholder engagement
- Strong facilitation and communication skills.

SRA Training Specialist (Forest Commission and Private Sector Focus)

- Master's degree in Forestry, Public Administration, or relevant Social Sciences
- Minimum 7 years' experience in designing and delivering training for public sector or industry actors in the forestry sector
- Familiarity with SRAs, benefit-sharing obligations, and forest operations in Ghana
- Experience working with frontline FC officers and timber companies
- Strong knowledge of adult education and participatory training methodologies.

SRA Committee Accountability and Community Engagement Expert

- Degree in Community Development, Social Work, or related field (Master's preferred)
- At least 5 years of experience working with rural communities, particularly in governance and benefit-sharing
- Experience delivering financial literacy or transparency trainings to community-level groups
- Familiarity with traditional governance structures and local institutions in Ghana
- Ability to work in at least in one local languages.

The Service Provider must demonstrate independence from the timber industry and government agencies to ensure objective assessment of SRA compliance and implementation.

Local and/or international backstopping can also be offered and included in the offer.

7. BUDGET

The maximum budget for this Service is 300 000€ for a 12-month service.

At the inception of the project, the service provider shall develop a comprehensive cost framework detailing standard unit rates for the daily allowances to the participants of the training and other reimbursement of expenses (accommodation, transport). The proposed cost framework will have to be discussed with the Ghana Forestry Commission and submitted to the PMU for review and approval.

The financial proposal must include all costs necessary for the effective implementation of the service. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Trainers and staff costs (including professional insurance, taxes or other fees related to the activities of the staff),
- Organization of meetings, including transportation and accommodation, if necessary,
- Logistical costs,
- Office expenses (laptop, telephone, ...)
- Field missions and travel outside the capital,
- Design and printing of training materials,
- Communication costs,
- Daily allowances to the participants of the training (rangers, district managers, committee members...)

The budget should be realistic, clearly itemised, and fully aligned with the proposed methodology, ensuring that the entire training component can be delivered within the allocated financial envelope. The expenses linked to the training sessions may not exceed 50% of the total amount of the contract.