

The Link between Stakeholder Engagement and Strategic Planning in the Ghana Forestry Sector: A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract: The study explores stakeholder engagement and strategic planning in Ghana's forestry sector. Stakeholder engagement has been studied in sustainable development over the past two decades, particularly the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which aim to "leave no one behind." Indeed, emerging approaches to sustainable development emphasize the need to create relationships with stakeholders and the search for appropriate methods to include stakeholders in local strategic planning—this literature review analyses how stakeholders have been involved in strategic planning in Ghana's forestry sector. The aim is to identify possible opportunities for developing governance structures that enhance stakeholder participation in policy and strategic planning. Aligning forest stakeholders around a shared purpose will contribute to the sustainable management of the resource.

Key Words: Stakeholder Engagement, Strategic Planning, Stakeholder Participation

I. INTRODUCTION

Good governance emerged as a significant engagement area among donors in the 1990s (Norris, 2011; Carothers & Brechenmacher, 2014) due to rising concern about the adverse effects of state capture and inadequate accountability in government institutions to influence policy formulation, planning, and implementation. Creating governance systems that are inclusive, representational, and lead to shared outcomes has emerged top priority in international development. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Agenda 2030 by the United Nations, that pledge to leave no one behind (UN, 2015), is probably the most ambitious expressions of inclusiveness. The SDG 16 calls on all signing nations to "promote peaceful and inclusive communities for sustainable development, guarantee equal access and establish effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions" (UN, 2015). Other SDGs contain commitments to "combat marginalization and meet the needs of all groups, such as gender equality in SDG 5 and addressing inequality in SDG 10 (Glassco & Holguin, 2016). The SDGs represent a robust transformational framework based on a shared understanding of inclusive institutions addressing inequality and exclusion.

Organizations have long understood that there must be a strategic fit between the organization's aims and capabilities to remain competitive. Organizations must practice inclusive governance by ensuring that the strategic management process

includes planning through implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. According to Akhmouch and Clavreul (2012), people increasingly demand to be more involved in making organizational policy decisions. According to Sen (2001), Stakeholder participation in policymaking has emerged from a new general development model that seeks a distinct role for the state based on pluralistic institutions, democratic legitimacy, and consensus. Stakeholder engagement is vital because more information and experiences from a broader range of stakeholders make it easier to establish and implement sensible policies and programs.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Strategic Management Process

The strategic management process is conceptualized in three, four, or five stages. However, all the methods contain the same fundamental actions in the same order. Strategic Goals and Analysis is the first stage. It is used to identify the organization's vision, purpose, and value statements. This is done with external business environment analysis (PESTEL) and internal organizational analysis (SWOT). The Strategic Planning stage uses information from stage one to develop intelligent objectives for the organization. This is followed by the implementation stage, also known as strategic execution. Finally, the Strategic Evaluation and Control stage monitors and controls the achievement of critical milestones against performance indicators. Analysis, decision-making, and actions are taken at each stage of the process, requiring stakeholder engagement.

2.2 Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder engagement is a constant and systematic process by which organizations establish a productive discourse and communication with critical stakeholders. The goal of engagement is to communicate stakeholders' expectations and interests to decision-makers to consider them while making decisions. Its added value is found in the creative search for solutions that best match the social and environmental context, the possibility of confrontation, and monitoring changes in social connections among all participants.

The aim of stakeholder involvement must be precise. It is critical to consider why an organization is engaging

stakeholders and what the engagement seeks to be accomplished. Strategy and operations are the primary purposes for engaging stakeholders [source]. Stakeholder engagement occurs to formulate or review strategy or to assist in identifying and resolving operational challenges. Both strategic and operational stakeholder engagement needs the development of trust-based relationships.

Based on the preceding, this paper uses the following definitions:

Stakeholder Engagement: involvement, participation, or collaboration of relevant stakeholders in Forest sector planning processes

Strategic planning: participation of stakeholders in the design and planning of strategy through field surveys, investigation, and consultations.

The working definition of a stakeholder engaged strategic planning process for this paper is a process of increasing opportunities for all stakeholders to participate in forest management strategic planning leading to transparent and equitable decision-making in the forestry sector.

The word "stakeholder engagement" is now being used to describe a broader, more inclusive, ongoing process between companies and people who may be affected (International Finance Corporation, 2007). While different organizations may use various terminologies to describe the phenomenon of engagement, such as consultation, public consultation, public participation, or stakeholder involvement, the concepts and principles are often the same. (International Finance Corporation, 2007).

The term 'stakeholder' has been traced to 1708 to "a person entrusted with the stakes of bettors" (Bryson, 2003). However, Freeman's 1984 book, *Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach*, popularized the term by challenging businesses to consider all stakeholders rather than just shareholders. Freeman (1994) defines a stakeholder as "any group or individual who can affect or is affected by achieving the organization's objectives." Although this notion has its origins in business literature, its meanings have changed due to its application in government administration and natural resource management. Now, "the term 'stakeholder' emphasizes the 'stake' or interests of the parties in a process" (Hermans, 2005). "Any organized group of people who have a shared interest or stake in a particular topic or system" is a stakeholder (Grimble & Wellard, 1997).

Stakeholder integration is a method of addressing conflict areas and claims [source]. "Virtually anybody and anything can 'impact or be affected by the decisions and activities of a business," according to specific criticism of a broad definition and "expansive views of relevant stakeholders (Orts & Strudler, 2002). However, when inclusivity is a goal, a willingness to take an expansive view of stakeholders must accommodate different views. Bryson (2004) asserts that the term must be used in a more inclusive way to enact more

democratic principles in public management. In community development practice, stakeholders are described as 'victims' or 'gainers' in relation to a project to reflect who might benefit or be at risk. Other terms that have developed common usage are 'participant,' 'involved party,' 'recipient,' and 'responsible party. Once a problem or issue is specified, stakeholders can be identified from the known actors.

From a critical perspective, "stakeholder engagement" is a contested concept that refers to a wide range of practices that vary according to context. In the natural resource management context, stakeholder engagement most often refers to the participation of stakeholders in planning or decision-making efforts to integrate their knowledge and values with a particular project's more specialized knowledge and purpose. Stakeholder engagement in natural resource management range from large multinational and multiyear projects (Partidário et al., 2008, Kidd & McGowan, 2013) to locally-focused projects (Knapp et al., 2014, Krasny & Delia, 2014). In sum, stakeholder engagement initiatives occur across various project scopes. The scales can include a broad range of stakeholders and are carried out by many managers, facilitators, experts, and non-experts.

Additionally, stakeholder engagement has come to enjoy significant cachet across these many contexts as a sort of "best practice" for planning and decision-making, primarily because it is more effective and democratic than top-down approaches (Butler & Adamowski, 2015). Many scholars have agreed that integrating stakeholders' knowledge and values in decision-making scenarios improve governance and accountability (Wagenet & Pfeffer, 2007). Others have stated that such assertions have not been thoroughly proven, and there are differing perspectives on the importance and efficacy of stakeholder participation (Allen et al., 2013). Other scholars have recognized that stakeholder engagement is conceptually slippery and context-dependent (Noland & Phillips, 2010). However, stakeholder engagement has emerged as a normative value for those engaged in natural resource management, supported by the institutionalized practice, albeit in various forms.

III. METHODOLOGY

To delve into searching for the link between stakeholder engagement and strategic planning in the Ghana forestry sector, literature was searched in a well-structured manner. Therefore, this research was designed to search for articles that fell within the themes under study. Although supported by other research databases for downloading purposes, Google scholar was the leading search engine.

In searching, the keywords considered by the researchers were "stakeholder," "engagement," "Ghana," "strategy," "strategic," forestry," "planning," "stakeholder engagement", and "strategic planning." The search began with preferential changes in the setting of the search engine. After choosing *search articles* under *collections* and leaving all default settings regarding *results per page*, *where results open*, and *bibliography manager*, the exercise continued at 'Advanced

search.’ The first combinations to be searched were ‘stakeholder AND engagement AND strategic AND planning AND Ghana AND forestry’ at *all of the words* and with *anywhere in the article* ticked at *where my words occur*, a total of 22,400 articles were ascertained. For a further realistic reduction, the returned articles dates were restricted to 2000 to 2022, which reduced it to 17,500 articles. An additional restriction for the returned results of only *review articles* minimized the findings drastically to 3,470, which were realistic enough for the authors to work with.

After going through all the 3,470 one after the other, the researchers were able to manually take out some works that were not quite close and vital to the topic at hand, resulting in a final sieved total of 217 articles reviewed for this study.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Developing a metric for engagement

Participation of stakeholders in natural resource decision-making processes is not a new idea. Reed's (2008) assessment of stakeholder engagement in natural resource management is based on the participatory management literature and traces its roots back to Arnstein's (1969) "ladder of participation." Reed identifies eight approaches for successful stakeholder participation in his review: (1) foster an environment of empowerment, trust, and equity, (2) involve stakeholders as soon as possible, (3) systematically represent stakeholders, (4) clearly define objectives, (5) employ contextually relevant methods, (6) expertly facilitate engagement processes, (7) integrate local and scientific knowledge, and (8) institutionalize participation. Finally, Reed contends that stakeholder interaction should focus on participation rather than just listening, securing a social license, or reducing conflict. The steps reflect the engagement literature's commitment to democratic decision-making processes (Butler & Adamowski, 2015).

Reed's eight characteristics guide how best to effectively engage stakeholders in natural resource management. However, an initial literature review revealed that few practitioners were meaningfully engaging theoretical frameworks such as Reed's. Although some of the cases intermittently described some features of Reed's prescriptions as appropriate, only a few were applying or adopting any framework whatsoever. It was even more evident that the essential elements of stakeholder engagement were either being overlooked or underappreciated. Given the range of stakeholder engagement contexts presented in the case study literature and the infrequent description of shared principles, a measure of stakeholder engagement was developed by condensing Reed's framework into essential and recognizable features to make comparisons across cases adequately.

4.2 Strategic planning

Different scholars have developed different perceptions of strategic planning as applied in an organizational or institutional setup. It is a process of investigating the

organizational future and identifying issues and trends that align with the priorities of the organization or institution (United Nations, 2019). The description analyzes organizational aims in teams, divisions, and units to a high-level strategy that assures high chances of realizing goals. The United Nations (2019) states that good strategic planning initiates focus, accountability, and results. Maleka (2014) creates the impression that strategic planning develops a blueprint that organizations or institutions use to ensure that their goals are realized. When an organization/institution makes a strategic plan, the management has identified specific objectives they wish to satisfy through the execution of the strategic plan. The document outlining the strategic plan communicates the organization's goals, required actions to fulfill the goals, and critical elements and planning procedure. Thus, Maleka (2014) describes an organizational management activity as setting priorities, focusing resources, strengthening operations, and ensuring the organizational stakeholders and employees focus on realizing the common goals, establishing results, and adjusting the organization's directions according to the changing environment.

According to The Enterprise Foundation (1999), strategic planning is an essential process that orients an organization within its mission. It finds the framework to make critical decisions on allocating the resources and challenges and taking advantage of the opportunities for the organization's development. Strategic planning is a vital process in the success of the organization through informing the priorities, obstacles, and opportunities which limit or enable an organization to carry out the mission.

Strategic planning can be expressed through different schools of thought from different understandings and the aspects applied in its implementation. The design school entails the conception process that seeks to balance the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (Berzins, 2010). The planning school relates the principle of strategic planning into specific steps. The perception from the positioning school of thought is due to the analytical process in concepts such as value chain and strategic groups, among others. In contrast, the entrepreneurial school refers to the future projection of the strategic plan. The cognitive school of thought is derived from the strategic planning process being an intellectual process that deals with research and strategic concepts to develop a constructive strategy.

Similarly, there is a learning school duct to the unpredictability of the performance of the developed strategies. The configuration school characterizes the dynamic transformation process, while the environment school is due to the reactive orientation to fit the market changes (Berzins, 2010). The school of thought emphasizes the importance of strategic planning to the organization and creates the impression that an effective strategic plan should guide an organization or institution. The strategic plan should have critical aspects to effectively satisfy all the schools of thought.

4.2.1 Objectives, strategies, and operational tactics

Different strategies for ensuring objectives are adopted to improve organizational tactics in strategic planning. Among the strategies is management by the objective, which entails the process where stakeholders discuss and identify common goals, assign each area of responsibility, state the expected results, then use the desired results to guide the improvements and assess members' contributions. The strategy puts across the objective as the guide to stakeholders. Hence, the strategies are developed to help realize the objectives. The strategy of management in which goals guide all the human resources helps build efficient innovation and planning (Nwafor-Orizu et al., 2019).

Based on the importance of the effective strategy and the focus on the organizational objectives, Holdt (1995) identifies critical barriers that hinder the successful planning and the implementation of strategy. The barriers align with the organizational objectives and strategies or with the operational tactics of the firm. The barriers, such as organizational failure to focus on the end goal but focus on the means, cause the organization to miss the expected results while lost in implementing the standards. Also, the study notes the challenge of having the objective written. However, it does not include a precise method of arriving at the objective, which shows the problem of the lack of developing a clear strategy to support the achievement of the expected objectives. Thus, it explains that if an organization aims at improving performance, it must target working towards a common goal that should be made clear, have timelines with practical set standards of achievement, and have challenging characteristics to promote innovation.

4.2.2 Importance of strategic planning

According to Ajagbe et al. (2016), the importance of strategy to organizational success is exceptional by focusing the organization from reactive to proactive, thus enabling the implementation and the initiation of strategies that promote strategic planning. Organizational strategies create more commitment to achieving the objectives, promoting organizational performance. Good strategies enable easy understanding of the operations in the organization. It also plays a critical role in reducing the resistance to change, a condition that negatively impacts the behavior of stakeholders (Ajagbe et al., 2016). Strategic planning generally improves communication between stakeholders (Tapera, 2014).

4.3 Stakeholder Engagement and Strategic Planning

In explaining the importance of stakeholder engagement in strategic planning, Sedmak (2021) said that stakeholder engagement allows organizations to address the wants and wishes of anybody with a stake in their company in advance, which can assist in developing connections, trust, confidence, and buy-in for crucial initiatives. Stakeholder involvement, when done correctly, can reduce possible risks and conflicts with stakeholder groups, including ambiguity, discontent, misalignment, disengagement, and change resistance.

Albrechts and Balducci (2013), Bryson and Slotterback (2016), Conroy and Berke (2004), Chakraborty et al. (2011), and Bryson et al. (2018) argue that strategic planning is effective when it pays close attention to the context, including the decision-making context when designing the strategic planning approach. Moreover, they argue that a good strategic planning process should pay careful attention to stakeholders, including elected, appointed, and career officials. According to Bryson et al. (2018), engaging multiple levels of government and stakeholders in strategic planning leads to the practical politics of gaining legitimacy, buy-in, and credible commitments.

Stakeholder engagement is crucial when it comes to strategic planning. Stakeholders must comprehend why a business or organization exists, where the organization intends to go, and how it plans to get there. Furthermore, stakeholders must be aligned with and buy into the organization's strategic direction to become champions who can assist in realizing the goal and vision. Stakeholders will also have a lot of relevant expertise and experience that management may want to consider to make the business more impactful, sustainable, and viable.

4.4 The Forestry Sector in Ghana

Ghana forestry is made up of both the public sector and non-governmental organizations. The public sector organization, which is The Forestry Commission (FC), was established in 1909 and was re-established by an Act of Parliament, Act 571, in 1999, after being set up subject to the provisions of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana. The FC is mandated to protect, develop, manage, and regulate Ghana's forest and wildlife resources. The core values of the FC are to promote active stakeholder involvement toward a shared vision. The FC was established to reserve forest estates to support agriculture, mainly cocoa production in Ghana. Several stools and skin lands were demarcated and gazetted as forest estate held in trust by the government on behalf of the landowners for the nation. In the early 1990s, Ghana joined several countries to promote participatory forest management (PFM) in response to donor requirements. The approach in Ghana is referred to as 'Collaborative Resource Management' (CRM). CRM led to radical changes in the 1994 Forest and Wildlife Policy formulation with the prime objective of engaging all stakeholders (including communities) and shareholders (landowning chiefs) in forest management.

Drawing inspiration from the Ghana Shared Growth and Development Agenda (GPRS), the Ministry of Land and Natural Resources promulgated the fourth Forest and Wildlife Policy in 2012. The policy aims to "conserve and sustainably develop forest and wildlife resources to maintain environmental stability and flow of optimum benefits to present and future generations. Its guiding principles are to; encourage collaborative resource management among communities, government, and stakeholders; recognize multi-stakeholder interests in forests and wildlife and forge a shared vision to protect, manage and use the resources. Moreover, the policy seeks to promote capacity development for

stakeholders in the forestry and wildlife sector; mainstream gender and vulnerability issues into forestry development planning and management. These commitments embrace stakeholder participation, transparency, and equity.

Exclusion and inclusion are central to our society's most contested social issues that need to be addressed. While scholars in inclusive and good governance like Quick and Feldman (2011) have argued that stakeholders need to be included in the strategic decision-making process, there is no consensus on how it plays out within the forestry sector.

The problem statement clarifies that stakeholder engagement has not been pursued in strategic planning as desired in the Forestry sector. To this end, the main objective of this paper is to find out if strategic planning in the Ghana forest sector can be improved with stakeholder engagement practices. Hence, this literature review seeks to answer the critical question: what is the link between strategic planning and stakeholder engagement (participation) in the Forestry Sector of Ghana, and how have stakeholders been engaged in the process?

4.4.1 Forest management in Ghana

Tropical deforestation as a global challenge has gained attention in research and policy (Tindan, 2013). The numerous services forests provide to the local people in Ghana have informed the government's efforts to protect forests and curb deforestation (Appiah et al., 2009). The measures target economic growth through reforestation and promoting the sustainable use of natural forest resources with local participation (Blay et al., 2008). Local people are seen as vital players in knowing their environment and sensible forest management in these approaches. However, divergent views on forest management goals, methods, utilization, and preferences have often bottlenecked these approaches (Appiah et al., 2009). Despite these roadblocks, the government has undertaken some afforestation programs to revive the nation's degraded forests, a major one being the Ghana Forest Plantation Strategy for 2012 to 2040 (Quacou, 2016). This follows the XII World Forestry Congress in Buenos Aires in 2009 and the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro in 2012 (Quacou, 2016). This program led to the formulation and revision of the National Legal and Policy Framework to protect the environment and forests.

Ghana's forest policies and resource management date back to legislation enacted to control the felling of commercial trees in 1906 and the creation of the Forestry Department in 1908 (Boon et al., 2009). The Forestry Department (now Forestry Commission) was established to manage timber resources and assist in conserving a well-distributed area of forest throughout the country (Oduro et al., 2011; Kotey et al., 1998). Forest estates reservation and demarcation were primarily completed in 1939, and a forest policy that remained in effect for forty-six years was adopted in 1948. Throughout the years (from 1948), many laws, policies, reforms, and programs aimed at forest and wildlife resources management in Ghana have been established. Notable amongst these are

the: Forest Ordinance of 1951; Forest Improvement Act of 1960; Wild Animals Preservation Act, 1961 (Act 43); Wildlife Reserves and Conservation Policy of 1974; Forest Protection Decree, 1974; Trees and Timber Decree 1974; Trees and Timber Regulation of 1983; Forest Protection (Amendment) Law, 1986, 1994; Forest and Wildlife Policy, Timber Resource Management Act, 1997 - Act 547; The Forest Protection Amendment Act of 2002; Forest Resource Management Project (FRMP); Forestry Development Master Plan (developed in 1996); Forest Sector Development Project (FSDP-1) (launched in 1995 and expired in 1999), National Environmental Policy (developed in 1995); National Environmental Policy (developed in 1995); Forest Sector Development Project (FSDP-2) (launched in April 2000 and expired in 2006); Natural Resources Management Program (NRMP) (launched in September, 1999) and Protected Area Development Program Phase II with emphasis on Community Resource Management Areas (CREMAs) (Arhin, 2014).

However, most early forest policies dwelt mainly on the sustainable supply of timber for the wood industry and thus promoted overexploitation resulting in the demise of unreserved forests. The government then, in 1978, placed approximately 3,267,250 hectares of forests under permanent forest estate (Boon et al., 2009). According to Kotey et al. (1998), many forest reserves had poorly degraded. The annual allowable cut bore little relation to sustainable yield estimates, and some vital timber species were threatened with commercial extinction in twenty years if current policies continued. The landholding authorities and local communities had become marginalized and alienated resource owners with few rights and even fewer responsibilities. There was overcapacity and waste in the timber industry. In certain quarters, patronage and corruption were rife.

Efforts to correct the situation with the Forest and Wildlife Policy of 1994 proved futile. The government drafted a new Forest and Wildlife Policy in 2011 to guide and help overcome many barriers to the country's forest conservation efforts. There have been several programs instituted to surmount the challenges of deforestation and degradation; Including the Natural Resources and Environmental Governance (NREG), Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA), Non-Legally Binding Instrument (NHLBI), the Forest Investment Program, and the REDD+ initiative under the Forestry Carbon Partnership Facility of the World Bank (Arhin, 2014).

4.4.2 Forest and Wildlife policy

The first formal forest policy statement made by the Government of Ghana to manage and protect the reserves was formulated in 1946 and approved by the Governor-in-Council in 1948. The policy remained in force for nearly half a century and has had a pronounced impact on forests and people. The emphasis on protecting the reserves was due to the implicit expectation that all forests outside the permanent reserves would ultimately be converted into agricultural land. The inability of the policy to explicitly state implementation

measures, coupled with inadequate resources for its implementation, aroused public discontentment about the forestry policy in the 1980s, one of whose main consequences was an in-house Forestry Department review exercise that took place in 1984. In 1994, a new Forest and Wildlife Policy covering both forest and wildlife conservation and management and sustainable development for maintaining environmental quality and economic benefits for all segments of the society was adopted (Forestry Commission, 2016). The Ghana Forest and Wildlife Policy 2012 is a revised form of the old policy to take advantage of these emerging opportunities to maximize the country's social and economic development and secure optimum welfare and adequate means of livelihood from the forestry sector for all Ghanaians.

According to [source], the policy seeks to:

- I. Consolidate good governance through accountability and transparency
- II. Enhance active participation of communities and landowners in resource management and addressing issues on tree tenure and benefit-sharing
- III. Promote small and medium forest and wildlife enterprises as a means of job creation for the rural and urban poor
- IV. Increase biodiversity conservation
- V. Promote sustainable management of savannah woodland
- VI. Promote ecotourism development
- VII. Increase government commitment to degraded landscape restoration through massive forest plantation development schemes
- VIII. Improve research and application of modern and scientific technology in resources management
- IX. Develop climate change adaptation and mitigation measures, and
- X. Secure sustainable financing for the forest and wildlife sector.

4.4.3 Collaborative forest and wildlife management in 2012 policy

The 2012 Forest and Wildlife policy mention collaborative resource management from the outset. Due to the strong interest and rights of communities in forest resource management, the focus of forest management has shifted from a government-led system to a community-government collaborative management approach [source]. The policy includes collaborative resource management in its list of 16 guiding principles.

The strategic directions within the first policy objective provide that forest reserve planning, policy formulation, and decision are made in a participatory manner through inter-sectoral and multi-stakeholder collaboration. Off-reserve timber production areas will be divided into Forest Management Units covered by forest management plans with the active involvement of local landowners. Additionally, Wildlife management and protected area plans will involve relevant communities through Community Resource

Management Areas. Traditional autonomy will ensure the protection and management of sacred forests and community-dedicated forests.

The fourth policy objective specifically mentions people's participation in forest and wildlife resource management. Following the new collaborative management approach, the new forest and wildlife policy wants to institute transparency and equity and legalize public participation in sustainable forest and wildlife resources management. This means the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources (MLNR) will ensure the enactment of the legislation to facilitate and enhance local participation and control and enable communities to benefit from the trees on their land (by providing off-reserve tree tenure security). The policy further foresees the development of a national strategic plan and necessary legislation to address illegal logging and chainsaw activities.

4.4.4 The Resource Management Support Centre and forest management

The Resource Management Support Centre (RMSC) is the technical wing of the Forestry Commission. The RMSC has a mission to develop integrated forest and wildlife management systems and facilitate and monitor their implementation through active cooperation with stakeholders to benefit all segments of society. The Collaborative Resource Management Unit in RMSC is primarily responsible for ensuring forest management is participatory and incorporates community issues into the forestry programs.

4.4.5 Forestry Commission Charter and Act

The Forestry Commission (FC) Act provides the inclusion of non-governmental organizations in Forest and Wildlife Management (Forestry Commission, 1999). The Service Charter of the FC mentions participation on several occasions within it. The FC promises to (i) develop forest and wildlife management plans, Social Responsibility Agreements, and Timber Utilization Contracts in consultation with landowners and local communities. Also, the FC pledges to conduct an annual public survey to measure the FC's overall progress in meeting the needs and aspirations of clients and citizens and put in place a customer feedback mechanism. Many other opportunities for the local community and civil society participation in forest governance are mentioned in the manuals of procedure (or the FC Service Charter) (ClientEarth, 2013).

4.4.6 REDD+ activities and projects

A Series of stakeholder engagements aimed at improving the participation of non-governmental stakeholders through the design, implementation, and monitoring phases of REDD+ and media outreach have been organized by the National REDD+ Secretariat (NRS) [source]. FC has consulted and involved diverse stakeholders in implementing the Ghana Cocoa Forest REDD+ Programme (GCFRP) (Forestry Commission, 2020). NRS, through the GCFRP, has been coordinating activities of stakeholders to achieve

deforestation-free cocoa-forest landscapes and support the development of Climate-Smart Cocoa through the sub-national community-based governance structures set up in six Hotspot Intervention Areas (HIAs). On account of the finalized Benefit Sharing Plan (BSP) arrangements and upon the receipt of the Upfront Advance Payment (UAP) as part of the Emission Reductions Payment Agreement (ERPA) from the World Bank, the NRS engaged stakeholders within three of the HIAs. The Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment (SESA) for the REDD+ mechanism in Ghana engaged stakeholders. Stakeholders in the various regions/districts and communities made inputs to the document (Forestry Commission, 2016).

V. CONCLUSIONS

The goal of this paper was to provide a point for further research into the relationship between stakeholder engagement and strategic planning. However, it should be noted that identifying stakeholders does not guarantee that their concerns will be acknowledged and handled. As a result, the paper concludes with a few broad generalizations that could help guide future research on the subject.

First, it is critical to investigate who is involved in the strategic planning process. Second, it is essential to consider the current institutional constraints that limit a decision maker's ability to implement policy decisions. Finally, identifying a participatory strategy that includes mechanisms and techniques sensitive to stakeholders' needs can stimulate deliberations for effective policy formulation. Furthermore, it is recommended that:

1. A clear stakeholder participation strategy must be established as an essential component of the entire strategic planning and decision-making process.
2. Stakeholder processes must be meticulously prepared, emphasizing stakeholders whom policy decisions will impact.
3. It is vital to comprehend the political economy and the current institutional limit that defines the scope for stakeholders' engagement in public policymaking.

This Literature review adds to existing knowledge to enhance stakeholder engagement in strategic management planning within the FC. Recommendations from the literature review will guide forest sector industrial players and decision-makers to improve stakeholder engagement practices in strategic planning. Engaging stakeholders will ensure that their interests and concerns are considered. Finally, the paper will guide public sector organizations to engage stakeholders in decision-making.

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