



global witness

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## MAKING THE FOREST SECTOR TRANSPARENT

Global Witness Governance and Transparency Fund project 2008-2012

### PROJECT INFORMATION NOTE

#### 100 word Summary

Citizens of forest-rich-but-poor countries often have minimal information about forest management in their country, preventing them from holding government and business accountable. Building on our expertise in extractive industry transparency and forest monitoring, Global Witness is working with partners in key countries to build their capacity to monitor and disseminate information such as forest management plans, permit allocation, revenues and infractions. We are developing a Forest Transparency Report-card to compare disclosure in major timber-producing countries. As a coalition we will use this to drive national and international advocacy to demand accountability and improve policy and practice across the forest sector.

#### Key objectives

1. Increased public access to forest sector information.
2. Effective advocacy activities in the target countries aimed at improved transparency in forest management and governance.
3. Strengthening a network of organisations working on forest governance, that can support one another in advocacy and research efforts during and beyond the life of the project.

#### Our approach

Demand for good governance is driven by civil society being equipped to, and having an interest in, holding governments to account. Governments will respond when citizens identify and voice their needs and expectations and exert pressure on policy-makers to implement fair and effective 'rules', including instituting legal reforms, tackling criminality and corruption, and engaging with civil society. Policy-makers have an interest in greater participation to improve outcomes' sustainability: citizens who feel included in policy processes are less likely to resist the rules.

*Making the Forest Sector Transparent* will support civil society groups in forest-rich countries to engage with policy makers and press for capable, responsive and accountable forest sector governance, through the following activity areas:

- People need information about rights to access forests and benefit from their use, and about government policies, to have a say in management of forest resources. An innovative 'Forest Transparency Report-card' will be developed to assess the level of information in the public domain.

- People need to have the desire and skills to pressurise governments to listen to and respond to their needs. *Making the Forest Sector Transparent* will develop civil society capacity to effectively use information on forest use and management in their country, to demand changes to forest management.
- Responding to globalisation of forest products trade and various forest governance initiatives, civil society partners have a strong desire to build an effective network, exchange experiences and coordinate activities. This builds a measure of political protection for advocacy work which may challenge the status quo.

#### Partnership

*Making the Forest Sector Transparent* will initially be implemented in four countries - Ghana, Liberia, Cameroon and Peru. These have been selected for their diversity (Ghana close to the end of commercial forest exploitation; Liberia about the re-start; Peru operating a different, less concession-based system than Africa; and, vis-à-vis Cameroon and Liberia, Francophone and Anglophone Africa having different traditions in administrative bureaucracy and legal systems) and the existing level of working partnerships with Global Witness. From the second year, other countries will become involved, selected on the basis of scoping work in the first year.

One national-level Partner NGO in each partner country will be selected as the lead project implementer for that country, and be a focal point both for other local civil society and community-based organisations, and for international partners. The Partner NGOs will retain their identity and not

become 'Global Witness Ghana' or 'Making the Forest Sector Transparent Peru'. As far as possible, each Partner NGO will be selected from and represent a country-wide NGO network. The network will then play an advisory role through the Partner to the project.

## Activities

### 1. Forest transparency report-card

The report-card needs to have both a **common basis** for country-country comparisons, and **flexibility** to support individual country initiatives. The report-card will be based on objective 'yes/no' questions about the availability of information (it is not a perceptions index like those of Transparency International). The Partner NGO in each country will:

- Develop and implement its own approach to researching a 'template' for the report-card questionnaire.
- Agree with other Partners a common template, with additional county-specific questions.
- Develop and implement a locally relevant system of data collection, and carry out a data collection exercise each year.
- Work together with all Partners to produce an Annual Transparency Report and associated website.

### 2. Special learning opportunities (SLOs)

The participation of local civil society (rather than only national networks) in the use of the report-card and the development of follow-up activities will be prioritised, to ensure it responds to real needs. Organisational development is also critically important for sustainability, both for partners and local civil society. *Making the Forest Sector Transparent* will help groups develop and grow so that they can initiate and undertake monitoring and advocacy themselves, including on but not limited to issues identified through the report-card process. The primary mechanism for this is a mini-grants system called SLOs. The Partner NGO in each country will:

- Develop and administer a structure for the SLOs, including possible stratification of opportunities (e.g. into 'quick', 'long' or 'big' grants); application procedure; steering group and approval processes; and monitoring and evaluation.
- Manage the SLO funds, reporting as agreed with Global Witness and undertaking an annual independent financial audit.
- Liaise with and support potential and actual SLO beneficiaries to identify training, capacity building, planning and advocacy needs they might have, and to match these needs to potential providers.

- Ensure SLO activities are conducted according to the plan. Towards the end of the project ensure all expenditure will be completed and accounted for.

### 3. Strengthening our coalition

Forest transparency issues are often up against **powerful vested interests**. These can be commercial confidentialities insisted on by industry, or secrecy around the control of public resources and hiding corrupt practices. Strengthening communications in the coalition will enable political risk-taking by one partner to be supported and backed up by an international network. Global Witness will lead on:

- Coordinating the production of the Annual Transparency Report, including appointing and supervising a graphic design team and translators, and appointing and supervising a web-design team to build a project website to which all Partners can contribute.
- Develop and administer an SLO structure, similar to that at a country level, for Partner NGOs to access. This will also cover supporting Partner NGOs/networks to travel internationally for lobbying trips in the UK / EU / US and networking trips to nearby countries.
- Coordinate an annual meeting for all partners, the first of which will be in Peru in March 2009.
- Appointing and supervising an independent monitoring and evaluation team who will provide advice and lessons to the project as it evolves.
- Undertaking regular management / monitoring visits to partner countries (2-3 times a year).

## Measuring success

The project indicators include:

- An increase in the quality and quantity of forest sector information in the public domain.
- An increase in transparency and participation in decision-making processes related to forest use.
- An increased acceptance and implementation of explicit processes for civil society to hold public servants to account (both demand-led and provision-led).

## Funding

The project budget is £3.7 million over four years. It primarily operates through re-granting to partners and other beneficiary groups, or to service providers in developing countries. It is fully funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) Governance and Transparency Fund.