The RSPO Complaints System: Experiences of a New African Grower

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Discussion Points

1. Background and context
2. Complaints impact
3. RSPO complaints system – what works, what could be better
4. System revamp – observations and suggestions
Liberia: A new frontier for palm oil

- West coast of Africa
- 1980 coup, unrest, civil war 1989 - 2003
- # 175 out of 187 countries - UN Human Development Index 2013
- 4th lowest GDP per capita
- Main economic activities
  - Mining
  - Agriculture
- Poverty Reduction Strategy
  - Palm oil important
GVL: A brief introduction

• 2009: Govt, community consultations started

• 2010 - 2011: Concession agreement signed, ESIA, pre-nursery

• 2012: Started development

• Today:
  • Around 6,000 Ha planted
  • 3,500 Liberians employed
  • 4 clinics operational
  • School built
  • Scholarships
Complaints History - GVL

- 5 official complaints
- Suspension order on Feb 2013
- Quarterly progress reports
- RSPO team visit in June 2014
- Current status: Box F (Action Plan) - escalated
Complaints Impact: Company

• Critical self-assessment & improvement
  – Engaged experts
  – Improved SOPs, processes, execution
  – Awareness of “rules”
  – Strengthened organisation
• Operational disruption
  – Significant delays
  – Cost
  – Management attention
• Increased scrutiny
  – More NGOs
  – Investors
Complaints impact: Community

• Increased awareness
  – Rights
  – Grievance process
  – Growers need to abide by “rules”

• Job losses
• Development delays
• Internal conflicts
The RSPO Complaints System

• It works
  – Exists, actively used
  – Rulings followed
  – Multi-stakeholder
  – Encourages dialogue as first resort
  – Open process (mostly)

• But…
  – CP proceedings not transparent
  – Slow resolution
  – Limited resources/reach/experts
  – Database incomplete
  – Inadequate filter?
Complaints System Review: Observations

✓ Improved processes and systems
✓ More resources and expertise
✓ Increased independence
✓ Strengthen bilateral engagement as first step
✓ Increased reach into new territories

• Burden of proof: caution on interpretation
• Safeguards against spurious complaints adequate?
Complaints System Review: Suggestions

- *Increase transparency – CP members, proceedings?*
- *Analytics to guide decision making?*
- *Sanctions for repeated abuse of system?*
Thanks for your attention.

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