



GHANA

COMMUNITY-BASED REAL TIME MONITORING

NOVEMBER 2021

INTRODUCTION

RFUK in-country partner: Civic Response

Forest area: 9,010,071 ha¹ (2015) (FAO)

Forest loss: 136,000 ha² (2020)

Percentage of timber production estimated to be illegal: c. 80%³ (2015)

Principal threats to forests: Illegal logging, cocoa plantations, mining

Snapshot: Ghana's remaining primary forest is heavily fragmented and found principally in the south of the country. These forest areas still suffer from high rates of clearance from artisanal logging, cocoa plantations and mining. In 2020, the rate of primary forest loss was the highest in the country's history according to Global Forest Watch⁴.

Since 2015, Rainforest Foundation UK (RFUK), its partners and local communities have used the **ForestLink Real Time Monitoring system (ForestLink RTM)** in Ghana to combat illegal logging, environmental destruction and human rights abuses. RFUK's ForestLink technology connects communities and law enforcement to carry out real-time monitoring of tropical forests, and put power back into the hands of those who call them home.

Communities trained: 75

Regions active: Ahafo, Ashanti, Bono, Central, Eastern, Volta, Western, West Northern

Alerts sent: Over 1,400

Civil Society Organisations using ForestLink: Civic Response, Ecocare Ghana, NDF and Tropenbos Ghana

¹ Chatham House, Forest Governance and Legality – Ghana

² Global Forest Watch Dashboard – Ghana

³ Arcilla, N., Holbeck, L. H., & O'Donnell, S. (2015). Severe declines of understory birds follow illegal logging in Upper Guinea forests of Ghana, West Africa

⁴ Global Forest Watch Dashboard – Ghana

HOW FORESTLINK WORKS

With this unique smartphone app, forest communities can report illegal activities via satellite link from even the most remote locations, without telecommunications networks. ForestLink empowers them to use their unique knowledge of the forest to defend their rights and to have a say in how extractive industries operate within their territories.



MONITORING & COLLECTION

Community monitors use a smartphone app (Collectaur) to collect evidence of illegalities and to document their alerts using photos, videos or audio recordings.



REPORTING & DATABASE

The collected evidence, bearing precise GPS coordinates of where incidents were observed, is transmitted to a secure database using a portable satellite transmitter or via SMS or internet.



VERIFICATION

Once the transmitted alerts are received on the online platform (Monitaur), they are analysed and verified by partner organisations.



ENFORCEMENT

Details of the illegal activities are passed on to the appropriate authorities so they can take action, such as sanctioning illegal operators.



ADVOCACY

The data collected using ForestLink helps CSOs to promote accountability of companies and authorities, thus increasing transparency and good governance more broadly.

A lush green forest scene with a large tree trunk and dense foliage. The text is overlaid on a dark blue rectangular background.

GHANAIAN CIVIL SOCIETY IS USING FORESTLINK TO SUPPORT GOVERNMENT TO MONITOR ILLEGALITIES IN THE FOREST SECTOR IN THE FACE OF ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS. RFUK PARTNER CIVIC RESPONSE HAS BEEN CRUCIAL IN UNITING THE COUNTRY'S CIVIL SOCIETY INDEPENDENT FOREST MONITORING PLATFORM (IFM) BEHIND FORESTLINK, AND SECURING BUY-IN FROM SENIOR FIGURES IN THE GOVERNMENT'S FOREST SERVICES DIVISION TO ROLL OUT THE USE OF THE APPLICATION BY AUTHORITIES.

OUR IMPACT

When communities send alerts, we advocate for these alerts to be investigated. If illegalities are confirmed, we use our collective voice to ensure authorities sanction those responsible. Through this process, ForestLink has improved law enforcement and empowered communities to defend their rights and lands. Civil society has become stronger and has developed deeper links to the forest communities it serves.

In Ghana, ForestLink RTM is being used by over 175 observers to monitor:



LOGGING IN NATURAL FORESTS



HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS



ILLEGAL MINING



ILLEGAL FARMING IN FOREST RESERVES



ILLEGAL USE OF FIRE FOR LAND CLEARANCE



FPIC PROCESSES IN RELATION TO LARGE SCALE LAND ACQUISITIONS



KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- **Arrests of illegal loggers:** In 2018, three trained community monitors in the Ashanti region reported multiple instances of illegal chainsaw logging, and in 2021 the FSD acted to arrest the perpetrators carrying out these illegalities.
- **Securing institutional support:** In a significant show of support to the community based monitoring system, the Executive Director of Ghana’s Forestry Commission instructed all Regional and District Managers to analyse data from the ForestLink platform, and follow-up with alert verification. This interest reflects the improved understanding of the value that community-generated data can contribute to the forest administration in Ghana.
- **Feeding into Ghana’s Timber Legality System:** Discussions are ongoing to connect ForestLink to the national timber legality system - the most advanced of all the countries ForestLink is active in.
- **Ensuring companies obey the law and pay into community funds:** Training communities on ForestLink has empowered them to renegotiate social responsibility agreements (SRAs) with logging companies who, under Ghanaian law, must provide financial support for economic and social development.



“Civil society organisations are very important to us. They are seen as partners in the protection of the forests. They are seen as a pressure force who monitor the activities of the Forestry Commission. They can easily take us on if we fail to do our work diligently.”

Nana Poku Bosompem, FSD District Manager from Sefwi Wiawso

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Whilst we are very proud of the incredible impact that the communities and our partners have every day in Ghana, our funding means that we can only monitor a fraction of Ghana's remaining forest. To learn more about how your support could transform the future of tropical rainforests, please contact us.

CHARLIE HAMMANS

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Visit us at www.forestlink.org



FORESTLINK

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