

The Last Great Ape Organization – LAGA

April 2011 Report



Highlights

- **LAGA wins another award** - The Future for Nature Award in the Netherlands, given to individuals for internationally outstanding species protection efforts.
- **8 dealers arrested in 4 different operations within 10 days** – 2 in Kumba chimp parts trade, 2 in Kribi with 9 sea turtle shells, 2 in Kribi with a live baby chimp and 2 in Bafang leopard skin deal.
- **A network of 7 dealers in ivory busted in Bengbis – South.**
- **PALF- Congo Investigator ends 1 month training in LAGA with good results.**

General

This month was marked by the winning of The Future for Nature Award and the arrest of 15 dealers in 5 different operations.

LAGA was awarded The Future for Nature award which is given to individuals for internationally outstanding species protection efforts. The award acknowledges individuals who embody an approach to conservation that is entrepreneurial, in that it is innovative, impactful and shapes the future of conservation. Recognizing that approaches need to change, this award recognizes the power of individuals and their influence on conservation. The award was received by the LAGA Director, Ofir Drori in Holland.

The award is the forth in connection to LAGA's work, and is hoped to give more credibility to and acceptance of LAGA's message and help in its long term quest to affect conservation in a meaningful way. The ceremony was attended by about 500 invitees, and the Director of LAGA had the opportunity to give a presentation and use the occasion to send across the messages of the need for **transparency and accountability and the diversity needed in participation in conservation.**

The presentation ended with three main messages that LAGA tries to put on the map –

- **Anti-poaching in protected areas is not wildlife law enforcement** – While over the last few decades we have enormously increased the amount of data we possess on the nature of poaching and trade, we are still using the same old strategy, unchanged. So the ample data we have of the nature of the problem has not been integrated to our solution. Poaching is just a small part of the problem and therefore anti-poaching should be just a small part of a larger strategy for the solution.
- **Activism** – Our challenge did not necessitate a project it demanded a fight. There was no skill or degree we could search for, we had to search for and foster activism – internally motivated individuals who want to bring a change to the realities in their country. It highlights a larger problem of conservation - while striving to become more of a profession maybe conservation has lost along the way some of its base values. We need to get back to what it is all about - not a job, but a mission, and get values back to the front seat of conservation.
- **Fight corruption** – Conservation should start getting serious at tackling head-on its no. 1 obstacle. Some of the systems we try to work with are dysfunctional and if we work with them we must be ready to work to change them. That means confrontation and it is an integral part of conservation work.

While the Director was receiving the award in Holland, the LAGA team in Cameroon was carrying out good operations. **8 dealers were arrested in 4 different operations within 10 days. 2 regular dealers in chimp parts were arrested** in Kumba – South West while trying to collect **400.000 FCFA (\$800) for 2 chimp heads and 8 chimp limbs**. The chimps were reportedly killed in the Korup National Park in the South West Region and it was not the first time they have been apprehended for trading in products of protected wildlife species. After their arrest, they tried to get the Assistant Divisional Officer for Kumba to intervene on their behalf, but this was quickly squashed by the operating team.

2 dealers were arrested in Kribi – South while trying to trade in 9 sea turtle shells. They claimed to have traded in ivory before with suppliers from the northern part of Cameroon and buyers from Equatorial Guinea. They resisted arrest and tried to fight with the operations team. In another operation in Kribi, **2 regular dealers were arrested while trying to sell a live baby chimp**. They have been trafficking live primates for long using a motor-bike to carry out their business. They called on former Member of Parliament from the Ocean Division to intervene on their behalf but he refused after getting the details of the case from the operations team. The live baby chimp was rescued and sent to the Limbe wildlife Center for proper care.

In Bafang – West, 2 dealers in protected wildlife products were arrested with a very large leopard skin. They were arrested with a military uniform and a motor-bike which they use to carry out the trade. One of them is a recidivist and claims to have connections to the Bafang royal family.

In an operation carried out by some Ecoguards of former ECOFAC, a network of elephant poachers/dealers busted in Bengbis – South. 6 of them were arrested for killing an elephant in the Dja Reserve and trying to trade in its parts. They were arrested with 2 elephant tusks (about 4 kg), a gun and smoked elephant meat. They are connected to a main dealer of Malian nationality and investigations are still ongoing for his arrest. LAGA was involved in writing the complaint reports (PV), ensuring that the culprits were transported and locked-up in Sangmelima while at the same time following up the cases in the Court of First Instance in Bengbis and carrying out more investigations in order to arrest the main dealer of Malian nationality who is the main driving force behind the killings of elephants in that area.

Investigations

- **18 investigations** of varying lengths were carried out in **7 Regions** of Cameroon- West, South West, North West, South, East, Littoral and Center.
- PALF Investigator from the Republic of Congo was trained in LAGA for 1 month. He was trained on procedures of Investigations, Operations, Legal follow-up on court cases and how to produce and push through media pieces. He also received training on how to work on the Investigations Organic system and how to write good field activities and financial reports. He also carried out field missions resulting in a successful operation in Kribi – South in the arrest of 2 main dealers with 9 sea turtle shells. Training and exchange of Investigators will continue with the other projects in the forthcoming weeks.
- Investigations led to 4 successful operations after targeting main dealers in Kumba – South West, Kribi – South, and Bafang – West; a total of 8 dealers were arrested
- Training of Investigators on operations procedure continued this month so that they could start to actively assist and help in controlling some operations in the field.
- This month saw one Investigator, i33 continuing his studies in South Africa. The challenge will be to continue engaging him in activism while in South Africa. He is still getting information back to the LAGA Investigations Department on his targets while in South Africa and he will be engaged in more investigations work especially on international trade.

Operations

5 operations were carried out this month against the 14 main dealers; 3 of the operations were carried out within 3 days with 6 dealers arrested.

- **18/04/11 – 2 regular dealers in chimp parts were arrested** in Kumba – South West while trying to collect **400.000 FCFA (\$800) for 2 chimp heads and 8 chimp limbs**. The chimps were reportedly killed in the Korup National Park in the South West Region and it was not the first time they have been apprehended for trading in products of protected wildlife species. After their arrest, they tried to get the Assistant Divisional Officer for Kumba to intervene on their behalf, but this was quickly squashed by the operating team.
- **20/04/11 – 2 main dealers arrested in Kribi – South while trying to trade in 9 sea turtle shells**. They claimed to have traded in ivory before with suppliers from the northern part of Cameroon and buyers from Equatorial Guinea. They resisted arrest and tried to fight with the operations team.
- **21/04/11 – 2 other dealers arrested in Kribi – South while trying to sell a live baby chimp**. They have been trafficking live primates for long using a motor-bike to carry out their business. They called on former Member of Parliament from the Ocean Division to intervene on their behalf but he refused after getting the details of the case from the operations team. The live baby chimp was rescued and sent to the Limbe wildlife Center for proper care.
- **27/04/11 – 2 dealers in protected wildlife products arrested in Bafang – West** with a very large leopard skin. They were arrested with a military uniform and a motor-bike which they use to carry out the trade. One of them is a recidivist and claims to have connections to the Bafang royal family.
- **27/04/11 – A network of elephant poachers/dealers busted in Bengbis – South**. 6 of them were arrested for killing an elephant in the Dja Reserve and trying to trade in its parts. They were arrested with 2 elephant tusks (about 4 kg), a gun and smoked elephant meat. They are connected to a main dealer of Malian nationality and investigations are still ongoing for his arrest. The operation was carried out by some Ecoguards of former ECOFAC. LAGA was involved in writing the complaint reports (PV), ensuring that the culprits were transported and locked-up in Sangmelima while at the same time following up the cases in the Court of First Instance in Bengbis and carrying out more investigations in order to arrest the main dealer of Malian nationality who is the main driving force behind the killings of elephants in that area.

Legal

- LAGA Legal Department carried out **22 missions** out of Yaounde- Centre Region: 3 in Douala (Littoral), 1 in Buea (South West), 1 in Limbe (South West), 1 in Kumba (South West), 1 in Muyuka (South West), 1 in Mamfe (South West), 1 in Abong-Mbang (East), 5 in Kribi (South), 1 in Ebolowa (South), 1 in Sangmelima (South), 1 in Bengbis (South), 1 in Bafoussam (West), 2 in Bafang (West), and 2 in Bamenda (North West).
- There are **20 dealers behind bars during this month**: 2 in the East Region, 4 in the South West Region, 10 in the South Region, 2 in the West Region and 2 in the littoral Region.
- **35 cases** were followed up by the Legal Department this month.
- **25 cases** are scheduled and being trailed in the court this month.
- **Prosecutions**: 1 dealer was sentenced this month.
 - 01/04/2011: The court of First Instance of Douala sentenced NKOUTENGAN Aboubakar to **six (6) months** of prison and to pay **\$4845 as damages and fine**. He was arrested in Douala for illegal detention and trying to sell a leopard skin.

Media front

- **29 media pieces** were produced and pushed through to radio and written press including: 9 written press materials (5 in English and 4 in French), 3 talk shows (all in English), 4 news feature in English and 13 news flashes (10 in English and 3 in French).
- Guests include: South West Delegate of MINFOF, and the former information officer at the US Embassy.
- Subjects focused on wildlife law enforcement including; Abong Mbang arrest of ivory dealers- judgement, Abong Mbang arrest of 6 ivory traffickers – hearing, Kribi arrest of 2 sea turtle shell traffickers, leopard skin dealer arrest Bafang, and Kribi 2 wildlife dealers arrest in chimp trade.
- 22 media pieces in English, 7 in French making a percentage of 75.9% in English and 24.1% in French.

External Relations and Policy

- LAGA Director took part in a dinner with a member of European parliament, the minister of Forestry and Wildlife, the E.U Ambassador and World Bank Forest Adviser.
- LAGA was awarded The Future for Nature award which is given to individuals for internationally outstanding species protection efforts. The award acknowledges individuals who embody an approach to conservation that is entrepreneurial, in that it is innovative, impactful and shapes the future of conservation. Recognizing that approaches need to change, this award recognizes the power of individuals and their influence on conservation. The award was received by the LAGA Director, Ofir Drori in Holland. The award is the forth in connection to LAGA's work, and is hoped to give more credibility to and acceptance of LAGA's message and help in its long term quest to affect conservation in a meaningful way. The ceremony was attended by about 500 invitees, and the Director of LAGA had the opportunity to give a presentation and use the occasion to send across the messages of the need for **transparency and accountability and the diversity needed in participation in conservation**. The presentation ended with three main messages that LAGA tries to put on the map – **Anti-poaching in protected areas is not wildlife law enforcement, Activism and Fighting Corruption**.

Management

- LAGA Director traveled out of the country for 3 weeks in Holland and Morocco. In his absence, there were excellent results in all fronts especially in the arrest of 8 dealers in 4 different operations within 10 days. This was further proof of the growing capacity and independence of the departments.
- PALF Investigator from the Republic of Congo was trained in LAGA for 1 month. He was trained on procedures of Investigations, Operations, Legal follow-up on court cases and how to produce and push through media pieces. He also received training on how to work on the Investigations Organic system and how to write good field activities and financial reports. He also carried out field missions resulting in a successful operation in Kribi – South in the arrest of 2 main dealers with 9 sea turtle shells. Training and exchange of Investigators will continue with the other projects in the forthcoming weeks.
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Activism Front

All the education activities carried out by the LAGA family are online; this could be gotten at the LAGA website – <http://www.laga-enforcement.org/Activism/tabid/77/Default.aspx>. Education activities for this month were on:

**1). Mobutu ‘Le Roi de Zaire’ - The film is about one of the most notorious dictators in Africa
By Sone Nkoke**

Section: Causes / Injustice

Time: 2 hours + 45 minutes debate

Resources: Projector/ TV screen + Power Point Presentation

Background:

“Mobutu” is the story of many other dictators in Africa who fight to remain in power through fraud of elections, change of constitution, suspension of civil liberties, rule by decree, repression of political opponents without abiding by rule of law procedures, cult of personality, strong association with the military etc. A common trait to countries ruled by these dictators include economic mismanagement, embezzlement, top positions occupied by friends and relatives, a strong culture of corruption, dishonesty among public servants of all kinds etc.

Some questions for Debate

- How can we put this into context seeing with most African leaders spending several decades in power?
- Is “people power” going to change this trend as viewed in Tunisia?
- How can institutions help when their rulings are overturned as in Cote d’Ivoire?
- Why do African leaders generally cling to power?
- Is it possible to witness genuine democratic practices in most African countries?

Comment

Given the backdrop to political revolutions currently being witnessed, will these dictators end up as Mobutu – solitary figures running away from their country, dying in exile with their amassed wealth in foreign banks? This is a main discussion point and a lesson to all dictators in Africa.

Further Reading:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mobutu,_King_of_Zaire

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VCJ1x>If8mw>

www.congotube.ca/video/115/Mobutu-King-of-Zaire

2). A Presentation of ACCOD and CSFD by Tah Eric – Director of ACCOD

Time: 30 minutes + 1hour 15minutes debate

Resources: Projector/ TV screen + Power Point Presentation (available in presentation archive of LAGA)

Background:

Creating Independent Activists is one aspect that LAGA uses to foster activism. The NGO members are encouraged to develop their own projects on the various development issues of their country and are given NGO time and management time to develop the project in the vision of turning it into an independent NGO/paper/book. The function of leadership is not producing more followers but to produce more leaders. 2 NGOs have been created by LAGA members – one is known as Action for Citizen and Community Development (ACCOD) and SCATI (Stop Child Abuses and Trafficking Initiatives) which aims at coordinating several precise domains of action (health, community empowerment, law enforcement, policy making, social work, social mobilization etc.) enabling them to act in favour of the eradication of the causes, the factors and the consequences of child abuses and trafficking.

ACCOD is an organisation created to help the citizen grasps fast changing realities in the world today in order to contribute in an appropriate manner in their society. The presentation focused on

ACCOD as an organisation, its coming to being, the history behind its creation, the problems it faced, what it is doing and what it has in perspective.

ACCOD's early life is intricately linked to the early life of the Civil Society Forum for Democracy (CSFD), a forum that has been put in place to unite civil society organisations working in the domain political governance. The stuttering steps of ACCOD is very similar to the early days of the Forum and ACCOD being a steering committee member, the lives of the two are closely linked and this makes the basis of the presentation. Presenting ACCOD and the Forum and much especially presenting the perspectives of the both structures.

Questions for debate:

1. What is the role of ACCOD in civil society?
2. What is the place of ACCOD in elections and democracy with community development?
3. What mechanism can ACCOD put in place to help citizen in a situation of unfair elections?

Comments:

Aim is to create awareness in local communities through rural radios to change malpractices during elections. To let the masses/ citizen know their electoral rights, and right for development at all levels in the society.

Further Reading

<http://www.laga-enforcement.org/Activism/tabid/77/Default.aspx>

3). A Presentation on Florence Nightingale - Activist who brought change in the health sector in Britain – By Sirri Emeline

Section: Activism Models

Time: 45 minutes + 1 hour debate

Resources: Projector/ TV screen + Power Point Presentation (available in presentation archive of LAGA)

Background:

Florence Nightingale is an immutable icon in the world of nursing but this lady from upper class British family born in 1820 had nothing to become a nurse but her willingness, devotion and most especially sacrifice to a cause at the a time when society was rigidly stratified.

The presentation takes us down the life of Florence from the time she was born to her death, as it says she died peacefully in her sleep. Peacefully indeed because she was groundbreaking in a profession that until then was unknown, pioneering nursing to new heights; from the hospitals in Britain to the war fields in Crimea, foregoing all lustful and lively pleasures of everyday which she could easily afford including even getting married. She fully realised her dream of serving others and not others serving her, a normal privilege for a British upper class member.

An inspirational lady, her story tells us of what it takes to surmount difficulties few thought could be surmounted.

Questions for debate:

1. Was she right in leaving all her privileges and stepping down her pedestal of upper class to consecrate her life to work that was not of her class?
2. Are women of other classes able to do what she did or could she not have benefited from the same position she left – an upper class family – to be able to achieve what she achieved.
3. What is right for a woman, getting married and bearing children or taking up a life of celibacy and working for humanitarian and humane achievements as she did?

Comments:

Florence Nightingale is an example to follow to bring a change in our community, country and the world at large. This can only come when we identify our talent, work for it and see to it that it bears good fruits.

Further Reading:

[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Florence Nightingale](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Florence_Nightingale)

www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic.../nightingale_florence.shtml

www.victorianweb.org/history/crimea/florrie.html

Replication

The replication of the LAGA model and the transfer of LAGA experience in other countries throughout the sub-region is a continuous process whereby LAGA works with other NGOs. The vision of bringing about results with an innovative approach, changing the existing system and triggering a paradigm shift in the way NGOs tackle wildlife crime means being actively involved in the functioning and activities of the collaborating NGOs which for now are AALF – Gabon, PALF – Republic of Congo, and RALF – Central African Republic. The replication of the LAGA model is also geared taking cross section lessons outside of wildlife conservation; these include the fight against corruption, fostering activism, fight against child trafficking etc.

<http://www.laga-enforcement.org/Replication/tabid/166/Default.aspx>

On a daily basis, the Management Department of LAGA works with the other NGOs to ensure that all managerial and financial issues especially reports are done; the LAGA Investigations and Operations Departments helps in planning, supervising and assisting in investigation missions and operations; the LAGA Legal Departments ascertains the proper legal follow-up of all court cases; and the LAGA Media Department works with the other NGOs to ensure that all the media pieces are mandatorily written, pushed for publishing and filed accordingly, also making sure all the necessary information is posted on the various project websites.

- For this month, LAGA trained of a PALF- Congo Investigator for 1 month on procedures of Investigations, Operations, Legal follow-up on court cases and how to produce and push through media pieces. Website work was done for PALF, RALF and AALF with all the web pages updated. Follow up the sending cross checking, corrections, validation and sending online of the PALF Annual Activity reports of 2010.

Finance

In preparation, will be made available shortly.

THIS MONTH IN PICTURES



LAGA Director, Ofir Drori giving a presentation on the work of LAGA in wildlife law enforcement and the need for collaboration during the receipt of the Future for Nature Award in Holland.



A baby chimp rescued during an operation in Kribi – South. 2 main dealers were arrested while trying to sell it. The live baby chimp was sent to the Limbe wildlife Center for proper care and safekeeping.



2 dealers in protected wildlife products arrested in Bafang – West with a leopard skin. They were arrested with a military uniform and a motor-bike which they use to carry out the trade.



2 regular dealers arrested in Kribi – South while trying to trade in 9 sea turtle shells. They resisted arrest and tried to fight with the operations team.

Links of this month

Recruitment of Super Volunteers - We are activists motivated by the great failure of aid in Africa, disillusioned by the waste, lack of conviction and corruption in the aid business. With the hope of bringing about a change we started tackling corruption issues as an NGO-The Last Great Ape Organisation (www.laga-enforcement.org) in order to prove Civil Society Organizations can and should develop a much more demanding and aggressive approach in this fight. Sub-Saharan Africa is moving backwards in every possible indicator set by its own development officials. Yet the aid system continues to reinforce the development myth - that pumping in more money to the existing system can solve Africa's problems. We wish to recruit and train six special volunteers with the following points in view to assist in this fight:

- Have had an experience in Africa.
- Have experience in volunteering and activism.
- Have a strong character and devotion that can carry them through this fight.
- Have a desire to effect change in a society.
- Must not necessarily be biologists or conservationists.

If you are interested please send your contact details and curriculum vitae (CV) to - ofir@laga-enforcement.org, ofir@kick-corruption.org, Tel: +237 9965 1803

<http://www.laga-enforcement.org/Activism/RecruitmentofSuperVolunteers/tabid/192/Default.aspx>