

Forestry Commission

Contributing to Corporate Governance in Ghana: Guidelines for Operating
Forestry Forums



Collaborative Resource Management Unit

Resource Management Support Centre

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Cover Picture: Community members participating in a training session on application of participatory tools.

Acronyms

BAR	Brong-Ahafo Radio
CBO	Community-Based Organization
CFC	Community Forest Committee
CRMU	Collaborative Resource Management Unit
CSO	Customer Services Officer
CSSF	Civil Society Strengthening Facility
DA	District Assembly
DCE	District Chief Executive
DFID	Department for International Development
DM	District Manager
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FC	Forestry Commission
FSD	Forest Services Division
FSDP	Forest Sector Development Project
GEF	Global Environmental Facility
GES	Ghana Education Service
ITTO	International Tropical Timber Organisation
KEEA	Komenda, Edina, Eguafo and Abirem DA
MOFA	Ministry of Food and Agriculture
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NTFP	Non-Timber Forest Product
OASL	Administrator of Stool Lands
RM	Regional Manager
RMSC	Resource Management Support Centre
SRA	Social Responsibility Agreement
TUC	Timber Utilisation Contract
WD	Wildlife Division

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1 Introduction and Concepts

One of the recommendations to come out of the national workshop on 'Collaborative Forest Management: the Way Forward' at Akosombo in May 2002, was the need for the Forestry Commission to take immediate steps towards the *'establishment of forestry forums to share ideas, views and experiences from the various stakeholders of the Commission'*.

The FC thus, with the support of the DFID funded Forest Sector Development Project (FSDP II) and under the direction of the Collaborative Resource Management Unit, initiated a programme in January 2003 to develop forestry forums in selected pilot districts across the five high forest regions of Ghana. To date, seven pilot forestry forums are under piloting (refer to appendix). The eventual goal is to create a network of forestry forums at the district, regional and national levels aimed at strengthening the relationship between the Forestry Commission and civil society in support of pro-poor changes in the Forestry and land sectors. In effect the main purpose of the forestry forum network is to create a platform for interaction and dialogue between representatives of the state and civil society to:

- Share and exchange ideas and proposals for inclusion in the formulation and review of policy;
- Share and exchange ideas and proposals for inclusion in policy implementation; and
- Monitor and evaluate progress and impacts of policy implementation.

1.1 Concepts & Definitions

Generally, civil society reflects organization of the people. According to Martinussen 1994, the concept of civil society refers to the social life of citizens within the households and the interactions of households in the local community and the various other forms of social organizations outside the formal political system and the corporate economy. With respect to political role of civil society organizations, it involves non-state actors and organizations creating pressures for transformation, for transparency in the allocation of resources by the state, and downward accountability in which the actions and future of the state actors are held up to scrutiny. (Amanor, 2003)

A forum is therefore defined as:

‘A neutral ground where different stakeholders or organizations of people who have a stake in the resources in question meet to discuss policy issues of concern related to the management of the issues—human and material resources’.

In effect the forestry forum provides the ground for interaction, discussion and debate on forestry related issues.

1.2 Expected Benefits

Strengthening relations between the FC and the general public through the creation of the forestry forum networks is a sound investment in better policy-making and a core element of good governance. Equally important, the forums contribute to building public trust in government, thereby raising the quality of democracy and strengthening civic capacity. The forums are expected to:

- Improve the quality of policy by allowing the government (FC) to tap wider sources of information in order to meet the challenges of the sector under conditions of increasing complexity and time pressure;
- Meet the challenges of the emerging information society by establishing venues for greater and faster interactions with citizens
- Respond to citizen's expectations that their voices (especially those of the poor and marginalized) are heard and their views are considered;
- Respond to the call for better governance, more transparency and accountability as public and media scrutiny of the forest sector increases;
- Strengthen the prospect of equitable benefit flows from forests and, eventually, the prospect of sustainable forest management.

1.3 Purpose of the Guidelines

These guidelines are preliminary provisions derived from the lessons learnt over the period of organisation of the forums. It highlights the processes, structure, functions and initiatives undertaken by the CRMU and the various forums and how effective they have been towards the overall contribution of civil society towards promotion of good governance in collaborative management of forest and wildlife resources of Ghana.

2 Review of Establishment Procedures

2.1 Facilitation

For the pilot phase, the CRMU has been facilitating the formation and management of the forestry forum programme. It is, however, expected that once guidelines have been produced and circulated Forestry Districts should be able to establish their own forestry forums. The Customer Services Officers in the system are expected to be instrumental in the establishment and smooth operation of both the pilot forestry forums and those to be established in future. Commitment, support, and funding the operation of forestry forums must be led by the Forestry Commission since it forms one of the core values of the Commission.

2.2 Sensitisation and Consultation Processes

The CRMU designed a programme for the establishment of the forestry forums. The unit synthesized and collated information from existing literature, the Internet and held consultations with experts. One-day sensitisation meetings were held amongst staff and existing civil society institutions, such as, the CFCs in the target districts. It was eventually decided that for the pilot phase, seven forums would be established across wide-ranging settings in five forest districts. Potential list of forum members in terms of relevant stakeholders and number of representative are discussed during this phase.

2.3 Pre-Forum Workshop

As part of the education and sensitization process, two-day pre-forum workshops were held in the selected districts for forestry stakeholder groups. Participants at the pre-forum meeting may, potentially, constitute the forum.

The objectives of this pre-forum meeting are:

- To brief the participants on forestry issues; and

- To allow the participants to provide inputs into the development of the forums
- To finalize membership of the proposed forum.

To achieve the objective of sharing ideas on policy formulation and implementation, the forum members were given intensive briefing on current issues in the forestry sector at the pre forum meetings. Topics explained include:

- The 1994 forest and wildlife policy
- Forestry Legislation, especially, LI 1649 and Act 547
- The service charter of the Forestry Commission
- Current situation of forest resources in the various districts using satellite imagery
- Strategies for managing forest and wildlife resources in the districts
- Roles and responsibilities of stakeholders in forest management
- Introduction to lobbying and advocacy
- Planning and facilitation of meetings

2.4 Membership

Analyzing the forum membership in terms of stakeholder representation, it was realized that Cape Coast district has the highest government representation (31). This is because the Cape Coast forum covers the entire forest district, which comprises five administrative districts. Ahafo-Ano South has the lowest government representation. The general trend of the community representation was adequate with the highest community representation in Birim North District and the lowest in Atwima District. With respect to gender representation, analysis revealed that males outnumbered the females by approximately eight to one. Institutions represented at the various forums include: Traditional Authorities, land owners, District level CFCs, Timber Contractors, Tree growers association, the EPA, Tourist Board, MOFA, Police, Judiciary, GES, District Assembly, Media, NGO's, FSD, Charcoal Burners and Chainsaw Operators. It is expected that a

member nominated to represent a body should seek the mandate of that body not later than two years upon being nominated.

2.5 Inauguration

Once membership has been finalized, a day is set aside to inaugurate the forums during which an Oath of Service to the community and nation is administered by either the DCE or a Senior Forestry Official. A larger number of stakeholders are invited to the inaugural ceremony and the occasion is used to educate the members on their roles, responsibilities and modalities for operating the forums.

2.6 Executive Leadership

Each of the forestry forums has elected executives comprising five to seven members depending on the size of the forum. The executives include a chairman, vice chairman, Treasurer, Secretary, organizer and in some cases two executive members. The term of office for each of the forum executives is two years renewable for only one additional term.

2.7 Schedule of Forum Meetings

The forum meets at every quarter. In between the forum meetings, there are at least two sub-group meetings which explore and finalize findings on issues identified from previous forum meetings. The findings are then presented at the following forum meeting for adoption. It was also agreed that two-thirds of the members present at a forum meeting would constitute a quorum for both sub group and forum meetings. The various forums agreed that issues that need clarifications and further discussions would be dealt with by sub-groups which have been set-up as ad-hoc committees.

A training programme on leadership, report writing, was held for the executive members of the forum to help them take over the organization and management of the Forum.

2.8 Role of the Forestry Forums

So far the specific functions of the forums have been to:

- Facilitate the sharing of knowledge, experience, news and information between members and other groups;
- Represent the views and support the interests of its members in forestry related matters;
- Facilitate collaboration between community groups engaged in forestry activities and to develop programmes to add value to forest products at a local and district level;
- Establish working groups to examine specific issues, such as combating illegal timber harvesting operations;
- Support the various initiatives under the National Plantation Programme;
- Support forestry education and awareness creation programmes.

Achievements of the Pilot Forestry Forums

1. Copies of the abridged forestry laws and regulations, the FC service charter, booklet on royalties disbursed, etc. which were distributed and explained to members of the forum were in turn used by members to educate their communities and institutions.

2. Publicity of Forestry Activities: Radio programmes have been initiated by some of the forums whereas some (Kade) have posted their outcomes on the FC's Intranet. In Sunyani, members of the forum together with Fire Service officers have started weekly programmes on the prevention of bushfires on radio BAR

3. Awareness creation on alternative livelihood options, such as: snail, grasscutter and mushroom rearing, have been undertaken in six communities in the Nkawie district by the Atwima and Mankranso forums. The target groups were chainsaw operators and their carriers /loading boys in the communities.

4. Critical analysis of the pros and cons of illegal chainsaw operation have been undertaken by all the forums and resolutions passed by all of them to assist in curbing the menace.

5. Inclusion of forestry laws /topics in the GES curriculum. The Goaso forum has formed a sub-committee to prepare proposals for the curriculum review and evaluation division of the GES

6. The provision of legal backing of CFCs with District assembly bye laws. The District Assembly representative on the Goaso forum together with CFC members and FS D representatives have put together a proposal for consideration by the DCE and the district assembly to use bye laws to support and protect CFC members who work to ensure sustainable forest management in the district

7. Accountability on Forestry Royalties: The Goaso forum managed to invite the DCE to make a presentation on the use of Forestry Royalties by the District Assembly

2.9 Impacts

At previous forum meetings evaluation were conducted together with participants to identify successes and problems of the forum. The general conclusions drawn up at are that:

- Cooperation among forest stakeholders have improved.
- Members are able to express their concerns openly without intimidation

- Representatives of institutions on the forum have been fully briefed about the forestry rules and regulations and roles and responsibilities of the stakeholders
- Acceptance by stakeholders that their voices are now heard on Forestry issues.

2.10 Challenges

A few of the challenges faced during the developmental phase are presented below.

- It has been observed that like any human institution, members tend to represent their own interests rather than the collective interest of all stakeholders.
- Some of the institutions in the districts for e.g. district assemblies, are not happy with requests made by the forum members for information about their activities.
- Members of the forum spend a lot of time undertaking activities on behalf of the forum. Whilst some are content with the current allowances given others have suggested an increment in allowances given to them.
- Members have also expressed concern about the sustainability of the forum when the piloting phase ends. Agona Nkwanta and Goaso forums have managed to secure funding support from other sources to support their activities.
- Organization of the forum over a larger geographical area such a forestry district with several district assemblies combined as it is in Cape Coast presents its own challenges. Late reporting at meetings and absenteeism becomes pronounced.

3 Provisions for Operating Forums.

The following provisions are being provided to serve as a guide towards improvement of forestry forums.

3.1 Registration as Community-Based Organisation

The Forums should as a matter of urgency register as Community Based Organizations [CBOs] with their district assemblies to enable them to source for funding from the government, international and local donor agencies.

3.2 Media & Awareness Creation

With the support of the Forestry Commission, the various forums should explore the possibility of obtaining free or subsidized airtime to create awareness and educate the public on forum and forestry activities.

3.3 Annual Programme of Work

Each forum should prepare an annual programme of work with accompanying budget detailing goals, outputs and activities to be undertaken in the year in the form of a Gantt Chart. It should also state how the activities are to be executed and by whom (responsible persons).

3.4 Proposal Writing & Funding

The forums should set up permanent fund raising sub-committees. The fund raising sub-committee members should undergo training in writing of project proposals and fund raising.

The sub-committee should be proactive in soliciting for funds based on the annual programme of work as translated into project proposals. Potential sources of funding are: the government (FC), Timber contractors, Traditional Council and District Assemblies. Other sources are International donor agencies (Embassies, GEF, FAO, etc.) and initiatives such as the Civil Society Strengthening Facility

(CSSF) and most important of internally generated contributions from members of the forums. Certificate of recognition should be issued to exemplary donors.

3.5 Auditing

Forums should elect a five member audit sub-committee to undertake annual audit of accounts.

3.6 Invitation to Forum Meetings

There should be automatic notification and invitation to the following to attend all forum meetings: DCE, RMs, DMs, Director (RMSC, Operations, etc.).

- Activities of the forum should be well publicized through press conferences, radio and TV programmes so that their recommendation can be heard
- All decisions taken by the forum should be pursued to a satisfactory conclusion.
- Media representatives on the forum should help to publicize the forum
- All activities undertaken by the forum should be well documented
- All forestry related institutions should help in funding the forums

3.7 Monitoring of Forestry Operational Activities

On a regular basis, forum members are to take a proactive role in the monitoring of forestry operational activities with a view to ensuring conformity with policies and adherence to laid-down procedures. They must undertake periodic field visits to ascertain progress in implementation of plans and programmes.

To this end DMs and other categories of public officers within and outside the FC, such as: Office of Stool Lands Administrator, the District Assembly, MOFA, etc. should be invited on a regular basis to brief the forum on their activities or on specific issues. DMs should, for example, update the forum on the following:

- Formulation and adoption of forest reserve (FR) management and district development plans

- Progress in implementation of FR management plans (participation in Annual Audit Workshops)
- Plantations established
- Number & types of timber rights (TUC, Permits, etc.) granted
- Quantities (Volume) of forest produce (timber, NTFPs, etc.) harvested
- Revenue collected, debtors and outstanding debts
- Adherence to Social Responsibility Agreements (SRA)
- Outreach programmes and educational campaigns undertaken.
- Illegal offences, wildfire incidents and extent, etc.

3.8 Circulation of Minutes and Resolutions

Use must be made of simplified reporting formats which allow the transfer of information to relevant stakeholders and members easily. Henceforth, one to two page summaries of proceedings and resolutions by the seven forums should be automatically circulated amongst the following:

- The Chief Executive of Forestry Commission
- The District Chief Executive
- The Traditional Council
- The Executive Directors of FSD and WD
- The Team Leader, FSDP II
- The Director of Operations and RMSC, FC
- The CRMU, RMSC
- The Regional Managers
- The District Managers
- The Mass Media
- The website manager, FC, Accra

Printed list of addresses of the above-listed would be made available to forum executives immediately.

3.9 Incentives

Over the long term an incentive award scheme would be instituted for the most innovative forum to come out with effective programmes at the end of each year. Another important incentive scheme would be sponsorship of study tours to eco-tourist sites of interest and cross exchange visits amongst forum members. If funding is available all forum members or their executive members should be sponsored to participate in collective review workshops at central locations for the exchange of ideas.

3.10 Formation of New Forestry Forums

Once funding becomes available, other districts in Ghana should be expected to initiate their own forestry forums through active facilitation by Customer Service Officers and guidance from the CRMU. These Guidelines should serve as a guide towards the establishment of forestry forums.

3.11 Evaluation of the Forums

The CRMU which has been acting as the main facilitator of the forums shall continuously monitor and evaluate the forums developmental process with a view to improving their effectiveness.

3.12 Review of guidelines

These Guidelines would be reviewed as and when substantial new information has been gained capable of contributing to the overall improvement of the forestry forum process.

4 Attachment

Forum Membership at Pilot Sites

Region	Forestry District	Forum (District Assembly)	Male	Female	Total
Brong-Ahafo	Sunyani	1. Sunyani	42	3	45
	Goaso	2. Asunafo	44	5	49
Ashanti	Nkawie	3. Atwima	28	5	33
		4. Ahafo Ano South (Mankranso)	27	5	32
Eastern	Kade	5. Birim North	50	4	54
Central	Cape Coast	6. KEEA	63	15	78
Western	Takoradi	7. Agona Nkwanta	46	4	50
Total			300	41	341