

GHANA LAND USE DIALOGUE

Mole Ecological Landscape (MEL)

CONCEPT NOTE

The Land Use Dialogue (LUD) is a multi-stakeholder engagement learning platform for gathering knowledge and leading processes for enabling responsible business, improved governance and inclusive development through a landscape approach.

Introduction:

The Mole Ecological landscape is a unique and wealthy resource within the guinea savanna ecological zone which falls within three (3) political regions (Savannah, Upper West and North East Regions) of Ghana. Endowed with biodiversity and riparian ecosystems, it encompasses Ghana's largest protected area (Mole National Park). Key features within the landscape include the Mole National Park, Community Conservation Areas known as the Community Resource Management Areas (CREMAs), cultural, hospitality centers, diverse flora and fauna dominated by Shea trees (*Vitellaria paradoxa*) and powered by an agrarian economy. Other tourist attractions include, the Larabanga Ancient Mosque, The Mystic Stone, Daboya Smock Weaving, Kparia Waterfalls, Mognori Eco-village etc. The landscape also forms part of the Volta basin (the largest river basin in Ghana) which contributes significantly to Ghana's economic development through the provision of vital water resources.

Thirty three (33) communities who are predominantly farmers fringe the Mole National Park. Traditionally, land ownership is communal under the custody of the Tendana (Earth-priest) under the "mandate" of the Overlord (Yagbonwura) who plays a key role in natural resource utilization. The importance of natural resources is associated more with direct consumptive use, like crop cultivation, human settlement, extraction of useful materials notably Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs); game hunting, shea nut collection, and wild honey harvesting. Nature within the landscape is viewed as part of their cultural heritage, customs, and tradition and also as a resource that can be utilized to support community livelihoods and national economic development while protecting the biodiversity and riparian ecosystem for sustainable use

The main challenge: Until 2012, the main challenges within the landscape were limited to unsustainable farming practices characterized by slash and burn, over grazing, perennial bush fires and poaching (both off-reserve and on-reserve). However, the significant improvement of roads in the landscape was tremendous and linked to the discovery of the valuable Rosewood (*Pterocarpus erinaceous*) has led to unprecedented illegal felling of this species. Charcoal production which was initially carried out on a small scale, also recorded a massive surge. Without the institution of a good monitoring system, tonnes of illegally felled trees and charcoal were transported out of the landscape.

Competing land uses have put the landscape at risk. A participatory and integrated approach is a key tool to reconcile the different perceptions and interests, reduce deforestation, reduce conflict and

increase land productivity in the region in the pursuit of a sustainable landscape and socio-economic growth.

The context:

The dialogue entry point in the Mole Ecological Landscape (MEL) will center around integrating natural resources issues in the Regional and District Landscape Strategies and work towards contributing to on-going processes around Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) and Shea production at the landscape and national levels. The ban on illegal logging and unsustainable charcoal production have also provided a major boost to secure natural resources within the landscape and enforcement, and compliance mechanisms need to be instituted and executed. The partnerships with businesses such as the Savannah Fruit Company (SFC) towards the development of a green value chain for organic shea has great potential to enhance livelihoods and secure ecosystem services within the landscape through the restoration of degraded lands.

There are promising examples of sustainable shea-nut collection and eco-tourism that offer possible alternatives. The establishment of community self-help financing mechanisms and the ongoing processes towards establishment of the Mole Ecological Landscape Conservatin Trust Fund (MELCTF) play very signnificant roles within the landscape.

The need:

A landscape approach is needed to clarify decision making around land use decisions and enhance the integration of climate-smart agricultural practices / agroforestry which promotes environmental conservation, curbing down illegal resource exploitation, sustainability of production value chains and sustainable development as a whole. This approach would further deepen the synergy between the park management and the surrounding communities.

The Land Use Dialogue:

The Land Use Dialogue (LUD) is a global initiative coordinated by The Forests Dialogue (TFD) secretariat and steering committee members in collaboration with local and global partners. The LUD initiative maps, applies and evaluates the practical “landscape approach” to provide tangible improvements on the ground. The landscape approach is a conceptual framework that seeks to develop an integrated and holistic view of the landscape, balancing multiple objectives through engaging private and public stakeholders. Efficient use and development of resources can be established through a dialogue platform where stakeholders collaborate to align their objectives, identify common risks and opportunities, and support shared decision making and collective action. The LUD initiative is modeled on TFD’s experience as a neutral multi-stakeholder platform adapted to meet local contexts and landscape needs.

The LUD in Mole Ecological Landscape is supported by the IUCN’s Stabilizing Land Use Project (PLUS), which intends to improve landscape governance of forest ecosystems, in turn influencing decision making at the landscape and national level. The PLUS project includes the establishment of a Governance Working Group (GWG) at the landscape level, made up of landscape stakeholders across interest groups. Two local partners are supporting the implementation of the project and the LUD at

the landscape level; A Rocha Ghana at the MEL and Codesult Network at the second project landscape in Wassa Amenfi. The Wassa Amenfi LUD was successfully organized from 3-5 December 2018, in the Wassa Amenfi Landscape (WAL) and this has provided key lessons which are being built on for a replication of the LUD process in the MEL.

Key Stakeholders and Timeline for MEL LUD:

The MEL LUD is expected to bring together over 80 participants drawn from government, businesses, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), Communities, traditional authorities, the international community, academia and media, and will take place 13th to 16th May, 2019.

- **Government;** With the creation of the new Savannah Region, the Regional Coordinating Council will be present. The District Chief Executives and their planners from all five (5) district assemblies (West Gonja, North Gonja, Sawla-Tuna-Kalba, Wa East and Mamprugu Moagduri) will also be present with some ancillary officers. Representation from key government agencies and departments including Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Forestry Commission (FC), Water Resources Commission (WRC), Ghana Police Service, Ghana Fire Service will also be key etc. As the focal point, management of the Mole National Park will duly be represented by the Park Manager and the Collaborative Resource Unit.
- **Traditional Authorities;** The Mole Ecological Landscape predominantly falls within the Gonja Kingdom which is ruled by the Yagbonwura (Overlord). Representatives will be drawn from the Wasipe Paramountcy and Gonja Traditional Council. The Wungu Traditional Area and Bulenge Traditional Area from Mamprugu Moagduri and Wa East respectively will also be present. A representation from the traditional authorities serving on the GWG would serve as a co-chair
- **Private Businesses;** As a landscape dominated by Shea, businesses within the shea sector would be engaged. These businesses depend directly and indirectly on resources from the landscape and have great influence in terms of livelihood empowerment. Savanna Fruits Company (SFC) would serve as a co-chair.
- **CSOs / NGOs;** NGOs within the landscape have very good engagements with communities and are working to promote collaborative governance, land use decision making, and livelihood strategies. Some of these NGOs will, therefore, be invited to participate. Katchito Community Development Center (KCODEC), Center for Conflict Transformation and Peace Studies (CECOTAPS), Organization for Indigenous Initiatives and Sustainability (ORGIIS Ghana), Coalition for Development of Western Corridor of Northern Region of Ghana (NorthCode), JAKSALLY Youth Development. A Rocha Ghana will also serve as a co-chair.
- **Women's Groups:** Women play a very vital role in Natural resource management and utilization and hence would be key in discussions under the LUD. Some women groups such as Shea Processing groups, Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs), Queenmothers, District Gender Officers, etc. will participate.

LUD Goals:

The objectives of the Ghana Land-Use Dialogue in Mole Ecological Landscape are designed to:

- Channel leadership (political, traditional and community) for effective natural resources management within the landscape

- Engage newly created Regional Coordinating Council and District Assemblies to fully integrate and provide support for community-based natural resource management.
- Improve cross-sectorial and institutional collaboration
- Engage duty bearers and resource users to apply sustainable best practices in resource exploitation and utilization
- Explore roles and ways to engage the private sector in sustainable landscape management, particularly in Shea sector;
- Support for Community Resource Management Areas (CREMAs);
- Foster community participation and ownership of forest conservation and management efforts, particularly under REDD+
- Clarify land tenure rights and improving gender responsiveness.
- Validate the Baseline Study
- Provide inputs into the design of a Landscape Management Strategy