



global witness

Press Briefing

21 November 2008

Holding governments to account: *Making the Forest Sector Transparent*

Global Witness launches new transparency report card project

Global Witness this month begins an ambitious project to improve forest governance worldwide. Following our successful bid to the UK Department of International Development's Governance and Transparency Fund, we are launching a four-year project working with civil society groups in up to eight timber-producing countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

In the face of high levels of poverty, institutionalised corruption, and degradation of forests through illegal and industrial-scale logging, local people are voice-less. 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 confidently voice their needs and expectations, exerting pressure on policy-makers to craft fair and effective rules, including instituting legal reforms, tackling criminality and corruption, and actively engaging with civil society.

Patrick Alley, Global Witness' Director observes, "*Policy-makers have to ensure greater participation of civil society to improve sustainability of forest management and this project aims to help that.*"

Citizens of forest-rich countries often have minimal information about forest management in their country, preventing them from holding government and business accountable. ***Making the Forest Sector Transparent*** will enable and support civil society groups in forest-rich countries to engage with decision makers and press for competent, responsive and accountable forest sector governance.

Building on our expertise in extractive industry transparency and Independent Forest Monitoring (IFM)¹, Global Witness will be working with local partners to build their capacity in monitoring the official provision of information regarding forest management plans, permit allocation, timber production authorisations, collection and distribution of forest revenues, and violations of forest law and regulations.

Together with our partners we are developing a forest transparency report-card to test and compare official disclosure in major timber-producing countries. We will support an international network of forest governance activists to use the report-card to drive national and international advocacy to press for accountability and improve policies and practices across the forest sector for the benefit of the poor and forest-dependent peoples.

The project will start in Ghana, Liberia, Cameroon and Peru. From the second year on, more countries will become involved, selected on the basis of scoping work in the first year. The project primarily operates through re-granting to implementing partners and other beneficiary groups, or to project-related service providers in the target countries. Global Witness and its partners are delighted that the UK Department for International Development has seen the potential and we look forward to the impact that this pioneering work will have.

For further information and a Project Information Note contact

David Young, Team Leader dyoung@globalwitness.org +44 20 7562 6392 / +44 7854 047826

¹ Global Witness pioneered Independent Forest Monitoring (IFM) by complementing official forest law enforcement with the objectivity and public credibility of an independent third party. IFM improves transparency in the short term while contributing to the development of a sound legislative and regulatory framework for responsible forest management. See www.globalwitness.org/ifm for further details.