



COMPLETION REPORT
ENHANCING THE CAPACITY OF FOREST
COMMUNITIES IN FOREST GOVERNANCE,
MONITORING AND COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS IN MANKRASO
FOREST DISTRICT GHANA.

PD 845/17 REV.2 (M)



HOST GOVERNMENT: GHANA GOVERNMENT

EXECUTING AGENCY: RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND YOUTH
ASSOCIATION (RUDEYA)

Project Number: ITTO PROJECT PD 845/17 REV. 2 (M)

Starting Date: March 2021 to August, 2022.

Duration: 18 Months

Project Costs: Total Costs US \$144,400;

ITTO Contribution: US\$120,000;

Counterpart Contribution: US\$24,400

Implementing Agencies:

Rural Development and Youth Association (RUDEYA)

Type of Report:

Project Completion Report

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Place and date the report:

Kumasi, Ghana (November, 2022)

Disclaimer

The views expressed in this report are those of the authors. They do not reflect the views of ITTO or the Government of Ghana.

List of abbreviations

CBAGs	Community Biodiversity Advisory Groups
CBOs	Community Based Organizations
CFCs	Community Forest Communities
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
DAs	District Assemblies
DFE	District Forest Forums
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FC	Forestry Commission
FLEGT	Forest Law Enforcement Governance and Trade
FORIG	Forest Research Institute of Ghana
FSD	Forest Services Division
FWG	Forest Watch Ghana
GPRS	General Packet Radio Services
GTA	Ghana Timber Association
GTMO	Ghana Timber Millers Organization
IFM	Independent Forest Monitoring
IMS	Information Management System
ITTA	International Tropical Timber Agreement
ITTO	International Tropical Timber Organization
JMRM	Joint Monitoring Review Mechanism
LAS	Legality Assurance System
LIM	Local Independent Monitors
MMDAs	Metropolitan Municipal and District Assemblies
MTS	Modified Taungya System
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NFF	National Forest Forum
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NTFP	Non-Timber Forest Products
RMSC	Resource Management Support Center
RUDEYA	Rural Development and Youth Association
SRA	Social Responsibility Agreement
SFM	Sustainable Forest Management
TVD	Timber Validation Department
VPA	Voluntary Partnership Agreement

Acknowledgement

RUDEYA is grateful to donors who have provided financial support through ITTO. We are also grateful to ITTO staff who have made enormous contributions to this project proposal from planning to execution levels.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The ITTO supported project titled *“Enhancing the capacity of forest communities in forest governance and community development projects in Mankraso Forest District”* was designed to complement the efforts of Ghana government to enhance stakeholders’ capacity in forest governance under the European Union and Ghana Government’s VPA/FLEGT program. The key problem was the weak capacity of forest communities to participate in forest governance and sustainable forest management practices. The specific objective was to improve the capacity of 20 forest communities in forest governance to enhance their negotiation skills for community development projects in Mankraso Forest District in 18 months.

The project has enhanced the capacity of 20 forest communities in forest governance. It has contributed to implement 10 community development projects with Social Responsibility Agreement (SRA) funds and benefits within the project time frame. In addition to achieving the set objectives and outcomes the project has produced protocols and guidelines for Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and communities. This will enhance the capacity of CSOs/Communities to implement strategies for independent forest monitoring and to produce validated independent forest monitoring reports to meet the needs of various stakeholders without any bias to communities or the official duty bearers. Prior to the implementation of this project, there was little collaboration between CSOs and state actors. This led to lack of formal strategies for community independent forest monitoring scheme. Our collaboration with the Resource Management Support Centre (RMC) and other state actors have contributed to smooth implementation of this project.

This project has set a key lesson for institutionalization of Civil Society and Community Independent Monitoring Scheme. This is a necessary compliment to the Ghana Legality Assurance System. The need for donor support to Civil Society Organizations and Forest Communities for upscaling and replication of the results is urgent. This will enhance Civil Society and Community Independent Forest Monitoring concept in Ghana. Civil Society and Community Independent Forest Monitoring scheme will contribute to legal compliance for the production and export of legal timber right from the forest gate.

1. PROJECT IDENTIFICATION

1.1 Context

In 2009 The European Union (EU) and Ghana Government entered into a Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA). The VPA aims at ensuring that only legal timber products are exported to the European Union. RUDEYA is one of the key NGOs in Ghana which have assisted the Forestry Commission (RMSC) and FAO to develop and publish operational guidelines on “CIVIL SOCIETY MONITORING OF THE VOLUNTARY PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT IN GHANA” and “CAPACITY BUILDING OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS AND COMMUNITIES IN VPA IMPLEMENTATION” in July 2012 and 2013 respectively. These documents state among other things that: “The successful implementation of the Ghana FLEGT/VPA is dependent on curbing illegal logging and a credible Legality Assurance System (LAS). In addition to the technical requirements of the LAS, a credible LAS should include coordinated Civil Society and Community led monitoring processes”. This project has been designed and implemented to complement government efforts to build the capacity of forest communities and to enhance their participation in forest governance, monitoring and forest law compliance.

Project location

1.1.1 Target Area

The project area is Mankraso Forest District in the Ashanti Region of Ghana (Figure 1). Mankraso Forest District comprises the Ahafo Ano North and Ahafo Ano South political districts with little extensions to Asunafo and Tano South districts. Within this Forest District there are three forest reserves namely Tinte Bepo (116 km²), Desire (151km²) and Tano Ofin South (409km²) with aggregate land area of 676.37km². There is also wide range of off reserve timber producing areas including farm lands and secondary forest areas. The area produces timber like Ofram (*Terminalia Superba*), Emire(*Terminalia Ivorensis*), Mahogany (*Khaya Avorensis*), Ceiba (*Ceiba Pentendra*), Wawa (*Triplochiton Screlozylon*), Sapale (*Entandroframa*) and many other local timber species. The highly degraded forest reserve areas are turned into Modified Taungya System and other forest plantation systems to restore the ecology with benefits to communities in terms of food production and shelter.

1.1.2 Geographic location

The Mankraso Forest District lies between longitude 2°25'W and 1°55'W; and latitude 6°40'N and 7°00'N. It is located within the north western part of Ashanti Region in Ghana. It has a total land area of 1,949.18 km². The district headquarters are Mankraso and Tepa.

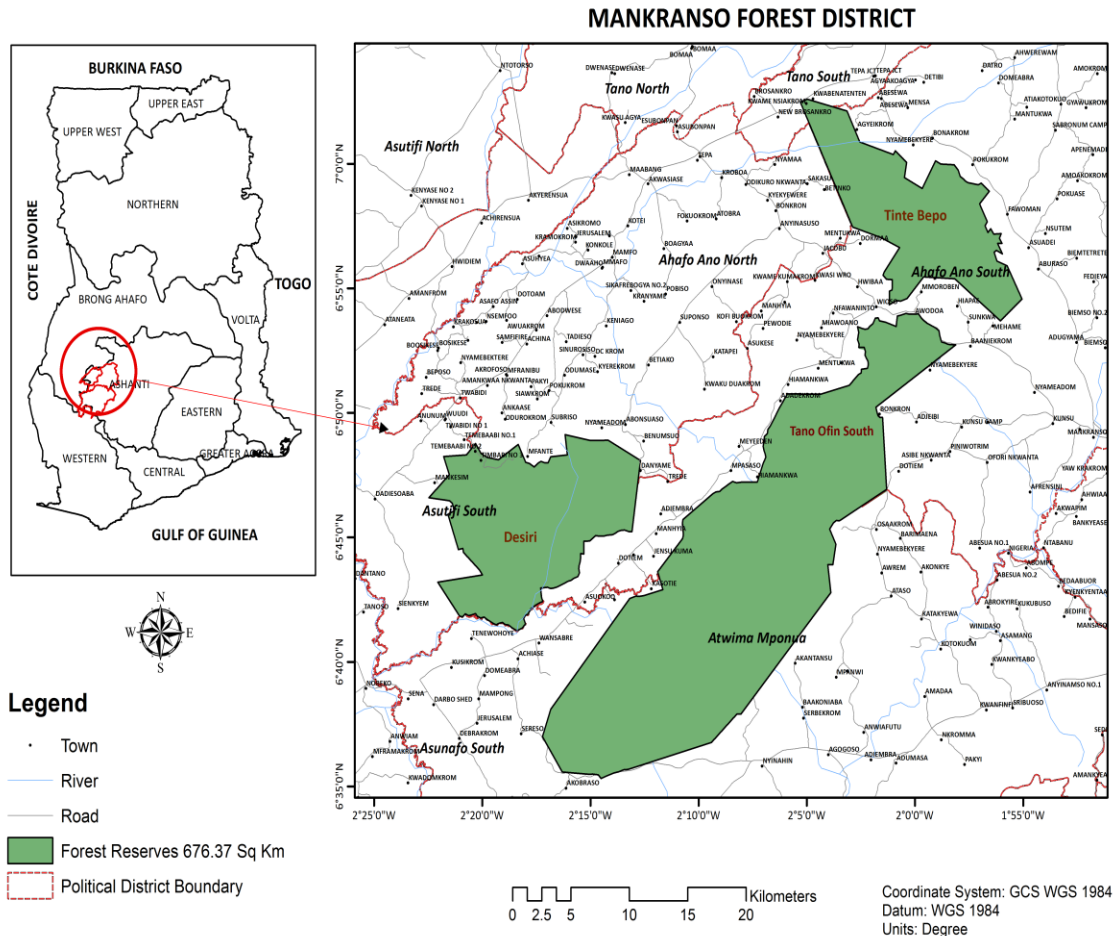


Figure 1: Map of Mankraso forest district

1.1.3 Social, cultural, economic and environmental aspects

The local government development focus for the above district includes: the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS II) which is primarily poverty reduction, enhanced human resource development and growth. This puts the human being and manpower development at the center of the nation's development agenda. The analysis of the demographic characteristics therefore has obvious implications for the formulation of this project.

The population of the area is 215,844 according to 2010 population census with 50.8% males and 49.2% females. It has 72% of economically active population from 18 years and above.

The vegetation is basically of the semi-deciduous type. The flora and fauna are diverse and composed of different species of both economic and ornamental trees with varying heights and game and wildlife. Economic potential for timber-based value adding industries is vast. The main occupations in the area are forestry, agriculture and fisheries industries.

1.1.4 Relevance and conformity with ITTO objectives and priorities

1.1.4.1 Conformity with ITTO's objectives and priorities

This project is in line with the ITTO 2006 objectives in the following areas:

Objective C: "Contributing to sustainable development and poverty alleviation".

Improvement in SRAs and negotiations for compensation payments to affected farmers; and monitoring the use of timber revenues at the District Assembly will increase community development projects in the forest communities and help to reduce poverty in rural areas.

Objective D: "Enhancing the capacity of members to implement strategies for achieving exports of tropical timber products from sustainably managed sources".

The development and implementation of local monitoring strategies by forest communities will improve forest law enforcement and legal compliance at the community level and help to check illegal logging and improve the production and export of legal timber.

Objective R: "Encouraging members to recognize the role of forest dependent indigenous and local communities to sustainably manage tropical timber producing forests".

Capacity development for forest communities will improve their participation, responsibilities, and rights in forest governance and sustainable forest management.

Conformity with ITTO Strategic Action Plan 2013-2018 in the following respects:

Strategic Priority 1 states "Promote good governance and enabling policy framework for strengthening SFM and related trade and enhancing SFM financing and investment"

Example of recommended actions:

- "Strengthening forest law compliance and governance."
- "Support to production and marketing of legally produced tropical timber and effective supply chain management."
- "Strengthening capacity of community and other small and medium-sized enterprises."

This project aims to build the capacity of forest communities to improve their participation in forest governance and monitoring at the forest gate. This initiative will contribute to forest law enforcement and improve the assessment of forest law compliance right from the forest gate. The project will also empower the forest communities to improve their negotiation skills for equitable share of timber revenues, community development projects and improved livelihoods.

1.1.4.2 Relevance to Ghana's policies and programs

This project is in line with the objectives of Ghana Forest and Wildlife Policy 2012.

The Ghana Forest and Wildlife Policy 2012, Objective 4: “Promoting and developing mechanisms for transparent governance, equity sharing and people’s participation in forest and wildlife resource management”.

This project provides capacity building to forest communities to meet their objectives in forest governance and access to timber benefit sharing arrangements. It promotes equity sharing by building the capacity of forest communities to better negotiate SRA benefits and have oversight responsibility in the use of timber revenues from the District Assembly in terms of social/community development projects.

1.2 Origin

RUDEYA had organized focused group discussions with Community Resources Management Committees and Community Leaders on the roles, responsibilities and rights of forest communities in the context of Ghana FLEGT/VPA. This project was the outcome of a number of community-based meetings with the Community Resource Management Committees and other forest stakeholders in the Mankranso Forest District in Ghana between 2014-201

1.2.1 Problem statement

The key problem in this project proposal was the weak capacity of forest communities to participate in forest governance and sustainable forest management practices. The problem had three main causes:

- i. Lack of community-based education and training programs: There is general and silent acceptability of illegal timber in the Ghanaian domestic market. Majority of forest people are not aware of the problems and challenges posed by illegal logging. Illegal logging creates deforestation, loss of revenue to communities, government and other stakeholders. Deforestation also creates loss of livelihood opportunities and environmental problems in forest communities and national level. Forest Communities also have limited knowledge and skills to negotiate for equitable SRAs, compensation payments to affected farmers in off reserve logging operations and social development projects from the District Assemblies. The forest communities need educational programs to create awareness on the dangers of illegal logging and the measures needed to address these problems. They also need training programs to improve their negotiation skills for equitable distribution of timber revenues and other forest resources.
- ii. There is lack of monitoring strategy in the forest communities: “The 2012 revised Forest and Wildlife Policy seeks among others to promote human resource development for community level initiatives, support the poor, the vulnerable, and the excluded to promote good governance through accountability and transparency.” Furthermore, the FC operational guidelines July 2012 on Civil Society Monitoring of the Voluntary Partnership Agreement in Ghana states that the “Successful implementation of Ghana’s FLEGT/VPA aimed at curbing illegal logging requires a credible Legality Assurance System (LAS). In addition to the technical requirements of the LAS, a credible LAS must include coordinated

Civil Society/Community led monitoring processes”. One of the key areas for CSOs/community participation in the VPA is the development and implementation of local independent monitoring strategy. The Ghana LAS includes the role communities and CSOs have in filing complaints with the Auditing Conformity Assessment Bodies if they believe that operators or officials are not acting in compliance with the related laws. Community roles/participation are still unfulfilled due to lack of capacity building programs. The forest communities need participatory training programs to monitor the following: forest management plans, timber allocation and utilization permits, timber harvesting operations, forest gate inspections, SRAs, compensation payments to affected farmers in off reserve areas, the use of timber revenues for community development projects from District Assemblies, conformity to Ghana LAS and all regulations to ensure legal compliance at community level.

- iii. Lack of platform for information and knowledge exchange: Forest communities and none state actors have limited information on timber operations and the use of timber revenues for social development projects. Information collection and exchange is lacking among many forest stakeholders. Even in situations where new knowledge has been generated, communities and stakeholders are not aware due to poor dissemination which affects the uptake and use of the knowledge. There is the urgent need to develop a platform and network by forest communities/NGOs, and timber firms for information collection, sharing and dissemination among the major forest stakeholders. This will promote understanding and transparency among all forest stakeholders and also enhance the VPA implementation processes. Community (independent) monitoring reports need to be validated and shared with the FC, TVD, IMs, DAs, Timber Firms, CSOs, NFF to enhance verification, compliance and transparency.

2. PROJECT OBJECTIVES AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

2.1 Project rational

This project aims at specific capacity building activities to improve community participation in forest governance, monitoring and access to equitable benefit sharing arrangements in timber revenues. The project will contribute to legal compliance for the production and export of legal timber right from the forest gate.

2.1.2 Stakeholders' analysis

The participatory approach, which is the hallmark of this project as initiated by RUDEYA, seeks to relate, collaborate and interact, with the major stakeholders, whose profiles are described below.

Primary Stakeholders: The forest communities (represented by community-based organizations like the CFCs, CBAGS, DFF), chiefs and timber companies are the primary stakeholders. Forest communities depend on forest for their livelihoods including, food, medicine, housing etc. They have responsibility to protect the forest from encroachment and wild bush fires, but they lack the expertise in forest governance issues and sustainable forest management practices. They are supposed to derive timber benefits from the timber companies through negotiated SRAs and social development projects from the District Assemblies. However, they lack capacity and skills to negotiate for fair and equitable share from timber revenues and social development projects from the District Assemblies.

The timber firms depend on the forest for sustainable supply of timber. They are worried about the threat posed by the illegal loggers. They also have the duty to comply with all timber harvesting regulations and social responsibility agreements.

The traditional rulers are the land owners and they receive part of timber revenues in the form of royalties. They are interested in sustainable forest management and increased timber royalties from the Lands Commission.

Secondary Stakeholders are the Forestry Commission (FC), District Assembly (DA), and NGOs. The FC is responsible for forest management. Currently the FC has renewed its commitment to Ghana FLEGT and SFM due to the Ghana/EU VPA. The FC receives 50% of timber revenues for forest management services. The FC is responsible for policy formulation and SFM in Ghana.

The District Assembly (DA) receives timber royalties from the Lands Commission on behalf of forest communities for community and social development projects. The DA is the mandated custodian of timber revenues on behalf of forest communities and they have the responsibility and duty to execute and implement development projects on behalf of forest communities. But forest communities are not able to monitor the flow and use of this revenue on their behalf or the mechanisms for selection and implementation of community development projects in their local government areas.

The NGOs/CSOs are interested in capacity development for the CFCs, CBAGs, DFF and forest communities to enhance their capacity in forest governance and SFM; and to facilitate innovations and programs to achieve forest monitoring, forest law compliance and transparency in the VPA

implementation processes. They are also interested in SFM and environmental issues relating to forest biodiversity and climate change.

The Tertiary Stakeholders are Forest Research Institute Ghana (FORIG). FORIG is interested in forest research and development in Ghana.

2.1.3 Project Development Objective and Impact indicators

To contribute to sustainable forest management and poverty reduction in Ghana.

Impact Indicators:

- a. 5% decrease in rural poverty by 2025 in forest communities.
- b. By 2022 forest law enforcement and legal compliance will increase by 10% in the project area.
- c. By 2022 equitable timber revenue distribution will increase by 10% in the project area - in the forest communities.
- d. By 2022 forest governance and SFM practices will increase by 10% in the forest communities

2.1.4 Specific Objective and Outcome Indicators

2.1.4.1 Specific Objective

To improve the capacity of 20 forest communities in forest governance and enhance their negotiation skills for community development projects in Mankraso Forest District in 18 months.

2.1.4.2 Outcome Indicators

- a. Twenty (20) forest communities gain knowledge in forest governance, monitoring and legal compliance.
- b. Ten (10) forest communities increase community/social development projects from the District Assembly.
- c. Ten (10) forest communities get improved social responsibility benefits (SRA incomes etc.)
- d. Qualitative improvement in information collection and exchange among key stakeholders.
- e. Compensation payments to affected farmers increased by 10% in off reserve areas.

2.2 Implementation Strategy

Project inception

Through collaborative methods and approaches the project has built consensus with all stakeholders on the best mechanisms to develop and implement local monitoring strategies towards CS/Community led independent monitoring scheme. Participatory learning workshops and educational programs were used to educate forest communities and local institutions like the CFCs, CBAGs, DFFs etc. on the Ghana/EU VPA which forbids the harvest and trade in illegal timber and wood in local and export markets. The development model was capacity development

of forest communities and local CBOs on Ghana FLEGT/VPA with the view to strengthen local capacity to contribute to local monitoring, verification, forest law compliance and transparency for the production of legal timber, and to ensure that forest communities have improved their access to timber revenues and community development projects which has led to sustainable social assets and capital in the forest communities.

Collaborating Institutions

The collaborating institutions were RMSC of the Forestry Commission for technical guidance, National Forest Forum (NFF) for the inputs and support of CFCs and DFFs. Forest Watch Ghana (FWG) for CSO/NGO inputs and support. GTMO/GTA for the input and support of the timber companies, and the Ahafo Ano North and South District Assemblies for the support of the local government. Representatives from these institutions were selected to form the project steering (technical) committee which provided advice and technical guidance for the project execution and implementation.

Community based educational programs

The project used simple and participatory methods to explain the rationale behind the signing of the VPA between Ghana and European Union. The contents of the VPA and the processes and measures to curb illegal logging and trade in timber products were explained using educational and participatory tools. These were audio visuals and simple educational and communication materials on drivers of deforestation and climate change in Ghana. It also used participatory methods like focus group discussions to analyze the negative effects of illegal logging on loss of revenue to the state and timber firms which subsequently affect SRA contracts and community development projects.

Strengthen local CBOS

Capacity building was based on the needs identified in the baseline phase against alternatives identified for sustainable resource management. The approach was as much as possible practical and on a learning by doing basis. The project used training of trainers' workshops to train CFCs, CBAGs, and District Forest Forum members on forest governance and the Ghana LAS. Using participatory methods, the workshops were used to train the local CBOs on the key areas for local monitoring activities in support of functional VPA.

Platform for information sharing

The project developed a platform for information collection, sharing and dissemination on forest law enforcement and governance among all forest stakeholders. Through collaborative approaches the project developed a network for all forest stakeholders including forest communities, CFCs, CSOs, FSD, FC, traditional chiefs, District Assemblies and Timber Firms. Among other things, the platform was used to advocate the views, lessons, and expectations of forest communities, CSOs and local independent monitors in the implementation of the Ghana VPA. Validated monitoring reports, and project lessons were linked to RUDEYA and Forest Watch Ghana Websites.

Project monitoring

The project used participatory monitoring to increase effectiveness and ensured that project activities and outputs were achieved on timely basis to produce the planned outcomes and the specific objective of the project. The project developed participatory monitoring and evaluation systems with reference to the impacts, outcomes, outputs and their indicators.

Gender mainstreaming and youth participation

Gender mainstreaming was one of the key strategies of the project. The project used gender analysis to identify the roles, interests and benefits accruing to men, women and youth in the project areas. This fostered the opportunity to address the needs of women and youth in the forest communities. Gender disaggregation and analysis helped the project staff to ensure that women and youth were adequately represented on the forest institutions like the CFCs, DFF and the local monitoring teams. Project indicators showed the number of men, women and youth in the community led monitoring team and how they benefitted from training and other capacity development programs. Gender friendly education, information and training approaches were adopted to promote the interest of women and youth in forest governance and participation in forestry activities at the community level. The existence of CFCs, CBAGS, women and youth groups were explored to reduce gender inequalities. These institutions are already changing sex stereotypes in forestry activities and decision making processes in some of the forest communities. RUDEYA was and still supporting the MTS and NTFP farmers who are mainly women and youth in some of the selected project communities. These are examples to support the current project on gender sensitivity. These projects have provided land and other resources for income generation and livelihood support programs to women and youth in forest communities. Gender and youth inclusion helped to improve broad awareness and right decision making in the forest communities, thereby improving forest governance. It also boosted the confidence of women and youth in community development projects.

Risks and assumptions

The main risk during the implementation period was the COVID-19 pandemic. Though the project has scaled through these difficult times, but it was restricted mainly to local events. Direct meetings with top management members from the Forestry Commission and Forest Watch in Accra was restricted. However, we have used the limited time and space judiciously to produce tangible results for the project.

The other challenge during the implementation was the rising cost of living which affected the project costs and expenditures. In this case, we also managed to steer through with strict financial controls so that we could finish the project within the budget provisions.

3. PROJECT PERFORMANCE

3.1 Project Performance

a. Specific objective

To improve the capacity of 20 forest communities in forest governance and enhance their negotiation skills for community development projects in Mankraso Forest District in 18 months.

Achieved results: Twenty (20) forest communities have received capacity building activities in the form of education, training workshops and field coaching in forest governance issues, SRA negotiations and community development projects. As a result, 10 communities obtained SRA benefits and the monies were invested in community development projects (attached as annex 1).

b. Total Amount of Expenditures; Analysis of Applied Input

The total approved project budget is US\$144,000. ITTO contribution is \$120,000 and the Government of Ghana/Executing Agency contribution is \$24,400. A total of \$97,143 was realized from ITTO in three instalments after the submission of the requisite reports and formal request. A total of \$22,857 was retained by ITTO for monitoring and program support. An aggregate of \$121,543 has been expended by the Executing Agency in the project implementation.

Table 1 Outputs and Related Activities

Project Element Planned	Project Element Executed (%)	Completed Date
Output 1: 20 Forest communities gained knowledge and skill for improved forest governance and access to benefit sharing arrangements.		
*Inception arrangement	100%	Start April,2021 End of April, 2021
*Organise inception workshop	100%	Start April,2021 End of April, 2021
*Organise 1st project steering committee meeting	100%	Start April,2021 End April, 2021
*Carry out reconnaissance surveys in 20 communities	100%	Start April,2021 End of May, 2021
A1.1 Conduct baseline studies.	100%	Start April,2021 End of May, 2021
A1.2. Organize educational programs on Ghana VPA/FLEGT.	100%	Start June,2021 End of July 2021
A1.3 Organize negotiation skills workshop on SRAs, social development projects etc.	100%	Start July,2021 End of August 2021
Output 2: Community based participatory monitoring strategy developed and implemented with 20 forest communities to enhance forest law compliance at the community level.		
A2.1 Organize Forest stakeholders' meetings to develop monitoring protocols.	100%	Start July,2021 End of August, 2021
A2.2 Mobilize, organize, and establish Community led Independent Monitoring Teams.	100%	Start August, 2021 End of September 2021
A2.3 Organize community-based participatory M&E training workshop.	100%	Start September, 2021 End of November 2021
2.4 Conduct community-based monitoring activities.	100%	Start November,2021 End of March, 2022
2.5 Monitor timber SRAs, Community development projects, etc.	100%	Start November,2021 End of March 2022.
2.6 Prepare monitoring reports with the community led Independent Monitoring Teams.	100%	Start January,2022 End of April, 2022
Output 3 Lessons and knowledge produced from the project documented, and disseminated amongst key stakeholders.		
3.1 Conduct stakeholders' meetings to validate monitoring reports and project lessons.	100%	Start January,2022 End of June2022
3.2 Develop Networks for information sharing and dissemination.	100%	Start June 2022 End of August 2022
3.3 Develop website and link project lessons to CF and FWG.	100%%	Start June 2022 End of September, 2022

4. PROJECT OUTCOME AND TARGET BENEFICIARIES

4.1 Project Outcome, target beneficiaries involved

The achieved outcomes:

At the close of the project period, 20 forest communities in the Mankraso Forest District improved their knowledge and capacity to participate in forest governance and forest management practices. Educational programs on the Ghana VPA/FLEGT were organized in 20 forest fringe communities in the Mankraso forest District in June, July 2021. During the end of project evaluation exercise 50% of respondents from 10 communities confirmed their knowledge on the educational programs in forest governance and SRA issues taught in the communities.

The Local Independent Monitors (LIMs) are providing step down education on forest governance and community participation in forest management practices in their communities. According to a LIM member from Adadekrom Jerry Asamoah, “Previously we did not know anything about the negative effects of illegal logging until RUDEYA came with the LIMs concept. We will continue community education on the negative effects of illegal logging on the environment”.

The community led independent monitoring teams were able to lead their communities to check and control illegal timber operations in collaboration with Forest Services Division in the project area. “This is the first time we are working together with forestry officials in timber monitoring operations and we hope it will continue”. Isaac Otchere LIMs Wansanmere.

Community negotiation capacity for SRA benefits improved and they were able to implement 10 community development projects with inputs from SRA incomes and benefits. (Please see annex 1). At the beginning of the project many communities did not know about the SRA concept. In some communities only the chiefs and community leaders knew about the SRA provisions and sometimes the SRA funds were not properly utilized for community development projects.

In a separate development, another 10 communities were able to negotiate, advocate and leverage 10 development projects from the 3 District Assemblies without SRA matching funds. The communities are now aware that they can approach the District Assemblies for development assistance using the SRA funds as matching funds.

The project also provided a platform for local forest information collection and exchange among the key stakeholders. “We are happy about the documentation and information sharing in this Independent Forest Monitoring Project. It is good to hear from community members on IFM activities”. CSO representative. Key information from the project were shared during stakeholder meetings and workshops.

4.2.1 Tangible Outputs of the Project

- i. Twenty forest communities have gained knowledge and skills for improved forest governance and access to equitable SRA benefits which are properly invested in community development projects. Ten (10) communities received SRA benefits and the funds were invested in community development projects using the local SRA committees. “This project will help to remove abuses in SRA collection and utilization in the communities”. Planning Officer from the District Assemblies.
- ii. Community-based participatory monitoring strategies have been developed and implemented with 20 forest communities to enhance forest law compliance at community level. The project has developed a monitoring guidebook which has been designed mainly to facilitate Civil Society and Community Independent Forest Monitoring. “We hope the Independent Forest Monitoring (IFM) guidelines will provide strategies and protocols for civil society and community independent forest monitoring. This will serve as standards for civil society and community Independent Forest Monitoring”. RMSC representative.
- iii. Lessons and knowledge produced from the project have been documented, and disseminated amongst key forest stakeholders. A local platform was set up to collect information and messages from the communities through WhatsApp and text messages. Project staff did the follow up with the appropriate authorities and the reports shared with the stakeholders. Relevant information has been shared in stakeholders’ meetings and workshops. “We are happy about the documentation and information sharing in this project” CSO representative.

4.2.2 Sectoral policies and programs

The project has contributed to the attainment of ITTA 2006 objectives in the following areas:

- i. *Objective C “Contributing to development and poverty alleviation”.*
The project has made contributions to community development projects in 10 forest communities thereby reducing poverty in the 10 forest communities.
- ii. *Objective D “Enhancing the capacity of members to implement strategies for achieving exports of tropical timber products from sustainably managed sources”.*

The project has developed local monitoring guidelines and strategies which has can contributed to forest law compliance at the forest gate. The Civil Society/Community Independent Forest Monitoring concept has assisted civil society and forest community representatives to play key roles in community-based independent forest monitoring. The local independent monitors in this project have helped to monitor and check timber felling irregularities and promote the production and export of legal timber products. Hitherto the implementation of this project there was no community-based monitoring strategy which could facilitate community participation in forest monitoring and help to check and control timber felling irregularities.

- iii. *Objective R: “Encouraging members to recognize the role of forest dependent, indigenous and local communities to sustainably manage tropical timber producing forests”.*

The project has enhanced the capacity of forest dwellers and the local independent monitors to check illegal timber operations and to protect forest resources from encroachments. The project has highlighted the need to include forest communities in forest monitoring and sustainable forest management by the state actors, timber firms and traditional authorities who are the land owners.

The project is also in line with the Ghana EU FLEGT implementation strategies.

Physical environment:

Although the project duration is short, it has impacted on the physical protection of forest resources. These include timber and environmentally sensitive areas in the forest reserves and off reserves forest areas.

4.3 Target Beneficiaries

Direct beneficiaries include 20 trained LIMs, 100 community resource committee members, and ten (10) forest communities (app. 5000 inhabitants) which secured SRA benefits and implemented community development projects with contributions from the SRA benefits and funds.

Indirect Beneficiaries were 10,000 residents from the 20 forest communities, and over 221,000 inhabitants from the 3 MMDAs in the Mankraso Forest District.

Local Participation by the forest communities and their representatives including the local independent monitors (LIMs) and local SRA committees were very high. The LIMs have provided step down education on timber felling regulations, contributed to field monitoring operations, and provided oversight responsibilities for the proper utilization and implementation of SRA funds and benefits for the implementation of community development projects. The benefits from 10 SRA funds have been used to implement community development projects which have contributed to poverty reduction in 10 forest communities. The capacity building activities have helped the LIMs and other direct project beneficiaries to contribute to sustainable forest management in the communities.

4.4 Project sustainability

Project sustainability strategies were designed from project planning and implementation levels. The local direct beneficiaries will provide technical and socio-economic benefits to the project communities after project completion through step down training and forest protection activities.

Exit Strategy: At the closing workshop the project achievements and lessons were shared and handed over to the key stakeholders including representatives from the LIMs, Forestry Commission, Forest Services Division, Forest Watch Ghana, Planning Officers from the District Assemblies and the Resource Management Support Centre. This arrangement is to ensure that the state duty bearers, community representatives, and CSOs are able to build on the achievements made by the project after the project completion.

5. PROJECT ASSESSMENT AND ANALYSIS

5.1 Stakeholder identification and stakeholder participation

The project has used community-based meetings for project identification. It used stakeholders' comments and needs in forest governance and the equitable access to timber revenues and forest resources as a spring board for further engagement with other stakeholders for the project identification and rationale.

5.2 Adequacy of Problem Statement, Project Objectives and Implementation Strategy

The key problem in this project was the weak capacity of forest communities to participate in forest governance and sustainable forest management practices. The specific objective was to improve the capacity of 20 forest communities in forest governance and enhance their negotiation skills for community development projects in Mankraso Forest District. The project objective was designed to deal with the key problem and their related causes. The project strategies were mainly capacity building activities using collaboration with the Forestry Commission and the District Assemblies to help design a suitable monitoring protocol and standard for local independent monitoring with a mix of local participation and CSO advocates. The strategy has helped to provide an independent monitoring model for local monitors within a reasonable collaboration with government and state actors which can produce validated and reliable monitoring reports in line with Ghana's FLEGT program. The project strategies were designed to include gender mainstreaming and sustainability strategies for possible continuity and upscaling to all forest areas in Ghana.

5.3 Critical differences between Planned and Actual Project Implementation

The project implementation was quite smooth and straight forward because the project outputs were realistic and attainable. However, there was no timber firm operating in the off-reserve areas during the 18 months of the project implementation. This made it impossible to capture the planned activities in the off-reserve logging activities involving local farmers. Despite this disappointment the project has given sufficient education and training to the target groups and to prepare them for the regulations regarding off reserve logging and its corresponding monitoring activities. There were also challenges regarding the network activities with some of the institutions, especially the Forestry Commission. The Forestry Commission has about 5 sub-divisions and it was impossible to dialogue with all the directors in order to gain access to their main website for information sharing. Within the project scope we are happy to share our limited website with the Resource Management Support Centre and Forest Watch Ghana.

5.4 Adequacy of Time and Project Inputs

This project is a small project with 18 months' time frame. The project was planned to start in March 2021, however the first funds arrived in late March 2021. We have therefore, scheduled the actual time frame from April 2021 to September 2022. The time frame was quite suitable for the

implementation of the project activities and achievement of project outputs. The inputs were quite suitable for the project implementation. However, the project needs to be upscaled to other forest areas in Ghana to create wider impacts with communities and the FLEGT program in Ghana. Community/Civil Society Independent Forest Monitoring strategies have to be institutionalized in Ghana. This will improve the Ghana Legality Assurance System and promote forest governance at the local level and enhance forest law compliance at the forest gate.

5.5 External Influences, Assumptions and Risks

The main assumptions and risks were the lack of participation of the key stakeholders. Through consultations we were able to draw the key stakeholders like the RMSC, Forest Services Division, Forest Watch Ghana, District Assemblies and the traditional authorities to participate in the project activities and in the various committees and workshops. We found it a bit difficult to reach timber associations at the national level, but we got the co-operation of timber firms working in the project area for monitoring and SRA negotiations.

5.6 Participation of Anticipated and Actual Project Beneficiaries

Participation from stakeholders was quite good for the successful implementation of the project. The identified beneficiaries mentioned in this project responded to the demands of the project activities.

5.7 Analysis of Project Sustainability

The project contained sustainability strategies leading to technical, socio economic, and political sustainability for the project. The exit strategy was designed to hand over the achievements and lessons learnt to Forestry Commission and all other stakeholders.

The project has built the capacity of forest communities and CBOs to enable them to improve their participation in forest governance and sustainable forest management. In addition, the project used training of trainers approach in order for the community led monitors to train new members of the communities to sustain the benefits of the project. Project partners and collaborators have built their capacity to utilize and retain the knowledge and benefits provided by this project to enhance institutional sustainability.

This project has improved and deepened the chances of communities and farmers to gain more community development projects through SRA funds and compensation payments to affected farmers leading to broad community participation in forest governance. This will sustain their interest in forest governance and promote socio economic sustainability of the project.

This project is embedded in the implementation of the Ghana VPA/FLEGT. The interest of Ghana government and FLEGT program will help to sustain the gains of the project by empowering forest communities to access equitable benefits from timber revenues after project completion.

5.8 Exit Strategy

During the closing workshop, the project achievements and lessons learnt were shared with the RMSC, FC, Forest Watch Ghana, the LIMs and the MMDAs so that the project lessons and achievements could be integrated in their respective programs and work plans.

5.9 Institutional Involvements

Appropriateness of roles and responsibility of stakeholders- the roles and responsibilities of the Resource Management Support Centre, Forest Services Division, District Assemblies, Traditional Authorities, Communities and Civil Society Networks were quite appropriate.

6. LESSONS LEARNED

6.1 Lessons Learned from Project identification and design matters

6.1.1 Project identification and design matters

- Collaboration with state actors in the project identification, design and implementation has proved beneficial to the project implementation. Contrary to CSO perceptions that the Forest Services Division (FSD) would not provide the necessary collaboration, FSD played key roles. This made it possible for the project to get access to timber harvesting compartments and timber harvesting operations and all the relevant documentations for the purposes of monitoring.
- Collaboration with the District Assemblies was very good. They provided all the needed information regarding timber royalties received during the project implementation period, community development projects in the project area. They are prepared to collaborate with CSOs to bring more development projects into communities with limited SRA funds.

6.1.2 Operational Matters:

- The successful implementation of this project produced standard protocols for Civil Society/Community Independent Forest Monitoring. The time to consider the institutionalization of CS/Community IFM as part of the Ghana FLEGT program is urgent. However, this might require continuous donor support for forest governance programs.
- The LIMs are carrying out educational and training programmes in their respective communities and this is a good step to improve project sustainability.
- Sometimes hired chainsaw operators from the timber firms engage in illegal activities on the blind side of the timber firms and the timber firms and FSD need to take note of this anomaly.
- Some farmers trust illegal chain saw operators. They negotiate with them and take a little fee ranging between GHC 50.00 – GHC100 depending on the size and the type of the tree species, to steal timber from the off-reserve areas.
- Sometimes, they also operate the ‘Abusa’ system of sharing the proceeds from the trees that are felled from their farms on agreement. The operators take two thirds (2/3) whilst the farmers take one third (1/3) of the wood. Farmers explained that this is profitable than the money they receive from timber firms in off reserve logging. In some cases, timber firms are reluctant to compensate for crop losses and damages on crop farms.

7. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In spite of the COVID-19 pandemic, the project has been completed successful within the time frame and available budget resources. *Enhancing* the capacity of forest communities in Mankraso Forest District on forest governance and community development projects, the following conclusions and recommendations are made:

7.1 Conclusions

- Twenty (20) forest communities gained knowledge in forest governance, monitoring and legal compliance.
- Ten (10) forest communities increased community and social development projects from the District Assembly.
- Ten (10) forest communities got improved social responsibility benefits (SRA incomes etc.)
- There was free flow of information among key stakeholders.
- Affected farmers had their compensation payments increased by 10% in off reserve areas.

7.2 Recommendations

- The project has been implemented mainly as a demonstration project with forest CSOs and forest communities. There is the need to upscale and replicate this project to other forest communities to realize its national application.
- Community Independent Forest Monitoring has to be institutionalized into the Ghana FLEGT program to enhance the participation of Civil Society Organizations and community participation in forest governance. This will enhance the Ghana Legality Assurance System and improve forest law compliance at the forest gate.
- Civil Society Organizations have to be assisted with necessary funding and capacity building to upscale the independent forest monitoring concept so that NGOs can also work to enhance the capacity of forest communities in forest governance, and contribute to community development projects.

