



The Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue in Ghana

Towards a negotiated solution to illegal chainsaw milling

James Parker Mckeown,
Nico Rozemeijer and Marieke Wit

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This publication has been produced with the financial assistance of the European Commission's Programme for Environment and Sustainable Management of Natural Resources, including Energy.

The contents of this publication can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union.

Published by: Tropenbos International, Wageningen, the Netherlands

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Citation: Parker McKeown, James, Nico Rozemeijer and Marieke Wit (2013). The Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue in Ghana. Towards a negotiated solution to illegal chainsaw milling. Wageningen, the Netherlands: TBI. xii + 44 pp.

Final editing: Patricia Halladay

Layout by: Juanita Franco (Tropenbos International)

ISBN: 978-90-5113-114-7

Photos: EU Chainsaw milling project (iv, 1, 7, 17), Marieke Wit (3, 29, 38)
Rosalien Jezeer (21) Hans Vellema (32)

Printed by: Digigrafi, Veenendaal, the Netherlands



Available from:

Tropenbos International
Marieke Wit
P.O. Box 232
6700 AE Wageningen
the Netherlands
tel. +31 317 481425
tropenbos@tropenbos.org
www.chainsawmilling.org
www.tropenbos.org

Tropenbos International Ghana
James Parker Mckeown
P.O. Box UP 982 KNUST
Kumasi
Ghana
tel. +233 3220 60310
euchainsawprojectghana@gmail.com

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Foreword

Chainsaw milling has become one of the biggest challenges to forest governance in Ghana, causing conflict among stakeholders and serious forest degradation. The domestic timber market in Ghana has been supplied by illegal chainsaw milling for decades. In 1998 the government banned the practice because of concerns about the depletion of forest resources. Despite the ban — which has been in place for fifteen years — chainsaw milling flourishes. It produces around 2.5 million m³ (roundwood equivalent/RWE) of lumber per year.

In 2009 Ghana was the first country to sign and ratify a Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) with the EU on legal timber exports. Although VPAs are primarily concerned with international trade, Ghana decided to include the production of timber for the domestic market in its agreement. Almost five years later, it has become apparent that finding legal ways to satisfy the domestic timber demand is easier said than done. Chainsaw milling enjoys much public support in Ghana: it supplies cheap lumber to the domestic market; it creates employment for about 130,000 people; and it benefits many participants in the sector through informal payments (approximately US\$ 24 million per year).

The chainsaw milling issue in Ghana is complex, comprising a range of competing claims and expectations. A well-managed multi-stakeholder process is necessary to bridge the differences in perceptions of the diverse stakeholders and help them reach agreement. The Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue (MSD) initiated and facilitated by the EU chainsaw milling project (2007–15) has been instrumental in finding ways to address illegal chainsaw milling. The MSD has contributed to a better understanding of the sector and has been successful in reaching consensus among virtually all stakeholders on an acceptable way to supply the domestic market with legal lumber.

This paper documents the design of the MSD process and the lessons learned so far in applying key principles for multi-stakeholder and policy development processes. It is hoped that other countries facing similar governance challenges in the forest sector can learn from these experiences.

In Ghana the process continues. The introduction of artisanal millers to supply the domestic market with legal lumber is only the first step in a long process. The concept of artisanal milling needs to be further elaborated and regulated; this requires more dialogue, and more lessons will be learned in the future. Stakeholder engagement therefore needs to be institutionalized in order to avoid conflict and to achieve a sustainable future for Ghana's forests.

Hon. Barbara Serwaa Asamoah

Deputy Minister

Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources

Acknowledgements

Many people in diverse ways have helped to make this publication possible. The authors wish to thank the representatives of stakeholder groups who shared their knowledge and lessons over the past five years in participating in the Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue: Amoako Dankwa, Emmanuel Torsu and Agyanin Boateng (artisanal millers), Abdul Mumuni (small-scale miller), Alex Asare (Forestry Commission), Nana Boatey (Traditional Authority), Prince Henneh (farmer), Samuel Brenya (local government), Prince Anokye (Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology) and Glen Asomaning (WWF). Jane Aggrey interviewed them and obtained useful information for the preparation of this publication.

We acknowledge the role of the Project Management Team, the Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue-Steering Committee, facilitators (especially national facilitator Mercy Owusu Ansah), the Community Forestry Workers, and all project staff for establishing and successfully facilitating the multi-stakeholder platform in Ghana. Finally, we would like to recognize the participation of all stakeholder groups in the Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue.

Executive Summary

Deforestation is a serious problem in Ghana. Illegal logging by chainsaw millers to supply the domestic market is a key factor in this deforestation. There are many causes of illegal logging and the problem is further complicated by the difference in perceptions among the great range of stakeholders on how to resolve it.

An attempt by the Government of Ghana to root out illegality by banning the use of chainsaws for processing logs did not work, partly because the legal framework does not provide adequate options for legal domestic lumber supply. In addition, corruption in the sector is rife, institutional governance is weak, political interference is widespread and there is no political will to enforce the ban.

In the 15 years since the ban was imposed, illegal logging has not decreased. The failure to enforce the ban prompted many stakeholders in the sector to ask for responses to various issues that underlie illegal logging:

- the legislation related to land and tree tenure;
- the inequality of existing benefit-sharing mechanisms;
- forest management regimes, which need to involve communities as guardians of valuable resources;
- the need for legal access to forest resources by small and medium forest enterprises; and
- the export of valuable timber resources while the domestic market is clearly undersupplied by legal timber.

Stakeholders' interests have to be addressed so that they have a sense of ownership of solutions to these issues. The best way to reduce illegality and conflict in the sector is to develop and enforce a regulatory framework *with* instead of *for* these stakeholders.

With this goal in mind the Chainsaw Milling Project was conceived and funded by the EU (Box 1). Its main objective is to reduce the level of conflict and illegality related to chainsaw milling. The main strategy is the design and facilitation of

a Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue (MSD) to better understand the causes of these problems and develop options to address them.

It took about two years to design the process; this included a stakeholder analysis, the selection of representative pilot forest districts (initially eight, later ten, of 46 total districts; Figure 1), and sensitization meetings at both the national and district level. It also included focus group meetings, where key stakeholder groups consolidated their perceptions of the chainsaw problem, analyzed the problem and reviewed possible solutions. The process was supported by information on chainsaw milling issues. Up to 2012, nine national-level MSD meetings have taken place (Table 1); these were preceded by district-level MSD meetings that allowed participants to prepare for the national meetings and provide feedback to the various stakeholder constituencies.

The MSD meetings, both at the district and national level, were focused on policy review and development. Participants jointly analyzed the root causes of the chainsaw milling problem and of failing policy responses and compared possible policy options, including a cost-benefit analysis. After they agreed on a preferred option a draft policy proposal was prepared and widely discussed at the community, district and national level. A strategy for implementation was discussed and pilot projects were initiated.

This paper documents the MSD from two perspectives: (1) as a multi-stakeholder process; and (2) as a policy development process.

A number of key process principles are important in order for multi-stakeholder processes to address complex societal problems and lead to positive change:

- acknowledging the complexity of the human/biophysical system in question;
- fostering collective learning among stakeholders;
- the need to shift power among stakeholders to make conditions as fair as possible;
- the inevitability of conflicts among stakeholders and the importance of facilitating conflict analysis and management;

Box 1. The EU Chainsaw Milling Project

The EU Chainsaw Milling Project aims to find solutions to the problems associated with the production of lumber for local timber markets. The project involves stakeholders in dialogue, information gathering and the development of alternatives to unsustainable chainsaw milling practices. The project has two phases: (1) developing alternatives for illegal chainsaw milling through a Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue in Ghana and Guyana (March 2007–April 2013); and (2) supporting the integration of legal and legitimate domestic markets into the Voluntary Partnership Agreements (April 2011–April 2015). In Ghana, the project is being carried out by Tropenbos International (TBI) in collaboration with the Forestry Research Institute of Ghana (FORIG) and the Forestry Commission (FC). - See www.chainsawmilling.org for more information.

- the importance of effective communication;
- the need for inspiring and collaborative leadership; and
- the necessity of understanding — and sometimes adapting — underlying institutions that may block change.

Most of these principles were applied in the MSD design and implementation. The effect was a significant reduction in conflict in the domestic market timber supply. Although the supply of illegal timber to the domestic market has not stopped, there is widely shared agreement among stakeholders that maintaining the status quo is not an option, and that policy and practice in Ghana forestry need to change for the sector to survive. That awareness and resulting sense of urgency can be directly ascribed to the MSD process.

The most urgent change required is to the policy framework for the domestic timber market. The MSD has been pivotal in allowing stakeholders to review and renew relevant policies. This paper documents the various stages of policy development: analyzing policies and chainsaw milling practices; policy formulation using MSD platforms at different levels for intensive consultation; policy implementation in the form of piloting new forms of forest management, business practices and alternative rural development options; and policy monitoring and evaluation.

It is realistic to assume that the MSD would have to continue to be involved in Ghana forest policy development, since the policy context is continually changing. It is important to institutionalize multi-stakeholder process (MSP) principles.

The chainsaw milling project — and more specifically, the MSD Steering Committee — are working to establish the conditions for sustaining a multi-stakeholder process approach to policy-making, rather than leaving that work solely to government. There are six key requirements:

1. The Government of Ghana, most notably the Forestry Commission, supports the MSD as an all-inclusive forest policy development mechanism;
2. The formal industry supports this approach;
3. Civil society organizations are less dependent on foreign donor funds and more able to take on advocacy and facilitation using local resources from either the sector itself or national funding (this is particularly important since Ghana will soon no longer be considered a Least Developed Country (LDC) and donor funding will dry up);
4. Grass roots interests are organized and are represented in accountable organizations;
5. Similar initiatives in the forestry sector are aligned with the MSD; and

6. The process remains focused on addressing the root causes of illegal logging and unsustainable practices, such as land and tree tenure and benefit sharing mechanisms.

Apart from seeking to meet the above requirements it is important to make the key process principles explicit at regular intervals and to monitor the effect of applying them to policy making, policy enforcement and forest management. The proven effectiveness of these principles is making their institutionalization more likely and is leading to all-inclusive decision-making becoming the usual way of governing forests in Ghana.

Abbreviations used

AAC	Annual Allowable Cut
CFC	Community Forest Committee
CFW	Community Forestry Worker
CRMU	Community Resource Management Unit
CSM	Chainsaw milling
DFF	District Forest Forum
DLMSD	District Level Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue
DLMSD SC	District level Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue Steering Committee
DOLTA	Domestic Lumber Traders Association
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FC	Forestry Commission
FLEGT	Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (EU Action Plan)
FSD	Forest Service Division
FSDP	Forest Sector Development Project
FORIG	Forestry Research Institute of Ghana
GTA	Ghana Timber Association (the loggers)
GTMO	Ghana Timber Millers Organization (the millers)
LDC	Least Developed Country
MLNR	Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources
MSD	Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue
MSD-SC	Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue Steering Committee
MSP	Multi-stakeholder process
NFF	National Forest Forum
NF	National Facilitator (EU CSM Project)
PMT	Project Management Team (EU CSM Project)
RMSC	Resource Management Support Centre
TBI	Tropenbos International
TIDD	Timber Industry Development Division
VPA	Voluntary Partnership Agreement

1. Introduction



Illegal logging, deforestation and failing government policies are not limited to Ghana. Through the EU-funded Chainsaw Milling Project (Box 1) Ghana's Forestry Commission (FC), the Forestry Research Institute of Ghana (FORIG) and Tropenbos International (TBI) tried a new approach to reduce the level of conflict and illegality related to chainsaw milling (CSM) by local communities. They developed and facilitated a Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue (MSD) that brought together stakeholders to jointly address problems in forest policy.

This document describes this process and illustrates the lessons learned, which are useful to countries with similar problems in forestry. It outlines the benefits

of more inclusive policy development rather than policy designed and imposed by government. Policy-makers in governments will also benefit; one of the lessons from the Ghana forest sector is that not everybody abides by the rules set by government, not even government itself. Civil society organizations, forest communities and the industry — who all have an interest in securing forests for their future livelihoods — will find the multi-stakeholder approach to policy-making useful.

The chainsaw milling project produced a steady flow of internal reports, external consultancy reports, and MSD proceedings.¹ This report draws on that information, which is complemented by interviews with stakeholders in the Ghana forest sector, such as chainsaw millers, medium-scale mill owners and government staff.

The MSD is not the first multi-stakeholder process (MSP). Existing literature on MSPs elaborate a set of principles that when applied successfully contribute to effective processes of change (see, for example, Woodhill and van Vugt 2011). As shown at the end of chapter 3, the application of these principles in five years of the Ghana MSD has been effective in reducing conflict in the domestic market timber supply.

Chapter 4 describes the MSD as an iterative policy development process analyzed on the basis of a Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) model (FAO 2010). The MSD has been successful in changing forest policy to be more inclusive of stakeholders through collective learning, collaborative leadership, transparency and effectiveness in dealing with power dynamics. Even though illegal logging and deforestation have not ended, the lessons learned in the design and facilitation of the MSD and in applying the core MSD principles suggest that developing policies in this manner is more supportive of sustainable forestry than conventional command-and-control regimes. This is true, however, if and only if these principles are institutionalized in the decision-making processes, as outlined in chapter 5.

1 These can be found at www.chainsawmilling.org.

2. Background



2.1 Illegal logging in Ghana

Forests in Ghana are rapidly disappearing, and illegal logging is the most important reason for this loss. Studies such as that of Hansen and Treue (2008) estimate that approximately 70% of the timber harvest in Ghana is illegal. Approximately 75% of this illegal logging is done by the informal sector (chainsaw operators who supply lumber to the domestic market; see Box 2 and Hansen and Treue 2008). In Kumasi the government itself uses more than 80% of the chainsaw-milled lumber supply (pers. comm., Kumasi lumber trader). If the estimated harvest of about 2.5 million m³ by chainsaw operators is added to the

official Annual Allowable Cut (AAC) of two million m³, the total annual harvest is 4.5 million m³ (Marfo 2010). Based on timber inventories and yield calculations, this is approximately four times the sustainable harvest level that was established in 1996 (Marfo 2010: 48).

Illegal logging is a serious threat to the country's natural forests; if nothing is done to address it the forests of Ghana will be depleted in 15–20 years (Wit et al. 2011: 31). Illegal logging has several negative effects:

- It threatens the biological integrity of the country's forest reserves (Hansen and Treue 2008) — the estimated logging intensity can be as high as seven trees per hectare (ha), which far exceeds the sustainable level of two per ha (Marfo 2010);
- Illegal loggers do not respect ecologically sensitive areas, areas of rich biodiversity or convalescent areas of production forest reserves (Marfo 2010);
- Illegal loggers do not pay fees, levies or taxes to the relevant authorities that are necessary for the management of forests — the loss of stumpage revenue to the state is potentially more than US\$ 18 million per year (Marfo 2010);
- Illegal logging threatens the existence of the formal timber industry in Ghana, including that industry's contribution to employment (around 103,000 jobs) and foreign exchange earnings (Hansen and Treue 2008); and
- Deforestation threatens rural livelihoods — communities in forested areas earn 35–38% of total household income from the use of forest resources (Appiah et al. 2007; Mayers 2008).

In the short term, illegal logging contributes to the livelihoods of rural people by providing income. Marfo (2010) estimates that 97,000 people in Ghana are directly employed by chainsaw-related operations and trade. Mayers et al. (2008) estimate the total number of people employed (directly and indirectly) in chainsaw lumber production and sale at about 350,000. Over the long term, however, it is clear that the very resources that people use illegally to make a living are being exploited beyond sustainable limits, and that benefits will one day evaporate.

Box 2. Illegal or informal?

Operating outside the legal framework is normally referred to as “illegal.” But when the legal framework does not provide adequate options for operating legally, or when certain activities are viewed as legitimate by most stakeholders, it is better to refer to this as “informal.”

Using the term “illegal” in the Ghana domestic lumber market context is problematic because many Ghanaians think that the rights to use forests are not equally distributed. Changing access rights to land and trees could be a better option than enforcing a law regarded as unfair and referring to those who depend on informal activities as being illegal.

Illegal logging practices lead to conflicts between stakeholders, increasing loss of legitimacy of state bodies, increasing corruption and less respect for the rule of law.

2.2 What is causing illegal logging and related problems in the forest sector?

Hansen and Treue (2008: 587) claim that “the high incidence of illegal logging is the result of policy failures, notably the failure to establish positive economic incentives for farmers and local communities to tend and conserve timber trees and forests, the outlawing of the chainsaw operators, and the failure to downsize the timber industry. Efforts in Ghana to address illegal logging have been ineffective because they have focused on enforcing and adjusting an inherently unenforceable and unfair legislative framework.” They argue that more fundamental policy changes are required.

Marfo (2010), focusing on the informal sector that converts logs into lumber, mentions four drivers of chainsaw milling:

1. Lack of adequate policy response to domestic timber demand – The booming Ghanaian economy needs timber for construction, the furniture industry, etc. The legal timber industry is required to channel 20% of its production to the domestic market to meet that demand. Unfortunately, this condition is not met, largely because export prices are higher than domestic prices. In addition, the current domestic market requires much more timber than that provided by the prescribed 20%. Illegal supply chains fill the gap.
2. Access to and affordability of chainsaw lumber – Over the years illegal chainsaw milling has been able to provide cheap lumber for the Ghana population, especially in rural areas. Since 84% of the total wood stocked in timber markets across the country is supplied by informal chainsaw operations (Marfo 2010), this means that no stakeholder or state agency has addressed the illegality of this supply.
3. Tenure and inequitable benefit sharing – The law vests ownership of all natural growing trees — including trees on private farms — in the state. This tenure arrangement not only discourages effective tree management but also offers a perverse incentive for farmers to connive with illegal chainsaw operators. Farmers can thus ensure an immediate return and by doing so avoid the risk of not being paid compensation when legal contractors enter the farm and cause damage. Also, although a percentage of the tree value is paid by contractors to “the community” as part of a benefit-sharing mechanism none of that benefit ends up in the hand of the individual farmer.

4. Unemployment – A very important driver of chainsaw operations is the rampant unemployment in the rural areas of Ghana. The demand for lumber and the ready availability of resources create jobs.

2.3 Why is finding solutions so complicated?

Finding solutions to illegal milling practices in Ghana has proved to be difficult. Although chainsaw milling has been banned since 1998, the ban has been largely ineffective for a number of reasons (Marfo 2010):

- an unclear legal framework;
- corruption and weak institutional governance (for instance, offences are rarely prosecuted in court, and fines are too low to be a deterrent);
- political interference; and
- a lack of political will to enforce the ban.

One of the key underlying reasons that illegal chainsaw milling has persisted despite a ban on chainsaw milling is the uncertain legitimacy of the law. Some people feel the law is unfair. Other questions also emerge. Who should be entitled to forest benefits: local people, who adhere to traditional rights and subsistence use systems, or the Forestry Commission, which is formally entitled to allocate concessions to private companies? Is deforestation a problem when forests are replaced by agricultural land for a growing rural population? What is the best way to resolve persistent illegal practices: better enforcement of the law or adapting it? The ensuing debate on the use and management of forest resources in Ghana features a range of values that cannot easily be reconciled, including stimulating local development, generating export revenues, conserving biodiversity, sequestering carbon and providing land for agriculture.

The debate is also complicated by the multitude of stakeholders at different levels, from farmers and consumers to international companies, EU trade commissions and global forest fora. Furthermore, forest degradation affects a range of sectors governed by a multitude of policy agendas, including agriculture, water resources, wildlife and tourism, climate control and rural development.

When both defining the problem and identifying possible solutions involve a range of values, affect multiple stakeholder interests and cut across multiple scales and sectors, it is highly unlikely that one legal instrument — in this case, a ban on chainsaw milling — can address the problem. A more comprehensive and inclusive policy development process is required to negotiate solutions that most stakeholders will support.

3. Design and review of the Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue process



3.1 The introduction of the Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue in the Ghana forest sector

The Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue (MSD) was designed under the framework of the EU Chainsaw Milling project (Box 1). The objective was to reduce the level of conflict and illegality related to chainsaw milling. The MSD was established to achieve a national consensus about issues underlying chainsaw milling by providing a mechanism for ongoing dialogue among stakeholders. More specifically, the MSD would accomplish several goals (Wit et al. 2011):

- provide a mechanism for stakeholders to share information, interact, participate and influence national policy processes and outcomes;
- enhance levels of trust between various actors;
- prevent or reduce conflict between stakeholders; and
- generate shared views of solutions and relevant good practices for chainsaw milling among stakeholders.

National-level meetings were complemented by debates at the district level. A number of pilot forest districts (first 8, later 10; Figure 1) were selected to enhance the participation of stakeholders and represent forestry practices in different ecoregions.

3.2 The MSD design

Preparation is crucial to ensure that the MSD 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 have the capability to express their opinions about the issues discussed and the process itself.

Preparation activities for the MSD included a stakeholder analysis, a sensitization programme, district-level meetings, national focus group meetings and a preparatory workshop (Duodu 2009). Figure 2 illustrates the MSD process.

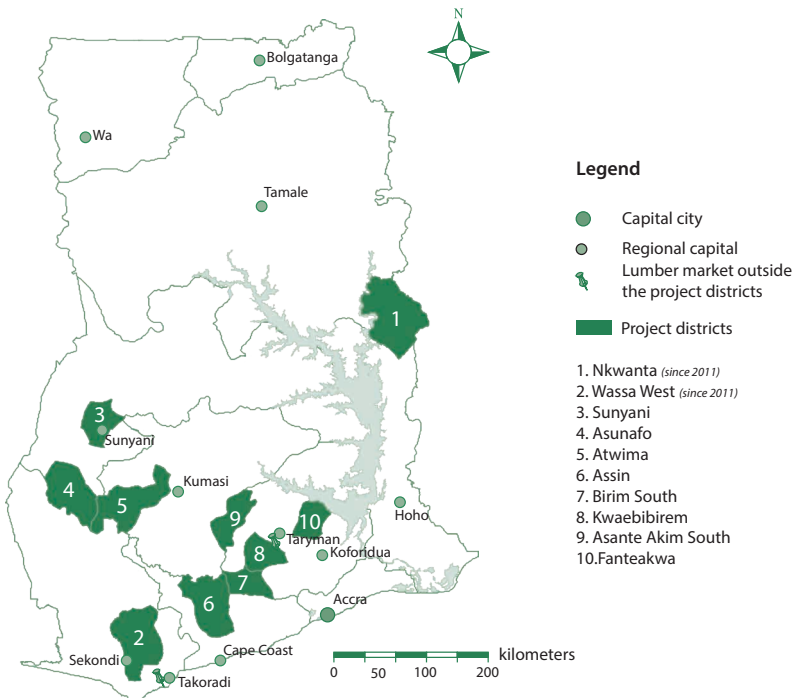


Figure 1. Pilot districts of the EU Chainsaw Milling project in Ghana

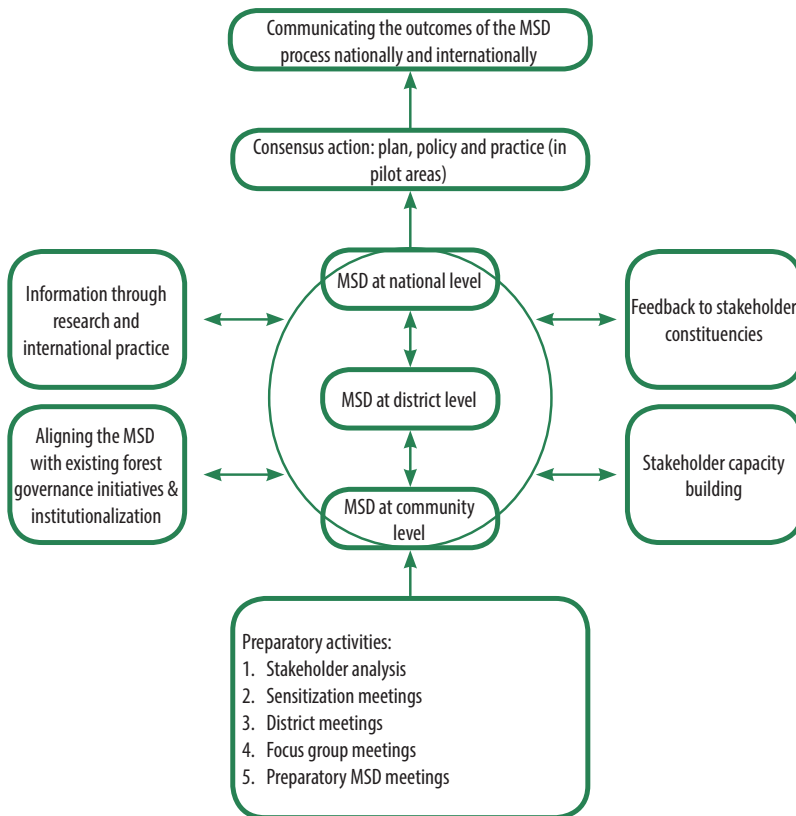


Figure 2. The MSD process

Stakeholder analysis

After the launch of the project in late 2007, an analysis was made of the stakeholders at the pilot district level and the national level, focusing on chainsaw milling prone areas. This ensured that all relevant groups of people with a stake in CSM would be involved in the process. The first step in preparing for the MSD was to bring individuals together in representative groups (e.g., timber trade associations, chainsaw operators, carriers, carpenters and woodworkers associations) to facilitate communication and to guide these groups in selecting their representatives. The project facilitators noticed that government agencies (among them the senior staff of the Forestry Commission) did not always understand the strategy of the project (“How can you talk with someone who is actually breaking the law?”) and ad-hoc sensitization meetings to address this issue were organized in July and August 2008 in the pilot districts.

Sensitization programme

The sensitization meetings were not originally planned for but were initiated to respond to the initial lack of confidence of stakeholders in the relevance and impact of an MSD. Stakeholders at various levels (community, district and

national) were informed and encouraged to support the MSD process. They needed to be convinced that the MSD was not just another “talk shop,” but a genuine attempt to coordinate all parties’ views and interests in an informed policy-making process that could deal with a persistent and complex problem that affected everybody. One of the strengths of the MSD process is its ability to adapt to changing circumstances in this way.

District meetings

Following the sensitization meetings, additional meetings were held in the pilot districts. These meetings were held to assess the extent to which stakeholder perceptions on chainsaw milling issues and the MSD differed, to propose acceptable means to bridge these divisions, to discuss and address important issues raised during the sensitization programme, to facilitate the selection of representatives and to determine the issues to be discussed at the MSD meetings.

Focus group meetings

Focus group discussions were then organized to provide insight into the expectations of important stakeholder groups (Box 3) and their views of the MSD as a tool to address critical issues (Owusu Ansah and Parker Mckeown 2008). These focus group meetings were organized at the national level. One day was spent on each of four focus groups: traditional authorities, District Assemblies, NGOs and communities; government institutions; the formal timber industry and research institutes; and the (illegal) chainsaw loggers. The meetings established an understanding of stakeholders’ interests, problems and concerns in chainsaw milling operations and identified issues, values, motivations, problems and opportunities associated with the MSD.

Box 3. Identified stakeholder groups in the MSD process

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Ministry of Lands and Natural Resource (MLNR) | 14. Chainsaw operators, machine owners, transport owners |
| 2. Forestry Commission (FC) | 15. Carriers |
| 3. Forestry Services Division (FSD) – part of FC | 16. Lumber brokers (DOLTA, markets) |
| 4. Resource Management Support Centre (RMSC) – part of FC | 17. National Forest Forum (NFF) and District Forest Fora |
| 5. Timber Industry Development Division (TIDD) – part of FC | 18. Furniture and Wood Workers Association of Ghana (FUWAG) |
| 6. Judicial service | 19. Wood Workers Association of Ghana (WAG) |
| 7. Law enforcement (such as police, customs, immigration and army) | 20. Charcoal producers |
| 8. Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) office (part of FC) | 21. Community forestry organisations |
| 9. District/municipal assemblies | 22. Farmers |
| 10. Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MOFA) | 23. Land-owners |
| 11. Individual members of Ghana Timber Millers Organization (GTMO) | 24. Non-timber forest product collectors |
| 12. Ghana Timber Association (GTA) | 25. Traditional Authorities |
| 13. Civil Society Groups such as Forest Watch, WWF, IUCN | 26. Research institutions such as FORIG and KNUST |
| | 27. General public (the timber consumers) |
| | 28. Media |

Preparatory workshop

In March 2009 a preparatory workshop was organized to present and prioritize the findings from the stakeholder analysis and the focus groups. Participants also nominated members to the MSD Steering Committee and agreed on the structure of the MSD and the criteria for selection of MSD members.

While district-level meetings were not originally planned for, participants felt that instead of having only a national-level MSD informed by stakeholder meetings it was better to also hold MSD meetings at the district level that would inform the national meeting. This would enable stakeholders at the district level to learn from each other and ensure that the wide geographical differences between the districts were acknowledged. This again demonstrates the ability of the MSD to adapt to new insights.

District-level MSDs

There were pragmatic reasons for selecting eight (later ten) pilot districts. The project could not cover the entire country, and the selected districts were representative of local interests and opportunities in the forestry sector. They offered sufficient options to develop and test alternatives to illegal chainsaw activities on a pilot basis.

Stakeholders agreed that every national-level MSD should be preceded by district-level MSD meetings, where participants could discuss the outcomes of previous meetings and prepare input for the next one. This ensured an optimal link between the district and national MSD and the preparatory community/stakeholder meetings. District MSD representatives were trained to organize and facilitate preparatory community meetings with their constituency. Up to 2012, an estimated 500 meetings have been organized in 54 communities in the ten pilot districts.

MSD meetings

The size of the national MSD meetings was largely determined by perceived manageability in terms of maximum numbers. Stakeholders agreed that a maximum of 70 members² from five major stakeholder groups (government, civil society, chainsaw millers, farmers and the formal industry) should attend the national MSD meetings. To ensure consistency, representatives were required to be permanent whenever possible. All representatives have voting rights; each representative has one vote.

A maximum of 30 representatives at district-level MSDs is desired, with at least one from each stakeholder group. The final list of members was approved at the district level and endorsed in September 2009 by MSD 1. As much as possible, agreements and decisions are reached by consensus. If consensus cannot be reached, members vote by secret ballot. So far, this type of voting has not been necessary.

2 When eight districts were involved, the maximum number was 60.

Each constituency elected an individual who represents the stakeholder group at both the district and national level. For some stakeholder groups — such as farmers in a community, or the traditional authority — it is relatively easy to elect a representative. The lumber traders, however, are spread over many lumber markets in different districts, and find it more difficult to choose a representative. At the national level this stakeholder group is represented by the newly established Domestic Lumber Traders Association (DOLTA).

Stakeholders wanted to participate in the process for a range of reasons (Duodu et al. 2009):

- **Recognition** – Important stakeholder groups such as chainsaw operators felt they had finally been recognized as key members of the forestry sector. They saw the project as an effective way to legalize their claims;
- **Direct financial interests** – Chainsaw milling is a lucrative source of income for an entire production chain and stakeholders participate to protect this income;
- **Indirect financial interests** – Land-owners such as government (the Forestry Commission) and chiefs feel they are losing out in the current situation because chainsaw operators do not pay royalties. The project allows them to make their voices heard;
- **Prospective economic interests** – The perceived potential of alternative livelihoods as promoted by the project draws in local community members;
- **Deadlock** – The ban on chainsaw milling is not effective and this realization draws in policy makers, forest managers and users;
- **Crisis** – Forest resources are dwindling rapidly; even chainsaw operators realize this. Failing to address deeply rooted conflicts is therefore no longer an option; and
- **Opportunities** – The forests of Ghana hold valuable assets and their benefits draw a wide variety of participants, such as NGOs, District Assemblies, the private sector and politicians.

Despite these reasons, some groups - such as the Ghana Timber Millers Organization (GTMO) - have reservations about the MSD, or are even boycotting it. Marfo and Parker McKeown (2013) distinguish two coalitions of stakeholders in the policy process around domestic timber supply. The conservative coalition believes that the formal timber industry should be the only supplier of timber and that government should ensure that this happens by enforcing the law. This coalition includes some of the most powerful stakeholders in the sector: the GTMO, the Ghana Timber Association (GTA), the Forestry Commission (FC), the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resource (MLNR) and the Judicial Service. GTMO has been the main proponent of this coalition. Although the GTMO formally does not want to be part of the MSD, individual members do attend meetings. The reform

coalition includes chainsaw operators, domestic timber traders, farmers and some Forestry Commission officials, especially those who work at the district level.

There are differences between the two coalitions apart from the extent of power and political influence they possess. They differ in approach: “chainsaw operation is criminal and must stop” versus “enforce the ban on chainsaw milling but safeguard the interests of the displaced operators.” They also disagree about how to address the problem: “use military force” versus “use collaborative schemes to control access to tree resources.” The MSD process provides a platform for both coalitions to discuss their differences in perceptions and interests on the basis of the assumption that they have one interest in common: maintaining the forests for livelihoods and economic development.

Capacity building and action research

Capacity building and action research³ are important ingredients of the MSD process. An effective dialogue requires skilled facilitators, who build trust and motivation and create equal opportunities for all stakeholders, and provide a steady flow of relevant and focused information. It also requires stakeholders to be sufficiently prepared to represent their constituency; these representatives must be capable of drawing input from their constituency before a meeting and providing feedback afterwards. It is the responsibility of the national facilitator - and even more importantly, the facilitators at the district level - to build the capacity of local stakeholders so that they can take part in the process in a meaningful way. With so many stakeholders in such conflicting contexts this is a formidable task.

Capacity building is taking place at four levels:

1. ***Building the capacity of the MSD facilitators*** - Community Forestry Workers (CFWs) are a key part of the MSD. CFWs are Forestry Commission staff who have been seconded to the project. They organize district-level meetings; support information exchange prior to, in and after the meetings; facilitate meetings; and mediate between stakeholders with conflicting interests. Their leadership and their belief in the value and outcome of the MSD are vital to the effectiveness of the process. Their ability to carry out these tasks has been built up over the years with project resources.
2. ***Capacity building at the national level*** - National-level MSD Steering Committee (SC) members receive training in areas that they have identified, including leadership, improving forest governance and institutionalization of the MSD. More importantly, SC members identify gaps in understanding of the domestic market supply and help fill these gaps by commissioning and evaluating research. This in turn strengthens their own capacity.

³ This is research intended to solve a specific problem.

3. **Capacity building at the district level** - The CFWs build the capacity of stakeholder representatives in their respective forest districts. Training often takes place at the same time as preparing for district MSDs (to save costs) in the areas of communication skills; representation and being accountable to a constituency; conflict management; and organization/facilitation of community meetings. Community groups are occasionally trained in more technical skills, such as forest management and alternative livelihood options.
4. **Follow-up at the community level, or at the level of producer associations** - The CFWs assist the members who represent their constituencies at the local level to disseminate information downward and prepare for taking concerns upward.

To ensure that discussions are informed by relevant facts and figures, an important part of the MSD process has been the commissioning of research. This was requested by the MSD parties themselves. Stakeholder-driven research will increase the likelihood that stakeholders take ownership of the outcomes. The Forestry Research Institute of Ghana (FORIG) makes an important contribution to conducting research.

Alignment with other stakeholder processes

The MSD is not the only initiative in Ghana to engage stakeholders in forest policy development. In 2009 there were another ten such initiatives in the country's forestry sector: the Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT)/Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) process; the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD) initiative; debate on the



United Nations Forum on Forests Non-Legally Binding Instrument (NLBI); the Natural Resources and Environmental Governance (NREG)-related KASA ("Speak out" in Twi) civil society project; the Global Witness Forest Transparency Reporting; Pro-poor REDD (IUCN/Danida); the World Wide Fund for Nature's Forest Certification support; an EU civil society project; the National (and District) Forest Forum (supported by the FAO); and the Growing Forests Partnership.

Obviously, there are institutional interests (of Ghana-based stakeholders and of donors) that hamper collaboration. In addition, the extent of consultation in the sector poses a danger of "consultation-fatigue" and opportunistic behaviour (where stakeholders participate in the process that benefits them the most). These factors may result in short-term output but not long-term impact. Long-term impact is more likely to be achieved in the multi-faceted forestry sector by means of collaboration, complementarity and cohesion.

In 2009 the MSD Steering Committee set in motion a process to merge with the National Forest Forum (NFF) initiative and closely liaise with the FLEGT/VPA stakeholder consultation process that was being coordinated by the Timber Industry Development Division (TIDD) of Ghana's Forestry Commission. The latter process was considered important, since the legal supply of timber to the domestic market was included in the EU/Ghana VPA. Aligning these different but related consultation processes would help to embed the MSD policy development approach in the Ghana forest sector.

Merging with the NFF structure was also considered to be important from an institutional point of view. The MSD approach fits well with the approach advocated by NFF; moreover, the NFF has legitimacy and is recognized by government. This increases the likelihood that outcomes from the MSD - channelled through NFF - will receive the necessary political attention. In addition, having one multiple stakeholder dialogue mechanism instead of three (each drawing on the same stakeholders on similar forest issues) requires fewer resources.

3.3 The MSD in action

From September 2009 until December 2012 72 district-level MSDs and nine national-level MSDs were held.⁴ Each MSD at the national level (and therefore the district meetings in terms of preparing for and reporting from the national meetings) was an important step in the chainsaw milling policy development process. Table 1 gives a brief overview of the topics covered at the national-level MSDs.

4 Recordings of MSD meetings, and annexes, can be found on TBI's website: www.tropenbos.org/projects/multi-stakeholder_dialogue_in_ghana.

Table 1. Topics discussed at national-level MSD meetings, 2009–12

Date	Topics covered
MSD 1 September 25, 2009 60 participants (inclusive of members with voting right, project staff and observers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalization of the MSD implementation plan (to be endorsed by the sector ministry), and election of MSD Steering Committee • Ways to streamline the MSD and the National Forest Forum roles and consultation processes • Identification of issues for further discussion at the MSD. The 32 issues identified during the meeting can be grouped under the following headings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◊ supply of and demand for lumber to the domestic market ◊ sustainability of forest resources ◊ policy/law/institutional issues ◊ alternative livelihoods ◊ research issues ◊ improved technology ◊ other issues, such as corruption, political interference, revenue loss to the state, monitoring, public awareness raising
MSD 2 December 11, 2009 73 participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jointly defining the current chainsaw milling (CSM) problem and developing a vision of the common future that can be summarized as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◊ a reviewed law/policy that conforms to current realities ◊ CSM transformed into acceptable and efficient forest-dependent enterprises ◊ adequate and accessible legal lumber for the domestic market ◊ sustainably managed forests ◊ increased revenue to government and resource owners • Presentation of three policy options: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. only sawmills to supply legal lumber to the domestic market. This means maintaining the status quo with strict enforcement of the ban 2. sawmills and artisanal millers⁵ to supply the domestic market with legal timber 3. only artisanal millers to supply legal lumber to the domestic market, while sawmills concentrate on export
MSD 3 April 7, 2010 77 participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreeing on a code of conduct for MSD meetings • Discussion and recording of preferences by stakeholder groups for the three policy options • Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis done in six groups of participants of the three policy options and suggested strategies to deal with weaknesses and threats • Nomination of a nine-member subcommittee to further study and adapt the outcome of the SWOT analysis of the three policy options
MSD 4 September 23, 2010 77 participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation and discussion of the final version of the SWOT analysis of the three policy options • Discussion on merging with a similar policy debate initiated by TIDD. The decision was to include a TIDD staff member in the MSD Steering Committee • Presentation of the highlights of a cost-benefit analysis performed on the three policy options • Defining the artisanal milling concept and definition – an important definition to be included in legislative instruments, which more or less defines access to timber resources: if the definition of artisanal milling (legalized access) includes chainsaws, access to resources will be easier for poor individuals; if the definition refers only to expensive milling equipment, poor individuals will have less access • To demonstrate more efficient, but cheap alternatives to chainsaw milling, other milling equipment such as Logosols (a frame attached to a chainsaw) and Woodmizers were presented by a salesperson from Husqvarna

5 Definition of artisanal milling had not yet been determined: it was concluded at MSD 9.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 94% of participants preferred policy option 2: Artisanal millers and sawmills to supply the domestic market with legal timber • A strategy was agreed on to get full stakeholder support for the preferred policy option
MSD 5 June 24, 2011 92 participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation and discussion of the draft policy proposal for the supply of legal lumber to the domestic market (based on policy option 2); and • Debate of an action plan to support the implementation of this policy direction. Agreement was not reached during the meeting. The major obstacle was the exclusion of “any form of chainsaw machine” (including the Logosol) from the definition of artisanal milling (the new term for proposed legal small-scale milling). The MSD disagreed with the proposed policy (70% against) prepared by a joint TIDD/EU CSM technical team to exclude chainsaws from the definition. The MSD felt that the entire chainsaw milling concept should be further discussed among all stakeholders; that a strategic impact assessment should be conducted to assess the possible implications of such a definition; that the new policy should focus more on addressing the underlying drivers of illegal chainsaw milling; and that the draft policy document should be discussed at the district level
MSD 6 October 26, 2011 87 participants (including 5 members of the press)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation and discussion of the outcomes of district consultations on the draft policy proposal for the supply of legal lumber to the domestic market • Consensus reached on the final version of the policy proposal, with the condition that the definition of artisanal milling be dealt with in implementation guidelines after the policy is accepted by government. The issue remained a very important one as the definition may exclude any form of chainsaw milling.
MSD 7 May 17, 2012 99 participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal evaluation of achievements and areas for improvement, by means of a questionnaire filled out by the members. The MSD was generally reviewed very positively in terms of organization, effectiveness and quality of outputs (see Box 5). • Debate on the definition of artisanal milling deferred to MSD 8 • Presentation of a study on lumber recovery rates of locally produced band saws • Introduction of Rapid Response Units (using the model of the armed anti-poaching control units deployed by Wildlife Division in and around national parks).
MSD 8 August 31, 2012 98 participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following the proposed policy for the supply of legal lumber to the domestic market (now approved by government), a strategic framework for implementation (actions on how to achieve the five policy objectives it outlined) was prepared by a small ad-hoc technical committee and presented to district-level MSDs. The feedback from the district meetings on the proposed strategic framework was then discussed at the national MSD (in groups) and commented on. • The definition of CSM was deferred to MSD 9 to give more time to TIDD for consultations on technical aspects of the draft definition.
MSD 9 November 7, 2012 92 participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation and discussions of outcomes from districts-level MSD discussions on the three proposed definitions of artisanal milling. The stakeholders reached consensus on a definition that excludes chainsaws for processing. See Box 4. • Debate on how to institutionalize the MSD. Stakeholders agreed to focus on four key areas: legitimacy, representation, sustainability and linkage with viable existing multi-stakeholder platforms.

Box 4: Definition of artisanal milling

“Artisanal milling is small-medium scale milling of timber from specified legal sources by a trained, certified, registered and licensed Ghanaian artisan, using licensed portable sawmilling equipment, which excludes any form of chainsaw machines, capable of recovering at least 50% of dimension lumber from logs for the domestic market only. This may be processed in-situ or ex-situ” (MSD 9, November 2012).

The MSD meetings were well attended, well organized, action oriented and clearly aligned with previous meetings. Processes of agenda setting, research, discussion of findings, policy proposal development and discussion, voting on proposals (by members only; facilitating staff and others are excluded from voting) were well planned and facilitated. MSD members highly valued the performance of the process (see Box 5).

There is evidence that stakeholders, most notably the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources, takes MSD recommendations seriously. The ministry accepted the MSD-driven domestic timber market policy in March 2012. Other stakeholders have followed up on MSD recommendations: associations of former chainsaw millers have gone into tree planting; DOLTA is looking for a legal supply of timber for its markets; and GTA members cooperate with artisanal millers.

Meetings follow a traditional format: chair's remarks, approval of minutes, presentation of the issues at stake, discussion in groups, plenary consensus seeking, and concluding remarks. Meetings are recorded, and minutes are sent to members and made available on TBI's website and checked and confirmed in subsequent meetings. Subsidiary information such as research reports and draft proposals are distributed widely at both the district and national levels.

The MSD process is managed through a structure of committees with defined roles and responsibilities:

1. An MSD Steering Committee at the national level (Box 6) reflects the stakeholder interests of the wider MSD platform. Members are elected every two years to the nine-member committee. The Steering Committee (SC) is responsible for managing the MSD process and for ensuring that decisions are implemented. The SC is increasingly taking on the role of convening meetings, setting agendas, facilitating debate and ensuring that decision-making is action-oriented; these tasks were previously carried out by project staff.

Box 5. Results of the internal evaluation of the MSD process

At MSD 7, in May 2012, members were consulted on the quality of the MSD process by means of a questionnaire: 52% of those present had attended all six previous national MSD meetings and members were generally satisfied with the organization of the MSDs; 93% were satisfied with the briefing materials provided during the meetings, and 92% were satisfied with the agenda and invitation; 65% had received the invitation one to two weeks prior to the meeting, while 35% were invited at shorter notice.

In terms of active participation, 95% were satisfied and 97% perceived the collaboration between the stakeholders as excellent; 77% did not experience any form of domination of any actor during debates; 80% were happy with the quality of facilitation; and 93% were satisfied in terms of the quality of MSD outputs.

2. MSD Steering committee at the district level (same roles and responsibilities as above). District-level SC members are also increasingly taking over the tasks formerly carried out by CFWs.
3. An MSD technical sub-committee supports MSD participants by reviewing information and filling knowledge gaps and presenting its findings to the Steering Committee and wider MSD process in an easily understood way.
4. The National Facilitator and the ten CFWs at the district level (one for each district) provide support services to the MSD in terms of facilitation, technical advice, information dissemination and training.
5. The Project Management Team of the EU Chainsaw Milling Project supervises the staff, act as resource persons and ensures dissemination of information. They are also responsible for planning, budgets and reporting.

Participants at both the district and national level are not paid a sitting allowance or other form of remuneration, but do receive an allowance to cover transport and related costs. Accommodation and food are provided. To date, MSD stakeholders have contributed only their time, not their money. All financial costs for the MSD process are covered by the EU Chainsaw Milling Project (see Box 1).

3.4 MSD facilitation

For the outcome to be accepted by all participants, dialogues and multi-stakeholder processes in general should be facilitated, not directed. The MSD process is facilitated at two levels: at the national level by the national facilitator (Forestry Commission staff attached to the programme) and at the district level in the pilot districts by FSD staff such as Customer Relation Officers and Assistant District Managers, who are attached to the programme as CFWs. Several facilitation tasks are required for the MSD:

- ***Initiation of the dialogue process:*** facilitators need to make stakeholders aware of the complexity of technical solutions for a problem that is highly contested in terms of values, competing claims on resources and

Box 6. National MSD Steering Committee

The nine-member national MSD Steering Committee is composed of representatives of the following stakeholder groups:

- National Forest Forum (2)
- Research/Academia (1)
- The Forestry Commission, representing three departments: RMSC, FSD and TIDD (3)
- Chainsaw millers/now called artisanal millers (1)
- Traditional Authority (1)
- Timber traders/DOLTA (1)

political agendas, and must convince stakeholders that a lengthy and comprehensive dialogue and negotiation process is more likely to result in an acceptable outcome.

- ***Providing funding and other resources:*** the project needs to secure funding from the EU and resources from the Government of Ghana (e.g., pilot projects of the Forestry Commission that provide equipment to artisanal millers), and collaborate with dialogue processes supported by other sources of funding.
- ***Mobilizing the interest and engagement of stakeholder constituencies, including organization of informal stakeholders:*** this includes organizing and informing meetings at the community, district and interest-group level, and training stakeholders in leadership and in representing and providing feedback to their constituencies.
- ***Providing leadership:*** the project managers - TBI, FORIG and the Forestry Commission, particularly TBI and FORIG - are regarded as neutral organizations with proven leadership qualities in facilitating policy review processes, multi-party negotiation, critical thinking based on scientific evidence, and collaborative problem solving.
- ***Creating linkages between stakeholders:*** linkages between informal forest users and representatives of the formal industry are particularly important in the MSD. A great achievement of the MSD in Ghana has been giving a voice to informal chainsaw millers. This is an enormous improvement over the violent encounters that used to plague the sector, whereby both opponents were losing out. The second major achievement in this regard is linking stakeholders among the local, district and national levels.
- ***Creating access to a range of knowledge bases:*** as well as providing scientific information through the technical committee and associated research institutes such as FORIG, the process has utilized experiential knowledge and indigenous knowledge from stakeholders through action research. The MSD actively engaged stakeholders in tasks such as weighing policy options and exploring alternative livelihoods (e.g., the livelihood surveys of Opoku et al. 2009, with stakeholders on viable alternative income options, and the SWOT analysis of the three proposed policy options by stakeholders at the community, district and national levels; see Table 1).
- ***Giving expert advice on process design and professionally facilitating multi-stakeholder events:*** initiating and facilitating multi-stakeholder processes are areas of expertise that project partners have acquired in working with international institutes such as the International Institute for Environment and Development and Wageningen University.

3.5 Important principles of multiple stakeholder processes

Multi-stakeholder platforms are necessary because of the increasing complexity of problems. Global issues such as climate change and international trade and treaties affect local management regimes and policies. There are new internationally accepted definitions of what comprises “good” governance. The way that decisions were made in the past (the ruling of a chief, or a decree from government), along with existing governance mechanisms — from local to global — fail to address today’s challenges.

Government is gradually changing to governance that includes the private sector, civil society, communities and academic institutes. Steering change in a direction that is aimed at the common good is not something to hope for from government alone; increasingly, coalitions of stakeholders are needed to drive this change (Woodhill and van Vugt 2011).

For multi-stakeholder processes such as the MSD to succeed — in this case, to make positive changes in supplying the Ghana domestic market with legal lumber — some key process principles must be incorporated. Woodhill and van Vugt (2011) identify seven key principles:

1. **Work with complexity** - recognize that human-biophysical systems, the impact of management interventions and the outcome of change processes are largely unknowable and unpredictable. The most important consideration is to get a shared understanding of what is known through collective learning processes, and to be responsive and adaptive to uncertainty and change. Practically:
 - a. Do not expect things go as planned; processes should be designed around multiple cycles of reflection, planning and action so that adaptation is possible;
 - b. Recognize that in complex systems change happens because of many different actors. Build a broad network of support, and be wary of top-down approaches;
 - c. Expect and learn from failure;
2. **Foster collective learning** - underpin multiple stakeholder processes with mechanisms that allow stakeholders to learn from each other through their collective experience. This is based on “experiential learning” (a cycle of concrete experience, reflexive observation, conceptualization, and active experimentation) and participation (active use of participatory tools in research, capacity building and engagement). Practically:
 - a. Design the MSP around an experiential learning cycle: explore the context, problems and interests of stakeholders without judgement; analyze the implications of the problem and possible solutions from various stakeholder perspectives, test and compare options, and set in motion action that clearly defines (and test over time) the assumptions that underpin that action.

- b. Engage stakeholders in exploring, sharing and testing these underlying assumptions (about both problems and solutions).
- 3. **Shift power** - social change involves understanding, working with and shifting power structures related to political influence, economic wealth, cultural status and personal influence. Power is not a negative force but rather a means by which any change is both brought about and resisted. Practically:
 - a. Carefully analyze power dynamics in the early stage of a multiple stakeholder process.
 - b. Identify how personal, political and financial power can be mobilized to benefit the collective process.
 - c. Recognize that processes can be taken over by more powerful groups in many ways.
 - d. Consider marginalized groups and build their capacity and political power before they engage with the more powerful stakeholders.
- 4. **Deal with conflict** - conflict is an inevitable part of multiple stakeholder processes. In fact, conflict is often desirable and necessary for change to occur. Practically:
 - a. Analyze (jointly) the key actors in conflict, and understand the underlying interests and root causes of the conflict.
 - b. Understand the way the conflict developed, as it will help to determine what kind of interventions are possible and when.
 - c. Identify possible ways to manage the conflict (informal/formal discussions, negotiation, mediation, court action).
- 5. **Enable effective communication** - underlying each effective multiple stakeholder process is the capacity of people to communicate openly and respectfully. Ensuring good communication skills is therefore a key area of capacity development.
- 6. **Promote collaborative leadership** - leadership patterns and capacities have a profound influence on the direction of MSPs. Effective processes require strong leadership, whether formal or informal, that supports and promotes the collaborative principles on which such a process depends. Practically:
 - a. Understand the existing status, traditional values and capacities of and relations among stakeholders in order to promote leadership styles that are helpful in change processes.
 - b. Engage stakeholders in critically analyzing different leadership styles and their implications for an effective MSP.
 - c. Develop leadership capacities among stakeholders if necessary.
- 7. **Reinvent institutions** - recognize that change in society (and therefore also in the forest sector) is largely about changing institutions. Institutions - not organizations - provide the rules. Institutions influence and constrain change, and MSPs need to engage stakeholders to look critically at the institutions that affect them and their problems/solutions, and find ways to change these institutions. Practically:

- a. Engage stakeholders in questioning their own rules (the meaning they give to events, and the norms and values they treasure) that have an effect on the changes they want to effect.
- b. Recognize that changing institutions takes time.

3.6 Applying MSP principles to the MSD process in Ghana

Working with complexity

The past five years show that the MSD did not take place as planned, and that adaptation of both the strategy and its implementation proved both necessary and possible:

1. Not all stakeholders immediately accepted the MSD. Some participants felt that chainsaw millers were criminals and should be in jail instead of participating in the process. A series of sensitization meetings had to be organized in order to make sure that most stakeholders participated.
2. The initial stages of MSD design revealed that having a national debate informed by stakeholder groups would fail to link with district and local levels (where the impact of illegal activities and deforestation is felt most). A layer of district-level MSDs was quickly designed to fill this gap. District level MSD maximize field-level engagement, reflecting district geographical differences and increasing the variety of viewpoints.
3. It also quickly emerged that the MSD was not the only platform for debating domestic lumber market problems. The Forestry Commission (TIDD) launched a policy debate on the regulation of the domestic market, prompted by VPA negotiations; the MSD – also supported by the FC — covered the same topic. The TIDD debate tended to reflect the concerns



of the conservative coalition while the MSD reflected the concerns of the reform coalition (see section 3.2). The TIDD debate was prompted by the need to quickly satisfy VPA requirements and conditions. The MSD took a more time-consuming approach, which involved researching options and implications and extensive deliberation at the local level. Still, the two processes dovetailed, mostly through lobbying behind the scenes after both initiatives realized that ignoring each other was not an option. TIDD was eventually represented on the MSD Steering Committee. In 2010 the MSD process was aligned with the VPA implementation process. This joint process set up its own structure, with a technical subcommittee and a policy committee to develop a policy proposal for supply of legal timber to the domestic market. The policy has been discussed at district-level MSD meetings and was accepted at the national MSD 6 in October 2011.

4. The overlap of the MSD process with established national and district forest fora threatened relevance and sustainability from the start, and the project strategy and implementation had to be adapted. The platforms are currently in the process of merging.
5. Externally-driven forest policy initiatives, such as the EU FLEGT programme to broker a VPA between EU and Ghana on ensuring a legal timber trade and good forest governance, have given a boost to the MSD. Ghana has decided to include the domestic timber market in the VPA. The REDD initiative is still under development in Ghana; when it is implemented it will also address the domestic timber market, as illegal chainsaw milling is considered a driver of deforestation.

The MSD and its supporting project framework incorporate flexibility; they are capable of adapting in an complex and ever-changing context. The project includes expert convenors such as TBI and FORIG, which provide knowledge about the forestry sector, as well as government (FC), which represents a variety of political agendas (e.g., using forests for production of timber and for securing the livelihoods of forest-dependent people). This was the right mix of leadership, which advocated for a process approach rather than a rigid implementation method.

In addition, the convenors of the MSD managed to provide a platform for negotiating compromises that represents a wide variety of stakeholders (the formal industry still does not participate fully). This allows the process to deal with complex differences in norms and interests on how the domestic timber market should be regulated and how forests can be sustainably managed.

Fostering collective learning

Three of the key successes of the MSD process have been supporting the dialogue with information, ensuring that new insights are shared among all stakeholders at different levels, and driving policy change (Marfo and Parker McKeown 2013).

Both FORIG and TBI did important work. FORIG predominantly carried out research on forestry in Ghana; TBI brought in international expertise and incorporated international lessons learned in the sector.

Until I participated in the MSD meetings in Joaso I thought God would provide for trees forever, but now I have seen maps, pictures, figures and facts showing that forests disappear amongst other things because I log trees illegally and do not replant. We cannot go on like this. This illegal logging should stop.
Chainsaw operator in Obogu (February 2013)

These are examples of research informing the MSD in Ghana:

1. an analysis of the context, drivers and impacts of chainsaw milling in Ghana (Marfo 2010);
2. a comparison of the efficiency rates of various (portable) sawmill equipment (Owusu et al. 2011);
3. a livelihood survey assessing the dependency of stakeholders on chainsaw lumber production (Opoku et al. 2009);
4. a cost-benefit analysis of three policy options addressing illegal chainsaw milling and an assessment of the comparative economic, social and environmental benefits of the options (Birikorang et al. in press);
5. research on the Annual Allowable Cut (AAC), to ensure the sustainability of timber production operations (upcoming);
6. an evaluation of how the FLEGT VPA and REDD influence the regulation of the domestic market;
7. a feasibility study of the charcoal market (upcoming); and
8. an assessment of the size of the overland export market (upcoming).

Research topics are identified by the MSD participants themselves; results are shared at MSDs at various levels and their implications are discussed. At the local level, where the predominant means of communication and learning is by talking instead of by writing/reading, it has proved necessary to devote a great deal of time to the verbal dissemination of research results.

Research results are not the only input to shared learning. Having practitioners participating in meetings allows academic results to be validated and practical insights to be shared. The use of various milling machines have been tested in terms of efficiency. Forest management arrangements to ensure the production of legal timber have been piloted at the local level (forest concessionaires sell legal logs to artisanal mills run by former chainsaw millers). Plantation development has been piloted at the local level by leasing degraded forests to community associations.

The results of these initiatives are reported back to the MSD participants. Local knowledge and experience is tapped and discussed at various MSD levels to foster collective learning on how best to supply the local market with legal timber.

These efforts pay off. MSD stakeholders and their constituencies are more aware of the scope of the problem, the different perceptions and interests of the various stakeholders, the possible alternative options, and the importance – however difficult to achieve – of negotiating solutions that most parties are willing to buy into instead of prolonging conflicts that hurt all stakeholders.

The added value of the MSD is that it has been able to educate people on their dependence on the forest and the added effect. It has gotten forestry officials to rethink the status of Ghana's forest. Presentations and information given have educated members on current forestry issues

Representative of the Academia (May 2013)

Shifting power

Multiple stakeholders means multiple interests. Since forest resources are valuable for both subsistence use and commercial use it is unavoidable that some interests conflict with others. Power dynamics (money, political influence, social status, knowledge) will determine whose interests will prevail. For the MSD to work, some power has to be shifted from those who control the decision-making in the forestry sector to those who are marginalized and voiceless. The MSD facilitating agencies were successful in shifting power in three ways, which allowed the MSD to function more effectively:

1. A meeting environment initially at the district level and later at the national level promoted the participation of “illegal” forest users (the chainsaw millers). The chainsaw millers were taken seriously as stakeholders, not as offenders of the law but as rural people who had a legitimate reason to use forest resources. They are the ones who supply the booming Ghana timber market. The chainsaw operators are gradually becoming seen not as thieves but as entrepreneurs. A voice and a face have been given to a large number of forest users; this helps to counterbalance the interests of the formal industry, or, as a representative of the Academia phrased it: “people who cause problems should be part of the solution;”
2. In some districts associations of chainsaw millers were organized, with the objective to implement pilot projects (such as plantation development in Obogu); and
3. The MSD was supported by information on the scope of the problem and the key factors driving illegal chainsaw milling. This increased understanding among stakeholders of why policy frameworks to regulate the forestry sector have failed. This in turn allowed the reformist coalition to pursue the agenda that it is senseless to enforce a “wrong” law and that it is more effective to advocate for reforms that lead to more equitable access to and control over forest resources.

The current forest law only favours big milling companies, benefiting few. The MSD opens up opportunities to change the law and create markets for small and medium size mills, benefiting many. That will encourage more people to use forests wisely.
Medium-scale timber mill owner, Joaso district (February 2013)

Dealing with conflict

Conflicts between stakeholders are bound to happen in a dialogue on contentious issues. During the preparatory stage of the MSD process a number of precautionary measures were taken:

- agree on a code of conduct for MSD meetings;
- clearly state the purpose and scope of discussions to all participants and strictly adhere to this;
- ensure that facilitators are not biased;
- focus the dialogue on consensus building;
- unless agreed otherwise, form discussion groups that are heterogeneous;
- use a horseshoe-shaped or round table during group discussion; and
- record all decisions on decision sheets and disseminate these to members.

Such precautions cannot eliminate conflict. These are some of the major conflicts that surfaced in MSD meetings, and were partly — or temporarily — resolved:

1. The timber industry and TIDD were reluctant to talk with chainsaw millers, who they regarded as lawbreakers. The underlying interests of the industry clearly conflicted with those of their potential competitors. When TIDD staff started to realize that chainsaw millers understood the inefficiency of chainsaw operations and were genuinely interested in changing to artisanal milling if they could get access to legal logs, TIDD became more amenable to joining the MSD and linking its public dialogue on domestic timber market policy options to that of the MSD. The chainsaw millers and TIDD have a shared interest: producing timber for the local market. It is better to combine efforts and do so in a legal and controlled manner. The MSD made conflicting interests converge. The GTMO, however, stays somewhat apart from the process. They have a vested interest in monopolizing access to forest resources, both for the lucrative export market and — if timber is left over — the less profitable but still worthwhile domestic market.

The MSD approach is an innovative and more effective way of dealing with conflict and illegality: chainsaw operators saw themselves as illegal entities and were hiding their livelihood. The MSD has given them the confidence to talk about how they operate to help find solutions. This has helped resolve conflicts compared to the “arrest and persecute” system.
Representative of the Nkawie District Assembly (May 2013)

2. The definition of artisanal milling (small-scale timber mills) was another bone of contention. If artisanal millers are going to be recognized as

a formal part of the domestic timber market, and therefore eligible for access to legal logs and/or plantation developments, it becomes very important to know who can become an artisanal miller. Chainsaw millers are starting to realize that getting illegal timber to the market is becoming more expensive (in terms of the higher risk of being caught and paying fines or bribes to forestry officials, police and politicians) than the fees and taxes associated with legal timber. It also had to be determined if artisanal milling would include chainsaw milling, without or with attachments, or only heavier and more expensive machinery such as mobile band saws and circular saws, such as Woodmizers. The use of freehand chainsaw milling would allow small-scale industries to develop with little investment; the latter requires major investment. The definition was fiercely discussed for years, but consensus was finally reached at MSD 9, November 2012 (see Box 4 for the definition of artisanal milling).

3. Chainsaws for commercial milling purposes continue to be banned, mainly because their use cannot be controlled. It is assumed that representatives of the chainsaw millers accepted the definition of artisanal milling because of the expected access to legal logs, higher efficiency rates, higher prices and lower costs, which means that the millers are willing to make considerable investments. The question remains: what will all those prospective artisanal millers do if they have no access to legal logs. This risk is considered very high in the light of forest resources being harvested beyond sustainable levels. This situation will test the MSD in terms of its capability to live up to stakeholders' expectations. It further poses a challenge to the MSD to identify alternative income opportunities for those who do not have access to legal logs, a challenge that is currently far from being met.
4. The MSD proved to be an effective platform for brokering joint ventures between logging concession holders and artisanal millers. Instead of selling logs to the formal industry's mills — and having their harvesting areas being invaded by illegal chainsaw gangs — some logging companies now sell legal logs and off-cuts to nearby artisanal mills on the condition that their concessions are protected by surrounding communities from intrusion. A pilot scheme started in Obogu in Joaso district and one is planned for Sankore in Goaso district.

The MSD has not just been complaining about the problem but also contributing towards finding lasting solutions.
Representative of the Ghana Forestry Commission (May 2013)

Enabling effective communication

Communication among participants during MSD meetings at the district and national level is secured by well-facilitated meetings, group discussions and presentations, and is recorded in minutes and reports accessible in paper form

and on the project website. Communication beyond these meetings is more difficult but equally important:

1. National and district representatives are expected to provide feedback to their constituencies, although it is very difficult to measure the effectiveness of this endeavour; and
2. MSD facilitating staff such as the CFWs organize meetings in selected communities in the ten pilot districts to engage stakeholder groups in preparing for and getting feedback on MSD meetings. Beyond the pilot districts other communication methods are needed, preferably in a non-written form, such as radio transmissions, television documentaries and educational videos, as well as leaflets and posters available at meeting places such as hospitals, chiefs' palaces, District Assembly offices, etc.

Communication among the technical folks on the platform has been done well but is lacking among those outside the platform.

Representative of civil society organizations (May 2013)

Promoting collaborative leadership

Bringing together the necessary stakeholders, providing fair and equitable conditions for discussions and manoeuvring through competing interests and emerging conflicts towards consensus requires leadership that is inspirational and collaborative. Some of this leadership emerged among the MSD facilitating agencies.

TBI Ghana was an important driver of the MSD process, defining issues and providing resources for multiple-stakeholder debate (Marfo and Parker McKeown 2013). Staff members within the Forestry Commission at both the district and national level, - with the commission split in factions belonging to the conservative coalition and the reform coalition - took a risk and advocated for reform. A collaborative approach to forestry was more in line with their model of resource management and development. Engaging the Forestry Commission in the design and management of the project was not without risk due to its mandate to uphold the law and its allowing the law to be flouted for more than a decade. In fact, some stakeholders regarded this as a major cause of the problem.

I see the MSD as a big family with common concerns and common interests. Sometimes there is an argument but what binds us together (to sustain the forest) prevents us from falling apart.

Chainsaw operator in Obogu (February 2013)

With hindsight, it is apparent that including the FC in project management and MSD design and management allowed the reformers in the Commission to overcome political interference and convince people that simply enforcing highly disputed legislation was not effective in sustaining the country's forest resources. The reformist leaders, who were especially vocal in the Steering Committee of the

MSD, seem to have grown in numbers with the inclusion of TIDD, the acceptance of the new definition of artisanal milling and integration of this definition in the formal timber production and trade sector (Marfo and Parker McKeown 2013).

At the district level inspirational leadership has developed during the process of forming producer associations, as individuals have been trained in the intricacies of representing and being accountable to their constituencies on a continuous basis. The perceived quality of district-level MSDs bears testimony to this.

This growing alliance of champions of collaborative change offers the ongoing MSD process the opportunity to have its principles of informed, learning-oriented and inclusive debate firmly institutionalized in the forestry sector as the “normal” way of reducing conflict and illegality related to chainsaw milling.

Reinventing institutions

Institutions are defined here as sets of rules and norms - either formal or informal - that determine behaviour: the way people do things, from greeting someone in the morning or paying respect to traditional leaders to paying a bribe to a policeman to avoid being fined. Some institutions encourage change and some block it. For things to change - in this case, conflict and illegality in the domestic timber market supply - the MSD process must look critically at the institutions that affect this situation and find ways to change those institutions that block progress. The establishment and gradual development of the MSD shows a shared commitment to reinventing the way that policy is made in the forest sector. Instead of waiting for central government to define the problem, develop policy to resolve it and inform the stakeholders - conventional command-and-control thinking - the multiple stakeholders take it on themselves to initiate the policy development process, and to inform other stakeholders, including central government. Instead of allowing the governing elite in the sector (the industry, politicians, part of the FC) to set policy objectives, the practitioners in the MSD process set their own objectives, thereby seriously questioning the legitimacy of conventional rules and rulers. In the MSD the discussion of forest policy is moving away from power and experts to all shareholders having discussions at the same table.

The MSD as built on these principles shows institutional change in the way that policy is developed in the Ghana forest sector. This has the immediate effect of less conflict among stakeholders and potentially (the policy is not yet implemented) less illegality in the domestic timber supply.

It cannot yet be determined if illegal forest use is declining (apart from where illegal use has decreased due to less availability of forest). There are other causes of illegal forest use in Ghana: corruption, political interference (Marfo 2010), and disrespect for the law. Freely exploiting common or state property such as forests is more the norm than the exception in the country. As long as these

practices prevail in the forestry sector it will be very difficult to implement the recently accepted domestic timber market policy, or any policy for that matter. It is the stakeholders themselves in the MSD at all levels that will have to recognize the institutions that block change, and change them in policy and especially in practice.

3.7 Conclusions: successes and challenges

Five years of the MSD in Ghana have been effective in reducing conflict in the domestic market timber supply. The supporting project framework managed to put in place an increasingly self-regulating multiple stakeholder process. Over the years the dialogue process was supported by necessary and valuable research data and by practitioners' knowledge to inform the debate and raise awareness among stakeholders on the scope and complexity of the problem and on possible solutions.

The MSD managed to shift some power from government and the industry to local and district users. This more equitable context has allowed MSD stakeholders to gain legitimacy and trust to manage emerging conflicts in the sector as a collaborative group. The effectiveness of the MSD in the domestic timber market and related policy development in Ghana shows a shift from the more conventional command-and-control model to a more collaborative approach. The extent to which the MSD will be successful in weeding out illegal



logging cannot yet be determined, since widespread corruption and disrespect for the law still prevail in the sector.

Establishing the MSD, or another process based on its underlying principles, as an inclusive forest governance mechanism firmly embedded in the sector is likely but not guaranteed. Positive influences include the increasing number of champions of more participatory decision-making in the sector and in government. In addition, the MSD has succeeded in reducing conflict and in establishing more inclusive policy development processes. The resources required from stakeholders to allow the MSD to function beyond the lifespan of the project are not yet forthcoming, however; this increases the risk of donor dependency and opportunism.

Substantial resources are required to pay for an effective MSD. Being all-inclusive and linking national, district and local level stakeholders (including preparatory and feedback meetings), and informing those meetings with researched information comes at a cost that ultimately will have to be borne by the sector itself. In fact, the costs will increase as non-pilot forest districts are included in the MSD and communication efforts at the local community level are stepped up.

An important asset of the MSD design and implementation process is the close involvement of the Forestry Commission. This gives the reformist faction in the FC the opportunity to use the MSD to drive institutional change towards more collaborative and inclusive policy-making and forest management. With international donors withdrawing from Ghana as the country loses its LDC status, it will greatly depend on the success of these institutional changes in the FC if an MSD can survive beyond the current project lifespan.

4. The MSD as a policy development process



4.1 Multi-stakeholder policy development processes

Policy development through the MSD in sectors such as forestry is increasingly seen as an open-ended attempt to change resource management and a process that emerges as a consequence of bargaining rather than as a form of top-down planning (FAO 2010). It is therefore seen as not being linear, where the problem and solution are identified (possibly by science), the solution is translated into policy, and the problem is solved. In domains such as forestry, where contested values of resource use and competing interests of multiple stakeholders prevail, it is very unlikely that there will be a shared interpretation of the problem, let

alone a consensus opinion on the solution. Policy development processes are characterized by fuzziness and conflict.

Ideally, lessons learned during implementation (or pilot projects) inform further policy design. However, the moment a policy is enacted, the chances are great that different stakeholders will interpret its objectives in different ways, especially when words such as “sustainable,” “equitable” and “development” feature prominently. To deal with these contested interpretations it is important to continue with a policy dialogue when concrete details need discussion, negotiation and adoption, and to not leave this work to technocrats and civil servants.

Balancing conflicting interests is a political rather than a technical matter. It has proved difficult to implement policies if the people affected by the decisions were excluded when the policy was negotiated. An inclusive policy process allows stakeholders to understand each other’s point of view and reach some form of consensus, compromise or agreement to disagree. Whatever the outcome, an MSP “serves as a mechanism for constructive confrontation, a release valve for grievances and a communication platform to deal with and avoid misunderstandings that can lead to conflict” (FAO 2010: 17).

The MSD is to serve as a peoples’ assembly.
Representative of the Ghana Forestry Commission (May 2013)

Multi-stakeholder policy development processes align with the principles of “good” forest governance, where responsibility for effective forest management is shared among stakeholders and government takes a more facilitating and coordinating role, with an emphasis on collaboration rather than conventional command and control.

Policy development rarely starts from scratch. It usually occurs when something is wrong somewhere and the business-as-usual response is not effective in achieving management objectives. To better understand how policy changes emerge it is useful to see the forest policy process as a cycle (Figure 3) and agree that the process can be initiated anywhere in the cycle.

4.2 The MSD role in analyzing illegal chainsaw milling practice in Ghana

The launch of the project and the establishment of the MSD was not the first attempt⁶ to analyze the failure to enforce the 1998 chainsaw ban and consequent

6 In November 2003 TBI organized a focus group discussion titled “Chainsaw lumber production: a necessary evil?” (Tropenbos International 2004). In 2005, the FAO commissioned the study “Chainsawing in the natural forests of Ghana: an assessment of the socio-economic impacts of this practice” (Odoom 2005). DFID financed a research programme on chainsaw milling and lumber trade in West-Africa, including Ghana (2005/2006).

deforestation. The MSD was very effective in bringing the relevant information to the negotiation table to inform policy discussions at the right time, in the right place:

1. The MSD stakeholders commissioned a study to better understand the underlying drivers of chainsaw milling (Marfo 2010). Appreciating the reasons that chainsaw milling persists made the sector aware that simply enforcing an “unenforceable” policy was not an option;
2. The MSD Steering Committee, on behalf of the MSD, engages researchers and consultants to feed the dialogue with research data (e.g., testing the efficiency rates of various types of portable sawmill equipment, livelihood survey reports, cost-benefit analysis of policy options, etc.). It is the MSD — through or supported by the technical subcommittee — that identifies the research questions, debates the findings and internalizes the recommendations during policy discussions. Ensuring that stakeholders have ownership of the analysis phase generates the will to deal collectively with the problem.
3. The MSD’s emphasis on multi-stakeholder engagement increases the understanding of the impact of the problem across sectors and from local to global levels. Analysis and discussion of findings at all levels, especially the local level, has had a considerable impact on people’s understanding of forest management problems. Increased awareness is the first step toward finding inclusive solutions. Awareness of the problems of other stakeholders makes people recognize the legitimacy of their participation in negotiation processes.

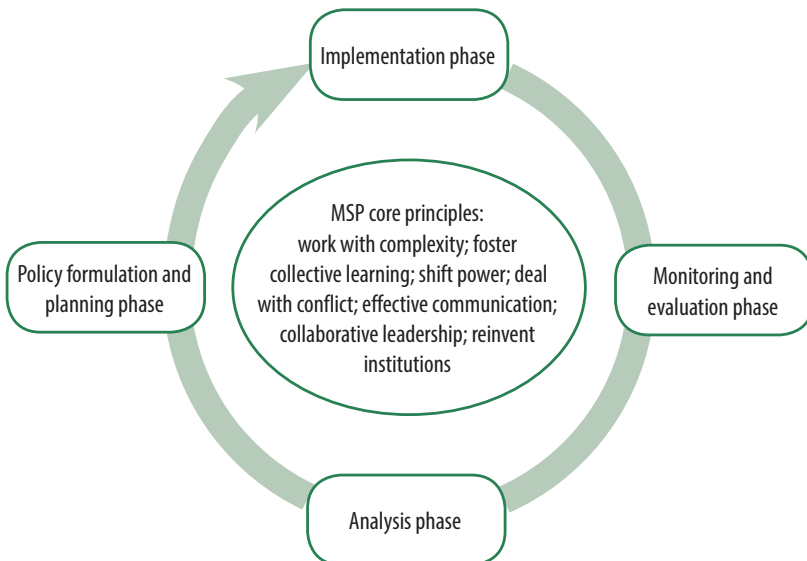


Figure 3. Phases of a forest policy development process. Source: adapted from FAO 2010

4.3 The MSD role in policy formulation and planning

The analysis of the chainsaw milling problem and the recognition that the policy was “unenforceable” allowed the MSD to present an alternative policy. There are several reasons why the MSD has legitimacy in the policy process and in suggesting alternatives:

- Most stakeholders (except some members of the formal timber industry) are represented, including very important groups such as government (most notably the Forestry Commission), and forest research organizations such as FORIG and TBI Ghana Office, which facilitate the policy development process;
- The dialogue incorporates local, district and national levels. Increasingly in Ghana, policy development processes must be accompanied by local consultation; and
- The overall project funding comes from the EU, which is simultaneously negotiating with the Government of Ghana over ensuring legal timber trade and supporting good forest governance, which makes the alternatives politically acceptable.

The MSD has made a substantial contribution to policy formulation so far. In 2009 three policy options for supplying the domestic market with legal timber were elaborated, researched and discussed (Table 1). The selected option, which includes artisanal millers in supplying the market, is a victory for those stakeholders in the forest sector who seek reform.

The preferred option was worked out in a policy proposal in 2011 and discussed at the district and national level. The policy aims to provide a framework that promotes trade in legal and sustainably produced timber on the domestic market.

The policy includes five key strategies to achieve its objectives:

- I. create enabling conditions to meet the demand for timber for the domestic market from legal sources;
- II. eliminate illegal timber production and trade;
- III. promote good governance in the supply of timber for the domestic market;
- IV. promote industry modernization and retooling; and
- V. promote community-based enterprises as alternative livelihoods for forest-adjacent communities.

Part of the purpose of the discussion was to get an agreement on the definition of artisanal milling and on whether to include a form of chainsaw milling (this would tend to include small operators in the sector). The final agreement excludes any form of chainsaw milling (see for the definition Box 4).

The usual reason given for the MSD agreeing to exclude chainsaw milling - seemingly against the interests of a sizeable number of the stakeholders - is that if chainsaw milling with or without attachments was legalized, the barrier to the practice would be too low and more people would acquire such equipment. However, it is clear to everybody that not all chainsaw millers can maintain their business because of the dwindling forest resources. Taking into account the sustainability of forest resources and the need to regulate the domestic timber supply, it would be better if approximately 80% of chainsaw millers stopped operating (Birikorang et al. in press).

The chainsaw millers who largely depend on the practice for their livelihoods understand the need to protect and rebuild the resource; millers who have other income sources do not see that and will continue until the resource is depleted. Hence, there should be a barrier to entering the business. If only those who invest in relatively costly mobile - although very heavy - equipment, such as band saws and circular saws, are allowed to operate, they can more easily be monitored to check overexploitation. The agreement over the definition of artisanal milling is a victory of informed democratic decision-making, but it remains to be seen whether all the chainsaw millers will accept it.

The MSD advocated for a Public Procurement Policy as a mechanism for government to ensure that only legally produced timber is used in government contracts.

The MSD supported the Forestry Commission's proposal to establish and operate an armed response unit to combat illegal logging. This showed that even the illegally operating loggers around the table recognized that there ought to be a limit to illegality.

The multiple stakeholders convened in the MSD have taken their new policy formulation role seriously. They understand that the current policy environment harms most stakeholders, and that almost any alternative is an improvement. Forest resources are depleting rapidly and the costs of illegal lumber are increasing, not only due to scarcity but because of increasing law enforcement.

The MSD came at an opportune moment and holds a promise for stakeholders to take control over forest management in Ghana. Implementation of the new policy directions will show if expectations can be met, especially when it becomes clear that existing land and tree tenure arrangements mean that there are just not enough forest resources left to satisfy everybody's aspirations, and that those who lose access will find it very difficult to secure equally valuable alternative income opportunities.

4.4 The role of the MSD in policy implementation

The MSD piloted a number of policy measures to address some of the identified drivers of illegal chainsaw milling. This offered the opportunity to link policy to practice in a controlled manner, and to build on the active engagement of stakeholders to deal with the problem in new ways:

1. Plantation development in pilot communities – the Forestry Commission agreed to lease sections of degraded forest for plantation development⁷ to artisanal milling associations at the community level. This recognizes and provides some tenure security to small-scale loggers to grow their own timber supply.
2. The Forestry Commission offices in some forest districts brokered agreements between private concession holders and groups of artisanal millers: the loggers supply the milling association with logs (at market price) in return for protecting the concession against intruders. This gives the loggers an opportunity to build community relations without extra costs. It also allows groups of artisanal millers to get access to legal timber and sell legal lumber to the market. The FC is also supporting some associations to purchase small timber mills.
3. Stakeholders generally realize that dwindling forest resources and adherence to sustainable harvest levels means that most of the 97,000 illegal chainsaw operators cannot be accommodated in legal (and viable) artisanal milling associations. Where will that substantial number of people turn to for an income? Alternative income opportunities are not easy to find in the rural areas in Ghana. A recent livelihood survey (Opoku et al. 2009) showed that agriculture offers income opportunities that can be tested on a pilot basis.

To be proactively involved in the implementation of the new domestic timber market policy — through designing and testing pilots — it is key for the MSD to remain a legitimate entity in the forestry sector and to represent the interests of its constituencies. Only during implementation will the costs and benefits of the new policy direction become clear. Proactive involvement would allow the MSD to monitor who gains and who loses; to inform the debate on what is sustainable forest management, equitable development, reasonable alternative income opportunity, or acceptable loss; and to take the lead in adapting policy and strategies accordingly.

⁷ The applied forest tenure arrangement is called the Modified Taungya System (MTS). The lessee is allowed to plant trees and use the forest for agricultural production until the tree canopy is closed and agriculture becomes difficult. The costs to the farmer of managing the growing trees are repaid by a percentage of the benefits when trees are harvested.

4.5 The MSD role in policy monitoring and evaluation

The implementation of policies and related strategic frameworks needs to be monitored. The MSD is well-placed to carry out that work, not only to measure the effectiveness of policy instruments, but to continue the dialogue on how best to regulate the domestic timber market in the interests of all stakeholders. This monitoring and evaluation is too important to be left to government. The good governance of forests in Ghana is the responsibility of all stakeholders.

4.6 Conclusions

The MSD related to chainsaw milling in Ghana is a forest policy development mechanism that has so far proved to be effective. The mechanism embraces multiple stakeholder engagement at all levels, as well as collective learning, collaborative leadership, transparency and skills in dealing with power dynamics. These principles are important to securing inclusiveness, ownership of the results and willingness to accept enforcement. The MSD facilitation allowed the stakeholders to analyze the context, drivers and impact of chainsaw milling in Ghana; to formulate alternative policy responses; to test an initial set of new policy instruments; and to lay the groundwork for further monitoring and for adapting policy and related strategic frameworks.

Policy development is an ongoing process and different interpretations of the “right” implementation of the policy are bound to result in future clashes among stakeholders. Therefore it is important to consolidate the MSD or a similar mechanism to maintain a policy dialogue and allow policy to adapt to changing circumstances.

An MSD is needed in solving complex issues concerning people with diverse interest. This means an MSD will always be needed.
Representative of the Ghana Forestry Commission (May 2013)

5. Future efforts



The MSD was established in 2009; its design and implementation had been supported by the EU project since 2008. The initial five-year project support was extended with a second phase, which ends in 2015. Sustaining the MSD in the forest sector of Ghana beyond 2015 is important for two reasons: robust policy development benefits from multiple-stakeholder engagement, as MSD experience has shown; and policies need to continuously adapt to the changing context and aspirations of society, which means there is a need for all-inclusive platforms to continue to monitor, analyze, reformulate and implement.

To sustain the MSD or a similar platform in the Ghana forestry sector six conditions are critically important:

1. *Government, most notably the Forestry Commission, supports the process* – The MSD experience clearly showed the awkward position of government, which was caught between the mandate to enforce the law and the actions of society to disobey it. Corruption prevailed for a long time. Although corruption persists in Ghana the MSD allowed the reformist coalition within government to respond to the failing policy by actually addressing it. For the MSD to continue, the reformist coalition within government needs political support, formal recognition in policy and strategy frameworks, and financial contributions.
2. *The industry is on board* – In spite of sector-wide engagement and impact, the MSD is still driven by donors and civil society. The main industry stakeholders — such as the GTMO and to a lesser extent the GTA⁸ — are not fully participating, and their active engagement is necessary for the sustainable management of Ghana's forests. In order to maintain a nationwide dialogue to conserve the forests of Ghana the entire sector needs to participate and share the costs. The successful effort of MSD facilitators to link with TIDD (the FC division closely aligned with the timber industry interests) is an important first step.
3. *Civil society organizations are less dependent on foreign donor funds* – The whole spectrum of civil society organizations in Ghana, from advocacy and lobbying groups to research and development organizations, depends largely on foreign donor funds. Given the clear trend of reduced international aid for Ghana, these NGOs will have to change their business model. Organizations that can play a more “neutral” role in forest governance processes will have to become more proactive in obtaining funds from industry and government.
4. *Grass roots are organized and represented in accountable organizations.* Chainsaw millers, now known as artisanal millers, will benefit most from forming a national association to represent their interests and establishing a channel of communication to their constituents. The organization of the domestic lumber traders (DOLTA) proved very effective. A national artisanal millers association may be equally effective in influencing policy development and implementation. As one of the interviewed chainsaw operators remarked: “chainsaw operators can secure the future of the MSD by forming a formidable association and actively participating in the MSD.”
5. *Alignment of similar initiatives in the forestry sector* - Decreased funding calls for efficiency. Currently, many initiatives similar to the MSD are active in the forestry sector in Ghana. They deal with different aspects of forestry, are part of different donor programmes, and are carried out by different forest-related departments, research institutes and NGOs. More often than not, however, they have forest perspectives in common: forest stakeholder

8 Since 2011, GTA has fully participated in the MSD.

participation or consultation, evaluation of forest management options, forest policy review and formulation, and capacity building for forest stakeholders. There is much to gain from streamlining and coordination.

6. *Root causes of illegal logging are addressed* – Of the four drivers of chainsaw milling mentioned by Marfo (2010), many of the problems in the Ghana forestry sector can be traced to one: land and tree tenure and inequitable benefit sharing. This issue will dominate the forest governance agenda for decades to come. The MSD must address it and must make itself the main conduit for a national debate on land and forest law reform.

It should be noted that sustaining the MSD or similar forest forum - in the form of an organization that is recognized by policy and financed by the sector - does not automatically mean that a multiple stakeholder process towards good forest governance and effective forest policies will be institutionalized.

For the MSD practice to become commonplace more than an organization, structure or budget line is needed. Institutionalization of the MSD means internalizing a set of core principles. It means that it becomes the usual practice in the forestry sector to work with complexity and not with blueprints, top-down directives and linear approaches. It must become the norm to foster collective learning environments instead of demanding undisputed expert truths. Power dynamics need to be made explicit, and power needs to become more inclusive to ensure that parties around the table can negotiate on an equal footing.

Conflicts are an inevitable part of negotiation, but as long as sufficient time is spent analyzing these conflicts there is a possibility that they can be transformed into positive change. Ignoring conflict is not a wise option.

Good communication is important, as are forms of leadership that embrace collaboration. Adhering to these principles is key for the kind of dialogue and policy making that stakeholders wished to see in the MSD over the last few years. They are more important to good forest governance than structure or budget.

If the facilitators of the MSD want to institutionalize the dialogue mechanism it is important to continually make the core principles explicit and to find a way to monitor the effect of applying them to forest policy enforcement and forest management alternatives.

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Drawing lessons from five years multi-stakeholder dialogue process to find alternatives for illegal chainsaw milling practices in Ghana

Deforestation is a serious problem in Ghana. Illegal logging by chainsaw millers who supply the domestic market is a key factor in this deforestation. Illegal logging has many causes and is further complicated by the different perceptions among a great range of stakeholders on how to resolve it. To effectively address the issues, stakeholders need to be involved and must feel that they own the solutions.

The Chainsaw Milling Project, funded by the EU, aims to reduce the level of conflict and illegality related to chainsaw milling. It does this through a Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue (MSD), which increases the understanding of the causes of these problems and develops options to address them. This paper documents the MSD both as a multi-stakeholder process and a policy development process.

Applying the principles of a multi-stakeholder process in the MSD design and facilitation has led to a significant reduction in conflict in the domestic timber market. The MSD has been pivotal in allowing stakeholders to review and renew relevant policies. This paper documents the various stages of policy development: analyzing policies and chainsaw milling practices; formulating policy; using MSD platforms at various levels for intensive consultation; implementing policy by piloting new forms of forest management, business practices and alternative rural development options; and monitoring and evaluating policy initiatives.

It is important to institutionalize multi-stakeholder process principles in Ghana forest policy development since the policy context is continually changing. The Chainsaw Milling Project — and more specifically the MSD Steering Committee — are working to establish the conditions for sustaining a multi-stakeholder process approach to policy-making rather than leaving that work solely to government.

By making knowledge work for forests and people, Tropenbos International contributes to well-informed decision making for improved management and governance of tropical forests. Our longstanding local presence and ability to bring together local, national and international partners make us a trusted partner in sustainable development.



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