

**LAST GREAT APE ORGANISATION, CAMEROON (LAGA)**  
**SEMESTER REPORT**  
**January to June 2006**

**Executive Summary**

Very good progress was made over this period on all aspects of LAGA's work, with tangible achievements not only in the fields of investigation, arrest and prosecution but also in media exposure, government relations and international activities.

Investigations

- A total of 107 investigation missions (of varying lengths) were conducted in this period in 9 provinces.
- In January, following the appointment of a head of investigations unit, new planning and reporting structures were implemented.

Operations

- Operations were carried out in 8 provinces resulting in 24 court cases.
- The rate of imprisonment for these cases rose to 88%.

Legal

- 24 new cases were brought to court and represented (many of the cases begun during the period have not yet reached this stage but are still ongoing).
- A programme was developed and initiated to make the legal representation of wildlife cases by the Ministry financially sustainable without external assistance.
- In February record damages of US\$4,445 were awarded for a wildlife case.

Media

- A total of 170 media pieces were produced in national media (television, radio and press).
- Wildlife Justice Magazine – a bilingual, bi-monthly journal of stories about the progress of wildlife law enforcement in Cameroon – was launched in March 2006, with 1,000 copies printed and distributed.

Strategic Highlights

- Over the course of this period, three live chimpanzees were confiscated from known dealers and re-homed to PASA sanctuaries in Cameroon.
- Operations were conducted exposing the international ivory trade with Nigeria, Ivory Coast, Guinea, and the Far East.
- Chinese links to international trade were identified and one Chinese national was arrested in a raid on an ivory workshop.
- Two operations were conducted involving the illegal trade in lion skins.
- Other investigations and operations involved drug smuggling (in conjunction with live ape trading) and the murder of an eco-guard.

Government Relations

- In March 2006 an MoU was signed with the government of Cameroon defining LAGA's law enforcement mandate and certifying their ongoing relationship.

## **Narrative Report**

### **Introduction**

This report refers to LAGA's activities from January till June 2006.

In this period LAGA experienced a major climb in the political level, and operational level. This report includes: the progress in each department of activities (Investigations, Operations, Legal, Media), strategic overview of and the impact of our operations on wildlife crime in Cameroon, progress in relations with the Cameroonian Government, in the international arena, and in non-enforcement initiatives LAGA has undertaken.

### **Contents**

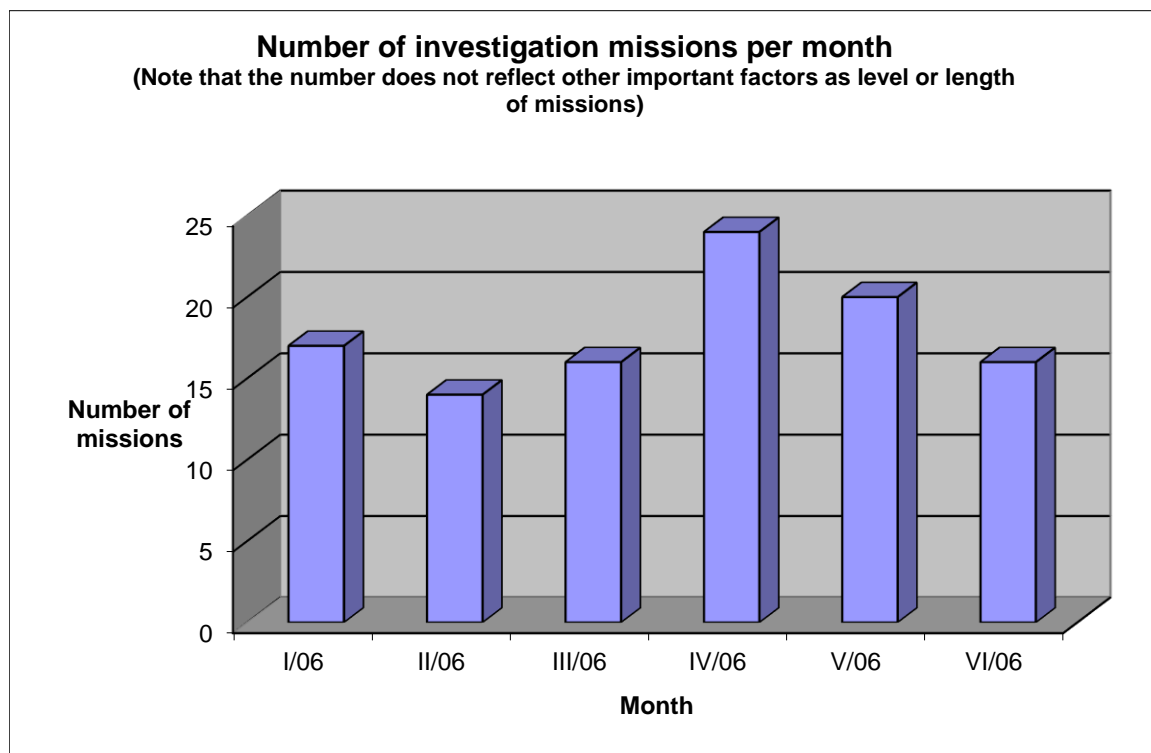
<b>Section</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Page</b>
1	Investigations	3
2	Operations	4
3	Legal	5
4	Media	7
5	Strategic Overview of Wildlife Crime in Cameroon and Operations' Impact	8
6	Independent monitoring	13
7	Relation with the Government	13
8	International Arena	13
9	Other Initiatives Taken	14
10	Management	14
11	Finance	14

## **1. Investigations**

LAGA's investigation unit has carried 107 investigation missions in 9 provinces during this time. The department has experienced structural reorganization and a drastic improvement in its professional level. 2 investigators were dismissed one was recruited within this period.

Following the appointment of the chief investigator as head of the investigation unit, he was made responsible for the reconstruction and development of the unit. In January the newly appointed head of the investigation unit took important steps within this role by designing and implementing new control tables, working program, and procedures.

In the beginning of 2006, the unit showed a high level of professionalism and an increase in the scope of its impact by undertaking two investigations relating to wildlife trade but involving additional offences not under wildlife law concerning the drugs trade and a killer of an eco-guard.

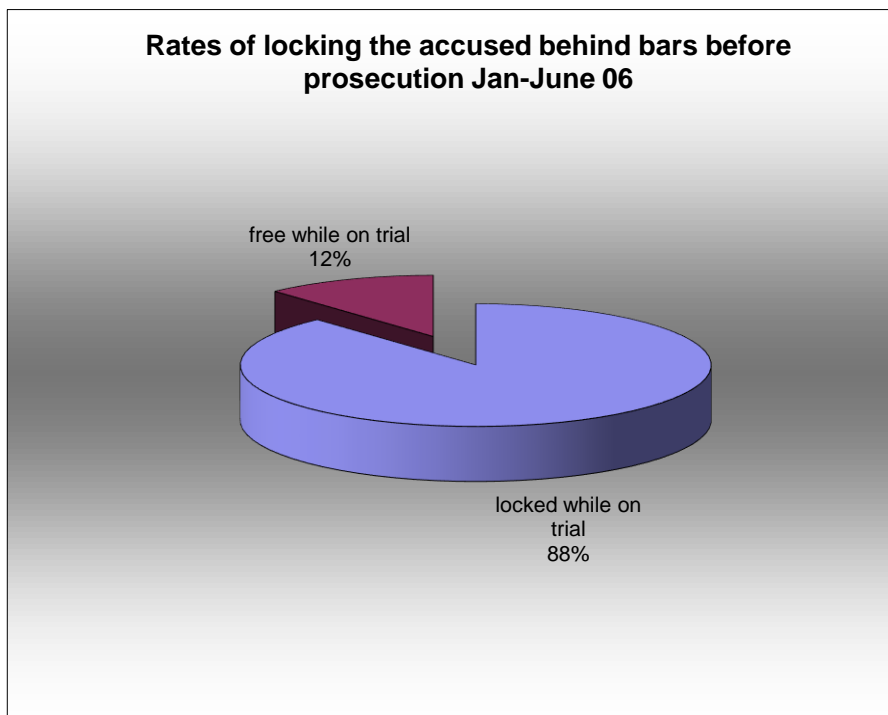


**2. Operations**

LAGA carried out operations in 8 provinces resulting in 24 court cases. Operations became more sophisticated over the period and the rate of imprisonment rose to 88% of the cases.

LAGA have increased collaboration with the National Brigade following its creation last September in

In this period LAGA carried reconstruction and transferred all ivory into the National Ivory Storage Room in the zoo as well as creating a computerized data base for it. The importance is of control over seized ivory insuring good governance.



### **3. Legal**

24 cases reached the court, and were followed up and represented. Most of the cases initiated within his period have not yet arrived prosecution as most subjects are imprisoned throughout the process and as jail terms grow longer so does the process.

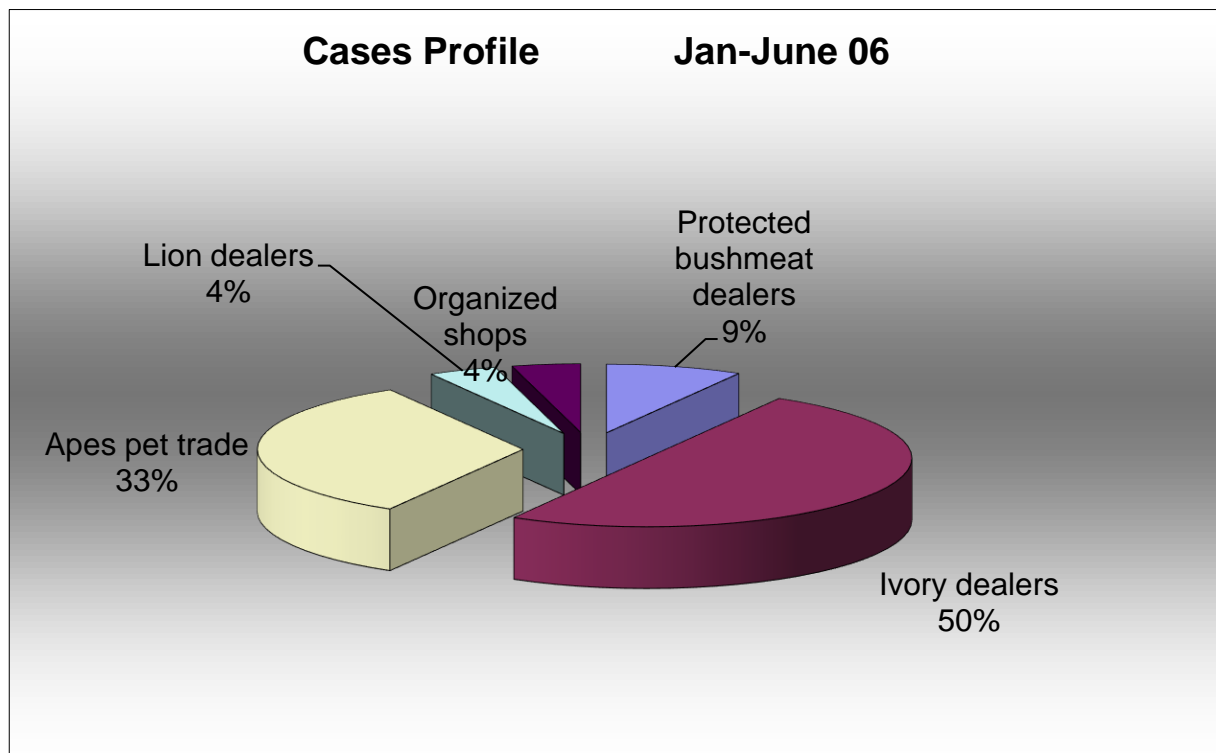
The legal unit built up relations in 4 new provinces and strengthened existing communication with the courts and collaboration on strengthening court procedures for wildlife law cases.

Last year LAGA identified a major obstacle to the progress of wildlife law enforcement - the prohibitive expense for the Ministry of paying lawyers' fees. As part of the goal of creating a self-sustaining wildlife law enforcement system in Cameroon, LAGA proceeded to address this situation directly. Later on methods were discussed with the Minister to ensure that the legal representation of Wildlife cases could be financially sustainable rather than a burden on the Ministry's budget by –

1. Increasing awarded damages for wildlife cases
2. Reducing lawyers' charges while improving their performance
3. Recovering awarded damages more effectively

Agreement was reached for finalizing negotiations with lawyers in different provinces, and starting process of execution of damages. In January, the first execution of fines and damages was paid, and Lawyers' bonuses were started with 2 lawyers. In February, unprecedented damages were awarded for a wildlife case– 2.4 million CFA (\$4,445), and a reliable system for collection of payment was set in place. By March the process had been completed as the MoU agreement with the Government formalized this program and included references to the financial arrangements with lawyers as an appendix of the contract.

In February the Legal Unit developed a new computerized system to control its schedule. This consists of creating a schedule of assignments for each active court case and automatic alerts for any assignment not accomplished on time. This has improved the level of efficiency of the department.



**List of court cases – Jan-June 06**

No	Case name	Offence	Profile	Remarks	Status
1	Bityeki	dealing with live chimp +drug	pet trade	Drug dealer arrested with 50 kg Marijuana, activates 5 poachers	locked while on trial
2	Markova Yuliya	dealing with a bonobo	pet trade	DRC, international ukrainian ape dealer	fugitive under chase
3	Ondonda Zhilber	dealing with bonobo	pet trade	DRC, international ape dealer, Russian passport	fugitive under chase
4	Eyong James	dealing with elephants products + murder	Ivory dealers	Killed 270 elephants, accomplice of murder of an ecoguard	locked while on trial
5	camara Mohamed	dealing with ivory	Ivory dealers	ivoirian connection to ivory trade	locked while on trial
6	Keita Nounke	dealing with ivory	Ivory dealers	Guinnean connection to ivory trade	locked while on trial
7	Sanoh Ibrahim	dealing with ivory	Ivory dealers	Guinnean connection to ivory trade	locked while on trial
8	Emene Wilfried	Selling young chimpanzee	pet trade	ape dealer trafikking between East and Yaounde	locked while on trial
9	Ahanda Abomo	detention of a live drill	Pet trade	negligence of NP project	locked while on trial
10	Eyanga	detention of a live drill	Pet trade	negligence of NP project	free while on trial
11	Angoulla Angoulla	Trade in crocodiles	bushmeat dealer	worker of logging company	locked while on trial
12	Sanoh Ibrahim	dealing with ivory	ivory dealers	repeated offender	locked while on trial
13	Adamou babouga	dealing with ivory	Ivory dealers	bamenda	locked while on trial
14	Njung Bonshe	dealing with chimpanzee mea	bushmeat dealer	bamenda	locked while on trial
15	Jikombe Daouda	dealing with ivory	ivory dealers	Wealthy High personality spends half time in France	locked while on trial
16	Goumbe Inoussa	dealing with ivory	ivory dealers	Foumban	locked while on trial
17	Makan Samuel	dealing with ivory	ivory dealers	repeated offender, arrest on a ship, international trade	locked while on trial
18	souleyman ali	dealing with lion	Lion trade	Laundrying illegal trade in the cover of a hunting safari	locked while on trial
19	tonye Nicolas	selling live chimpanzee	pet trade	Edéa	fugitive under chase
20	boulong	selling live chimpanzee	pet trade	Edea	fugitive under chase
21	Cathérine fouda	Protected animals	International dealer in protected animals	Underground large shop, international trafick, Daughter of first mayor of Yaounde, sister to a minister	free while on trial
22	Teng Tonny	dealing with ivory	Ivory dealers	Asian, 3.9 tonnes affair	fugitive under chase
23	Teng Andrew	dealing with ivory	Ivory dealers	Asian, 3.9 tonnes affair	fugitive under chase
24	Teng Nora	dealing with ivory	Ivory dealers	Asian, 3.9 tonnes affair	fugitive under chase

#### **4. Media**

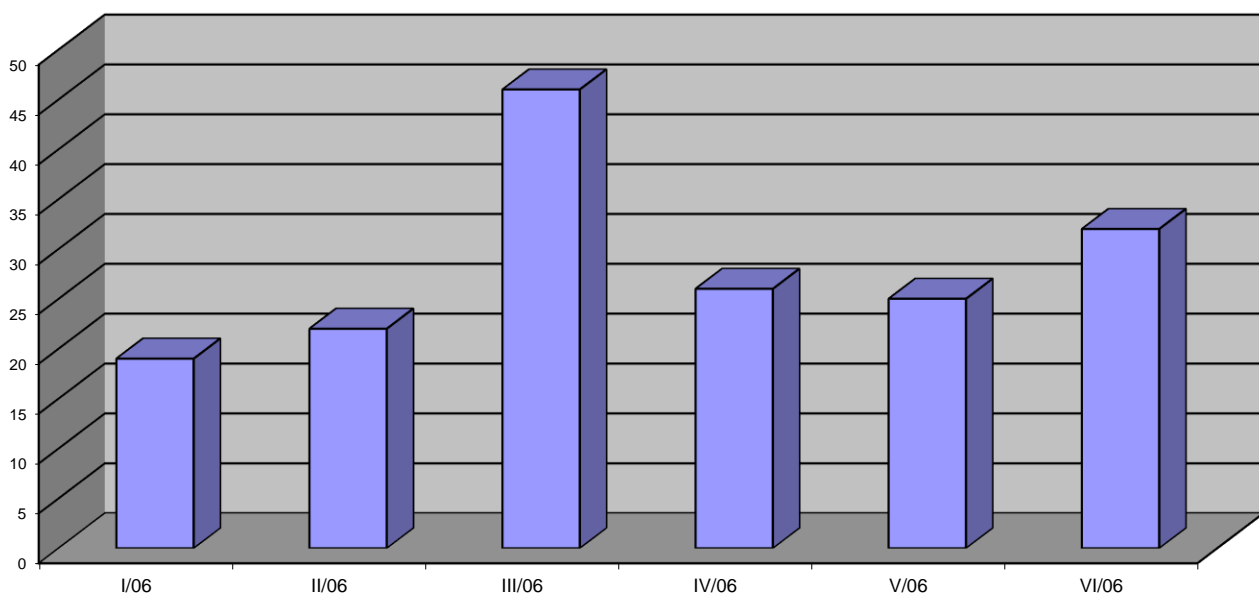
A recorded total of **170 media pieces** was produced and pushed into media, including numerous articles in all media – radio, television and written press. Subjects were on a broad range of wildlife law enforcement issues including all of LAGA’s operations and prosecutions, the ‘Taiping Four’ gorilla smuggling case, apes and health, CITES legislation and its implications, the UNEP/UNESCO GRASP project, traditional values / cultures and wildlife law enforcement, and links between wildlife crime and the illegal drugs trade. Guests featured in these articles included: the Honorable Minister of MINFOF, the Secretary General, Ministry directors, Magistrates, lawyers, local Chiefs, Members of Parliament, delegates, police commissioners, diplomats, and NGOs.

The capacity, professionalism and matching results in this department have been growing steadily. Following the recruitment of a media assistant to build capacity of the media department, a program of intensified media campaigning was approved, and following this came a rapid growth in output in 2006 with more talk shows, more diversified stakeholders as guests and of higher level in hierarchy.

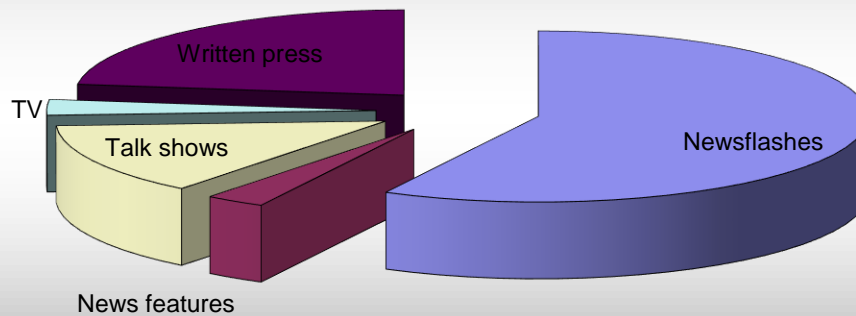
In March LAGA launched the first edition of a bilingual bi-monthly journal on Wildlife Law Enforcement. 1000 copies have been printed and actively distributed to all major professional stakeholders. The journal, called *Wildlife Justice Magazine*, contains interviews with some government officials and diplomats on wildlife law enforcement operations. The journal focuses mainly on the progress of the wildlife law enforcement process in Cameroon. The first edition is dedicated to government policy and includes interviews with the Prime Minister and the Minister of Wildlife and Forestry.

Efforts of this period have been captured by a foreign TV crew in a Cicada production for the Discovery channel for three programs.

Number of Media Pieces Produced and Pushed



### Split of Media Pieces



## **5. Strategic Overview of Wildlife Crime in Cameroon and Operations' Impact**

Beyond the number of operations and their effectiveness there is an even more important factor in evaluating LAGA's work – the strategic value of the operations in reducing the level of illegal wildlife trade. In this regard LAGA is choosing diversified operations, which carry an added value to expose and map the different angles of wildlife crime in Cameroon. Consequently, our work sheds light on the nature of illegal wildlife trade in the sub-region. The strategic focus over this period was on great apes, ivory and lion parts, including special attention to international ivory trading routes.

### **5.1 Apes**

The Taiping Four affair exposes a different angle in combating illegal trade in apes - the political fight against the international players of the trade. The Taiping Four are four gorillas that were smuggled from Cameroon to Nigeria to the Taiping Zoo in Malaysia, which paid 1.6 million dollars in this illegal deal. After the discovery of this affair by the International Primate Protection League (IPPL) Cameroon has been demanding the return of the gorillas in accordance with CITES guidelines. In October, following a series of inter-ministerial meetings and correspondence with the South African government the Cameroon government sent a negotiations mission to South Africa. The mission, sent by the Prime Minister's office, included the sub-directors from MINFOF, MINEP, and Ministry of External relations, the High Commissioner of Cameroon in South Africa and the Director of LAGA. The Cameroon delegation took a strong stand in demanding the gorillas to be repatriated, and backed their stand with an extensive technical demonstration. The work on this issue has been constant throughout the period of this report.



In January LAGA has carried out an operation linking the trade in apes with the drugs trade in the Centre Province. Four large sacks of marijuana, weighing about 50Kg, were seized along with a young chimpanzee. Another kind of drug was also caught in possession of the dealer which he admitted was cocaine. The drugs and wildlife dealer has been employing at least 4 poachers and has been trading other protected primates regularly.

In March a dealer specialized in trading in protected wildlife species has been arrested in Yaounde with a live chimpanzee. The dealer was observed regularly trading in protected wildlife species including apes between Belabo in the East Province to Yaounde in the Centre Province.

In June an operation was carried against a shop in Yaounde identified to trade in large scale from its basement in various protected species including – apes, elephants and crocodiles in a systematic manner. Catalogue numbers were given to items described as Elephant skull, Chimpanzee bone, Gorilla skull (probably a mandrill skull misidentified), Aardvark hand, stuffed Turaco birds, and many other Class A animals. The owner Mrs. C. Fouda is a daughter of the first mayor of Yaounde, a sister to a former minister and a very wealthy and well connected individual. This case presents a challenge to the fight against corruption LAGA is undertaking.

In the same month an operation took place against an Ape dealer in Kopongo Littoral Province. The operation was not fully successful, as while the chimp was rescued and the complaint report channelled, the offender managed to escape. An arrest warrant was issued and LAGA will insure the offender gets arrested.

## **5.2 Ivory**

### **5.2.1 International investigation on 3.9 tonnes seizure**

May month is dominated by the incident of 3.9 tones of ivory seized in Hong Kong. It was used for a successful unprecedented investigation and operations in Cameroon as well as political achievements engaging further the Government of Cameroon and the International community.

Information arriving from Hong Kong CITES Management Authority to Cameroon's MA on seizure of 3.9 tons of ivory initiated an investigation led by MINFOF in collaboration with customs authorities and the forces of law and order in collaboration with LAGA. At this stage the investigation revealed the time and place of the illegal act and gathered enough evidence to forward 3 main suspects for prosecution both on customs charges as well as wildlife charges. The investigation also revealed two additional containers with false compartments. In both traces of ivory were found.

From CoP 13, every CITES meeting, Cameroon has constantly alerted that the markets of China represents a threat to its elephant population, and that large amounts of ivory are illegally trafficked from Douala, in containers, to China. During CoP 13 LAGA, on the CITES delegation, initiated a side meeting with the Chinese delegation and delegations of Central and Western Africa for this matter.

The smugglers are professional and the concealing methods they were using are new to the customs authorities. The equipment used for detecting the ivory in Hong Kong is not available for export inspections in Cameroon.

Cameroon suspects the ivory in this shipment is gathered from different neighbouring countries. Cameroon is seeking a DNA test to verify this for the benefit of mapping wildlife trade in the sub-region and playing a positive role in fighting it.

Trying to build a full picture from a single incident is a matter of statistical analysis that is beyond this report. Yet, there are still basic observations that can put this investigation in a larger context. The seizure in Hong Kong represents more than 300 killed elephants.

Assuming the false compartment is fully charged before each journey, the evidence collected from the additional two containers alone makes this a smuggling affair of around 12 tons of ivory or 900 killed elephants. This activity was probably done over time as the recycling of the containers shows. It appears that the magnitude of this ivory trafficking scheme is unprecedented. On one hand, one can argue that increased enforcement in China, Hong Kong and Cameroon is evident and clear in terms of seizures and court sentences and the fact that ivory trade is getting more centralized and operates in new innovative modus operandi is a normal response to an increased enforcement. On the other hand, one can argue that despite all enforcement efforts, illegal ivory trade is simply on the increase.

A full confidential report concerning this investigation is shared with relevant authorities, a non-confidential version of it will be circulated soon.

### **5.2.2 The Chinese link**

In May an ivory dealer has been arrested on board a Chinese ship at the Douala Port in possession of sample ivory products on sale. The dealer was using the regular method of arriving the ship with sample ivory products attractive to potential Chinese buyers and inviting them to make illegal deals at safer corners in the city of Douala. This is the second arrest on a Chinese ship.

### **5.2.3 The Guinean link**

In February LAGA carried out two operations against Guinean ivory trade connections. The two were in Douala and were a follow up on foreigners involved in international ivory trade. Last year LAGA brought about the arrest of a big trader in Douala of Guinean nationality. He used to buy tusks from all over the country and employ carvers manufacturing models for the Asian market. He served a jail term and later left Cameroon. Now these operations arrested three more Guineans operating in a similar way in two different places with 68 Kg of ivory.

## **5.3 Lions**

In June efforts, mainly sponsored by the Born Free Foundation, concerning illegal trade in lions were concretised in an important operation discovering illegal trade in lions products in the cover of legal trade of a safari company. A long-time worker in Hunting Safari companies has been arrested undertaking lions trade in Garoua, North Province. The dealer is noted to have been using the legal activities of these companies to cover illegal trade in products of protected wildlife species, notably lions and leopards. This is the second arrest in the North province involving lions trade, and it comes a few months after Cameroon hosted an international conference on African lions conservation strategy initiated by the secretariat of the convention on trade in endangered species (CITES) in response to the declining population of the world's lions. Lion conservation is thus undergoing a political process in reaction to research indications that the world's lion population has dropped by 50 per cent in the last decade. During the lion conservation conference held in Douala, Cameroon identified trade in lion skins as a major cause of in the declining of lion population in Central and West Africa, and strongly insisted on the effective application of the wildlife laws as only solution to the crisis.

Samples have been sent for DNA analysis to try to shed light on possible international illegal trade in lions' products.

## **5.4 Wildlife Crime Connection to Other Crimes**

In the beginning of 2006 LAGA's investigation unit broadened the scope of its activities by initiating wildlife-related investigations involving crimes outside wildlife law.

In January there was an operation involving drugs and apes in Bafia, Centre Province. Four large sacks of marijuana, weighing about 50Kg were seized with a young chimpanzee. Another kind of drug was also caught in possession of the dealer which he admitted was cocaine. The drugs and wildlife dealer had been employing at least 4 poachers and had been trading other protected primates regularly. The dealer was successfully incarcerated despite corruption attempts. This operation was appreciated by the local police who admitted that this has been the largest marijuana seizure in that division.

On January a poacher in South West Cameroon killed an unarmed ecoguard from a one meter range – a very disturbing crime. After a two week investigation by the forces of law and order came to a dead end, LAGA's one week investigation discovered that a known poacher and ivory dealer had been hiding the killer and an accomplice. By the time we brought the Ministry team and the forces of law and order to the location, the two had apparently escaped to a house of the killer's brother, in another town. On February 20<sup>th</sup> in a LAGA collaborative operation the subject was arrested. With him were seized one elephant tail and a letter he wrote that implicates him as connected to the killing. Interrogation continued and we moved the subject around the country. By the end of the month, the location of the killer had not been determined. However, the subject confessed that he has killed more than 280 elephants from 1977 till now. The man also confessed that he was the one writing and signing the implicating letter (on the letter was a title - "Read and burn in fire").

### Overview of International Wildlife Traffic in Cameroon and Operations' Sites Jan-June 06



Base 802575 (R02413) 7-98

## **6. Independent monitoring**

In July last year the World Bank appointed LAGA to be the independent monitor of three of its projects –

Camrail (Cameroon railway service) project, Mbam Djerem National Park and Campo-Maan National Park. MINFOF has contacted LAGA concerning the need for a national Independent Monitor of Wildlife Crime. This marks an achievement for LAGA in regards to its 4<sup>th</sup> Objective: “Form the first model for an independent monitor for wildlife, as stated in the AFLEG declaration.”

In March two operations were held in the Campo Ma’an area. Campo-Ma’an is a national park managed through a project of WWF. The World Bank appointed LAGA to monitor the project giving LAGA a chance to exercise 2 of its 6 stated objectives – Creating a map of potential for the donors in exposing unsuccessful investments in law enforcement, and creating an independent monitor for wildlife crime in Cameroon. The assessment report is a part of this bi-annual report.

## **7. Relation with the Government**

The fostering of LAGA’s relationship with the Government of Cameroon is of high importance in the sensitive domain of law enforcement, as building legitimacy for the concept of a Wildlife Law Enforcement NGO is LAGA’s objective No. 3.

In March, an agreement was been signed between LAGA and the government of Cameroon. The signing of the MoU closes a circle of three years, and is the first signed agreement defining LAGA’s unique mandate in law enforcement and the Government’s commitment in this process. The event was intensively covered by the media and included such high level guests as representatives of the British High Commission, the US Embassy, the World Bank, the Ministry of Justice and many others.

## **8. International Arena**

LAGA is based in a sub-region that has been identified as one of those most harmed by the international illegal wildlife trade. LAGA is a unique experience whose value lies in its potential for duplication and a larger impact beyond Cameroon. This is in line with LAGA’s objective to serve as a model in the search for a paradigm shift in wildlife law enforcement.

In January, LAGA started the first active case outside Cameroon, involving a bonobo international smuggling affair by expatriates. LAGA has appointed a lawyer and works with the Ministry in charge of wildlife in DRC.

In January, the UNEP manual for the parties on implementation of Multilateral Environmental Agreements was released, with the case study of the Government of Cameroon and LAGA included as a unique and positive approach that should serve a lesson to other parties.

In April LAGA was selected as BHC best project of the ending financial year.

In May the incident of 3.9 tones of ivory seized in Hong Kong was used for political achievements engaging further the Government of Cameroon and the International community. With International community US Ambassador, British High Commissioner and World Bank forest advisor all played a role concerning this case after LAGA’s communication.

## **9. Other Initiatives Taken**

### **9.1 Apes and Ecotourism Potential**

In February, LAGA organized a meeting on ape ecotourism potential in Cameroon as a follow up of the Kinshasa GRASP meeting.. The meeting was held in the US embassy and has put together a wide spectrum of stakeholders for developing ecotourism in Cameroon – three Ministries, NGOs, donors, and national and international economic operators. An international guest – Praveen Moman, Director of Volcano Safaris – gave an account of mountain gorilla safaris and the lessons taught. The views expressed gave a comprehensive insight of the challenges ahead. The meeting has been described as a good starting point and as new wind blown into an old and slow process.

## **10. Management**

In January, LAGA began to recover from its management gap, as capacity building of assistant manager, head of investigation, and media department resulted in freeing more management time from the Director.

A gap still exists in LAGA's management especially in communication with donors and reporting. Discussions continue as LAGA proposed building its capacity with a part-time overseas professional in charge of communication with donors and potential donors.

## **11. Finance**

In January, through the dedicated help of IPPL, LAGA received a grant from the Arcus Foundation. The grant – \$25,000 per year for two years – represents an improvement in LAGA's sustainable funding, together with the BHC grant insuring 3 years funding.

By March The US FWS grant used from April 2005 was fully exhausted and an application for a renewed grant has been accepted.

More information in the Excel Annex.