



SUMMARY REPORT

**THE VOLUNTARY PARTNERSHIP
AGREEMENT VPA-FLEGT AND
TRANSPARENCY IN THE
FORESTRY SECTOR**

The Voluntary Partnership Agreement VPA-FLEGT and Transparency in the Forestry Sector

Cover photo: A factory surveyed by SRD

Disclaimer:

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I. INTRODUCTION

To promote timber legality, the European Union (EU) has pursued an initiative to establish a voluntary partnership agreement on strengthening forest law enforcement, forest governance and trade in forest products (VPA-FLEGT) since 2003 - a legally binding trade agreement between the EU and timber exporting countries outside the EU. Leading one of the rich countries in forest resources, in 2010, the Vietnamese government started the process of negotiating this agreement with the EU. After a process of negotiation, in 2018, the agreement was signed and in June 2019, it was ratified and came into effect. It is expected that by 2021, Vietnam will have been exporting FLEGT-licensed timber and timber products to the EU market.

The core content of the VPA is to provide a legal framework with the aim of ensuring that all timber products imported into the EU are legally produced and from wood of legal origin. Although the VPA-FLEGT focuses on a bilateral trade agreement on legal timber, it also has further expectations (Jade, 2014).

According to PROFOR and FAO (2011), forest governance was seen as a foundation for developing appropriate policies and providing better technical solutions to a more sustainable and effective usage in forest product. In Vietnam, forest governance and its principles such as accountability, transparency, equity, efficiency and participation have been given attention from government agencies and NGOs recently. Ensuring fully comprehensive understandings and practice of these principles among society is the responsibility of not only government agencies but also independent organizations, especially which in VNNGO-FLEGT network, through their participation and supervision. It could be said that one of the fundamental and essential principles of forest governance is the principle of transparency, which has urged all the VPA-FLEGT Agreement partners to reach a consensus on the "Disclosure of Information" Annex. Hoang et al (2017), conducting an overview study on forest governance, also stated that in Vietnam, the current policy and institutional systems show that the level of transparency in forestry is not high.

As a golden opportunity to enhance forest governance, VPA-FLEGT is said to make a significant contribution to the forestry sector in developing forest transparency and governance (Global Witness, 2012). The implementation of the VPA-FLEGT promotes forest law enforcement, improves forest governance, and enhances transparency, which strongly results in sustainable forest development (Neupane et al., 2019).

II. AN OVERVIEW OF TRANSPARENCY

In recent years, the concept of transparency in forestry has been widely used by many international organizations as an effort to improve forest governance in the forest-resourceful countries. In an increasingly interconnected and complex world, transparency can be seen as a

mean of achieving sustainability (Gupta & Mason, 2014). Due to practical and important benefits, increased transparency is one of the indispensable elements in international conventions and agreements, including the VPA.

It can be seen that the only concept of transparency does not exist. The most general concept is that transparency could be understood as the right to know, and the right to access information freely and publicly (Fern, 2015).

Studies conducted regarding transparency have shown huge benefits that can be achieved with improved transparency. The first is to reduce corruption. Through improved transparency and accountability, barriers related to corruption are likely to be reduced as a result of clarification of relevant legal and regulatory processes in the VPA implementation (Jade, 2014). A lack of transparency facilitates increased corruption, allows powerful individuals to illicitly profit by distributing harvesting to their friends and relatives, to keep companies free of charges or tariffs on harvesting and selling timber (EUFLEGT Facility, 2015). In their study, Lindstedt and Naurin (2006) showed that accessing to adequate information would have a very positive effect in curbing corruption in case the attached conditions are met. By targeting accretion of transparency in timber processing countries, corruption will also be addressed. Studies also show that although transparency has a huge impact on limiting corruption, it cannot be claimed that lack of transparency is the result of increased corruption and that transparency has a clear relationship with corruption. The degree of corruption is not necessarily the result of transparency, but may also involve many other factors (Marie, 2017). Secondly, transparency helps to avoid conflicts as possible. Conflicts between stakeholders can arise due to a lack of accessing to information. The VPA process makes forest governance more transparent, minimizes conflicts and potential causes of conflict (EUFLEGT Facility, 2015). The third is to enhance voices and participation. Transparency allows stakeholders to express their point of view as well as to take part in a debate. A lack of transparency also means that residents and communities are possibly taken their own rights to control of resources including land and have difficulty participating in decision-making process on forest resources; the government lose their revenue (EUFLEGT Facility, 2015). Increasing transparency enables power-shifting and giving local forest communities a stronger voice (Broekhoven, Wit, Goransson, John, & Van, 2014). The fourth is to prevent deforestation, to promote the efficiency of organizations as well as to empower citizens. Fern (2015), when researching in Congo, found that the lack of transparency has exacerbated unsustainable usage of forest resources and created conflicts between the harvesting company and communities. This study also shows that transparency contributes greatly to reducing deforestation, improving organizational performance and empowerment. Deficiency in transparency and accountability often leads to illegal logging and corruption (Minang, Duguma, Bernard, & Nzyoka, 2017).

Not only is a trade agreement aimed at promoting legally imported timber and wood products from Vietnam to EU, the VPA is also a tool to enhance governance which includes increased transparency. The VPA has created a favorable opportunity for many stakeholders to participate in the negotiation process, helped to enhance transparency and accountability in forestry (Fern, 2015). An indispensable component of the VPA is independent audit. An independent auditor reviews and verifies the effectiveness and reliability of the legal timber system, reports it to the EU and VPA partner country, thereby enhancing transparency. In addition, the VPA has also put in place an index to promote information transparency. Annex VIII of the VPA requires the partner country of the VPA to make their information accessible and to public their documents and data relating to forest sector principles and practices. This annex regulates a binding obligation on the authorities to disclose information, through which accessing to information is encouraged, and transparency is promoted (EUFLEGT Facility, 2015; Global Witness, 2012). It can be seen that VPA's regulations related to promoting multi-stakeholder participation in negotiations, conducting independent audits, and requirements for disclosure are the reasons for improved transparency in forest governance. However, whether the great benefits of transparency are achieved or not depends greatly on the stakeholders and on the VPA implementation process.

III. OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. General objectives

The general objective of the study is to assess the current level of transparency in the forest production sector in Vietnam and to provide recommendations to increase transparency in the VPA-FELGT implementation.

2. Specific objectives

- 1) Assess the level of transparency in forestry production regarding to the VPA-FLEGT implementation at present to serve as the basis for future impact assessments.
- 2) Identify obstacles in implementing the commitment to transparency as expected by the VPA-FLEGT and then propose to promote transparency in forestry production.

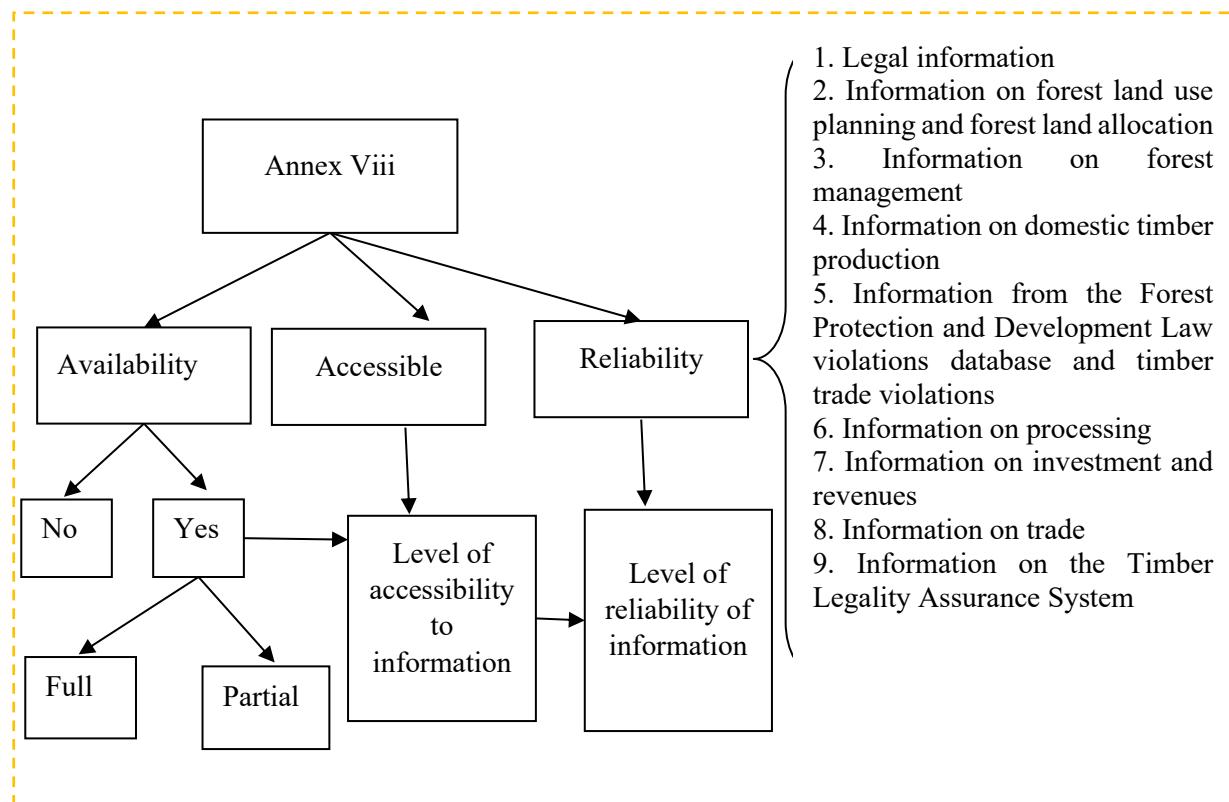
IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1. Study framework

According to Fern (2015), access to information could be seen as the central issue of the VPA-FLEGT on the ground that through this, stakeholders, especially civil society organizations, were able to supervise government action and commitment. The VPA-FLEGT could help to improve transparency in a number of ways, notably the information disclosure addendum in the VPA-FLEGT imposed a binding obligation on the government to disclose information, which led to enhancing transparency (Global Witness, 2012). In Vietnam, the regulation on information

disclosure was outlined in Annex VIII of the VPA-FLEGT. Transparency was shown on 3 different aspects. First was the availability of information, which means whether the information had been issued or not. Second was whether the issued information can be easily accessed or not. Thirdly, in case the information had already been accessed, whether this information was synchronized, accurate or not.

Based on the mentioned issues regarding transparency, a research framework was developed, which is shown in Figure 1.



2. Study sites

The study was conducted in Son La province, Quang Tri province, and Ca Mau province in the Northwest, North Central, and South West regions of Vietnam, respectively. The selection of these three regions stemmed from the fact that these provinces contained large forest areas and diverse ethnic groups (Kinh and ethnic minorities); people had many years of experience in forest planting and exploitation; different levels of access to information in forestry widely existed and local enterprises whose fields were exploiting and processing timber were active.

The research team interviewed staff of the Thuan Chau special-use protection forest management board (MB), timber processing enterprises in Son La city, and households in Thuan Chau district. In Quang Tri, interview studied of enterprises in Dong Ha city and Cam Lo district, households of Dakrong district, and officials of the FPD. In Ca Mau province, the research team interviewed staff from the National Park Management Board of Mui Ca Mau, the Forest

Management Board of Tam Giang 1 and the afforestation households in Dam Doi district, Ngoc Hien.

3. Study stage

The study selected a non-probability sampling method to perform sampling. For the first stage, the study used convenience sampling method to select objects to be consulted.

In the second stage, the quota sampling method was applied, in which participants were divided into three groups, including (i) forestry staffs, (ii) enterprises and (iii) afforestation households.

Table 1. The number of participants across 3 provinces

	Ca Mau	Quang Tri	Son La	Total
Officials	13	12	12	37
Enterprises	3	7	6	16
Afforestation households	29	29	31	89
Total				132

4. Information collection

4.1. Collecting secondary data

Desktop review was used to synthesize information related to transparency policies and regulations in the forestry sector from research studies, policy reports, the government's reports and online articles. In addition, the research also collected local socio-economic reports and statistics to synthesize basic information of each study site.

4.2. Semi-structured interview

To collect primary data for the study, the research team conducted semi-structured interviews with 3 different groups of entities who were only selected to interview on condition that they met the criteria that the research team had set out. The study identified the criteria for selecting respondents for each group, for example, for afforestation households: (i) at least 5 years of experience in forest plantation, (ii) the area of forestry land is larger than 0.5 ha, (ii) income from forestry is an important source of income for the household.

5. Data Analysis

Statistics program R and SPSS were used to analyze the data. The study applied the non-parametric test method, namely Kruskal-Wallis test to analyze differences for sex, education, and

ethnicity variables. The analysis described the frequency, the average and standard deviation used to analyze variables performing levels of information accessibility, and the reliability of information.

In addition, we also applied a likert scale from 1 to 5 to determine the accessibility as well as the reliability of information with 5 levels. This scale was used to answer two questions about the respondent's consent to (1) The information is easily accessible, and (2) The information provided is extremely reliable.

Analyzing the accessibility and reliability of the information is particularly concerned with whether the respondents have had access to the information; if so, it would be analyzed and if not, then not included in the analysis. Out of the 30 sources of information that were already available, the research team eliminated the items that were not relevant, then randomly selected 30% of the items (after being selected) to evaluate the accessibility to information and reliability of information as specified in Annex VIII of the VPA.

Step 1: Eliminated information items that do not have access to all three groups of audiences. Accordingly, the study selected 19 eligible information items.

Step 2: Applied the simple random sampling method to select the information items to use in the evaluation, randomly select 30% out of 19 information items. Using the random formula in excel, the researchers chose 6 items of information to attach in the analysis.

Step 3: Assessed the accessibility and reliability of the 6 selected information items to inference in general.

$$\sum_{i=1}^k DGC = \sum_{i=1}^k M1 + \sum_{i=1}^k M2 + \dots + \sum_{i=1}^k M6$$

In which:

DGC: General assessment of accessibility and reliability of information items

M1, M2 ... M6: Selected information item (Six information items)

i: Order i ranges from 1 to k (k = 5)

Qualitative data obtained from research reports, in-depth interviews, newsletters, articles on Webs were analyzed by the NVIVO program.

V. RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION RESULTS

1. Characteristics of surveyed target groups

The three target groups interviewed included the official group, the timber processing enterprise group, and the farmer group. The characteristics of these groups were described in Table 2. The majority of respondents to the survey were men (85%), of which 51% were farmers, 23.1% were officials, and 10.5% were enterprises. The educational attainment level was different between the farmer groups and the two other groups. More than 90% of the interviewees were officials and entrepreneurs with bachelor's and post-graduate degrees, while the majority of farmers were primary, secondary and highschool educated. Education levels of the interviewees varied from low to high, which resulted in the highly representative ability to access and evaluate information. The overall ethnic composition was relatively balanced, 50.7% of whom were Kinh ethnic and 49.3% were ethnic minorities. However, there was a significant difference between the target groups. 100% of enterprises and 26/37 which was equivalent to 70% of officials were Kinh people, while the farmer group had 59/89 (66.3%) people belonging to ethnic minorities. It could be seen that the target groups participating in the interviews were ethnically diverse. This also helped to reflect the research results honestly, which was consistent with the fact that households relying on afforestation include both Kinh households and ethnic minorities.

Table 2. Characteristics of surveyed target groups

		Officials	Entrepreneurs	Farmers	Chi-square
Sex	Male	33(23,1)	15(10,5)	73(51,0)	2.0936
	Female	4 (2,8)	1(0,7)	16(11,2)	
Educational attainment level	Primary			20 (14,0)	88.027***
	Secondary			34(23,8)	
	Highschool	5 (3,5)	1(0,7)	32(22,4)	
	University	21(14,7)	14(9,8)	2(1,4)	
	Post-University	11(7,7)	1(0,7)	1(0,7)	
Ethnic	Kinh	26(18,3)	16(11,3)	30 (21,1)	31.287***
	Others	11 (7,7)	0 (0)	59(49,5)	

Significant difference with P <0.01

2. The availability of information

According to Section 2 of Annex VIII of VPA-FLEGT, the information published by Vietnam included 9 groups of information and 36 specific information items (Figure 2). According

to the results of consultation, existing reports' references and surveys of related websites (General Department of Forestry, VCCI, thuvienphapluat and so on), there were 28/36 items of information, which was equivalent to 78% of the information items specified in Annex VIII were available from different sources. Currently, in the processing information group, the information item on the "List of Organizations that is periodically updated by risk groups from the OCS System" has not been available yet. As for the VNLTAS Information Group, all seven items of information are being prepared to be developed guidelines on implementation by MARD and GDF.

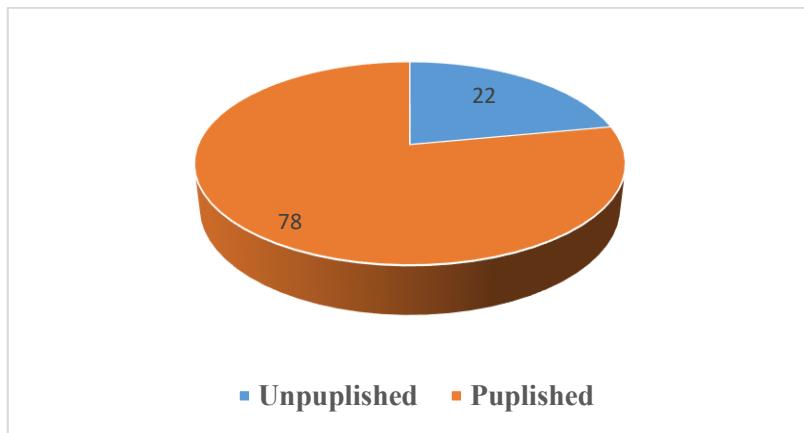


Figure 2. Proportion of published information items according to Appendix VIII of VPA-FLEGT

To proactively access information as stated in Appendix VIII, visitors could use three main sources. The first was through completely open sources on the Websites. The second was by means of written requests. The last resort was to register an account with password on the Website to access. In terms of ease and convenience, completely open sources were probably the most popular, followed by open source but required an account (in fact, not everyone can be given a password to access) and the least was the sources that require official dispatch to access.

3. Level of accessibility and reliability/accuracy of information.

Based on the outlined criteria (Section 4.5 on data analysis), the research team randomly selected six items of information to analyze, from which commented on the level of accessibility to information and the level of reliability/accuracy of existing information in Annex VIII of the VPA.

Relevant legal documents that are referenced in Appendix II and Appendix V and the amendments and supplements thereafter.

Relevant legal documents related to Annex II focus on the regulations relating to the definition of legal timber and Annex V relating to the system of ensuring timber legality. For this information item, 50% of respondents (13/26 people) were neutral and 30% of respondents (8/26 people) agreed that accessing this information is very easy. Officials had access to this information the most, followed by enterprises and the communities. The data showed that only about 20% of

interviewed people have ever accessed this information. Meanwhile, more than 90% of farmers havd never approached because they had not been interested or had not been informed about this information.

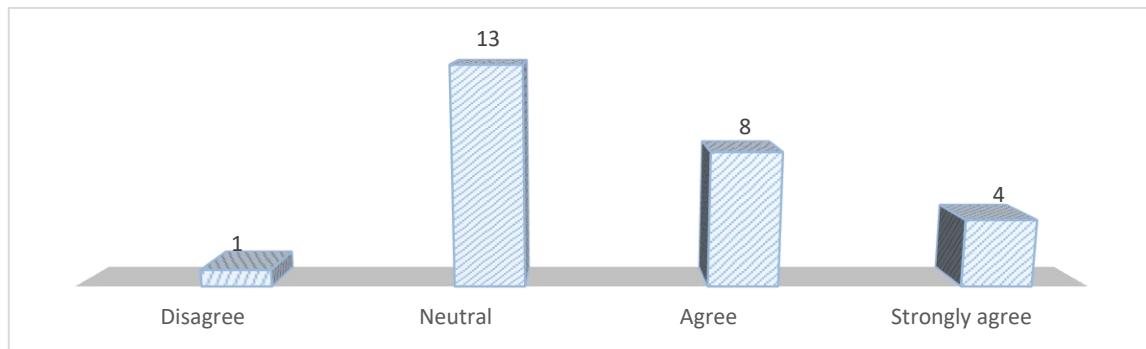


Figure 3. Comment on the accessibility to relevant legal documents

Data and planning maps of three types of forests (special-use, protection and production) at provincial and national levels was the information item accessed the most (84/132 people), which was equivalent to 59.15%. In addition to rangers, the number of enterprises and people having access to this information was relatively high, which were 9/16 (56.3%) and 39/89 people (44.3%), respectively. The large number of people approached showed the great interest of enterprises and farmers for this information item. This information is available on the website of the Vietnam Forest Administration. Regarding the ease and convenience in accessing information, 19.7% of the respondents were neutral, 27.5% agreed and 9.2% strongly agreed (Figure 3). Similarly, the reliability/accuracy of the information also received 18.3% of neutral opinions, 21.1% of agreement and 17.6% of strongly agreeing opinions. Although many localities still had deviations between the map and reality, most of the interviewees evaluated relatively positively in the accessibility as well as the reliability/accuracy of this information.

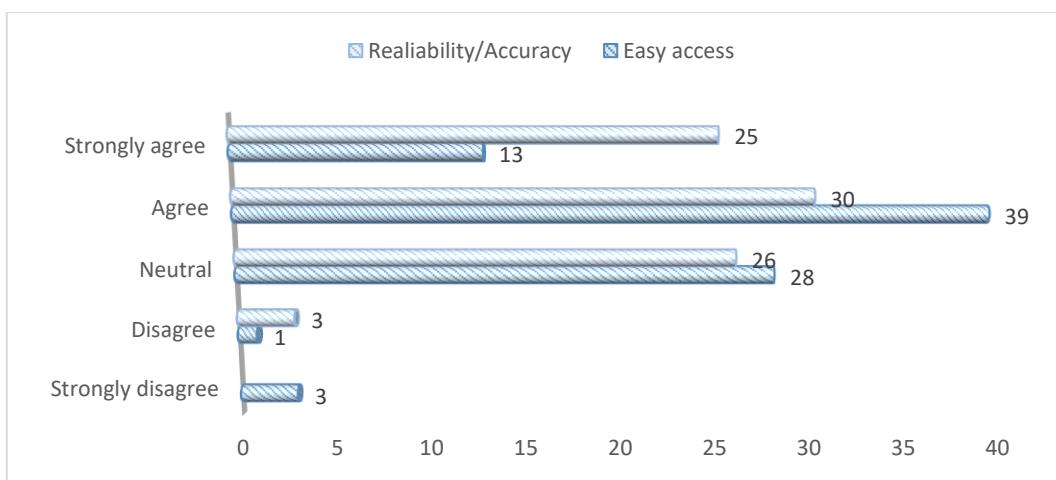


Figure 4. Comment on the accessibility to information and the reliability/accuracy of information on the data and the planning map of the three forest types.

Upon request and follow a non-discriminatory and non-discriminatory process that does not increase the burden of administrative procedures and information regarding available forest land allocation certificates and lease contracts at authorized local agencies.

Information regarding the forest land allocation certificate and forest lease contract was one of the most important information, which 55/132 people had ever accessed to. As for the accessibility, 41.8% thought that it was neither easy nor difficult to access this information, while 38.2% considered it to be easy. This data showed that access to information related to the certificate was not always easy, especially for farmers (more than 55% of the households had a neutral opinion in terms of the accessibility to this information). Regarding the reliability of information, compared with 36.4% of neutral respondents, the agreeing opinions were 2% higher. For the totally agreeing level, there were 13 opinions (23.6%). It could be seen that the accessibility to this information was not really easy (for the people). Meanwhile, the reliability/accuracy of this was highly appreciated by many people.

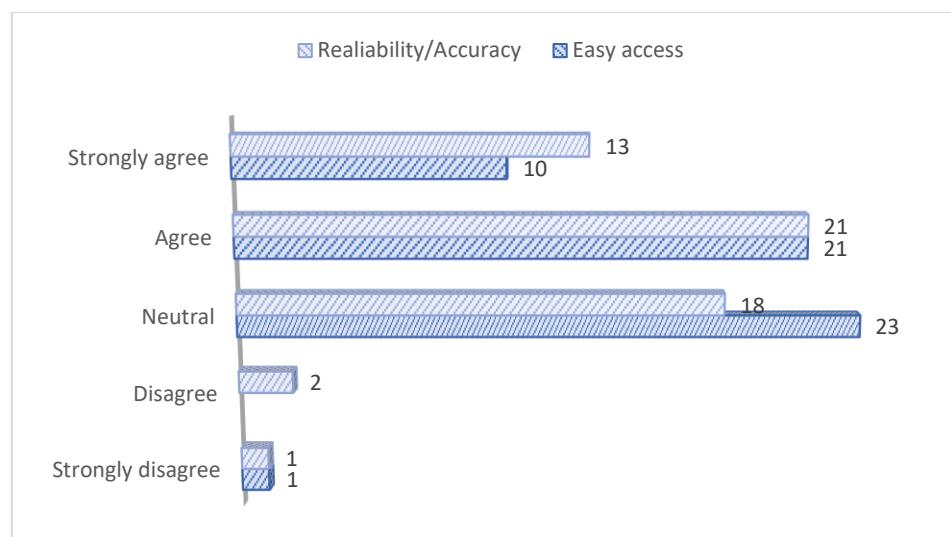


Figure 5. Comment on the accessibility to information and the reliability/accuracy of the information on non-discrimination and without increasing the burden of administrative procedures to meet this requirement and on Forest land allocation certificate.

Forest land area under forest protection contracts

This information is mainly managed by forestry companies and forest management boards. This information is not disclosed on a regular basis. This resulted in the fact that when being asked about the accessibility to this information, some respondents completely disagreed (6,6%) and other respondents were neutral (37.7%). Besides that, there were also respondents agreeing and strongly agreeing. The level of accuracy of the information was believed by the majority to completely agree, agree or neutral. The level of assessment of the accessibility or accuracy of this information was most concentrated on three levels: neutral, agree and fully agree. Regarding the people's opinion, more than 50% of respondents thought that they were neutral about the accuracy and accessibility to this information.

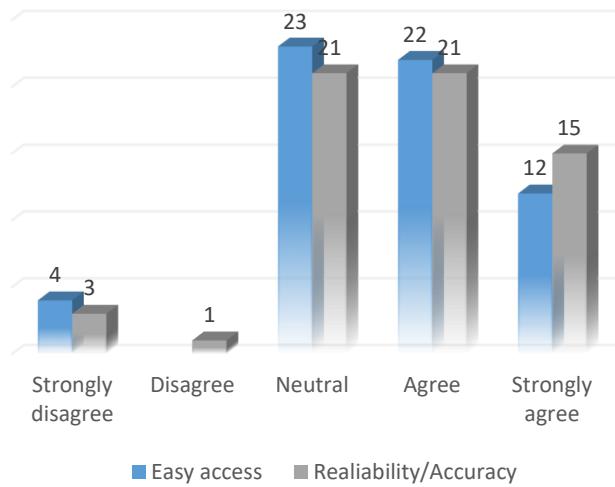


Figure 6. Comment on the accessibility to information and the reliability/accuracy of information on forest land under protection contracts.

Annual data on national and provincial forest changes (natural and planted forests) and scattered trees.

The data on changes of forest resources are relatively synchronous, in which the number of scattered trees is updated by the locality. According to Table 3, information on this type of data is rated by the majority of respondents at the level of consensus on the accessibility (51.7%) while reliability/accuracy of 50%, which was 1.7% lower. Most of scattered trees are self-measured by the locality in an inconsistent measurement method. This leads to the participants commenting that the reliability/accuracy of this information was lower than the level of accessibility.

Table 3. Comment on the accessibility to information and the reliability/accuracy of information on forest changes at the provincial and national level each year.

	Easy to access	Reliable/Accurate
Totally disagree	4	3
Disagree	1	2
Neutral	14	14
Agree	30	29
Totally agree	9	10

Number and list of officially registered timber and timber product processing and exporting enterprises, according to geographical location (region) and type of enterprise (domestic and foreign firms).

Business registered enterprises are licensed by the Department of Planning and Investment (DPI). The information on quantity and company listings are kept and managed by DPI. In addition, the Forestry Sub-Departments also store this information for general management.

Regarding to the easy access and reliability/accuracy of this information, the majority of respondents (44%) were neutral, which meant it was neither easy nor difficult to access and the level of reliability/accuracy of this information was average. Besides, there were two groups of completely opposing opinions: one group said that they agreed with the accessibility and reliability/accuracy of the information, while the other group completely disagreed. The reason for such contradiction was the information, although managed by the DPI and the Forestry Department, was also required to have the necessary documents to be accessed. On the other hand, there were also many enterprises that change their business lines and locations but are not updated regularly, leading to a not highly positive comment on the reliability/accuracy of this information.

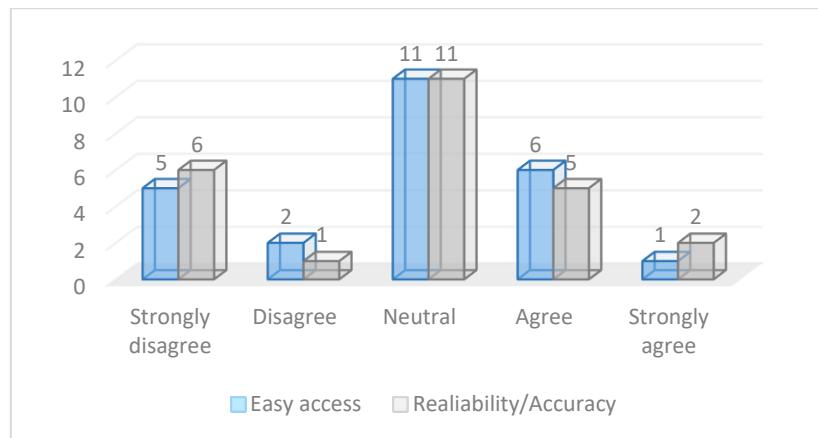


Figure 7. Comment on the accessibility to information and the reliability/accuracy of information on quantity and lists of enterprises for timber and timber product processing and exporting

General comments on the accessibility to information and reliability/accuracy of information

The aggregate results from randomly selecting six out of a total of 19 information items showed that the level of agreement with the accessibility and reliability/accuracy of information was the most common (40.78% and 37.59%), followed by the level of neutrality with accessibility (36.25%) and reliability/accuracy (39.91%). The third most common level of comment was strongly agree, fourth was totally disagree and the least was disagree. This data showed that nearly 60% of respondents agreed or completely agreed with the accessibility to outlined information in Appendix VIII, but besides that, up to 40% of respondents did not. This also raised the issue of necessity to make information more accessible. Similarly, nearly 61% of respondents agreed or fully agreed with the information provided as extremely reliable/accurate while 39% of the respondents were in the opposite. This data showed that not only is it necessary for the information to become more accessible, but also it was required that information should be more reliable/accurate.

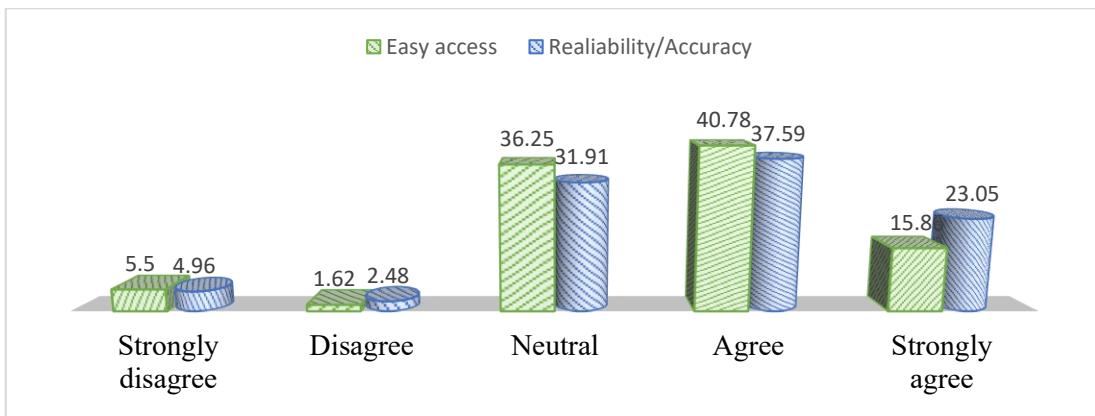


Figure 8.. General comments on the accessibility to information and reliability/accuracy of the information

4. Information channels and access to information

Relevant information and forestry information, in particular, can be accessed from different channels. The statistics showed that there was a very significant difference ($P = 0.00$) among the three groups of target subjects. Officials and enterprises often accessed information through specialized websites, online newspapers, meetings and training while farmers mainly access information through meetings, television, radio and training (Figure 9). The difference in accessing channels between farmers and the other two groups showed that in order to increase accessibility to information for different groups, different channels were needed.



Figure 9. Main channels used by officials, enterprises and the community to access information

The research also showed that the number of information channels depends not only on education level but also on age. The correlation between the age and the number of information channels was very significant ($Sig = 0.00$), and the correlation coefficient was -0.03. This showed an inverse correlation between the age and the number of information channels accessed. The higher the age, the less information channels were accessed. Young people tended to have the ability to access information in many different forms.

The research results also showed that men had 4.7 information channels on average, which was 0.5 higher than female's. In addition, the data also showed that the number of information channels accessed by Kinh people was higher than that of the ethnic minorities. Although the

difference was insignificant, research also showed that in order to increase accessibility to forestry for households, it was also necessary to focus on female headed households and to pay more attention on ethnic minorities.

The ability to access information depended on many different factors such as the type of information, the accessibility of the person, their relationship with stakeholders, their interests and so on. Therefore, there was also a relative difference between the target audience.

5. Obstacles and difficulties in implementing the commitment to transparency as expected in the VPA-FLEGT

Most of the information items in Appendix VIII require official letters or proposals to be accessed. Such access was completely feasible for state agencies while for households or other organizations (such as NGOs and businesses), this would cause many difficulties and slow down the process of accessing needed information.

The current information was collected from a variety of sources. Most of the forestry staff considered the current information to be relatively accurate and reliable. However, some informants responded that "Sometimes there are still discrepancies in information between units, possibly due to the statistical or the implementation method, for example forest area or the quantity of scatter trees".

Although current information has been shared to many different levels, but it still mainly concentrated on the national level, while the local level (commune and ward) had very little information. Some households said that "When there is a need for information on some regulations in forestry, people mainly turn to the local forest protection staff, the People's Committee, or the FPD staff but also did not get as much information as expected ". Some officials at the National Park Management Board of Mui Ca Mau also said, "There are still some limitations in coordinating information sharing with the people. Some official documents have not been disseminated to the people".

The forest land use plans and forest protection plans were hardly publicized and popularized and consultation with local communities is limited. This sometimes caused conflicts among communities or between communities and forestry enterprises.

Information items were now distributed in many different places, under the management of many agencies and in many forms (documents, digitization, documents). This "diversification" did not allow information to be accessed quickly, but on the contrary, made it difficult to access.

There is no an official unit responsible for monitoring and inspecting the information specified in Appendix VIII to ensure that this information is completed as required by the annex and to ensure that the information is easy to access and reliable.

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND SOME RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Conclusions

According to Appendix VIII, there were 9 information groups corresponding to 36 information items that need to be published. Currently, 28/36 information items are available (78%) and 8 information items are being finalized or not have been available yet, of which 7 items belong to the information group on Timber Legality Assurance System and 1 item belongs to group on Six Processing Information.

In order to access proactively to the information specified in Annex VIII, it is necessary to have a written request, or a completely open form or an account on the websites. However, only about 8 out of 28 entries are accessible in the two ways mentioned above.

Nearly 60% of respondents agree or strongly agree with the easy accessibility as well as reliability/accuracy of the information items. However, nearly 40% of respondents are neutral, disagree or completely disagree with the accessibility and reliability of the information. Except for enterprises and forestry staff, over 55% of the farmers found it not easy to access the information items.

Although most of the information is accurate and reliable, but there are also inaccuracies due to statistical and implementation methods. Local communities have very little consultation on forest land use planning and forest protection plans.

There is a big difference between respondents (enterprises, officials, farmers) in terms of information channels. In the case of enterprises and officials, they often access to information through specialized Webs, online newspapers, meetings and training while farmers are mainly get information by means of meetings, television, radio and training.

Compared to men, women often have less information channels. Similarly, ethnic minorities also have fewer opportunities to access to information channels than Kinh people.

Local forest land use planning and forest protection plans are rarely consulted by the local people. This sometimes causes conflicts among communities, between communities and forestry enterprises.

2. Some recommendations

There are 8 items of information that have not been announced. Therefore, it is time for the Vietnam Administration of Forestry to continue to improve and publish these information. These items of information include (1) The list of organizations updated periodically regarding to the risk group from the Regulatory Organization Classification System; (2) Regulations and procedures to guide the implementation of the components of the VNTLAS System and related implementation instructions and methods; (3) Regulations and guidelines for licensing, revoking and administering FLEGT licenses; (4) List and contacts of FLEGT Licensing Authority of

Vietnam and its branches; (5) List of Memorandum of Understanding and bilateral agreements between Vietnam and other countries on forestry, trade and legality of timber; (6) Memorandum of Understanding and bilateral agreements between Vietnam and other countries on forestry, trade and timber legality if not inconsistent with the confidentiality of this Memorandum of Understanding and Agreement; (7) Name and contact address of the selected Independent Review Entity; (8) Publicly published internal inspection and examination reports related to the VNLTAS system implementation in accordance with Vietnamese law.

Information items are now distributed in many different places, under the management of many agencies and in many forms (documents, digitization, documents). Therefore, the VNFOREST should develop a list of information lists and places that can be accessed so that all citizens and social organizations (CSOs/NGOs) can search and use them easily.

The number of information items that requires an official dispatch is still high (73%), while the number of information items accessed on Web sites through open source or account registration still accounts for small density. Therefore, the Vietnam Administration of Forestry and other stakeholders need to limit the number of information items that need official dispatches. Instead, it is suggested to increase the number of open information items through Webs from 27% to 70%.

Although the number of people agreeing and completely agreeing that the information is easy to access and reliable/accurate accounts for a high proportion (60%), there are also 40% of respondents disagree with this comment. This shows that in order to enhance the transparency of information as Appendix VIII, it is necessary to continue to improve (the form of access, mode of measurement and synthesis of information) from stakeholders to ensure the accessibility and reliability of information.

Women and ethnic minorities have certain disadvantages compared to men and Kinh people in accessing information. Therefore, state programs and international projects need to pay more attention to these subjects.

Local FPDs should strengthen community consultation in forest land use planning and forest protection plans.

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