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Linking FLEGT and REDD+ to improve forest governance — a synthesis

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Introduction

A number of international policy initiatives have emerged in response to concerns about forest loss and degradation. Key among these are the EU Action Plan for Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) and Reducing Emissions for Deforestation and Degradation and the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks (REDD+). Both initiatives, as well as others such as National Forest Programmes (NFPs),¹ aim to address underlying causes of deforestation and forest degradation. Ideally, all these initiatives would be compatible and mutually reinforcing, but practice shows that this is often challenging.

The EU FLEGT Action Plan marked its tenth anniversary in 2013; REDD+ became part of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) negotiations in 2007. The first Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) — a key instrument of the Action Plan — was ratified in 2010 between Ghana and the EU. Since 2007 a range of countries have been engaged in REDD+ preparations at the same time that they were negotiating or implementing a VPA (see Appendix). The countries are at various stages of preparation and implementation; the context, experiences and progress in each country are different. This makes it relevant to examine whether and how the development and implementation of VPAs and REDD+ initiatives are coordinated, what challenges exist and how coordination can be strengthened. This includes coordination with other policies, strategies, structures or processes at the national and sub-national level that aim to improve forest governance and promote sustainable forest management.

This issue of *ETFRN News* aims to contribute to a better understanding of the existing and potential linkages between forest-related initiatives, in particular FLEGT and REDD+. Documenting and analyzing experiences with and lessons from how these initiatives interact will help policy-makers, practitioners and other experts better understand what works

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and what does not. This issue brings together 22 articles with practical experiences and research about how FLEGT, REDD+ and other forest-related initiatives are integrated and coordinated at the country level, and the opportunities and limitations for interactions between the initiatives. It has been a challenge to find concrete country experiences of FLEGT and REDD+ interactions; most cases are still at a conceptual level.

Section 1 of this publication introduces the two main international forest initiatives, FLEGT and REDD+. Section 2 describes interactions between various initiatives in a general way. Section 3 deals with governance, law and institutions. It includes articles on safeguards, land tenure and civil society participation, among other topics. Section 4 describes the existing and potential implications of international forest initiatives for communities and smallholders, and Section 5 provides two perspectives on the potential linkages between TLAS and MRV. It also includes an article on risk reduction measures for REDD+ investments in which FLEGT could play a role. Section 6 discusses several other types of interactions: the potential value of the FLEGT approach for other commodities, experiences with forest funds that may be useful for new REDD+ initiatives and the importance of fuelwood in both REDD+ and FLEGT discussions.

FLEGT, REDD+ and beyond

The EU FLEGT Action Plan² sets out measures to prevent the import of illegal timber into the EU, improve the supply of legal timber and increase the demand for timber from responsibly managed forests. The measures include both demand-side and supply-side instruments. On the supply side, the Action Plan supports timber-producing countries with measures that include the promotion of fair solutions to illegal logging. It also focuses on complementary demand-side measures to reduce the consumption of illegally harvested timber in the EU. The Action Plan further promotes multilateral efforts to reduce illegal trade in timber in major markets.

VPAs are bilateral trade agreements between timber-producing countries and the EU. They form the centrepiece of the Action Plan. The purpose of a VPA is to support countries in producing legally verified timber. Once the licensing system of the VPA is functional, timber products from this country can be sold on the EU market only if it carries a FLEGT licence. VPAs support improved governance in the forest sector of producer countries and provide a mechanism to assure the legality of the timber products that enter the EU market. Another important part of the Action Plan is the EU Timber Regulation, which bans illegal timber from the EU market and requires operators to exercise due diligence and take risk mitigating measures when they place timber on the EU market. Timber that carries a FLEGT licence is exempt from this requirement.

REDD is an international mechanism framed by international climate change negotiations. REDD changed to REDD+ in 2008 to include activities aimed at enhancing carbon stocks, sustainable forest management and forest conservation. REDD+ aims to provide performance-based incentives to developing countries for carbon sequestration (i.e., to keep trees standing) and to support associated land-use planning and reforms.

Both FLEGT and REDD+ contribute to improved forest governance, in particular by strengthening inclusive and transparent multi-stakeholder participation and by facilitating legal and institutional reforms. VPAs link good forest governance with legal trade instruments. REDD+ initiatives are increasingly taking forest governance issues into account, which help make it an effective instrument to slow, halt and reverse forest cover and carbon loss.

Both processes also aim to improve forest management. FLEGT focuses on timber and timber products, whereas REDD+ focuses on forest services. FLEGT uses markets and trade as incentives to achieve its aims; REDD+ uses performance-based payments that may be linked to carbon markets. As a result, FLEGT could be viewed as relatively straightforward: fewer actors are involved; there is a clear focus on timber products; and simpler methods are used. Timber-producing countries that negotiate and implement a VPA with the EU strengthen their own laws and law enforcement policies, while operators in the EU need to comply with the EU Timber Regulation. Conversely, REDD+ requires strong coordination with a number of economic sectors that are beyond the scope of FLEGT, such as agriculture, mining and infrastructure development. See Table 1 for a summary of the differences between FLEGT and REDD+.

Table 1. Main differences between FLEGT and REDD+

FLEGT	REDD+
Bilateral	Multilateral
VPAs designed through a national participatory approach to consensus building with a broad range of stakeholders to strengthen and enforce the legal framework	multilateral guidance requires translation into national strategies with a broad range of stakeholders
focus on monitoring legality verification and timber supply chains	focus on monitoring of carbon benefits and also recently, co-benefits ³
limited to timber production and trade	comprehensive, including all deforestation and degradation drivers
links market access and governance	links performance-based incentives and land-use sector reforms

FLEGT and REDD+ are the prevailing international forest regimes being negotiated and implemented (see the Appendix for an overview of countries with FLEGT and/or REDD+ activities). However, a host of initiatives and approaches to governing forests exist — both regulatory and voluntary — such as forest certification, the Non-legally Binding Instrument on All Types of Forests (NLBI), NFPs (which include national forest policies), the Convention on Biological Diversity, CITES and the post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals process. This is reflected in the subject of the articles in this *ETFRN News*: most deal with the potential linkages between FLEGT and REDD+; only a few also take into account other initiatives. Lessons about the interactions between these two regimes could be viewed as representative of linkages between other forest-related regimes.

About linkages

Linkages in this issue of *ETFRN News* are defined as all types of interactions between FLEGT, REDD+ and other initiatives. These interactions can be positive (i.e., one or both of the initiatives are strengthened by the interactions), negative, or neutral (there are no benefits or negative impacts to the interactions). In this synthesis article the term “synergies” is used only when it relates to positive interactions or linkages.

Various methods have been used by the authors of the articles in this *ETFRN News* to identify possible linkages. Wiersum, Capiroso and Visseren-Hamakers (2.1) used the framework developed by Gehring and Oberthür (2009) to systematically assess type of interactions. These authors identify interactions as influences that travel from one regime — the “source” — to the other — the “target.” Regime interactions may take many forms, from complementary to competitive, and can be existing or potential. Wiersum, Capiroso and Visseren-Hamakers identified four types of interactions: **Cognitive** interaction, where decision-making, actions or actors of one regime are affected by another; interaction through **Commitment**, where actors of one regime or process modify their outputs because of agreements in another regime; **Behavioural** interaction, where changes in one regime affect implementation of another regime; and **Impact-level** interaction, which results from the interdependence of stakeholders in the interacting regimes.

Tegegne et al. (2.2) use a similar framework (without the “impact” type of interaction). The other articles do not use this framework or any other particular framework. However, the types of linkages they discuss can all, in one way or another, fit in with the four categories presented by Wiersum, Capiroso and Visseren-Hamakers (2.1).

This synthesis article is structured according to a number of areas for potential linkages between FLEGT, REDD+ and other initiatives. These areas were identified through the assessment of linkages in the articles: (i) governance and institutions, including participatory processes, institutional cooperation, transparency and accountability, and community and smallholder forestry; (ii) FLEGT and REDD+ supporting each other in technical issues, including social and environmental safeguards and monitoring systems; (iii) FLEGT approaches to address deforestation drivers in support of REDD+; and (iv) financing forest management and conservation. The last part of the article presents a number of conclusions and recommendations using the four types of interactions mentioned above.

Governance and institutions

Stakeholder participation

People increasingly recognize that governance problems underlie many of the problems associated with access to and use of forests. Effective governance embodies decision-making that is participatory, consensus-based, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive, and which follows the rule of law.⁴ The impartial and independent exchange of information is a critical part of fostering good governance processes. For complex issues such as natural resource management, where there are a range of views, competing interests and expectations, well-managed multi-stakeholder processes

can bridge the differences in perceptions of the diverse participants and help them reach agreement (Box 1).

Box 1. Key principles for multi-stakeholder processes

There is no such thing as a standard blueprint for a multi-stakeholder process. The context, stakeholders, issues, participants and objectives determine the design of each dialogue process. Preparation is crucial to ensure that the process is sound and inclusive and is driven by the stakeholders. All relevant stakeholders must participate in the process and should be well informed about its objectives. They need to be organized and they should be able to express their opinions about the issues to be discussed and the process itself. Skilled and sensitive facilitation is crucial in guiding the dialogue toward its goals, ensuring that participants contribute fully and freely, and in dealing with conflicts and divergent interests.

For multi-stakeholder processes to succeed, some key process principles must be incorporated. Woodhill and van der Vugt (2011)⁵ identify seven key principles:

1. Work with complexity
2. Foster collective learning
3. Shift power
4. Deal with conflict
5. Enable effective communication
6. Promote collaborative leadership
7. Reinvent institutions

Both FLEGT and REDD+ processes are expected to benefit from a multiple stakeholder process and create space for it at a national level. One of the strengths of the VPA negotiation and implementation process is the high level of stakeholder participation through structured and inclusive consultations. This experience could be applied to the REDD+ process. In Cameroon the REDD+ process learned from the VPA process: the same participatory approach used to negotiate the VPA has been applied to REDD+, and a national platform on REDD+ and climate change has been established. The involvement of all relevant stakeholders and the sharing of information established an unprecedented level of confidence and trust among local stakeholders and government representatives, resulting in the validation of the REDD+ Readiness Preparation Proposal, or R-PP (4.4).

Stakeholder consultations can be done in multiple ways. To ensure the legitimacy of the process, local representatives of indigenous groups, communities or other groups affected by FLEGT or REDD+ activities must be selected in a transparent manner so that it is clear to all stakeholders how and why these persons are able to speak and make decisions on behalf of others (4.4). For effective participation, the capacity of weaker stakeholders needs to be built, not only to understand the issues, but also to articulate their ideas and concerns.

Institutional linkages

In theory there is a lot of potential for synergies between initiatives at the national level, but in practice cooperation seems to be limited. Each initiative creates its own coordination mechanisms. Cooperation and cross referencing between the two initiatives in decision making is limited, irrespective of whether they are situated in the same office (Ghana, 3.1), or in separate ministries (Lao PDR, 2.3).

Identifying the thematic and institutional intersections of FLEGT and REDD+ at an early stage could help in developing a common approach to improved forest governance (as for example happened in Lao PDR and Honduras). Highly compartmentalized government structures and vested political interests are among the persistent barriers to better cooperation (3.4).

Transparency and accountability

Transparency and accountability are important conditions for successful VPA and REDD+ implementation. Both VPA and REDD+ preparations need to include the establishment of appropriate transparency and accountability mechanisms. Most VPAs have a specific annex which sets out the norms for public information sharing; REDD+ has safeguards that need to be addressed, which include governance issues and respect of rights of indigenous and local communities affected by the regime. Most international forest regimes aim to increase transparency and accountability, e.g., through improved access to information. Increased transparency has the potential to shift power and give local forest communities a stronger voice (4.4).

Kiyulu N'yanga (3.6) gives an impression of the scale of the work that improving transparency and accountability may require in a fragile state like the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Among the measures that he proposes are public disclosure of all the funds dedicated to REDD+ in DRC, strengthening the management of local development funds, the establishment of an independent Monitoring and Evaluation Committee for all FLEGT and REDD+ projects in the country and reporting to all stakeholders. In addition to these measures to improve the financial transparency of FLEGT and REDD+ projects could be added measures related to the system of forest governance (such as decision-making; e.g., granting of resource rights) or to the people involved in the processes.

Community and smallholder forestry

Both the FLEGT and REDD+ processes can help clarify and secure the rights of local and indigenous communities to forest land: they provide a way for national stakeholders to acknowledge certain rights. At the same time, community forestry and smallholder forestry can also help in controlling illegal logging, which contributes to the common aims of FLEGT and REDD+ (Honduras, 4.1, Thailand, 4.6). However, forest management requirements under these processes can be stringent, effectively excluding some communities from participating. Requirements that are not strict enough should also be avoided; they could lead to increased illegal logging activities.⁶

Monitoring smallholder operations can be a challenge because of the often diversified forest and land management goals of the individual smallholders, which are not always in line with the goals of FLEGT and REDD+. Monitoring a large number of broadly dispersed smallholders can also be challenging and expensive. The use of innovative techniques such as GIS, remote sensing, web patrols and community monitoring may provide solutions (4.6).

Tenure

Unclear tenure arrangements are one of the major drivers of illegal logging and deforestation. Security of tenure rights is one of the foundations of good forest governance and also supports local economic development. Conflicts over land can undermine the objectives of FLEGT and REDD+ processes; these initiatives share a mutual concern for land tenure that could lead to productive synergies (3.5). They can facilitate a review process of the forest sector that could help resolve many of the longstanding land conflicts in the country (e.g., Vietnam, 4.5).

In many countries community tree tenure arrangements are complex and in need of reform (3.5). Organizing tree tenure rights in a way that benefits people and the forest can be a challenge and in some countries (e.g., Ghana) may even require a constitutional amendment. The influence of the VPA is limited by its focus on the timber industry. It cannot address the land rights of people who are threatened by forest uses such as industrial agriculture and mining, which are expanding quickly. REDD+ has the advantage of encouraging a cross-sectoral vision; it takes into account all land-use factors that drive deforestation. Because of this, REDD+ can potentially be important in resolving tenure ambiguity and benefit sharing, which helps prevent forest people from being marginalized (3.5). But there is also a risk that REDD+ will help to maintain tenure insecurity for forest-dependent communities; the requirements under REDD+ (e.g., to clarify tenure arrangements) may in this case benefit vested interests at the expense of forest-dependent communities (3.1; 4.1).

Technical issues

Social and environmental safeguards

Safeguards are policies and measures that aim to address both direct and indirect negative impacts on communities and ecosystems by identifying, analyzing and ultimately working to manage risks and opportunities. Safeguards are important to ensure that actions do not cause negative social or environmental impacts.⁷ It is unlikely that a single social safeguard mechanism will prevent all potential negative impacts.⁸ Rather, proponents will have to design a coherent set of tailor-made mechanisms for specific target groups over the short and long term, and these mechanisms must become an integral part of the initiative.

Stakeholders have identified a number of social and environmental risks in the implementation of the FLEGT and REDD+ processes, some of which are listed by Korwin, Rey and Ribet (3.3):

- negative impacts on biodiversity (e.g., conversion of natural forests into plantations); and leakage, where a reduction in forest degradation and deforestation or in illegal logging in one area leads to additional forest degradation, deforestation or illegal logging in a different area;
- negative impacts on forest-dependent people and other vulnerable stakeholders because of their limited participation. Some indigenous groups are concerned that REDD+ may lead to a “commodification of life” (4.3).⁹ Elites may benefit from REDD+ at the expense of forest-dependent people and their livelihoods, e.g., through unclear land tenure, poorly maintained land title documents, or an increase in the value of land due to REDD+ financial incentives (4.5); and
- legality requirements that exclude informal actors in the timber trade, including Small and Medium Forest Enterprises (SMFEs). The majority of SMFEs operate largely informally,¹⁰ and are characterized by limited resources and capacity. If they are not well designed, FLEGT and REDD+ could put SMFEs out of business.

Both processes address these risks, but use different approaches:

- The REDD+ safeguards address a range of issues, including respect for the knowledge and rights of indigenous peoples and local communities, transparent national forest governance structures, effective participation of stakeholders, and the conservation of natural forests and biodiversity. REDD+ requires the establishment of a national Safeguard Information System or SIS (3.5) that reflects the existing safeguards and safeguard instruments in the country.
- VPAs address stakeholder risks through an inclusive negotiation process rather than by predefining specific issues as safeguards. They also require a national impact monitoring framework to be established that will identify and address any negative impact of the VPA once it is being implemented.

The Honduras R-PP specifically mentions the linkages between FLEGT and REDD+, highlighting two key aspects: (1) complementarity and coherence between respective safeguards; and (2) recognition by both processes of the rights of indigenous and local communities, including the problematic forest tenure situation (4.2). Other countries — for example, Cameroon, Central African Republic (CAR) and the Republic of the Congo (ROC) — have replicated the VPA’s social and environmental commitments in their R-PPs (2.2).

Monitoring requirements

Both processes include monitoring requirements. The main tool for guaranteeing legality in VPAs is the Timber Legality Assurance System (TLAS). The TLAS is accompanied by an Independent Audit system.

The TLAS has several components:

- a legality definition, which includes the regulatory references, indicators and verifiers for all laws for which enforcement will be monitored;
- a wood-tracking system that ensures that only timber verified as legal will be exported or sold;

- a system of verifying legal compliance that ensures that no illegally sourced timber enters the chain of custody; and
- a FLEGT licensing scheme for timber that is verified as legal. This licence is required for all timber shipped to the EU market.

REDD+ requires countries to develop a National Forest Monitoring System (NFMS)¹¹ to report the outcomes of their efforts to reduce forest-related greenhouse gas emissions, including a Measurement, Reporting and Verification (MRV) system. Safeguard Information Systems¹² also form part of REDD+ monitoring and cover non-carbon benefits such as social and ecological aspects and potential co-benefits.

The MRV requirements under the REDD+ process address three factors:

- measurement refers to information on carbon stocks and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions over time;
- reporting requires the compilation and availability of national data and statistics for information in the form of a GHG inventory.¹³ Reporting requirements to the UNFCCC may cover issues other than just those subject to measurement; and
- verification refers to independent checks of the accuracy and reliability of the reported information and the procedures used to generate information. This verification is done through an independent and external review.

Both TLAS and MRV collect, organize and generate geo-referenced information related to forest cover, forest area, trees and species and forest management (5.1). Some authors argue that good governance requires governments to develop one system that combines the monitoring requirements of both REDD+ and FLEGT (5.2). This system would benefit forest users, including concession holders (5.2). A single national monitoring system that integrates the TLAS and NFMS, verifies key aspects of the forest sector and meets the requirements of both REDD+ and VPA, would minimize transaction costs. The system would not be limited to monitoring biophysical data; it would also measure the success of governance reform targets for issues such as tenure, benefit sharing, participation in forest policy-making and implementation (3.1; 5.2). The NFMS, a tool that allows a country to assess a broad range of information, could be a framework to integrate both MRV and TLAS. Opportunities for synergies between the two monitoring systems are expected to become apparent as their design and implementation progress (5.1).

Potentially, synergies in monitoring could be achieved in several ways (5.1):

- collection of information and achieving quality control in a coherent/exchangeable manner;
- coordinated IT infrastructure and data management systems;
- identification of illegal logging hotspots; and
- improved data for forest management and policy planning at the company and national level, including improved spatial planning.

The FLEGT approach: addressing agricultural drivers of deforestation

FLEGT has generated experiences that could be relevant to sustainable supply-side and demand-side initiatives for other commodities. Ten years ago the development of the EU FLEGT Action Plan helped stimulate discussion, research and action to develop a wide range of possible policies and measures aimed at tackling illegal logging. However, the influence of FLEGT is limited by its focus on the timber industry and illegal logging.

Agricultural commodities are also important causes of deforestation. The conversion of forests (legally or illegally) for agricultural crops, often for export, is far more significant to deforestation than illegal logging. Agriculture and mining, another driver of deforestation, are not directly addressed through FLEGT. Therefore, the new EU Forest Strategy (October 2013)¹⁴ foresees that: *"...the Commission will assess the environmental impact of EU consumption of products and raw materials likely to contribute to deforestation and forest degradation outside the EU. If appropriate, it will consider policy options for limiting such impacts, including the development of an **EU action plan on deforestation and forest degradation.**"* The action plan could also be valuable in stimulating discussion and action on agriculture, deforestation and forest degradation.

REDD+ has a cross-sectoral vision, taking into account all land uses that drive deforestation. If it builds on VPA approaches, REDD+ could be an opportunity to expand the VPA's gains beyond the timber sector (3.5). To this end, Brack (5.1) assesses whether the consumer-country measures used to exclude illegal timber could be applied to illegal or unsustainable agricultural products associated with deforestation. FLEGT uses a number of approaches that could possibly be adapted to use for other commodities. Based on experiences in the timber sector, approaches for agricultural products could include a range of measures:

- adopting public procurement policies similar to those that promote sourcing legal and sustainable timber. Many local and regional governments in the EU already use procurement policies to promote organic and Fairtrade food products, and the UK has recently adopted a procurement policy for sustainable palm oil in food and catering.
- VPA-type bilateral agreements for sustainable agricultural commodities may be worth considering, particularly in the context of existing VPAs, such as those in Indonesia and Ghana, or those in negotiation, such as in Ivory Coast.
- private-sector initiatives on sourcing sustainable agricultural commodities may be helpful in developing identification systems, which could increase the scope of bodies such as the Roundtables on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) and Responsible Soy (RTRS).
- financing and investment options include stricter safeguard policies for public agencies and, for private institutions, encouraging or requiring commitments to lending policies that require adherence to sustainability standards.

In order to function, all of these regulatory options must be based on some form of identification system for sustainably produced commodities. In most cases this means certification. There is no point in imposing consumer-country controls on imports unless

the producers can respond. Therefore, supporting measures to lower the cost and encourage the uptake of various certification systems and improve their robustness should be considered (5.1).¹⁵ With regard to certification, Wiersum, Capiroso and Visseren-Hamakers (2.1) describe how the VPA processes and the FSC process influence each other and learn from each other.

Financing sustainable forest management and conservation

Potentially, more funding will be available for REDD+ than for VPAs. The focus of REDD+ on reducing carbon emissions can generate more resources. It has been speculated that the motivation of some countries to engage in REDD+ stems from this opportunity to earn revenue from emission reductions. In Ghana, the VPA process resulted in a broad understanding that governance reform is the fundamental challenge facing the sector, but initially the financial leverage provided by REDD+ drove stakeholders away from this reform agenda and shifted the focus to carbon accounting (3.1).

Several authors suggest exploring where and how the use of funds to help countries to prepare for REDD+ could also be useful for the implementation of VPA commitments (2.2). The ROC R-PP states that REDD+ funds should ensure that synergies are developed between the REDD+ and FLEGT processes (2.2). Bekoe Ansah and Ozinga (3.1) recommend specifically using the funding capacity of REDD+ for policy, legislative and institutional reforms that improve forest governance and strengthen community rights. This will also benefit FLEGT objectives.

However, with the postponement of possible large-scale market-based financing of REDD+ to at least 2020, REDD+ is likely to continue to be funded by traditional development aid money.¹⁶ This delay in carbon payments could also delay implementation, but the reliance of REDD+ on ODA funding will also result in REDD+ including broader development objectives (i.e., an increase in emphasis on co-benefits, especially poverty reduction). This could lead to a decoupling of REDD+ financing from performance-based payments for emission reductions.¹⁷ These payments were central to the original idea of REDD+. In order to maintain this link, performance-based payments for co-benefits — closely tied to REDD+ objectives — could be introduced. It is broadly accepted that to reduce emissions effectively REDD+ needs to address the underlying causes of deforestation as well as governance issues such as tenure. The future funding of REDD+ will therefore depend on a broad range of sources, including public and private. The design of these funds can be based on experiences with existing funds: Broadhead et al. (6.2) describe eight existing funds that support a combination of national and regional REDD+, climate change and forest protection activities. Their article provides information on the design and regulation of internationally financed national-level funds that operate in developing countries.

REDD+ only recently required non-carbon benefits (NCBs) to be rewarded. Bucki (5.3) gives a practical way of integrating NCBs in results-based payments without dedicated price premiums. He also suggests that FLEGT can function as a risk-reducing measure for REDD+ investments. Where FLEGT VPAs are in place, stronger governance and institutions exist, making it less risky to invest in the forest and agricultural sector in these countries. In theory, the investment risk is higher where no VPA exists.

Conclusions: how to foster positive change

Interactions between various forest initiatives, in particular FLEGT and REDD+, are starting to emerge. As described in the articles in this *ETFRN News*, there is a great potential for synergies between various initiatives. For example, both FLEGT and REDD+ processes will greatly benefit from actions that improve and monitor forest governance. Improving forest governance arrangements and the clarification of tenure rights are essential for effective implementation of both FLEGT and REDD+.

However, translating this potential into practice seems challenging; see, for example, Ghana (3.1), Vietnam (3.4) and the Republic of the Congo (3.5). Many opportunities at the national level are context-specific and ad hoc: they depend on how far along the two processes are, the institutions involved, the political will to interact and how the two processes are perceived and implemented.

While the VPA framework is relatively clear and predictable for stakeholders, REDD+ involves a substantial degree of uncertainty; multilateral negotiations are still ongoing and institutional and policy preparations at the country level are still being developed. In Guyana, where the FLEGT VPA has started in support of REDD+-implementation,¹⁸ clear synergies between the two processes have been established from the start. At the same time, it seems that REDD+ processes make use of VPA experiences with multi-stakeholder processes less than one would expect.

The lack of awareness and communication across processes and their main actors at the national and sub-national level is one of the main obstacles to synergies.¹⁹ The first step in maximizing synergies between FLEGT and REDD+ is to ensure that there is good communication between all those involved.²⁰

The possibilities for establishing synergies between the processes are specific to each country. Early identification by national stakeholders of thematic and institutional areas where positive interactions between national processes such as VPA and REDD+ are possible may help to avoid duplication and strengthen outcomes. The four types of interactions mentioned by Wiersum, Capiroso and Visseren-Hamakers (2.1) and described above can help in systematically assessing these potential synergies.

Based on our analysis of the articles in this issue of *ETFRN News*, we have identified the following existing and potential interactions:

- Interaction through **commitment** can be positively influenced through early clarification of the jurisdictional delimitations of the processes, agreement on what work is carried out by which regime and what could be implemented jointly. Since some elements of either regime could be best addressed by the other, coordinated requests for assistance could provide a strategic way of managing potential overlaps.
- **Cognitive** interactions can be positively stimulated through continued collaboration and strengthened communication between the two regimes at the country level. The first step is being aware of the various processes that are active in a

country and understanding them and their expected outcomes. Periodic joint strategy meetings could help to create this understanding. Sharing of lessons collected by the processes should be stimulated so that the achievements of one process can advance the other.

- **Behavioural** interactions should be carefully monitored to avoid negative effects and to foster positive ones. Activities should be identified that can be jointly undertaken in a timely way for both processes. Joint efforts can bring greater momentum to reaching and influencing the decision-makers of relevant sectors, from national to district and local levels. On issues such as tenure reform and land-use planning, for example, FLEGT could benefit from the broader scope of REDD+ since coordination and collaboration with non-forest sectors are required.
- Both the FLEGT and REDD+ regimes have established safeguards to manage negative impacts. **Impact-level** interaction can be managed through the establishment of effective linkages in implementing these safeguards to benefit the affected stakeholders. Potentially, this will enable stakeholders to interact with and participate in one coherent set of processes and procedures, rather than a variety of possibly conflicting regimes.

Donors of the various initiatives should work with national governments to better understand how national stakeholders interpret the interactions and how they want to increase coherence between them. Support may be needed to revise national forest policies and laws to integrate FLEGT and REDD+ processes into the long-term vision and development of the sector. Possibilities for assistance to enhance mutual support between the various regimes need to be explored.

Similarities between processes do not automatically lead to synergies. The potential benefits of synergies (e.g., avoided duplication of efforts, reduced costs and greater efficiency) do not always outweigh the transaction costs (e.g., for coordination, information sharing and negotiations) between FLEGT and REDD+ (3.4). Better integration and coordination of the FLEGT and REDD+ processes into national forest policy planning processes (e.g., through National Forest Programmes or an overarching land-use plan) can help overcome these barriers and, importantly, support stakeholder engagement. A prerequisite is that implementing countries have strong ownership over such an overarching process. Better integration into a national planning process will also increase the likelihood that these initiatives will contribute to the improvement of forest governance in a coherent way and that processes will overcome their differences and instead be mutually supportive within the country and foster change in the forest sector.

Achieving synergies between various forest regimes — FLEGT and REDD+ in particular — is not easy. Country experiences are limited: most examples in this issue present only the potential ways in which forest regimes can be better linked. More work needs to be done on fostering these linkages. In addition, the key goal of each process is to deliver on its objectives. In some cases this could mean that elements of the various processes must be kept separate to avoid their having a negative impact on each other. As this issue shows, some progress has been made, but a better understanding is needed of the linkages

between the processes in order to learn from good practices and from missed opportunities, so that positive change can be fostered.

Acknowledgement

The authors would like to thank René Boot, Herman Savenije and Roderick Zagt of Tropenbos International for their valuable comments on earlier drafts of the article.

Endnotes

1. Almost two decades ago, countries agreed on a common approach known as a national forest programme (NFP) and adopted a set of principles designed to guide NFP development and implementation. NFPs incorporate a wide range of initiatives that contribute to the formulation, planning and implementation of forest policy at the national and sub-national level.
2. See www.euflegt.efi.int/flegt-action-plan.
3. See the Warsaw decision on summary of information on safeguards (COP 19 of UNFCCC, November 2013).
4. This is from UNESCAP 2006. What is Good Governance? www.unescap.org/pdd/prs/ProjectActivities/Ongoing/gg/governance.asp (December 2006).
5. See Woodhill, A.J. and S.M. van der Vugt. 2011. Facilitating MSPs: A sustainable way of changing power relations? In *Guidebook for Facilitation of Multi-stakeholder Processes*. South Africa: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH.
6. See for example, T. Bauer, 2012. *Community forestry in Cameroon: how it can contribute more effectively to FLEGT*. Wageningen: Tropenbos International. www.tropenbos.org/publications/community+forestry+in+cameroon:+how+it+can+contribute+more+effectively+to+flegt.
7. See Jessica Boyle and Deborah Murphy, August 2012. IISD. www.asb.cgiar.org/PDFwebdocs/redd_sis_building_existing_systems_report.pdf.
8. See "Illegal or Incompatible?" Project team. 2010. Social safeguards in the Ghana-EU Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA). Triggering improved forest governance or an afterthought? Wageningen, the Netherlands: Wageningen University and Research Centre, 10 pp.
9. Commodification of life is "treating people and parts of people as marketable commodities." Some indigenous peoples view their environment as part of themselves, and therefore see REDD+ as a risk.
10. See SNV and WBCSD, 2007. Promoting Small and Medium Enterprises for Sustainable Development. www.snvworld.org/download/publications/sustainable_development_eng.pdf.
11. This national system can serve multiple purposes, including meeting MRV requirements under the UNFCCC for REDD+.
12. Decision 12/CP.17 of the UNFCCC Durban Outcome 4 states that a Safeguard Information System (SIS) should provide information on how all Cancun safeguards are addressed and respected. SIS should be country-driven, implemented at a national level, and built on existing systems as appropriate.
13. Developing countries can also use certain international data sources relevant for REDD+.
14. See p. 14 of European Commission. 2013. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: A new EU Forest Strategy: for forests and the forest-based sector. Brussels. Bold emphasis added by the authors of the synthesis article.

15. For a comparison of FLEGT and certification, see Hinrichs, A. and F. van Helden. (2012). "Can the FLEGT Action Plan and voluntary forest certification reinforce each other?" *ETFRN News* 53: Moving Forward With Forest Governance.
16. See Angelsen, A., M. Brockhaus, W.D. Sunderlin, and L.V. Verchot (eds.) 2012. *Analysing REDD+: Challenges and choices*. CIFOR, Bogor, Indonesia.
17. This is sometimes referred to as the "aidification" of REDD+.
18. See Joint Concept Note for the Guyana-Norway co-operation. 2012. www.lcds.gov.gy/images/stories/Documents/Joint%20Concept%20Note%20%28JCN%29%202012.pdf.
19. See UN_REDD Programme. 2013. Understanding REDD+ and FLEGT Linkages Through Country Experiences. Newsletter Issue #36 February/March 2013. www.un-redd.org/Newsletter36/REDD_and_FLEGT_Linkages/tabid/106082/Default.aspx.
20. See ProForest 2011. FLEGT-REDD+ linkage: Working together effectively. Briefing Note 3.