

Transcript of the interview with Robert Simpson, Manager of the FAO Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade Programme (FLEGT)

EU-FAO FLEGT Programme

(00:00) Question 1 – What is the FLEGT Programme? (not recorded)

The FLEGT Programme is a joint initiative between the European Commission, FAO, the Government of the UK and the Government of Sweden to address illegal logging and some of the associated governance challenges. It's a multi-donor trust fund and the third phase, which is just starting now, is a total of 30 million dollars. The programme provides technical and financial assistance to local stakeholders through cost for proposal and direct dialogue with governments. We support private sector organizations, government institutions and civil society organizations to address their local identified forest governance challenges. We also have the process of supporting knowledge and information sharing through organizing workshops and supporting publications on lessons learned through the different projects that we support. There are economic, social and environmental costs associated with illegal logging and poor forest governance. Governments all across the globe lose billions of dollars every year that could be used for equality social programmes, indigenous groups or community forests dependent groups whose access to resources and possibly increase challenges of food insecurity. Environmentally illegal logging has a very detrimental impact on degradation of forests. Degraded forests have challenged the ability to provide environmental services such as soil stabilization, clean drinking water and carbon sequestration.

(01:47) Question 2 – Could you give some examples of supported projects? (not recorded)

The programme supported over 200 projects in 40 different countries. For example, in Latin America we have worked with Guatemala, Honduras and Colombia to develop a more comprehensive chain of custody systems, meaning helping the government monitor log movement from the point of harvest all the way through production and then sale of timber products. That allows them to capture more revenue and to ensure legality of their timber products. We have worked with the government of Ghana to establish guidelines on how best to ensure that communities adjacent forest concessions area able to benefit from the harvest of timber and have social benefits from that. We have also worked with the private sector in the Philippines to develop best usage guidelines to help them track the timber that they purchase, whether inside the Philippines or externally, and track that through the production line to ensure that they are using only legal timber for the production of furniture or other timber products that they are exporting.

(02:48) Question 3 - What are the plans for the new phase? (not recorded)

We are very excited about this third phase that is starting now. Again it's a 30 million dollar trust fund and we will continue until 2020. New for the third phase, we will be focusing more efforts on working with the private sector. Efforts to address governance and legality have been lagging with the private sector as we focused more on government and civil society organizations. A second part will be focusing on fewer countries, we will only be working in 22 countries rather than the 40 countries, and we will help them move forward more specifically on the governments challenges that they are facing.

* Interview conducted by FAO's Maria Angela Rosati