

Programme Evaluation Series

Evaluation of the FAO-EU forest law enforcement, governance and trade programme – Phase III

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Annex 4. Côte d'Ivoire case study

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Abbreviations and acronyms

AVSI	<i>Association des Volontaires pour le Service International</i>
CIFOR	Center for International Forestry Research
EFI	European Forest Institute
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FLEGT	Forest Law Enforcement Governance and Trade
FODER	<i>Forêts et Développement Rural</i>
IDEF	<i>Initiatives pour le Développement communautaire et la conservation de la Forêt</i>
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OI-REN	<i>Observatoire Ivoirien pour la Gestion Durable des Ressources Naturelles</i>
REDD+	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation
VPA	Voluntary Partnership Agreement
WCF	Wild Chimpanzee Foundation

1. Introduction

1.1 Background and methodology

1. Background. This document presents the country case study on Côte d'Ivoire, as part of the Final Evaluation of the third phase of the FAO-EU programme "Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade", hereafter referred to as FLEGT-III, phase three or the programme. The programme is financed by the European Commission (EC), Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO)¹ of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA). The programme is implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). The evaluation looked at the programme in its whole but has used case studies to have a closer look at six countries in particular to assess the evaluation questions at country level. Côte d'Ivoire is one of these.
2. Methodology. The selection of countries case studies was based on the following criteria:
 - i. importance, age and size of the FLEGT portfolio in the country;
 - ii. balance between Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) and non-VPA countries;
 - iii. geographical balance across and within the regions;
 - iv. information-rich cases to illustrate both good practices and challenges we can learn from (partners/stakeholders; technical areas; gender, small and medium-sized enterprises [SMEs], etc.);
 - v. availability of previous assessments for comparison (either provided by the mid-term evaluation or case studies from the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR)/Analysis for Economic Decisions [ADE]);
 - vi. inclusion of countries that were not yet assessed;
 - vii. good country-level support & coordination to set up interviews; and
 - viii. probability of significant development after the mid-term evaluation.
3. Côte d'Ivoire was selected on the following criteria: Representative portfolio with the mixture of stakeholders and technical areas addressed; West Africa and still negotiating VPA; important country since phase III; good mix portfolio and examples on gender; studied less by others.
4. The evaluation has adopted a participatory, consultative approach with internal and external stakeholders throughout the evaluation process. The evaluation has sought to include marginalized voices and include a gender approach, thereby noting the differentiated impacts of the programme on men and women.
5. The evaluation was based on review of documentation,² stakeholder interviews and review of qualitative and quantitative evidence (data, publications, progress reports) to gather information. This information is as much as possible validated and triangulated by a combination of information sources. Based on this, findings were elaborated. The evaluation

¹ Previously (until September 2020) called Department for International Development.

² See bibliography at the end of the document.

report presents the findings according to the six main evaluation questions included in the evaluation matrix (appendix 3 in the overall evaluation report). In the section on outcomes, it focussed on outcome 1, 3, 4 and 6. Outcome 2 targeted only non-VPA countries and outcome 5 targeted overall programme impact; therefore, these outcomes were not analysed in this case-study.

6. The case-study is not an evaluation of the FAO-EU FLEGT programme in Côte d'Ivoire, but supports the overall evaluation. Therefore, the findings of the case study supported the findings in the overall report and no conclusions or recommendations were elaborated for the country.
7. At the core of the evaluation work was a series of bilateral and group interviews with the different stakeholders, following a list prepared by the FAO management team,³ that was validated and complimented by the evaluator. Interviews did not follow a one-way question-answer pattern, but were carried out in such a way that the interviewees were free to provide any information they wanted about the programme and deemed important to be included in the report. A summary of the representation of persons consulted can be found below:

Stakeholder group	Number of persons
Government officers	1
Civil society organizations/community organizations	3
Private sector/ private sector associations	3
Bilateral/multilateral agencies	8
Total	15

1.2 Limitations

8. There was no time for the evaluation team to review all available documentation, assess all country projects in depth or contact every stakeholder (direct or indirect) of the programme. Therefore, careful sampling of documentation, data and stakeholders has been done in cooperation with the FAO programme management team.
9. There were international travel restrictions related to the global COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, in-country missions by the evaluation team were impossible and all preparations, interviews, triangulation have been done by teleconferencing means. This resulted in less opportunity for important additional communication with key stakeholders such direct interaction, informal conversations, field and facilities observation and immediate follow up. Since the evaluation relied on teleconferencing means, less people in total were interviewed, particularly local stakeholders at community level that have no or little access to telecommunication tools.
10. In total 21 people were contacted for interviews, but only 15 replied. When the quality of communication via teleconferencing means was poor, the evaluator found other solutions to communicate. As the evaluator could discuss with at least one representative of each category of actors, it didn't influence negatively the quality of information collected.

³ See list of people contacted and interviewed in Appendix 1.

2. Background

2.1 Context of the programme

13. This section contains information from various sources: EU FLEGT Facility website, 2017; LOGGINOFF, website. UK Department for International Development (DFID) and the European Union, 2021; FAO–EU FLEGT Programme website, 2021; From ACP-FLEGT to EU FAO FLEGT: scaling up efforts to improve and interviews with partners and beneficiaries (PDF).
14. The FAO-EU FLEGT programme in Côte d'Ivoire. Côte d'Ivoire and the European Union began negotiating the VPA in February 2013. The agreement should have been signed in 2017, but it was delayed because reforms of the legal framework were needed first. As the VPA negotiation process essentially concerns legal and regulatory provisions, these preliminary steps were necessary in order to move forward. This explains the temporary interruption of the formal negotiation process during this period.
15. In 2014 Côte d'Ivoire initiated the reform of its legal framework and a new forestry code was adopted (Ministère des Eaux et Forêts Côte d'Ivoire, 2021. Le nouveau code forestier ivoirien. Loi N°2014- 427 du 14 juillet 2014). This was followed by the elaboration of implementing legislation (ongoing until 2016). The authorities then found it necessary to hold a forum of general states of the forest, wildlife and water resources to take stock of the management of these three sectors of activity and to see what new course should be taken, particularly to guide forest management.
16. In 2018 the process was completed and resulted in a new forest policy for the preservation and rehabilitation of forests. In 2019, a ten-year national strategy (estimated funding of CFA 616 billion) for implementing this policy was proposed and a new forestry code was promulgated (Ministère des Eaux et Forêts Côte d'Ivoire, 2021. Stratégie nationale de préservation, de réhabilitation et d'extension des forêts). The implementation texts (around 30 texts, 17 of which have already been signed: 12 decrees and five orders) are currently being adopted.
17. VPA negotiations resumed with a joint review for the period 2018–2019. It was sanctioned by the proposal of a roadmap 2020–2022 which has been drawn up between the Government of Côte d'Ivoire and the European Union, establishing a deadline for signing a FLEGT VPA in 2022. Members of the Technical Negotiating Committee (CTN; the negotiating body) participated in its creation, including civil society, traditional chieftains and the private sector; a final version should be officially adopted in December 2019. The negotiations involved representatives of Ivoirian civil society organisations, the private sector, Government ministries and agencies, and traditional chiefs. Through wide participation, the process aimed to foster significant national ownership, stakeholder engagement and a broad consensus that would promote effective VPA implementation.
18. A 10 December 2019 presentation by the Ministry of Water and Forests (*Ministère des Eaux et Forêts*) identified as “acquired” important aspects of the VPA, such as improved stakeholder engagement and clarity of the law through participative legal reform; improved transparency through online procedures and information about the timber sector, and through Independent Observers; proposed reforms to the public procurement

of legal timber; and the proposal of a national traceability system. The definition of legality is now underway, as is the legality assurance system (LAS).

19. Projects funded by FLEGT-III. According to the information found in the annual report 2020 Phase III FAO-EU FLEGT programme and on the FAO-EU FLEGT Programme web site, 2021, 17 projects were funded during Phase III of the programme for a total amount of USD 1 527 696 requested.
20. Analysis of Table 1 below shows that service providers related to civil society organisations benefited from five projects with the highest budget (39 percent of the total budget). Service providers related to private sector benefited from six projects with 37.5 percent of the budget.

Table 1. Repartition of projects and budgets between the different categories of actors

	SP → CSO	SP → PS	GOV	GRP	TOTAL
Ministry of Water and Forests			5		5
Association des Volontaires pour le Service International (AVSI)		3			3
Wild Chimpanzee Foundation (WCF)	2				2
Syndicat des Producteurs Industriels du Bois (SPIB)		2			2
Initiatives pour le Développement communautaire et la conservation de la Forêt (IDEF)	2				2
MALEBI		1			1
Observatoire Ivoirien pour la Gestion Durable des Ressources Naturelles (OI-REN)	1				1
Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR)				1	1
TOTAL	5	6	5	1	17
Budgets	624 054	600 132	316 975	53 590	1 594 752
%	39%	37.5%	20%	3.5%	100%

Notes: SP: service provider; CSO: civil society organization; PS: private sector; GRP: global and regional partner; GOV: government.

Source: 2020 annual report.

21. If we look at the themes of the projects through the keywords found in the titles of projects or in the specific objectives (Table 2), we see that legality comes first with nine occurrences, followed closely by domestic market (eight) and VPA. The terms FLEGT and legality are very closely associated as the aim of the FLEGT Action Plan is to improve governance and reduce illegal logging by strengthening legal forest management, improving governance and promoting trade in legal timber. The measures in the Action Plan are designed to increase both the demand for and supply of legal timber. The priority given to the domestic timber market is not a surprise either, since in Côte d'Ivoire, as in some other countries (Congo, Cameroon), this market has been integrated into the VPA, along with the export market.

Table 2. Repartition by key word

Themes	Number
Legality	9
Domestic timber market	8
VPA	6
Independent Observation	5
Governance	3
Traceability	3
Community forestry, Local population	1
Transparency	1

Source: Analysis by evaluation team.

22. Independent observation (five) and governance (three) go together. Independent observation aims to improve forest governance through the implementation of an independent monitoring mechanism to strengthen law enforcement and transparency in forests. Two projects with the *Initiatives pour le Développement communautaire et la conservation de la Forêt* (IDEF) focused on logging areas, one project with the *Observatoire Ivoirien pour la Gestion Durable des Ressources Naturelles* (OI-REN),⁴ and two projects with the Wild Chimpanzee Foundation (WCF) on targeted Forêts Classées.

2.2 Theory of change

23. No theory of change (TOC) has been designed for Côte d'Ivoire.

⁴ The law on the practice of independent observation was instituted on 23 July 2019. It aims to identify all issues related to deforestation so that the government addresses this issue in order to protect and restore the Ivorian forest cover

3. Evaluation questions

3.1 Relevance

Evaluation Question 1: To what extent has the programme design (and particularly, its revisions at mid-term) remained appropriate vis-à-vis its expected objectives and outcomes?

Finding 1. Much had been initiated in the previous phases and at the beginning of Phase III there was a context of overall reform of the forest sector in Côte d'Ivoire. There was a need to accompany the country in its efforts to adapt the national regulation of the sector and to align with the requirements of the European market. The evaluation found that it was relevant for the FAO-EU FLEGT programme to accompany the forestry reform and the adoption in 2019 of a new forestry code, foreseen by the new strategy, as this a prerequisite for continuing the VPA negotiation process.

24. Most of the information from this section has been obtained through interviews with people working in the Ministry of Water and Forests, partners and civil society beneficiaries. It was completed by documentation collected on projects funded by the programme.
25. Phase III is part of the logic of continuity to support the implementation of the roadmap adopted following the joint review of May 2018. The priorities were already identified in the VPA, namely: transparency of the forestry sector, stakeholder participation, tools to be put in place (legality grids, including the legality verification system and the traceability system, etc.), and the development of a national strategy for the forestry sector. During the joint review, additional issues were included: further processing of timber, integration of gender into the issue, and consideration of the national market.
26. Many of the studies carried out in advance with the support of the FAO programme (Phase II) concerned the national market. It was thus possible for FAO to generate the first data to understand the problems, to know the stakes and the desired level of intervention, the actors in the sector, the interactions between the formal and informal actors and, finally, to know which reforms would be best adapted to the situation of the national market. It should be recalled that the FLEGT VPA covers both the export market and the domestic timber market.
27. A good example that shows the logic of continuity of the FAO programme's intervention during phase III is the project led by the Ministry of Water and Forests on the implementation of a wood traceability system. It is a logical continuation of the first actions and initiatives supported by the programme; it started with the identification of needs in terms of legality and traceability, then there were projects to develop guides to chains of custody and today it is in the process of developing a system for verifying legality with the VPA, which itself includes a timber traceability system.
28. A good sign that the issue of forests has regained importance in Côte d'Ivoire, is showed by the fact that the Minister of Water and Forests has today a higher protocol rank in the hierarchy of Ministries (he has gone from protocol rank of 23 to 5). This changes a lot about how this Ministry can influence decisions. The current Minister quickly recognised the competence of the FLEGT Focal Point and his team, supported by the *Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit* (GIZ), within the FLEGT Permanent Technical Secretariat (PTS), and made him responsible for all aspects of forest governance.

29. In addition to the Ministry's part-time staff at the Forestry Department, Côte d'Ivoire has set up its own team of four young forestry engineers who are 100 percent dedicated to FLEGT under the coordination of the FLEGT Focal Point.
30. The FAO FLEGT programme is highly relevant from a civil society perspective. It is in line with the country's priorities, particularly in the context of the VPA negotiations that started in 2013 (the preparatory phase having started in 2011). For Phase III, it can be said that FAO has continued along the very relevant path of supporting motivated beneficiaries with a particular focus on encouraging impact and building project management capacity through excellent analysis of reports.

3.2 Outcomes

Evaluation Question 2: To what degree has the programme achieved its set outcomes?

Finding 2. Given what has been done, the evaluation found that the programme contributed to some visible examples of improved governance with IFM reports accepted by authorities and that improved enabling conditions (e.g. traceability) and enhanced information on timber legality to facilitate the implementation of the VPA agreement, once signed, have been supported with concrete results by the programme.

31. The revised log frame of the FAO FLEGT programme, as presented in the Annex 2 of the annual report 2020 of the FAO-EU FLEGT programme (Rome, 2021), identified 6 outcomes, i.e.: i) Voluntary Partnership Agreements contribute to improved forest sector governance and timber legality on domestic and international markets; ii) initiatives that support legal production and consumption of timber and better forest sector governance in countries that are not engaged in the VPA process are strengthened;⁵ iii) the capacity of private sector (particularly micro, small & medium enterprises [MSMEs]) to participate in the trade of legal timber has increased; iv) stakeholders in both consumer and producer countries demonstrate an improved knowledge of benefits from legal logging, international trade requirements and of best practices for forest law enforcement, governance and trade; v) the progress, achievements and impacts of the FLEGT action plan are better understood and information is made available through updated, robust and user-friendly information system; vi) increased technical and institutional capacities of service providers. The following points will analyse if these outcomes were achieved.
32. Given the complexity of the programme, it must be acknowledged that the project management team (PMT) has made a remarkable effort to produce a well-structured logical framework with indicators for the different levels of outcomes and outputs. However, it should be noted that the table specifies that the impact indicators on more equitable forest management and the indicators for outcome 6 will be measured at the end of the Programme Phase III (in the Annex 2 of the annual report 2020 there are no figures presented). Furthermore, the indicators have not been quantified (which is understandable given the complexity and heterogeneity of the programme and because the focus was more on process and demand based), but this makes it much more difficult to judge the degree of achievement of the objectives when analysing the outcomes, as they have not been quantified beforehand.

⁵ Outcomes 1 and 2 are the same except that 1 is for VPA countries and 2 is for countries that are not engaged in the VPA process.

33. Outcome 1: Improved Forest sector governance and timber legality. Many projects funded by the programme during Phase III targeted legality and governance. A few projects were funded through the Ministry of Water and Forests on legality and governance.
34. Following the adoption of the forestry code in 2019, the Ministry of Water and Forests has launched the process of drafting the implementing texts. Some of these texts specifically concern the VPA-FLEGT and the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD+) process. A FAO project has made it possible to contribute to the development of these texts, namely support to the Ministry of Water and Forests in the framework of the regulatory reform related to the definition of timber legality and the implementation of REDD+ (2018–2020). According to the Ministry of Water and Forests and several partners, a group of lawyers, which had been set up in 2014, was able to be remobilised. It was reinforced with new participants. This has resulted in better quality texts. Interviews emphasized that the Ministry of Water and Forests, thanks to this funding, was able to organise grassroots consultations (local administrations, private sector, local communities). It was necessary to go to the field so that this category of actors who live the realities of the forest on a daily basis have the opportunity to be informed and to express themselves.⁶
35. As found in Annex 1 of the annual report 2020 FAO-EU FLEGT (2021), thanks to this project, 474 local stakeholders in the regions have been consulted on the legal reform, 10 implementing decrees integrating all stakeholders' comments were drafted, 1 plenary session with 35 stakeholders for the evaluation of 5 draft implementation decrees was organized and 3 legality grids serving as a basis for VPA negotiations were updated.
36. The programme supported a second project with the Ministry of Water and Forests on public policy on timber procurement: Contribution to the establishment of a public policy for the responsible purchase of timber with a view to the progressive integration of the national market into the VPA (2018–2020). An international workshop was organised by FAO in collaboration with the Ministry of Water and Forests from 16 to 17 May 2019. Experiences were shared and Côte d'Ivoire was able to learn from them. In addition, a study was financed in order to make a proposal on the implementation of a wood procurement policy for public markets. At the time of evaluation, a policy document with an action plan was subject to adoption.
37. As found in Annex 1 of the annual report 2020 FAO-EU FLEGT (2021), key results of this project are: One special inter-administration reflection committee established, one study documenting timber supply and demand presented to stakeholders and published jointly by FAO and CIFOR (Raphael Tsanga, Paolo Omar Cerutti & Edouard Essiane. 2020), one public procurement policy for timber developed, validated by all stakeholders and submitted to the Council of Ministers for adoption, and one advocacy document made available.
38. Another project with the Ministry of Water and Forests is still in progress: Contribution to the establishment of a of a national system for the traceability and legality of timber in Côte d'Ivoire (2020–2021). This project takes into account existing initiatives and is a logical

⁶ A first project had already been funded in 2016: "Support to the drafting of the application texts of the Forest Code necessary for the implementation of the FLEGT and REDD+ processes and capacity building of the two coordinations in terms of supply chain control".

continuation of the first actions and initiatives already supported by the programme. The project started by identifying needs in terms of legality and traceability, then there were actions to be able to draw up traceability chain guides and today the country is in the process of drawing up the legality verification system with the VPA, which itself includes a wood traceability system. Côte d'Ivoire wants to take into account all existing initiatives and reflects all the realities of the forestry sector. Once the system is developed, it will be tested (a blank test is planned to see how to integrate this system with the verification of legality system) and certain actors will be trained in its use. The traceability and legality modules will be complementary to the "SIG FORET". The evaluation team was informed by the FAO team during the finalization of the report that the traceability and the legality modules of the system have now been finalized, and will be used, launched and tested. As this project is still in progress, the key results are not yet available.

39. According to information collected during the interviews, the first FAO funding attributed to IDEF (an Ivorian organisation with an international vocation) focused on classified forests (2014) and then a second one was funded during Phase III on independent observation in logging perimeters, where 90 percent of the timber exploited in Côte d'Ivoire comes from. This was done through "the Support for the development and implementation of an independent monitoring strategy in the Forestry Exploitation Areas in Côte d'Ivoire" (2019–2020) and "Strengthen Forest governance through the deployment of independent observation in the Forestry Exploitation Areas in Côte d'Ivoire and real-time community monitoring" (2020–2021). The key results achieved for this project are presented in Annex 1 of the annual report 2020: 382 stakeholders were consulted on the new Forest Law, 35 national civil society organisation staff were able to conduct IFM missions after a 7-day training combining theoretical and field practice, a methodology for IFM in the logging concessions was developed in a participatory way, and 6 IFM missions were conducted and 6 IFM reports drafted.
40. Always according to interviewed beneficiaries, in addition to IDEF, OI-REN, a platform of Ivorian civil society specialised in environmental issues, has also received funding from FAO in 2019 for a project entitled: Support for the consolidation of civil society's legal assets relating to transparency, access to information and the establishment of an effective and operational national system of independent forest monitoring in Côte d'Ivoire (2019–2021). The two main aims of the OI-REN project were to develop and implement a national framework of independent observation for the entire national forest estate and to strengthen the participation of the civil society in the ongoing reform through consultations with local populations. The key results of this project can also be found in Annex 1 of the annual report 2020.
41. On good governance, with the independent observation tool used by WCF since 2014 and by IDEF since 2019, information is collected and reported to local and national forest administrations. Published independent observation reports identify illegalities and failures in the application of laws and procedures and make recommendations that help improve the legal framework and law enforcement for more responsible logging. Where there is independent monitoring, there are visible changes in improved logging governance.
42. MALEBI has produced a legality grid for charcoal as part of the project funded by the FAO Programme: Development of a pilot traceability system for sustainable and legal charcoal based on blockchain technology (2019–2021)

43. In the Annex 1 of the annual report 2020 it is said that: “the participation of stakeholders across the spectrum in the ongoing process of legal reform. Out of the ten decrees drafted by the multi-stakeholder working group created in 2016 with Programme support, three were signed and seven are about to be signed. Second, national civil society organizations conducted a number of Independent Forest Monitoring (IFM) missions, which is a substantial contribution to transparency efforts and has led to a closer collaboration with the Administration”.
44. As found in the Annex 2 of the FAO-EU FLEGT programme annual report 2020, the global contribution from all these projects to outcome 1 can be summarized as follows: i) on improved forest governance, infractions related to illegal logging were reported through ten IFM reports validated and analysed with the relevant authorities; they were either fully implemented (52 percent) or partially to fully implemented (92 percent); and ii) on legality/traceability, five decrees were developed for implementing the forest code and were made public for consultation (the evaluation observed that these figures are slightly different from the ones presented in Annex 1). It is worth to mention that as independent observation is now included in Article 15 of the Forestry Code, the national forest estate can be subject to independent observation. It is foreseen that a decree will specify the modalities for implementing independent observation and the SC has already drafted the first version of the decree within the framework of a committee set up by the Ministry of Water and Forests, which has already been validated by all stakeholders during a plenary session. The signature of the President of the Republic remains.

Finding 3. The programme has contributed to some extent to the structuration and the reinforcement of the capacities and the representativeness of the private sector in the VPA negotiations, especially the small operators and their unions. Two cooperatives have been created and have signed collaboration agreements with some industrialists for the supply of legal wood.

45. Outcome 3: Enhanced capacity for private sector to participate in legal timber trade. According to information collected during the interviews (service providers and private sector), the programme raised awareness among the artisans on the need to preserve the forest cover. They gradually felt part of something bigger, in terms of conservation and restoration of forest cover and the notion of legal timber has gradually gained ground. It should be noted that the actors of the 3rd transformation are little structured and organised and their low volume of activities does not allow them to meet the requirements of the large industrialists in terms of making legal wood available (question of price and unfair competition with the illegal wood put on the market). Thanks to the support of the programme through the project « *renforcement des capacités et accompagnement à une formalisation durable des acteurs du secteur informel de la filière bois par une approche genre et jeunesse, pour assurer une meilleure participation au processus APV* » (2017–2019), one non-governmental organization (NGO) (*Association des Volontaires pour le Service International [AVSI]*) has contributed to the formalisation of many (several hundred) artisanal carpenters at the *Centre de Promotion des Investissements en Côte d'Ivoire (CEPICI)*, the public body responsible for registering businesses. But the effect of this support remained limited because once registered, the craftsmen have to pay taxes and as they do not have a sufficient volume of work, they often cannot. Therefore, accompanying measures should still be provided to help them (like incentives, reduction of taxes, etc.). The project produced also a guide on the formalisation of the “Petites et Moyennes Entreprises transformatrices” (TPME).

46. The second FAO-funded project with AVSI, "support for structuring and improving the participation of domestic market players in the FLEGT VPA process in Côte d'Ivoire" (2020–2021), tackled another topic. In the Technical Negotiation Committee, the private parties that sit on the committee are mainly industrialists and large forestry companies. Yet the other actors (small enterprises, artisans of the third transformation, etc.) were not represented at the negotiation table because at the very beginning of the process the issue of the domestic market was not a high priority in the country. There was no real debate on this issue and all the annexes of the VPA were linked to traceability, to the export market. AVSI raised this issue whenever possible with the various bodies and actors. Within the Private Sector College, which participates in the National Technical Negotiating Committee, one of the professional artisanal organisations that AFSI supported, Gamby (Youpougon wood craftsmen's group), has a representative who participates in the work of the Private Sector College (one of the four colleges that make up the National Technical Negotiating Committee). AVSI was able to ensure that small operators could participate in the work of the private sector college, but it also insisted on the fact that the debates should not concern only the big industrialists, because small operators are important and their concerns must be taken into account. AVSI has therefore succeeded in getting into this issue and understanding the challenges by taking into account the small operators.
47. Another achievement of this project was obtained through the support given to the federation of wood trades in Côte d'Ivoire. AVSI has initiated a series of actions to strengthen the capacity of this organisation. The *Fédération des métiers du bois de Côte d'Ivoire* (FMB-CI) was set up in August 2019 and brings together not only small-scale processing operators, small-scale loggers and small-scale timber industries, but also a range of actors at different levels of the timber value chain in Côte d'Ivoire. The support given to the Federation has allowed for a better geographical networking.
48. The most representative Unions in the forestry sector in Côte d'Ivoire are the *Syndicat des Producteurs Industriels du Bois* (SPIB) and the *Syndicat national des groupements et organisation des professionnels ivoiriens du bois* (SYNGOPIB). They have been involved in the discussions, but very few of their members across the country are directly involved in the process. It is not certain that information is properly passed on between the Unions and their members.
49. FAO supported SPIB through two projects: i) "Capacity building of domestic timber market operators" (2018–2019); and ii) "Support to the formalisation and structuring of professional associations of the domestic timber market above the 8th parallel, with a view to their networking and linking with timber industrialists for their supply of legal timber" (2020–2021).
50. The first project aimed to improve the involvement of small and medium-sized enterprises/industries and informal actors in the VPA negotiations and to build their capacity. It has led to the creation of two cooperatives (WOBÉ and WOGNON), which have signed collaboration agreements with some industrialists, who are interested in accompanying them in their supply of legal wood. A second project followed, with a view to networking and linking them with timber manufacturers for their supply of legal wood". The idea was to consolidate the achievements of the first project and to concretise the effective commercial relationship with the Industrialists of the South. As the project is still in progress, only one concrete result could be found in Annex 1 of the annual report 2020:

One training for SMEs on how to better structure and manage their associations has been delivered.

51. Bringing together third-level processing craftsmen with certain wood industries, particularly through the SPIB, which is open to collaboration with these craftsmen to supply them with legal wood, was deemed a good idea. However for interviewed representatives of the private sector, the question arises as to the cost of wood for small-scale processors following competition from illegal wood which is flooding the market. The same product finished with illegal wood will be 50 percent cheaper than one made with legal wood. Without concrete measures (incentives, reduction of taxes, etc.) from the government for this category of actors, the perception is that it is unlikely that real progress in legality will be made. FAO staff expressed a different opinion and say that studies done by FAO have shown that illegal wood, although sold at a lower price, involves significant costs for the corruption of this wood from the place of felling to the place of sale, which ultimately means that illegal wood costs more than legal wood. Without more precise figures it is difficult for the evaluation team to have a clear position on the issue.
52. The Charcoal sector has not been included directly in the framework of the FLEGT VPA, but it is a sector that drives deforestation. Practices and processes needed to be improved and the sector's actors needed to be supported. The project "development of a pilot traceability system for sustainable and legal charcoal based on blockchain technology" (2019–2021) has been initiated with the MALEBI Association, an association of women who produce and sell biomass. This was a project to develop a pilot traceability system for sustainable and legal charcoal based on blockchain technology. The capacity of the association has been strengthened (with the European Forest Institute [EFI] in particular) and a trip to England for training on forest governance was organised. The programme has raised women's awareness, but there is a lack of resources and a number of difficulties in translating this awareness into practice.
53. As a conclusion on outcome 3 found in Annex 1 of the FAO-EU FLEGT programme annual report 2020, it can be said that the Union of Industrial Wood Producers (SPIB) and the NGO AVSI Foundation have implemented concrete actions to support the trade of legal timber on the domestic market such as SME formalization, SME associations strengthening, the creation of a "purchasing centre" and the design of the national Timber Associations Federation. The contribution to outcome 3 was quantified in the Annex 2 of the annual report 2020 through two indicators, i.e.: i) Indicator 3.2. "Number and description of cases where the Programme has created or improved the enabling conditions for MSMEs". The representation of MSMEs in the VPA processes through their inclusion in participative legal reform has increased; and ii) Indicator 3.3. "Number and description of private sector associations formed or made more sustainable following Programme support": 7 associations have been formalized.

Finding 4. The programme has initiated the structuration of a few civil society organizations (IDEF, AVSI, MALLEBI), by reinforcing their expertise, skills as well as knowledge about the benefits of legal timber and trade. Today, thanks to the programme support, the participation of Civil Society in the discussions on the reform is more robust, it can discuss as equals with the other stakeholders and its voice is heard. Information provision to private sector is a point for attention.

54. Outcome 4: Improved knowledge about the benefits, best practices and requirements of legal timber and trade. According to people interviewed, the reform process on the forest sector was mainly based in Abidjan, but deployment was initiated by the programme in the

regions to inform forestry officers about FLEGT and its issues. Representatives from civil society organisations recognize that at this stage there is a better knowledge of the benefits, best practices and requirements of the legal timber trade for a larger number of actors in several localities in the country (Abidjan, Toumodi, Abengourou, San Pedro, Bouake, Korhogo, etc.). But it was not possible for the evaluation to find more precise figures on this outcome. According to representatives of the private sector, it appears that there has been a lack of a project specifically aimed at the private sector to inform them more widely about what independent observation is and the FLEGT VPA process in general.

55. Outcome 6: Increased technical and institutional capacities of service providers. As mentioned by several representatives of civil society organisations, they have benefited from funding, particularly in the framework of the independent observation (included in the new forestry code and for which the application decree is being adopted). The beneficiaries recognize that thanks to the programme, the civil society organisations have acquired legitimacy in the eyes of the stakeholders and its voice now counts. However, independent observation is still geographically limited and its impact on the governance of forest exploitation is also limited.

Evaluation Question 3: What have been the most significant changes generated by the programme?

Finding 5. The most significant changes of the programme are the increased skills and capacity of the civil society and the private sector.

56. During an adapted, simplified outcome harvesting workshop at the outset of the evaluation, the evaluation team asked the FLEGT III PMT to identify the most significant changes, according to their perception. The PMT perceived the following three most significant changes, brought about by the programme: i) increased capacities of service providers, ii) increased capabilities of the private sector; and iii) increased legality and traceability. These perceived most significant changes were validated and analysed during interviews with different programme partners and service providers and triangulated, where possible, with the desk review exercise. Some of the findings in this section overlap with the programme level outcomes already mentioned in the previous section, or those highlighted in the sustainability section.
57. Even though the VPA is not yet signed, Côte d'Ivoire is already benefiting from it, especially with the ongoing participatory reforms involving many stakeholders. The most significant change according to the majority of interviewees is the increased skills and capacity of the civil society and the private sector. The FLEGT process has raised the awareness of all actors in the timber sector about the disappearance of forests and the issues of forest conservation and governance, putting them together around the same table.
58. Independent observation projects had capacity building components that have trained many actors. Organisations from other countries such as the *Forêts et Développement Rural* (FODER) came to train Ivorian organisations, which then trained other organisations in the country. There was also a training component that affected the private sector, yet to a lesser extent. It was more the small operators and craftsmen who were affected (with AVSI). Efforts were made for structuring the actors in the sector: the federation was set up and the opinions of small operators are now more taken into account. The reinforcement of capacities for both the civil society and the private sector could be further broadened on national scale.

59. The Ministry of Water and Forests has also benefited from the programme's support. It has enabled the Ministry of Water and Forests to strengthen its regalian actions through technical and financial support. All the documentation generated by the various studies financed by the programme is now available to the Ministry. These data help in the decision-making process. This is the case with the study made by CIFOR (Raphael Tsanga, Paolo Omar Cerutti & Edouard Essiane. 2020) that structures and identifies the needs of public timber markets in Côte d'Ivoire and on the legal, regulatory and institutional framework of public procurement.
60. On the legality and traceability aspects, many actors interviewed recognised that an enabling environment has been created with the elaboration of texts (forest code, forest policy, national strategy, National Forest Governance Improvement Programme (PNAGF), forest code implementation texts, etc.). This was a prerequisite for making progress in the VPA negotiations. The same people say that it is now necessary to complete the ongoing legal reform and apply the laws.
61. Interviewees conveyed that the strong Independent Monitoring (IM) support of the programme since the beginning has had a significant influence on the evolution of forest governance, which has made huge progress and is now officially recognised (further discussed in sustainability section). On traceability, the programme financed the Ministry of Water and Forests to set up a timber traceability system. Progress has been made on this issue, but it is not yet visible, according to the interviewees.

3.3 Social inclusion, equity and gender

Evaluation Question 4: To what extent have the programme interventions contributed to gender equality, equity, empowerment and social inclusion, and reached the intended users and uses?

Finding 6. The programme aimed at integrating the gender dimension in its approach and projects and a few specific cases of the contribution made by the programme to gender equity through projects exist.

62. The beneficiaries of projects informed the evaluator that FAO projects are subject to gender scoring when contractors send in their project proposals. The FAO ensures also that, during implementation phase, women are included in the projects. If FAO does training for artisans, it makes also sure that women are involved, and the same goes for workshops.
63. Currently, there is an ongoing the Ministry of Water and Forests project "Women and Forests: Contribution to the restoration and reconstitution of the Ivorian forest cover through better involvement of women". The project is implemented by the Permanent Technical Secretariat APV FLEGT of the Ministry of Water and Forests. It is designed to organise training and support two women's groups in Dimbokro and Yamoussoukro in the creation of tree nurseries and reforestation activities.
64. Many organisations were willing to integrate the gender dimension in their activities. For example, AVSI was keen to highlight the involvement of women in the implementation of its projects. Indeed, AVSI has always included in its activities a woman head of a carpentry and another woman, head of a charcoal production cooperative. It was observed that while there are few women in the field of carpentry, there are many in the field of charcoal production and marketing.

65. However, some organisations think that FAO was not too gender oriented and there were no projects run by women. It is not enough to record the number of women participating in a meeting, it is also important to ensure that they are given the floor and that they understand the content of the discussions. More effort needs to be made to find appropriate funding for women.

3.4 Partnerships

Evaluation Question 5: To what extent has the programme managed to engage with relevant, strategic and capable partners and multi-stakeholder processes at global, regional and national level?

Finding 7. The evaluation recognises the diversity of partnerships and synergies established within the frame of the programme. The strength of the FAO-EU FLEGT programme is that it has succeeded in bringing together actors who were not used to working together.

66. Many examples of partnerships (or synergies) were given during the interviews. A few are listed below.
67. In Côte d'Ivoire, GIZ ensured the contribution of an European Union member country and provided a FLEGT Technical advisor with a budget to finance activities. He works on the basis of impacts and not on a chain of results; which gives him flexibility and capacity for adaptation/synergy. With this permanent GIZ position in the country and EFI's interventions on FLEGT, the two organisations have set up an informal and formal cooperation that has well complemented the collaboration with the FAO team.
68. Despite the "administrative" label attached to the GIZ FLEGT advisor posted within the Ministry of Water and Forests, interactions with the civil society and the private sector were possible, in good synergy with the Department for International Development (DfID)-funded facilitator position,⁷ which is more oriented towards the civil society and the private sector. Furthermore, the President of FODER (supported by the programme in Cameroon), Rodrigue N'Gonzo, became the FLEGT facilitator in Côte d'Ivoire with a support component for the European delegation (20 percent), initially funded by DfID and then by the European delegation to EFI.
69. There was also synergy between projects, for example between the first project funded to IDEF «Appui au développement et la mise en œuvre d'une stratégie d'observation indépendante dans les Périmètres d'Exploitation Forestière en Côte d'Ivoire» and the project funded to OI-REN, «Appui à la consolidation des acquis juridiques de la société civile relatifs à la transparence, l'accès à l'information et à la mise en place d'un système national, efficace et opérationnel d'observation indépendante des forêts en Côte d'Ivoire». IDEF has from the beginning sought to create synergies between the two, because OI-REN is a civil society platform of which IDEF is a member. A joint kick-off workshop for both projects was organised in October 2019. A joint activity was also realized at a capacity building session for other civil society organisations on independent observation in March 2020, which resulted in the pooling of resources and therefore more people trained.
70. In the framework of the project on legal reform financed by the FAO-EU FLEGT programme and the consultations organised for the drafting of application texts, people in the regions

⁷ Funded by DfID, the Palladium group has a FLEGT Facilitator in Côte d'Ivoire, who is responsible for facilitation of the Voluntary Partnership Agreement between Côte d'Ivoire and the European Union.

had to be consulted on the application texts of the law and the guidelines to be given to them. IDEF and the Secrétariat Technique Permanent FLEGT⁸ worked together on this. In February 2020, the pooling of resources in the Adzopé region and the establishment of a common agenda was sought. As a result, more beneficiaries were reached and budgets were put together. The joint presence of the two structures helped to reinforce the message that was conveyed.

71. Another example is the independent observation that was already supported in the Congo Basin by the FAO-EU FLEGT programme. IDEF (Côte d'Ivoire) approached FODER (Cameroon) to strengthen its capacity and help develop methodologies for implementing independent observation. FODER had developed the ISO-certified Standard External Observation System (SNOIE) in Cameroon. With the support of FODER, IDEF tried to adapt the SNOIE, together with OI-REN, to the context of Côte d'Ivoire.
72. For the second phase of its project, IDEF was supported by the Rainforest Foundation (RFUK) that developed the Forestlink tool, which allows community observers to send alerts to a centralized database, even from remote areas without a telephone network. The project seeks to strengthen the fight against illegal logging, and to promote the well-being of local communities and forest-dependent indigenous people.
73. In the framework of the last project financed by the programme for AVSI «Appui à la structuration et à l'amélioration de la participation des acteurs du marché domestique au processus APV FLEGT en Côte d'Ivoire», exchanges were organised with the Italian federation FEDERLEGNO (Italian Federation of Woodworking and furniture industries) for the rational use of wood. The craftsmen learned better finishing techniques to give more value to their work.
74. Within the framework of the programme, MALEBI has partnered with *Ressources et Extraction Minière* (REM) as technical partner and Gaiachain as technological partner.
75. As found in the evaluation document of the Programme National ONU-REDD in Côte d'Ivoire (Samyn, Kouassi, 2018), in 2016, due to the initial weak internal structuring of civil society in Côte d'Ivoire, the REDD+ programme (Ministry of Environment), in synergy with the EU FLEGT programme (Ministry of Water and Forests) and the support of other technical partners, has helped improve the level of participation and representation of civil society organisations. The programme also contributed to the improvement of the structuring and representation of civil society organisations in the FLEGT and REDD+ processes and mechanisms through the establishment of a common platform called OI-REN. According to a report (Anne-Cécile Capel, 2017), experience shows that approaches to reducing deforestation and forest degradation (REDD+) and strengthening forest governance (FLEGT) can be much more effective in tackling forest loss if they are implemented together. The widely recognised similarities between REDD+ objectives and FLEGT initiatives provide clear opportunities for joint action to address deforestation and strengthen forest governance. These similarities include a common goal of improving forest management, common challenges such as corruption, weak law enforcement and weak judiciary. Both programmes target the same actors - stakeholders from government forestry entities, local communities and indigenous peoples, and the private sector.

⁸ A structure within the Ministry of Water and Forests.

76. Through the project "appui à la rédaction des textes d'application du Code Forestier nécessaires à la mise en œuvre des processus FLEGT et REDD+ et renforcement des capacités des deux coordinations en matière de contrôle de la chaîne d'approvisionnement" funded by the programme and implemented by the Ministry of Water and Forests (March to November 2016), it has been possible to carry out a study to link the various laws that govern the forestry sector: Forestry code, mining code, environment code, agricultural orientation law, land code, etc. The project made it possible to see what interactions could be made between these different laws. Moreover, it enabled the set-up of a group of lawyers who intervene in the various ministries concerned by these laws.

3.5 Potential sustainability

Evaluation Question 6: What are the sustainability prospects of the programme results and what is their potential to contribute to long-term changes?

Finding 8. The evaluation found that some of the programme's inputs can contribute to the sustainability of the process. At the same time, despite some encouraging signs, the visible changes in the institutional and operational frameworks initiated by the programme remain fragile.

77. It is probably a little early to talk about long-term changes because Côte d'Ivoire is still at the negotiation stage. However, the Ministry of Water and Forests recognises that there has been an institutional influence. Furthermore, Ministry officials have increasingly taken into account other actors in the sector. There has been a clear change in the Central Forest Administration's attitude towards civil society representatives, who were previously perceived as "controllers" of the Administration, particularly in the framework of the independent observation, and were distrusted by the Administration. Today, the Administration sees the value of working with civil society, particularly on independent observation, as it facilitates their work. The consultation process in the forest reform exercise and the contribution to the elaboration of the application texts of the forestry law saw increased stakeholder participation. A framework for consultation between the civil society (including local communities), the service providers and the administration has been put in place. There is now a dynamic of collaboration between these actors that did not exist before. This is a concrete contribution to indicator 6 of impact: Number and description of countries where civil society has a stronger voice and increased power in national FLEGT-related governance processes.
78. Control has been strengthened for the respect of legality, even if Côte d'Ivoire is still in a phase of developing tools (indicator 1 of impact: number and description of VPA countries with evidence of improved forest governance). Through awareness raising and information, practices are improving. Many interviewees recognised that the strong Independent Monitoring (IM) support of the programme since the beginning has had a significant influence on the evolution of forest governance, which has made huge progress and is now officially recognised. The new law on the practice of independent observation, which is a consequence of FAO FLEGT support, was instituted on 23 July 2019. It aims to identify all issues related to deforestation so that the government addresses this issue in order to protect and restore the Ivorian forest cover. This has strengthened key actors such as WCF, which in turn has been able to include and support other local actors in its activities. Independent observation is now integrated into the forestry code and civil society and private sector representatives are involved in governance process. The CTN, which is the negotiating body, has representatives from all stakeholder groups and is in charge of

technical negotiations. What can be credited to the programme is that the people who sit on this committee have had the opportunity to be involved in the implementation and feedback of the various projects, or in the validation of certain project proposals. This has enabled them to be better prepared for the content of the CTN discussions. As mentioned in the section on Outcomes/most significant changes, their skills were improved and they became more 'informed actors'.

79. Despite these encouraging elements, interviewed representatives of the civil society questioned the sustainability of the programme's actions. The first element of concern relates to the sustainability of independent observation which depends on funding. Currently IDEF, one of the main actors on independent observation, is only active in about ten areas out of more than 300 throughout the country and WCF is present in three classified forests. Therefore, the geographical impact remains very limited. And on the question to what extent project's supported actions are likely to be sustained or replicated after the project funding ends, the answer remains mitigated.
80. The second element of concern relates to small local artisans and processors. Most of the results obtained during the programme are fundamental for the activities of small-scale processors. Through the projects implemented by AVSI, some of them have been involved and sensitized to the legality issue. A guide was produced for these actors to inform them of the importance of formalisation. However, as long as the taxation system remains the same, it is unlikely that they will adopt it, because it is cheaper for them to continue to source illegal wood. This goes beyond the sectoral framework of the Ministry of Water and Forests, and would require the involvement of others, such as the Ministry of the Budget. Interviewees feel that the procedures should be simplified to enable these actors to adopt the legal system.
81. Another argument raised is the need for FAO to continue to focus on the issue of charcoal in Côte d'Ivoire, which production is a major cause of deforestation in the country. While the grid exists, it was mentioned that the texts should be adapted with the reality on the ground, so that people who produce charcoal could better adhere to the regulations.
82. The final concern raised is about the future of the programme in Côte d'Ivoire. FAO's mandate has not been renewed by European Union and EFI will no longer have the role of managing FLEGT support. This has been entrusted to the *Agence française de développement* (AFD), yet only for countries that are already at the VPA implementation stage, which is not the case of Côte d'Ivoire. The FAO projects on the revision of legal frameworks, legal support, etc. are interesting examples that have enabled significant progress on the FLEGT process. However, they still need support and the availability of funds remains fundamental. An example is the independent observation that will need funding and support to continue to function. For civil society to continue to be credible, its capacities must be further strengthened. Interviewees conveyed the hope to receive future support.

3.6 Programme management

Evaluation Question 7: To what extent were the management and implementation arrangements appropriate?

Finding 9. Support provided by the Programme is unanimously appreciated by recipient organizations and has helped to grow their capacities in both technical and financial areas. The short duration of projects is considered by some beneficiaries as a constraint.

83. The FAO is considered by the majority of interviewed organisations as an appreciated partner. The procedures manual is deemed clear on all aspects (administrative and financial management, communication and use of the logo, etc.). The flexibility, responsiveness, anticipation and availability of the programme team was appreciated. Often in the implementation of projects one is confronted with difficulties due to the changing context. Things can change between the preparation and implementation phases. An example given was the programme's ability to deal with changing contexts. According to interviewees, the team has been able to propose adequate amendments and showed a certain level of flexibility that was well received. The validation time for the reports was two weeks maximum (sometimes it was even done in a few days) and then the financial payments were made, making the process efficient.
84. One of the strengths of the third phase of the programme has been to open up the possibility for the Central Forest administration and the private sector to submit projects at any time (Direct Assistance) and this has made it possible to be more reactive, instead of having a cumbersome independent identification mission before submission.
85. Programme partners respected their roles and the professional interactions with the programme managers created a relationship of trust and consideration of the feedback received.
86. The programme's project implementation teams are not only in charge, but they have the possibility to influence the highest level of decision-making. An example is the traceability project where the Director of Forest Industries is the Chairman of the Project Committee.
87. The challenge that FAO set itself in its programme was to work with NGOs, even those with no experience. While this was a good capacity building approach, it required much attention and supervision for the implementation and control of expenditure. Many projects have been known to set up teams and take a long time to be effective and relevant to the issue they want to address.
88. Organisations are obliged to pre-finance the last instalment of the project and this is a problem for some of them, as they often do not have the necessary means and cash flow. It could be helpful to consider a mechanism to avoid pre-financing or even limit it to minimal amounts, as national NGOs are non-profit organisations and generally do not have funds outside of the funded projects.
89. Some small NGOs had to struggle to be heard and to apply several times before getting the project. Yet organisations who had experience in managing projects were able to adapt more easily to FAO's way of working. Once in, they benefited from training at the beginning of the projects and the follow-up and responsiveness of the programme team was considered very good.

90. Some organisations think that the duration of projects needs to be reviewed. One of the main challenges mentioned is related to the (short) duration of the projects, which does not leave much room for manoeuvre. This was for example crucial in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and the socio-political unrest that Côte d'Ivoire experienced at the end of 2020 and the beginning of 2021 in connection with the various elections. It was proposed that FAO should consider two- to three-year projects with increased budgets to achieve greater impact.
91. It was perceived that the local FAO representation was not very much involved in the programme. This has made it more difficult to monitor projects from FAO headquarters. The evaluation was unable to explore this issue further.

4. Lessons learned

92. It's important to recognise the role of all actors, but especially the small ones, and prioritise the synergy of action between all the actors involved. This ensures that there is a common vision of the problem and suggestions for solutions that integrate the interests of all.
93. The programme should strengthen the involvement of women in the VPA and to give them a voice, especially in rural areas. The forest is not only a man's business and women have a role to play in the Forest Recovery Plan.
94. With NGOs that have proven their technical and financial management skills, FAO could give them priority in the selection process by granting them several successive phases. This was not always the case.

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Appendix 1. People interviewed

Last name	First name	Institution/agency	Role
Ahoussi	Delphine	Malebi (service provider)	Présidente de l'Associaton (COT)
Alberny	Elodie	EFI (GRP)	Forest Governance and Timber Legality Assurance Expert Congo, Liberia
Anderson	Diedri	IDEF (service provider)	Director of programmes and projects at the association (COT)
Ayemou	Laurent	AVSI Côte d'Ivoire (service provider)	Ancien responsable des projets (COT)
Borelli	Maylis	ATIBT (GRP)	Responsible for Congo
Cocco	Stéphane	APV European Union (GRP)	Côte d'Ivoire
Decleire	Yanek	Giz (GRP)	Conseiller FLEGT M I N E F Forest Governance Advisor (COT)
Du Castel	Christophe	AFD (GRP)	
Duhesme	Caroline	ATIBT (GRP)	Coordinator of the FLEGT-REDD projects
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