

Responsive Forest Governance Initiative (RFGI)
Supporting Resilient Forest Livelihoods
through Local Representation

The Illusion of Democratic Representation in the REDD Readiness Consultation Process in Ghana



Emmanuel Marfo

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Responsive Forest Governance Initiative (RFGI) Research Programme

The Responsive Forest Governance Initiative (RFGI) is a research and training program, focusing on environmental governance in Africa. It is jointly managed by the Council for the Development of Social Sciences Research in Africa (CODESRIA), the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign (UIUC). It is funded by the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA). The RFGI activities are focused on 12 countries: Burkina Faso, Cameroon, DR Congo, Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, South Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda. The initiative is also training young, in-country policy researchers in order to build an Africa-wide network of environmental governance analysts.

Nations worldwide have introduced decentralization reforms aspiring to make local government responsive and accountable to the needs and aspirations of citizens so as to improve equity, service delivery and resource management. Natural resources, especially forests, play an important role in these decentralizations since they provide local governments and local people with needed revenue, wealth, and subsistence. Responsive local governments can provide forest resource-dependent populations the flexibility they need to manage, adapt to and remain resilient in their changing environment. RFGI aims to enhance and help institutionalize widespread responsive and accountable local governance processes that reduce vulnerability, enhance local wellbeing, and improve forest management with a special focus on developing safeguards and guidelines to ensure fair and equitable implementation of the Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) and climate-adaptation interventions.

REDD+ is a global Programme for disbursing funds, primarily to pay national governments of developing countries, to reduce forest carbon emission. REDD+ will require permanent local institutions that can integrate local needs with national and international objectives. The results from RFGI Africa research will be compared with results from collaborators in Asia and South America in order to enhance RFGI comparative scope, and to broaden its geographic policy relevance.

RFGI Working Paper Series Editors' Note

**James Murombedzi, Jesse Ribot
and Gretchen Walters**

Struggles for control over and access to nature and natural resources; struggles over land, forests, pastures and fisheries, are struggles for survival, self determination, and meaning. Natural resources are central to rural lives and livelihoods: they provide the material resources for survival, security, and freedom. To engage in the world requires assets that enable individuals, households, and communities to act in and on the world around them. The ability to accumulate assets and the ability to access government and market services depends partly on such resources along with the political-economic infrastructure – rights, recourse, representation, markets, and social services – that are the domain of government. Democracy, which both enables and requires the freedom to act, is predicated on these assets and infrastructures. Since the 1980s, African governments have been implementing local government decentralization reforms aimed at making local government more democratic by making them responsive and accountable to citizen needs and aspirations; in many places this has been done through a decentralisation of natural resource governance to local administrations. In order to be responsive to individual, household and community demands, local governments, too, need resources and decision-making powers. There must be a public domain – a set of public resources, such as forests or fisheries, which constitute this domain of democracy, the domain of decisions and services that citizens can demand of government. Natural resources, when decentralized into the domain of local authority, form an important part of the resources of individuals, households, communities and governments, making possible this move toward local democracy.

Natural resources provide local governments and people with wealth and subsistence. While nature is not the only source of rural income, the decentralization of natural resources governance is a core component of local government reform. However, governance reforms have been implemented in a context broadly characterized by an enduring crisis of the Western economic and financial systems, which in turn has stimulated privatization and liberalization in every sphere of life, including nature. The process has deprived local governments of public resources – depriving individuals and communities of a reason to engage, as a powerless government is not worth trying to influence. Privatization is depriving forest-dependent peoples of their access to formerly ‘public’ or traditionally managed resources. National governments, as well as international bodies such as the United Nations programme, titled the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD), further this trend as they collaborate with private interests to promote the privatization of natural resources. The resulting enclosures threaten the wellbeing of resource-dependent populations and the viability of democratic reforms.

The specter of climate change is deepening the crisis of enclosure. A key response to climate change has been the attempt to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions through enhancing the capacity of forests in the developing world to store carbon, ostensibly for the benefit of the atmosphere as well as the communities who use these forests. UN REDD seeks to pay communities, through their national governments, to conserve their forests as carbon storage. A plus ‘+’ was added to REDD, forming REDD +, to call for improved ecosystems services, forest management, conservation, forest restoration and afforestation to enhance the capacity for carbon storage. Designed on the basis of similar payments for environmental services (PES) schemes, REDD+ has the potential to inject vast new sums of money into local resource use and governance. In the context of fragile local governments, nascent democracies and powerful private interests, such cash inflows result in the commercialization and privatization of forests and natural resources and the dispossession of local resource users. This financialization of natural resources grossly diminishes the scope for democratic natural resource governance schemes. To be sure, the implementation of REDD+ can also learn from and avoid the pitfalls experienced in these PES schemes, especially if they represent local interests in natural resource governance decision making.

The Responsive Forest Governance Initiative (RFGI) is an Africa-wide environmental-governance research and training program focusing on enabling responsive and accountable decentralization to strengthen the representation of forest-based rural people in local-government decision making. Since January

2012, the programme has carried out 33 case studies in 12 African countries, with comparative cases Nepal and Peru, to assess the conditions under which central authorities devolve forest management and use decisions to local government, and the conditions that enable local government to engage in sound, equitable and pro-poor forest management. Aimed at enabling local government to play an integrative role in rural development and natural resource management, these case studies are now being finalized and published to elicit public discourse and debate on local government and local democracy. This Working Paper series will publish the RFGI case studies as well as other comparative studies of decentralized natural resources governance in Africa and elsewhere that focus on the intersection between local democracy and natural resource management schemes. Using the concepts of institutional choice and recognition, the cases deal with a comprehensive range of issues in decentralized forest management in the context of REDD+, including the institutional choices of intervening agencies; the effects of such choices on accountability and representation; and the relationships between local government and other local institutions. The series will also include syntheses discussing the main findings of the RFGI research programme.

Based at CODESRIA, and funded by the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), the RFGI is a three year collaborative initiative of CODESRIA, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). RFGI working papers and documents, including the background papers, the RFGI programme description, and the RFGI Methods Handbook, can be found on line at:

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CODESRIA publishes *Africa Development*, the longest standing Africa based social science journal; *Afrika Zamani*, a journal of history; the *African Sociological Review*; the *African Journal of International Affairs*; *Africa Review of Books and the Journal of Higher Education in Africa*. The Council also co-publishes the *Africa Media Review*; *Identity, Culture and Politics: An Afro-Asian Dialogue*; *The African Anthropologist and the Afro-Arab Selections for Social Sciences*. The results of its research and other activities are also disseminated through its Working Paper Series, Green Book Series, Monograph Series, Book Series, Policy Briefs and the CODESRIA Bulletin. Select CODESRIA publications are also accessible online at www.codesria.org.

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Abstract

Ghana claims to have developed its REDD Readiness Plan through a highly participatory and consultative process using the notion of stakeholder representation in designing the institutional architecture for participation. The rhetoric of democratic representation is highly visible in Ghana's constitution and forest policy statements. To what extent were the espoused democratic principles regarding representation implemented by intervening authorities who designed and implemented the REDD Readiness strategy consultative process? The paper explores democratic representation of REDD actors, by examining espoused visions of democracy against actual commitments in practice. The paper argues that representation is an illusory feature of the REDD participatory process in Ghana because it is used symbolically rather than substantively. It shows that policy commitments to democratic representation in the R-PP consultation and participation process were largely symbolic to the extent that the allocation of resources did not reflect the depth of the espoused language of democracy. The paper also shows that there seems to be a fundamental gap on democratic notions of responsiveness and accountability between scholars and authorities of programmes like REDD. Moreover, the paper demonstrates the struggle by REDD authorities to define the institutional architecture for the representation of local people and civil society in national processes like REDD that can deliver responsiveness and accountability in practice. In effect, current understanding of representation under institutional choices for stakeholder participation approaches seems to be very far from the desired democracy outcomes of responsiveness and accountability.

Keywords: forest governance, institutional choice, democratic representation, stakeholder participation, REDD.

Introduction

Since 2008, Ghana has been pursuing a REDD+ programme and the REDD Readiness Preparation Plan (R-PP) development process has generated enormous discussion about stakeholder consultation and participation¹. This study seeks to investigate how representation of local people was contemplated by Ghanaian REDD authorities, and how it was designed and actually executed. These questions are important because REDD+ authorities themselves have asked how effective and equitable consultation with communities can be ensured (Bamfo 2010). In addition, several recent studies have identified responsiveness and accountability of community representatives as problematic in the forestry sector (Opoku 2006; Ayine 2008; Marfo 2001, 2004; Marfo et al. 2012). All of these are against the background of a complex institutional landscape in the forestry sector, emergence of multiple collaborative forest management schemes and multi-stakeholder dialogue platforms as well as a growing civil society coalition claiming largely to represent communities. Therefore, the paper seeks to understand how central authorities in the R-PP process perceived representation and participation and how they operationalized these in terms of institutional choices and allocation of resources.

In this paper, I advance two main arguments with respect to the transition of global and national democracy discourses into national and specific sector programmes such as the REDD. First, I argue that commitments to democracy outcomes are so broadly stated in international/national environmental policy that they create room for re-negotiation and re-definition in which these commitments can be reduced to weak national and programme-specific constructs. In the process of implementation, I argue that key policy actors and implementing agents filter these programmes through their own lenses, and, depending on the structure of power play among key policy actors, this leads to the design of programmes based on these actors own rationale for what is 'good' or 'appropriate'. Whether

these local intervening authorities are committed to democratic representation of local populations, whether they even would know how to implement them were they committed to doing so, or whether they are able to implement these programmes, is an empirical question discernable by the measure of resulting local democratic processes; it cannot be taken for granted.

Further, borrowing largely from the policy and political symbolism literature (Edelman 1998; Colebatch 1998; Emerson 2002), I argue that even when democracy outcomes are selected or preferred in official policies, the commitment of programme authorities in terms of allocation of resources may be merely symbolic to appeal to higher-level national or international authorities. What predisposes programme authorities towards such symbolic commitments may be explained by a number of factors. Smith et al. (2001) makes an overarching argument in support of the politics of choice that no single political goal accounts for the choice of institutions. Rather programme authorities may be influenced by political patronage (see Przeworski 2007; Green 2011), desire for strategic partnerships without genuine commitment to transfer of resources (Pfeffer 1978; Mathur et al. 2003; Ribot 2011) or desire to maximise economic gains (Ekert 2006; von Benda Beckman 2006; Toni 2007; Chhatre 2008; Hara 2008). In this respect, whether there is substantive or symbolic commitment of resources to any stated democracy outcome also becomes an empirical question.

This paper examines the development of the R-PP as a unit of analysis. The focus of attention is on intervening authorities leading the design of the R-PP. Additionally, the paper examines the international framework guiding the preparation of the R-PP and the national processes of agenda setting and stakeholder consultation towards a REDD+ readiness strategy as critical arenas for understanding which sub-national institutions are chosen, what we will call the politics of institutional choice, in designing and implementing representation. In this regard, the study generally sought to understand how authorities in Ghana bringing REDD+ interventions captured and translated democracy principles related to representation into the programme through institutional choices and arrangements. Specifically, the central questions that this paper attempts to answer are:

- i. What democracy intentions regarding representation and participation are espoused by the intervening authorities of the REDD Readiness development process and why?
- ii. How were these intentions translated into practice during the R-PP design process?
- iii. How do the espoused democracy intentions on representation compare with practice?

To understand REDD+ as a forest-climate policy, a number of theoretical approaches exist in the policy science literature². Generally, policy sciences literature has been more explicitly focused on the analysis of decision making within the organizational context of the state and therefore take the decision maker or the organization responsible for decisional outcomes as the principal unit of analysis (Grindle and Thomas 1989). In all cases Edelman (1998) argues that decision making creates potential space for symbolism, where commitments to democracy outcomes by authorities may remain rhetorical. For example, with the rational actor model, where elites operate on the basis of bounded rationality (commitment to decisions that satisfy basic criteria for an acceptable alternative or meet satisfactory standards) or incrementalism (commitment to only marginal changes over time in order to reduce uncertainty, conflict or complexity), the structured commitment of resources to particular outcomes may be limited (Grindle and Thomas 1989). Moreover, the pursuit of such interests may result in priorities that potentially sideline some issues (Grindle and Thomas 1989) and in that case commitment of resources for the participation of non-state actors may remain only on paper.

This paper will show that policy commitments to democratic representation in the R-PP consultation and participation process were largely symbolic to the extent that the allocation of resources did not reflect the depth of the espoused language of democracy. The paper will also show that there is a fundamental gap between how democratic notions of responsiveness and accountability are being advanced by scholars and practitioners as they do not seem to feature prominently in the perceptions of REDD authorities. Moreover, the paper will demonstrate the struggle by REDD authorities to define the institutional architecture for the representation of local people and civil society in national processes like REDD that can deliver responsiveness and accountability in practice.

The next section summarises the main theoretical perspective framing the analysis and the methods that were employed to investigate the research questions. This is followed by presentations and discussions of the results, structured along the themes of the main research questions. The main conclusions from the study are presented in the last section.

Theory

The theory of representation and its relation to democracy has been well studied (Pitkin 1967; Beckley 1999; Wellstead et al. 2003; Przeworski 2007; Saward 2008; Dovi 2010; Ribot 2004, 2011), and what it should mean for policy and research continues to engage political theorists (Saward 2008). Largely elaborating the work of Pitkin (1967), representation has been conceptualised as ‘standing for’ (descriptive) or ‘acting for’ (substantive) a given constituency (Wellstead et al. 2003). In the former, the analysis has focussed more on the identity and socio-political attributes of the representatives and the represented. In the latter, the focus of analysis is on the substantive interest³ of those being represented. Largely influenced by the liberal culture of representative democracy, emphasising the need for representation to reflect the collective interests of individuals in the polity, ‘democratic representation’ has been conceptualised as the responsiveness and accountability of the representative to the represented (Ribot et al. 2006; Mainin et al. 1990; Ribot 2011). To some extent, it has been argued that democratic representation is a function of power as representatives need material and discursive resources to be able to effectively execute their functions and exercise discretion (Ribot and Larson 2005; Ribot, Chhatre and Lankina 2008).

In this respect, focusing on the extent to which intervening authorities transfer power resources to enable representatives to be responsive and accountable can help one analyze the substantive commitment of authorities to democratic representation⁴. Following Rogers (1974), Giddens (1984), and Marfo (2006), power resources include the social, orientational, economic and institutional resources that provide opportunities and capacity for representatives to engage their constituency and be able to meaningfully influence other actors in decision making processes. To explore the notion of power resources concretely, I follow the classification of ‘instrumental’ and ‘infra’ resources by Rogers (1974):

instrumental resources are the means [or resources] of influence; they can be used to reward, punish or persuade...and infra-resources are those attributes, circumstances, or possessions that must be present before the appropriate instrumental resources can be activated or invoked; in that situation they are the preconditions or prerequisites without which instrumental resources are useless (1974:1425).

This perspective of power can be helpful to analyse the commitments made by higher level authorities in practice and to a large extent assess whether espoused commitments to democracy principles are merely symbolic or substantive. A perspective on substantive versus symbolic commitments of resources to implement decisions in a participatory policy making process like the R-PP development is critical. Ralph Emerson (2002) argues that “we learn nothing rightly until we learn the symbolical character of life”. Edelman (1998) has argued that ‘public policy making tends to be a highly stylised and ritualised process. It is replete with symbolism that conveys and serves to rationalise the product, whatever it may be. It has been argued that policy making is necessarily a communicative encounter and that symbols are the currency of this communication process (Edelman, 1998). For the development of policies in certain problematic areas, desired outcomes such as responsiveness and accountability in the participatory process leading to formulation of an R-PP for example may place new demands on the political system. These demands are frequently couched in terms of familiar symbols in order to legitimise the demands and to solidify support (Edelman 1998:119); most of these principles break down when they are required to be framed in specific terms. Thus, following Clay and Schaffer (1984), studying commitment to democratic ideals like responsiveness and accountability of representatives in the R-PP process from the perspective of actual commitment of resources that enabled this is an approach that can help clarify whether official provisions are mere rhetoric or not. In effect, it can help demonstrate the extent to which democratic ideals that dominate international and national environmental policy discourses are given attention in practice.

Method

The domain of the paper is a ‘studying-up’ approach (Nader 1974, Ribot 2011) to understanding higher level authorities’ commitment to democratic representation in Ghana’s R-PP process. By studying up the R-PP process, the research focuses on understanding higher level socio-economic and policy contexts and rationalities of actors who designed the programme for which the outcomes mediated the actions of the policy participants.

To study the democracy intents of authorities as officially espoused by higher level authorities and the public and their commitments in practice in the R-PP process, I followed both discourse and practice. The study used discourse analysis focusing on written texts, actor narratives and participant observation as key data sources.

To this end, the author consulted sector policies, programme and project documents prepared by Government, donors, public institutions and NGOs that elaborate the intents and implementation plans of the authorities implementing the REDD process. Interviews were conducted with key people involved in the design and implementation of the R-PP. In order to validate documentary facts and ascertain their perspectives, 10 experts were interviewed who were conspicuously involved and mentioned in the R-PP document (I call them REDD authorities), drawn from the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources, Forestry Commission, World Bank, R-PP Consultation and Participation Working Group and REDD secretariat. Three REDD-related meetings (both formal and informal) were attended by the researcher to follow the discourse, seek expert opinions and interrogate general understandings of key issues. In addition 30 participants in the various R-PP preparation consultation meetings, representing various community-related groups in the consultation process were interviewed to gain their perspectives on the process, particularly as regards commitment of

power resources. Thus the study's empirical assessment of the allocation of power resources was limited to the evaluative perspectives of informants.

The sections that follow present and discuss the empirical observations made. First an overview of the R-PP development process is presented to show that the Forestry Commission and the World Bank were leading actors who shaped the process. Second, the constitutional and policy proclamations are presented to show that there were a number of them that were espoused with intentions to achieve democracy outcomes with respect to representation. This is followed by a review of power resources that higher level authorities committed themselves to provide to support stakeholder participation. Then the analysis proceeds to elaborate how stakeholder representation was operationalized both in terms of the perception of the authorities and the actual practice. Generally, REDD authorities conceptualized representation in a descriptive sense. Local communities were represented by traditional authorities and NGOs; elected local authorities were not given the same level of recognition thereby undermining local democracy and Ghana's decentralization regime. The assessment of critical resource allocation to selected representatives based on their evaluation is presented. It shows that, by and large, the commitment of the REDD authorities was more symbolic and that access to information, timeliness of information delivery, access to supporting social networks and adequacy of funds for internal consultation and feedback were not satisfactory. The paper ends with a conclusion section that argues that there is a gap between the concept of democratic representation and practice.

Overview of the R-PP Development Process in Ghana

Following a series of meetings and consultations, the World Bank established the Forest Carbon Partnership Fund (FCPF) in September 2007 as a means to finance REDD efforts in developing countries. The FCPF authorities established a so-called Readiness mechanism whose core elements are reference scenario establishment, REDD strategy development and Monitoring System and Verification Schemes. The World Bank has set out eligibility criteria for the selection of countries for support under the programme. Participating countries are required to submit a Readiness Plan Idea Note (R-PIN) which is reviewed by a Technical Advisory Panel (TAP). Selection criteria include relevance of the country in the REDD context (area of forest and carbon stock and relevance of forest to country's economy); quality of the R-PIN, evaluated based on a number of issues including ownership of the proposal by both government and relevant stakeholders; and variety of approaches used including demonstration of inclusiveness and a focus on REDD in combination with poverty reduction, livelihood enhancement, and/or land tenure rights, including alternative forest sector or governance arrangements (World Bank, 2008)

Following a positive evaluation by the TAP and selection by the Participants Committee of the Fund, the country qualifies as a REDD country participant and may then develop a REDD Readiness Plan, which elaborates the R-PIN . Finally, the implementation of the Readiness Plan⁵ results in a Readiness Package, which contains at least the three elements of the Readiness mechanism.

The Forestry Commission (FC) in Ghana completed its R-PIN in 2008, and the country was selected as a REDD country participant. The entire institutional framework for stakeholder participation was designed from the R-PIN which emerged with strong technical support from the Ghana office of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) but championed by the FC.

The R-PIN template demanded that some level of individual and institutional consultation is carried out. Except for IUCN, all the key people consulted were officials of the Forestry Commission. The R-PIN was critiqued by the World Bank (WB) for lack of clarity about how sectoral coordination is done, lack of adequate mentioning of civil society organizations and NGOs and lack of data on affected communities and inadequate mention of such communities in the R-PIN. The R-PIN review found the extent of consultations inadequate as it did not have a strong cross-sectoral and public/affected community support at the national level (World Bank 1998:2). It observed that consultations were only conducted with the Coalition of Rainforest Nations, an international NGO.

The FC received a grant of USD200,000 in February 2009 to prepare its Readiness Plan subject to a number of conditions. The FC submitted the first draft of its R-PP to the FCPF which was reviewed by the TAP in October 2009. The TAP concluded that the R-PP at this stage did not fully meet the standard on stakeholder consultation and participation, especially as regards local communities and on national readiness management arrangements (FCPF-TAP review, 2009). In January 2010, the FC submitted a second draft of the R-PP after addressing concerns of the TAP, including the need for further consultations with local communities and traditional authorities. This was reviewed in February 2010 and the TAP's review suggested that standards on implementation arrangements and stakeholder consultation concerns were partially met and participation requirements were largely met. In the case of the former, the TAP still wanted the roles of the Natural Resource and Environmental Committee and the proposed National REDD Steering Committee to be clarified as well as explanation why the REDD apex body (secreariat) should be located in the FC and not the office of the President. For the TAP, the consultation with traditional authorities and fringe communities, which was previously recommended, was sufficient to consider the consultation complete. The R-PP was finally approved by the FCPF in December 2010.

The FC set up a number of working groups on different subject matters, mainly the Consultation and Participation (CPWG), Policy, and Methodological Groups. The consultation process was designed by the CPWG, which comprised of people mainly from the FC and about three national NGOs (and coalitions) 'thought' to be experienced in designing and conducting consultation. To satisfy the condition for extensive consultation, a number of national and sub-national stakeholder consultations were organized. The R-PP was finally approved in December 2010, after which Ghana has taken steps to solicit funding to pilot selected REDD projects. In March 2014, Ghana submitted an Emission Reduction Programme Idea Note (ER-PIN) to the WB to implement its REDD programme.

The espoused democracy outcomes for representation in the R-PP process

Even though the R-PP document provides extensive text on participation, other national documents were also analysed especially because the R-PP itself takes inspiration from the broad policy directions in the country and in the sector (R-PP, p13).

From a constitutional perspective, two subjects provide a thrust for eliciting the democratic culture for developing sector policy. These are the fiduciary principle and democratic decentralization. The fiduciary principle espoused in article 36 of the Republican Constitution obliges custodians and managers of land (and by extension natural resources) in trust for the people to be accountable. Article 240 largely espouses democratic decentralization, demanding that decision-making affecting local people for example should be localized as much as possible and that local authorities should be accountable. Specifically, it is provided that, as far as practicable, local people should be afforded the opportunity to participate effectively in their governance (section 2e).

Specific to the forestry sector, the 1994 (and more recently the 2012) Forest and Wildlife Policies (FWP) align sector governance to these constitutional principles. The 1994 policy gives guidance that there is “the need to develop a decentralized participatory democracy by involving local people in matters concerned with their welfare (3.2.15)”. Particular mention is made of the development of consultative and participatory mechanisms (see section 5.5.5).

One of the main policy objectives is ‘to promote and develop mechanisms for capacity building for transparent governance, equity sharing and citizens’ participation in forest and wildlife resource management.’ The following provisions of the 2012 FWP summarizes the conviction of government with regards to the above policy commitments:

Due to the strong interest and rights of local communities in forest resource management, the Forestry Commission has modified the focal point of its management system to ensure greater consultation with stakeholders, especially local communities that are dependent on the forests and are willing to ensure its maintenance. Thus, the focus of forest management in Ghana is shifting from a government-led system to a community-government collaborative management approach (section 2.10).

Engaging local communities in consultations, capacity building, education and training is the established platform for their effective participation in negotiation processes and their rights of access to natural resources for maintaining basic

standard of living are maintained (section 3.1.2).

The UN-REDD/Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) Guidelines provide the fundamental thrust for the democratic ideals regarding stakeholder participation of R-PPs. For example they espouse principles such as the right of constituents to elect their representatives, the right of consultation and transparency in information sharing:

Representation of all stakeholders, including indigenous and forest-dependent people through their own existing processes (e.g., councils of elders, headmen and tribal leaders) including through representatives chosen by themselves through their own processes...;

Consultations should facilitate dialogue and exchange of information, and consensus building reflecting broad community support should emerge from consultation. In the case of indigenous peoples, such consensus should include support from the community as expressed by their legitimate chosen leaders...;

There should be records of consultations and a report on the outcome of the consultations that is publicly disclosed in a culturally appropriate form, including in local languages (FCPF & UN-REDD 2011, p4).

In addition to these, the Information Memorandum of the FCPF espouses a clear commitment to stakeholder participation as a key feature of the Facility and provides the fundamental motivation for it:

at national level, the relevant stakeholders and right-holders will be consulted and participate in the readiness process...given that a durable solution to deforestation and degradation requires the involvement of multiple actors across society, it is important that these actors participate early on in the readiness process. Countries will, for example, make special efforts to ensure that forest-dependent indigenous peoples and other forest dwellers meaningfully participate in decisions that may affect them and that their rights are respected consistent with national law and applicable international obligations (2008, p5).

With respect to community participation, the R-PP has a commitment to consult with forest-fringe communities and representation of key stakeholders in the National REDD steering committee (NRSC). First, it was espoused that various stakeholders, including forest-fringe communities, should be involved in the consultation and decision-making processes, including the NRSC (R-PP annex, p45-46). The second principle espoused for the R-PP design can be termed the responsiveness principle. Essentially, the principle is that group representatives should bring on board interests that reflect the collective concerns within their groups. For example, authorities say “clear responsibilities should be identified

for participants...to ensure that levels of communication and consultation are representative both within groups and between them (pp46; 53 of R-PP annex).”

A number of perspectives can be deduced from the discussion with REDD authorities about the meaning of stakeholder participation. First, participation was construed as mere passage of information from intervening agents to stakeholder groups. Second, participation was construed as the provision of spaces of engagement, looking more at the opportunity for those assembled to interact. Here, the scale of engagement may differ from consultation (intervening agents seeking opinions from communities for example) to direct participation where information exchange and perhaps actual exercise of influence of outcome is anticipated. Third, participation was also construed as the representation of stakeholders, where the notion of ‘involvement of all stakeholders’ was usually projected. In this sense, the indicator is more of what proportion of the stakeholders is actually engaged and not so much of opportunity to engage or influence outcomes. The fourth construct moved beyond the elements described above to citizen involvement by way of having the right to choose who represents. The fifth construct anticipated relational aspects of stakeholder representatives and members in terms of demands for responsiveness and accountability. This was described by some of the interviewed authorities as ‘genuine representation’. The last construct anticipated participation to occur when all stakeholders are included in decision making to the extent that they actually own the decision. Here, it is the end that justifies the means, and it seems that proponents of this were more focused on the instrumental utility of participation in helping a process move forward in terms of support for decisions. They did not seem to give attention to the ‘integrity’ of opinions expressed (whether they reflect popular concerns or not), transparency of the process nor being sensitive to representative-constituency relations.

Another key observation is that, to a large extent, almost all the experts perceived representation from a descriptive notion, contemplating a constituency (stakeholder group) that has to be ‘stood for’. Again, it seems that responsiveness was more contemplated than accountability since at least 8 out of 10 of the authorities gave impressions directed towards uptake of stakeholder voice, compared to just about 3 who paid attention to accountability issues.

Thus, to a large extent, while representation was conceptualized in a more descriptive sense in both official discourse and from the perspective of REDD authorities, and that responsiveness was generally cited by both, accountability was not quite reflected in the opinions of the authorities.

Espoused commitments of power resources to operationalize stakeholder representation for developing the R-PP

The R-PP Consultation and Participation Plan (RCPP)⁶ espoused a number of enabling conditions and resources for effective identification and performance of stakeholder representatives in the consultation and decision-making processes. Table 1 provides a summary based on content analysis of the entire Plan using the analytical categorizations of power resources.

Table 1: Espoused conditions and resources intended to enable stakeholders to be represented and participate in the R-PP design process. All pages referred from the RCPP

	Infra resources	Instrumental resources
Institutional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Creation of wider stakeholder consultation as a conditionality by FCPF authorities - Coordination with other consultation processes to reduce consultation fatigue (p43) - Dedicated institution to coordinate the process (p49, 55) - Capacity building of coordination group to mobilize stakeholders for consultation - Use of existing consultative structures(p52) - Creation of expert working groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recognition as legitimate representative by central authorities
Orientalional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Knowledge about lessons from the experiences of other initiatives (p43) - clarity on purpose and what issues to be consulted on - timely availability of information (p49) - Timely notification of events to allow representatives to organize constituency (p49) - Analysis of existing knowledge (p53) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Access to dedicated website (p47) - Access to Policy briefs and information Notes (p47) - Access to synthesized knowledge (p53)
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identification of stakeholders via stakeholder analysis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Access to constituency or social network
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - funding (budget) for implementing the consultation and participation plan (p36-37 of R-PP) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Funding to cover cost of consulting group members and attend meetings

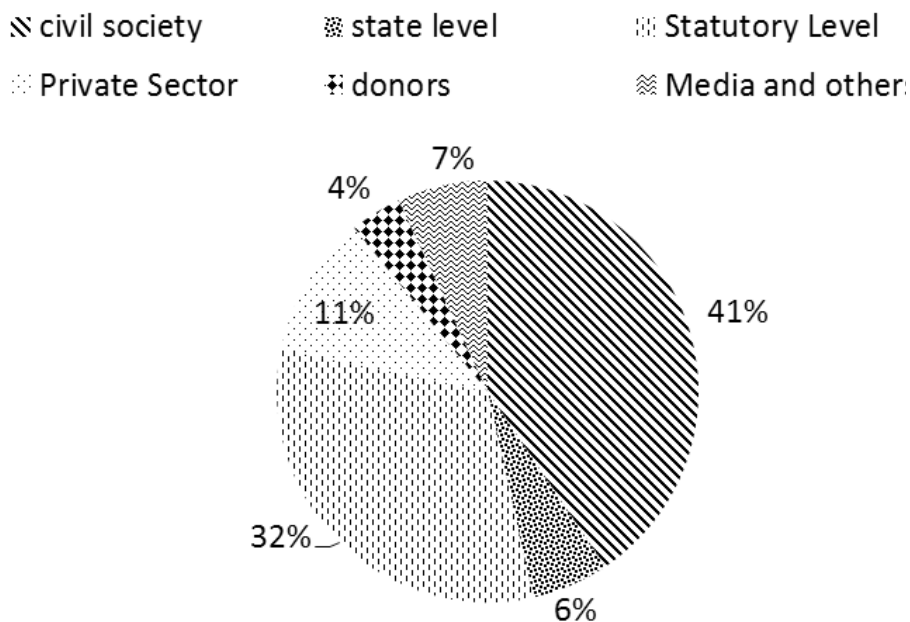
Operationalizing Stakeholder representation in the R-PP

Who was consulted and why?

A whole range of actors were consulted and ‘represented’⁷ on various bodies and in various meetings during the R-PP design process. These included statutory bodies from across Government Ministries, Agencies and Departments, civil society groups, from community-based organizations to national professional associations and the private sector, from farmers to national trade associations. The full list of stakeholders that were earmarked for consultation is given as annex 1b of the R-PP.

A total of 8 national and zonal consultation meetings were held as part of the R-PP participatory process from May 2009 to January 2010. To a large extent, the consultation process succeeded in bringing representatives of most of the stakeholders enlisted on board (at least 50% on average, and impressively about 90% in the case of civil society groupings).

Figure 1: the proportion of the various stakeholder categories who were represented during the R-PP consultation process in Ghana (total number of participants, N= 352)



Generally, figure 1 shows that civil society and statutory agents dominated the consultation process, accounting for over 70 per cent. This trend is not surprising for at least two reasons. First, throughout the drafting of the R-PP, the FCPF review, particularly for the R-PIN and first R-PP drafts, had insisted on the need for the FC to widen the consultation process to include indigenous communities, traditional authorities and civil society in general. Hence a wide range of people – as many as 38 community-level, district-level and national groups – were enrolled in the consultation process under the umbrella of ‘civil society’. In addition to this, special sensitization and consultation meetings were held for traditional authorities and forest-dependent communities in 2010 to further respond to FCPF’s demands for wider consultation. In all, about 120 people (mainly chiefs) participated under the umbrella of traditional authorities ‘representing’ over 45 traditional communities⁸.

Second, the large number of participants drawn from statutory bodies (government departments and public agencies) is not too surprising due to at least two reasons. First, owing to the multi-sectoral demands to implement a successful REDD programme, there are a number of statutory agencies in Ghana whose mandates fall within the

scope of interventions anticipated by REDD. As many as 17 agencies were listed by the Forestry Commission for consultation (annex 1 of R-PP). Second, the Forestry Commission, which is the leading agency negotiating the REDD programme and the main implementation agency of forest policy and management is a huge institution with staff operating from national to district levels. This naturally placed some demands for enrolling a large number of its technical and managerial staff in the consultation process. For example, out of the 44 participants drawn from various statutory agencies during the national multi-stakeholder workshop on REDD in May 2009, 40 of them (over 90%) were FC staff (annex 1 of R-PP, 2010).

Operationalizing local representation

How was the participation of local communities from their consultation to involvement in decision-making bodies constructed and operationalized in the Ghana R-PP process? First of all, it should be mentioned that REDD authorities, both in verbal exchanges and in official documents, categorized 'communities' as part of civil society.

The term 'civil society' was used by REDD authorities to embody a large number of actors ranging from traditional authorities, forest users, community-based, national and international NGOs, even to institutions like the university and research institutions (which are somehow autonomous public institutions). As many as 38 groups were labeled 'civil society'.

The term 'community' appeared in the R-PP discourse sometime labelled 'forest-dependent' or 'affected' communities. While no operational definition was given, it appears the meaning assigned by REDD authorities was 'forest dependent resource owners including forest fringe communities which have influence on forest management activities' (p3, FCPF Review, 2008). From this perspective, it is not surprising that the R-PP consultation process involved all manner of people who could be said to have some influence on forest management. They included members of the Community Resource Management Committees, traditional leaders (chiefs) who are in most part of the forest zone custodians of communal (stool) lands, farmers, NTFP gatherers, district forest forum, fire volunteers, tree-growers association and so on. Therefore, as per the manner in which the term community was contemplated in official R-PP documents, the range of actors who were listed for participation in the process may suffice, at least in the sense of descriptive representation (Pitkin 1967).

The material content of information submitted to REDD authorities at all levels of consultation were mainly those of the opinion, however insightful, of the people who were privileged to 'stand in' as community representatives⁹. This substantially

conflates everything about the representation of communities into the subject matter of who represents. This is because there was no distinction, at least from a conceptual viewpoint during the design of the process, between a process of obtaining material content of community voice and the human agent articulating that voice.

The analysis on the question of community representation is difficult due to the heterogeneity embedded in the term itself and the wide geographical scope covered by forest-fringe populations. In the face of this complexity, REDD authorities operationalized community representation using various strategies, generally depending on the nature of decision outcome desired and the scale at which community opinions were being sought.

First, community representatives were 'chosen' from a wide range of actors who possessed attributes of specific groups who could be brought under the definition of forest dependent communities. Such actors were chiefs, chairpersons of Community Resource Management Committees (CRMCs) or District Forest Forum, Assemblymen (elected local government representatives), and members of Community Fire Volunteers and so on. This was especially the case involving all the consultations purported by REDD authorities to target local communities. The sub-national consultation workshop raised a number of issues including the need to use community assemblies, information centres and radio and not invited institutions only. Even then, authorities must recognise various actors within the hierarchy of institutions like chieftaincy which have paramount, divisional and stool land chiefs across different jurisdictional scales.

Second, community representation in national REDD institutional set-ups, such as the NRSC, was operationalized using the involvement of selected traditional authority or civil society activists. Generally, all REDD authorities interviewed perceived that the representation of National House of Chiefs (NHC) or traditional Authorities, National Forest Forum (NFF) and FWG on the NRSC should suffice for the representation of local community interest in the process. Why were these recognized by REDD authorities as community representatives? For traditional authorities, REDD experts generally indicated that Chiefs are custodians of forest land (landowners) and that they have gained the legitimacy as representatives of their people. It is, therefore, only logical that the seat allocated to traditional authorities should be referred to the NHC which is the lawful body representing the chieftaincy institution. For the FWG, the general impression is that it has gained certain legitimacy as an organized voice for civil society participation (here the term refers to all actors outside the government or public and private agencies) in national policy issues and that their role in the FLEGT-VPA negotiation was widely cited. For example a senior officer of IUCN

said “The FWG is chosen as a body to represent communities because of their experiential knowledge on issues affecting communities and also because they have a network that transcends to local areas (pers.comm. 5/12/12)”. Another senior FC representative on the REDD consultation planning committee (CPC) added “FWG is assumed to represent several NGOs and hence have a broader constituency... The NFF has gained legitimacy as a multi-stakeholder dialogue platform in the forestry sector and indeed was slated as the platform to engage stakeholders in the initial drafts of the R-PP (pers. comm., 12/10/12).”

How were civil society representatives chosen to sit on the NRSC? Out of the 4, only 2 members were ‘automatically’ admitted by virtue of their elected position in their affiliated institutions (the NHC and NFF). The other two were selected based on a number of factors including their perceived knowledge level and their experience and network in the sector. Some indications of the political lineage of the selected representatives were given during informal interactions with some REDD authorities. A member of the CPC iterated, “representatives were chosen through nomination or selected based on previous knowledge about key people from respective stakeholder groups”. This is typical and even in organised multi-stakeholder dialogue (MSD) platforms, Obeng et al (2013) reports that about 40% of the participants in the MSD platform for chainsaw milling¹⁰ were not selected through consensus from their groups. Second, on the question of responsiveness and accountability of these to their constituency, the general observation is that there is no mechanism or demands (sanctions) on these people to solicit views or report back. The R-PP documents reviewed including even FCPF reviews did not, by and large, anticipate mechanisms for ensuring responsiveness and accountability. All that was stressed was the need for a wider stakeholder consultation, at best being more specific on groups that FCPF authorities thought had been sidelined. A number of remarks from some REDD authorities interviewed should suffice to illustrate the point. A high level civil society activist said “We have no involvement in ensuring feedback or verifying responsiveness of what these people represent- by and large we take that for granted”. Another senior FC official observed that the accountability of chiefs has often been assumed and no effort has gone beyond their consultation...our view is that responsiveness will be achieved through the CRMCs and other structures.”

Interrogating the subject of democratic representation further, an expert from the donor community remarked “I am afraid there is no representation...my observation over the years here in Ghana is that people are selected because they are a friend of XX friends”.

The absence of accountability of group representatives in the R-PP process is not exceptional as the problem even exists in platforms such as the chainsaw MSD

where resources were dedicated to capacity building in these areas (Mckeown et al. 2013). A review by Obeng et al (2013) suggests that in at least 30% of the cases in the MSD, stakeholder representatives in the process did not report back to their constituents. The issue of accountability of stakeholder representatives continues to emerge in both policy and scholarly discussions in Ghana as a major governance challenge in the forestry sector (Marfo, 2004; Opoku, 2006; Ayine 2008) and Marfo et al. (2012) and Cobbina (2013) identify it as critical to the success of REDD.

6

Resource Commitments to Stakeholder Representation

First, the 10 REDD authorities were asked to assess the extent to which they were satisfied with stakeholder representation. The focus was on the number of stakeholder groups represented, the extent to which they think their substantive concerns were represented, and the extent to which they observed or believed representatives had internal consultation with their constituencies.

Generally, except for private sector and local communities, the authorities were quite highly satisfied with the representation from statutory bodies, traditional authorities and civil society groups (mainly NGOs). However, in over 90 per cent of the cases, they were generally satisfied with the representation of the substantive concerns of all these stakeholder groups. In terms of internal consultation, the authorities were generally not satisfied with representatives of local communities, statutory and private sector actors as having done sufficient internal consultation. This perception was confirmed by the 30 selected representatives interviewed. In over 95 per cent of the cases, none of these ever consulted any group member except a few NGO representatives who indicated consulting colleagues once in a while. In all (100%) of the cases, it was noted that there was no sanction or mechanisms for sanctioning representatives for failure to conduct internal consultation or provide feedback. Perhaps, this is so because in almost 80 per cent of the cases, representatives were nominated/selected by REDD officials; the rest participated through privileges of their elected positions such as being President of the NFF or already representing civil society on other platforms such as the FLEGT VPA Steering committee. This contradicts the observation by Obeng et al (2013) in the case of MSDs where some form of internal consultation or feedback occurred in at least 60 per cent of the cases. To some extent, this is expected because the project had committed resources to the areas of capacity building, organization

of district and community level consultation platforms to facilitate downward and upward flow of information. This reinforces the thought that commitment of resources beyond participation in dialogue makes a difference to democratic representation.

Second, the REDD authorities and the 30 stakeholder representatives were asked to assess resource commitments towards democratic representation. The assessment was based largely on the infra resources identified from the Consultation and Participation Plan as critical conditions to enable democratic representation in the consultation process.

Generally, the 30 respondents fully agreed in 60 per cent of the cases that the Forestry Commission was committed to providing the 10 identified infra resources that would enable effective representation. However, it was only in about 35 per cent of the cases that these authorities fully agreed that FC actually met their commitment to providing these resources. Areas where authorities predominantly agreed that commitment of resources were unsatisfactory were timely release of background information for meetings and resources to undertake internal consultation and feedback.

To a large extent, even though the FCPF authorities in approving the R-PP were satisfied with the level of participation, the allocation of resources could not have supported democratic representation. Generally, the response from some civil society representatives who participated in the various consultation meetings confirmed this (Table 2). For example, the article III of the annex to the grant letter providing USD 200,000 for the preparatory effort specifically defined eligible expenditure items and went to the extent of allocating amounts; 65 per cent of the grant was to go to Consultant's services leaving only 35 per cent for training and workshops. It was indicated that some funds from the Natural Resource and Environmental Programme (NREG) was actually used to supplement the R-PP consultation process.

Table 2: Summary of responses from civil society representatives about REDD authorities' commitments to important resources to enable an effective representation (n=30)

Description of identified power resources	Very satisfied	Quite satisfied	Not satisfied
Recognition and respect by Government officials	22	8	0
Feeling that your opinions are respected and taken into account	19	11	0
Timely notification of meetings to enable you prepare	0	14	16
Clarity about the purpose for the consultation	3	18	9

Timely release of background information	0	8	22
Access to sources of information about REDD such as Policy Briefs, Information Notes	0	17	13
Access to social networks that strenghtens position	0	17	13
Adequacy of funds and logistics support for your participation	1	13	16

Not surprisingly, representatives of various community and civil society groups were largely not satisfied with notification of meetings (53%), timely release of information (73%) and provision of funds to support their participation (53%). However, these are very critical conditions to enable internal consultation and accountability. A leading CSO member of the CPC member remarked that:

The initial design of the consultation and participation plan was excellent. Implementation however was initially faulted. Later when it became necessary to rectify the situation, not enough time was given for this; there was also no resources provided for internal consultations.... I represent YYY in the civil society group but we do not have resources to report back.

The case of the chainsaw MSD review where 95 per cent of participants were satisfied with the participatory process can attest to the importance of these resources. In that case, at least 75 per cent of participants engaged in internal consultation with group members (Obeng et al. 2013), 93 per cent were satisfied with the briefing materials provided during the meetings, and 92 per cent were satisfied with the agenda and invitation; 65 per cent had received the invitation one to two weeks prior to the meeting (Mckeown et al. 2013).

Conclusion

The first issue that is raised by following through the R-PP process regarding policy and resource commitments to democratic representation, is that the term ‘representation’ as a democracy outcome (Ribot et al, 2011) as used in the R-PP discourse reflected descriptive rather than substantive representation (Pitkin 1967). Both the perception of authorities and how representation was construed and implemented revealed the understanding that stakeholders must be represented by somebody who can be said to belong or share an identity that properly links him to the larger stakeholder group. A characteristic like ‘localness’ that could be associated with chiefs, community-based NGOs and forest user groups enabled several actors to be recognized as community representatives. The descriptive nature of representation as observed in the R-PP process is characteristic of the forestry sector. McKeown et al (2013) states that in the past decade alone, Ghana has undertaken about 10 programmes/projects in the sector that required stakeholder participation and consultation and in all cases, participants have been selected from stakeholder groups as representatives.

The second observation is that the R-PP case demonstrates that there are inherent difficulties associated with the representation of local people or communities in national-level processes. This is especially so as authorities construct representation in the descriptive sense. This is because local people fall into so many stakeholder groupings and the geographical spread of forest-based communities is so wide that it is almost impossible to have each group represented in a national consultation process. In almost all the cases reviewed by McKeown et al (2013), the local peoples’ representation had been assumed by the participation of a traditional authority, farmer or some community-based NGO, usually selected by programme organisers. Therefore, in the case of local communities, as well argued by Wellstead et al. (2003), democratic representation may have to be assessed more substantively in terms of the responsiveness and accountability of those making claims of representation. Even though civil society

activists and traditional authorities made claims for local representation, as indeed confirmed by REDD authorities, they acted as benign dictators so far as there was no downward accountability (see Ribot 2011). Even for those recognized as community representatives in the R-PP, the challenge is the extent to which what was articulated could be said to represent 'community interest'. This is an empirical question not addressed in this paper. However, these inherent challenges associated with local community representation in national level processes make it difficult for one ascertain whether there is a deliberate strategy to marginalize their representation or higher level authorities themselves struggle about how to operationalize the concept. The practical question is whether we can isolate communities from civil society. The question is more relevant as recent evidence from a study of the democratic role of NGOs in Ghana suggest that, contrary to claims and beliefs of representation of citizen voice, NGOs fail as representatives (Kamastra and Knippenber, 2014).

The issue of civil society representation in forest policy processes is increasingly becoming controversial (Marfo et al. 2013). This is because the term 'civil society representation' has a fluid boundary and can refer to a whole range of actors. For example, during the FLEGT-VPA negotiation process, civil society participation was solicited using the Forest Watch Ghana contact group to nominate representatives to sit on the steering body. By recognizing the FWG, other civil society groups which are not members were isolated for any possible participation. By REDD authorities choosing to follow the structure used by the VPA, the structural isolation of non-FWG civil society groups was sustained as far as civil society representation on important bodies like the NRSC and consultation and participation committee are concerned. This is being resisted, both within the FWG itself and outside. For example, concerns raised by some members of the FWG with respect to the need to review their representation in the VPA and REDD process are well documented to the extent of demanding fresh elections or nominations (FWG AGM minutes, 2012). More recently, in passing the VPA Legislative Instrument (LI 2184 of 2012), the law recognized Traditional Authorities and Trades Union Congress (a national body for organized labor) as representing civil society. This provision has raised some debates (including one at a national legal working group meeting in Accra). A leading FWG member hinted that there are moves by FWG to use administrative procedure to 'derecognize' TUC as an appropriate civil society actor in forestry matters. According to his narrative, the effort is aimed at ensuring that the practice of inviting FWG as civil society representative continues even if the law is not amended as desired.

Two conclusions can be made from this phenomenon. First, it seems that traditional authorities have gained entrenched legitimacy as representatives of

local people. Notwithstanding, several authors have written to criticize their accountability (Aidoo 1978, Ribot 1999, Marfo, 2004, Ayine 2008, Larson et al. 2010, Marfo et al. 2012) and others (Owusu 1996, Amanor, 2002, Opoku 2006, Berry 2009) have explained why central governments and their authorities continue to recognize chiefs as local representatives in policy processes. Second, even though community and civil society participation seems to engage the attention of authorities, there seems to be continuous struggle to define the exact architecture for it. How to operationalize community representation differs and there are various models using all manner of actors including National Forest Forum, Forest Watch Ghana, Trades Union Congress, traditional authorities and so on. Indeed the R-PIN and technical review comments themselves 'promoted' traditional authorities whenever local participation was mentioned.

To what extent can one say that the authorities in the R-PP consultation process were committed to democratic representation? From a power resource allocation perspective, the assessment by respondents suggests that, by and large, the commitment remained largely rhetorical. In this respect Marfo et al (2013) have argued that shifting from programme-specific consultations towards institutionalizing a common multi-stakeholder dialogue for the forestry sector will be useful as resources can be used to strengthen internal consultation and accountability measures. What about if civil society representatives were able to articulate the concerns of the broad civil society groups based on their extensive knowledge and privileged networks to the extent that internal consultation may not have changed the outcome of their positions? It is argued that this may not matter to the question of symbolic commitment because it does not detract the FC from providing adequate resources for such internal consultations.

The paper suggests that there is a gap between the concept of democratic representation against how policy actors in the R-PP case constructed and operationalised it. There seems to be a significant gap because democratic notions of responsiveness and accountability being advanced by scholars like Wellstead et al (2003) and Ribot (2011) do not seem to feature prominently in the perceptions of REDD authorities. Of course it should not be surprising then to find that the structured commitment of power resources that enables democratic representation was not conspicuous in the R-PP process. From the foregoing, we conclude that democratic representation in the Ghana R-PP process remains largely a rhetorical and symbolic notion. Even when some commitments to it have been rhetorically espoused by authorities, it has remained symbolic, to follow Edelman (1998), and that the allocation of power resources to implement them in practice has been found wanting.

Notes

1. The author also acknowledges similar consultation process during the Voluntary Partnership Agreement negotiation between Government of Ghana and the European Union.
2. Grindle and Thomas (1989) for example gives a more detailed description of pluralistic and public choice, state-centered, rational actor, bureaucratic politics and state interests models and approaches in explaining policy choices.
3. Borrowed heavily from federalist and utilitarian thought, what should be the determining factor for representation of a group is their interest. Pitkin (1967, p89) argues that interests become attached and subjective when that interest is ‘what men feel’ and that the ‘mild voice of reason’ should prevail over the immediate selfishness of individuals or groups within a constituency. Bentham (1883) argues that there are ‘universal interests’ that are public by nature, what Mill (1861, p69) has called ‘shared public interest’. Wellstead et al. (2003) argue that it is the representation of public interests that promotes the utility of all individuals in a group or society. The other aspect of substantive representation of interests is what Edmund Burke (1949) has called ‘virtual’ representation. Here interests refer to the representation of unattached objects like environmental safety, economic development and so on which transcends beyond mere public opinion to reflect what Burke called *feelings* of the nation. Pitkin (1967, p181) cited Burke’s (1949) argument that “good government emerged from ‘reasoning of wise and intelligent men and not the so-called will of the public”.
4. I intentionally use the term ‘power resources’ to follow the analytical distinction between power and resources (see Giddens, 1984, Clegg 1992, Marfo 2006).
5. The Readiness Plan elaborates on the R-PIN and contains more detailed information on the country’s forest policy, including the legal and institutional framework, the countries monitoring system, and its strategy to read Readiness. It would include concrete terms of reference for the elaboration of the REDD strategy; describes the details of the stakeholder consultation process including how to involve affected communities, indigenous peoples and forest dwellers. The Plan would represent approaches a country would consider to elaborate on the reference scenario and the monitoring strategy design. The Readiness Plan would further include an implementation schedule and would outline clear responsibilities and milestones. The Readiness Plan would also include a communication and outreach plan (World Bank, 2008:18).

6. The goal of the Plan was to achieve collective ownership of the process to develop strategies that reduce emissions through deforestation and degradation and to support conservation, sustainable forest management and enhancement of forest carbon stocks. The specific purpose was to ensure that all stakeholder groups have a better understanding of REDD+, how it relates to Ghana and what roles, responsibilities and opportunities they have within Ghana's efforts (p. 46 of R-PP Annex 1).
7. I use the word 'represented' in quotes in a very general everyday sense without imputing any conceptual meaning to it. Where I desire to do so, it is emphasized in the text.
8. Here, I use traditional communities to represent different scales of geo-political jurisdictions, ranging from specific villages (e.g. Goviefe, Etwereso etc) to district or traditional areas (e.g. South Dayi District Assembly or Juaso traditional area which may encompass several towns and villages).
9. Evidence gathered from informal interaction of 30 participants at both national and sub-national level consultation workshops revealed this.
10. The Tropenbos International Ghana programme, Forestry Commission and Forestry Research Institute of Ghana are implementing an EU-funded project to address illegal chainsaw milling in Ghana. The project aims to employ a participatory and consultative approach using a multi-stakeholder dialogue process, involving various stakeholders in the forestry sector (for an overview see Mckeown et al. 2013; Obeng et al. 2013).

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