



Briefing

VPAs, governance and SDGs

Voluntary Partnership Agreements (VPAs) between the EU and timber-exporting countries are among the measures of the EU FLEGT Action Plan, which aims to tackle illegal logging by improving forest governance and promoting trade in legal timber products.

About this briefing

VPAs, governance and SDGs

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Key messages

- Voluntary Partnership Agreements (VPAs) between the EU and timber-exporting countries can help countries achieve multiple Sustainable Development Goals, because of both the commitments that are agreed and implemented in a VPA as well as the process to agree those elements.
- VPAs reach far beyond the timber trade. They also have positive impacts on democracy and justice, jobs and welfare, peace and security, climate change and biodiversity conservation.
- VPAs achieve this by strengthening each partner country's legal and regulatory frameworks, making them more accountable and transparent, by modernising and formalising the forest sector, improving business practices, and by building capacities and institutionalising multistakeholder participation in decision-making.
- Fifteen countries are negotiating or implementing VPAs. These processes show how an incremental approach can create the space and trust needed to overcome the longstanding challenges VPAs expose.
- VPA processes do however take time. To change attitudes and overcome political challenges requires long-term commitment. Nonetheless, they are effective tools to contribute to SDG targets and therefore interesting mechanisms for donors to finance and support.

VPAs, governance and SDGs

Voluntary Partnership Agreements (VPAs) between the EU and timber-exporting countries are among the measures of the EU FLEGT Action Plan, which aims to tackle illegal logging by improving forest governance and promoting trade in legal timber products.

VPAs are expected to have positive trade impacts as partner countries begin to issue FLEGT-licences to consignments of verified legal timber products they export to the EU. This is because FLEGT-licensed timber from VPA partner countries automatically meets the requirements of the EU Timber Regulation, which promotes use of legal, sustainable timber in the EU. Preparation for assessing trade impacts is underway, through an EC-appointed independent market monitor.

But VPAs don't only promote trade. They also address social and environmental concerns. And the multidimensional nature of VPAs means they reach beyond the forest sector.



VPAs drive change because:

- VPAs bring many interests to the table as, unlike other efforts to address illegal logging, they have implications for both the supply and demand sides of the trade.
- National stakeholders from government, civil society and the private sector decide the scope of each VPA, ensuring national ownership of commitments that target nationally-determined needs.
- Step by step dialogue leads to understanding, which enables stakeholders to identify solutions, isolate the technical challenges from the political, and address persistent governance problems and their root causes
- VPA partner countries commit to develop timber legality assurance systems, reinforcing the institutional framework for government accountability to citizens and businesses.
- The accompaniment of the EU provides the visibility and support needed to push for reform on both supply and demand sides



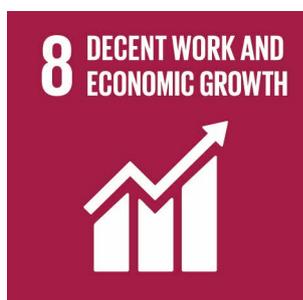
Gimba forest logging, Liberia

A community activist named Anthony Kamara examines a logging site in Korninga Chiefdom, Gbarpolu County.

Source: Travis Lupick

VPA experiences show that throughout the process even before FLEGT licensing begins, the process can incrementally strengthen regulatory frameworks, modernise and formalise forest sectors, improve business practices, build capacities, and increase transparency, accountability and multistakeholder participation in decision-making. These are major milestones on the road to sustainable, inclusive economic growth.

Such gains underpin many aspects of sustainable development enshrined in the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). VPAs are therefore a useful mechanism for donors to support to help countries address multiple SDGs. In particular, there is evidence that VPAs directly address goals 8, 12, 13, 15 and 16 and their sub-goals listed in Table 1. The EU FLEGT Facility's accompanying working paper provides this evidence. We anticipate that evidence will emerge to show how VPAs also address other SDGs, such as those focused on poverty.

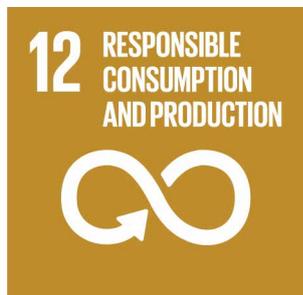


SDG 8: Promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all

8.3 '...encourage the formalisation and growth of micro and small medium sized enterprises'

8.4 '...decouple economic growth from environmental degradation'

8.8 'protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environment for all workers'



SDG 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

12.2 'achieve the sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources'

12.6 'encourage companies... to adopt sustainable practices'

12.7 'promote public procurement practices'

12.8 'ensure the public have information and awareness for sustainable development'



SDG 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

13.1 'strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries'

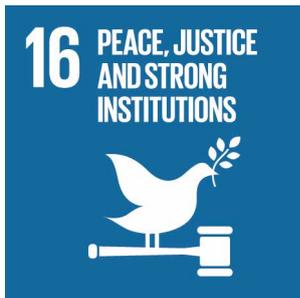
13.2 'integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning'



SDG 15: Sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation, halt biodiversity loss

15.2 'promote sustainable management of all types of forests, halt deforestation'

15.b 'mobilize significant resources to finance sustainable forest management and provide incentives to developing countries'



SDG 16: Promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies

16.3 'promote the rule of law and ensure equal access to justice for all'

16.5 'substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms'

16.6 'develop effective, accountable, and transparent institutions'

16.7 'ensure inclusive, participatory and representative decision making'

16.10 'ensure public access to information...'

16.a 'strengthen relevant national institutions'

References

1. EU Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade Action Plan
2. <http://www.itto.int/imm/>
3. Insert reference to the full working paper and online edition

About the EU FLEGT Facility

The EU FLEGT Facility supports the European Union, its Member States and partner countries in implementing the EU FLEGT Action Plan. The European Forest Institute has hosted the Facility since 2007. The Facility has its headquarters in Barcelona, Spain, with additional offices in Brussels, Belgium; Joensuu, Finland; and Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Disclaimer

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