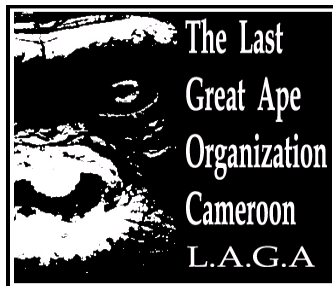


# **THE LAST GREAT APE ORGANIZATION, CAMEROON LAGA**

**FIRST SEMESTER REPORT JANUARY - JUNE 2021**



## **Executive Summary**

Despite the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic and several other difficulties, the LAGA team pushed forward, obtaining tangible achievements in its collaboration with the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife (MINFOF). Achievements were obtained in the fields of investigation, arrest, prosecution, media exposure and government relations with focus on the fight against the trafficking in pangolin scales, live primates and leopard skins. These activities also included relations with the international community. The EAGLE network's Central Coordination Unit (CCU) continued to provide vital technical and organisation support that facilitated several operations resulting in a significant number of arrests. A customs official was arrested for trafficking in a live mandrill while 2 traditional chiefs were also arrested.

12 major traffickers were arrested at a rate of one for every two weeks and approximately 42 % stayed behind bars from the day of arrest. This is an usually very low rate of arrested traffickers kept behind bars. Accordingly, 12 new cases were brought to the courts. 9 traffickers were found guilty and the courts ordered the payment of damages totalling 216,100,000 F CFA (about \$432,200) to MINFOF by the convicted traffickers. Media exposure was at a rate almost one media piece per day.

The EAGLE network achieved substantial results as 84 traffickers were arrested across all 9 countries. An investigator from Cameroon travelled to Uganda and the collaboration produced two good operations.

The LAGA team participated in the mourning and remembrance of Vincent Gudmia Mfonfu who was one of the founding fathers of the organisation. The team took part in several funeral activities marking his departure to the world beyond.

**The work of LAGA was supported by ECF, Wildcat, Born free Foundation, DUTCH GORILLA Foundation, AVAAZ, Pro Wildlife**

**LAST GREAT APE ORGANISATION, CAMEROON (LAGA)**  
**SEMESTER REPORT**  
January - June 2021

**OVERVIEW**

**Investigations**

- A total of 87 investigation missions (of varying lengths) were carried out in 6 regions.

**Operations**

- Operations were carried out in 4 regions arresting 12 major traffickers resulting in 12 court cases at a rate one for every two weeks.
- Operations were on live primates including a chimpanzee and mandrills, pangolin scales and leopard skins.
- The rate of imprisonment of arrested offenders was usually low and stood at 42%.
- A baby chimpanzee was rescued early on in May.
- A customs official was arrested with a live mandrill in February.

**Legal**

- 12 new cases were brought to court. Many of the 12 cases began during the period have not yet reached the prosecution stage but procedures are ongoing.
- 9 traffickers were found guilty and handed prison sentences, fines and damages. Damages amounted to some 216,100,000FCFA (about \$432,200) to be paid to MINFOF.
- 7 court judgements were passed during the 6-month period.
- Only one appeal was lodged this semester.
- Corruption and complicity were witnessed in one case.

**Media**

- A total of 147 media pieces were produced in national media (radio, TV, written press and internet) achieved at a rate of almost one media piece per day.

**Management**

- The annual report of 2020 was made available online.
- One candidate was trained and recruited for the position of investigator
- Focus was on maintaining high standards in every department despite the numerous health challenges and on improving recruitment for investigators.

**External Relations and Policy**

- The Covid-19 pandemic limited the possibility of holding several high level meetings. Nevertheless, some meetings were held with MINFOF officials, the diplomatic community, national and international NGOs to discuss issues on collaboration, governance, wildlife law enforcement among others.

### **Strategic Highlights**

- The operational focus over this period was on live primates, pangolin scales and leopard skins
- The strategic focus was ensuring investigations and operations were smoothly carried out despite the challenges posed by the pandemic.
- External relations activities principally targeted high level discussions at the Ministry to tackle issues of collaboration and with diplomatic missions to improve communication and collaboration.
- A new round of recruitment targeting the investigation department were initiated
- The CCU evaluated and provided strategic assistance to management, operational and organisational functioning.
- An internal auditing was carried out to ensure high standards of financial reporting and probity.

### **EAGLE Activities**

- A total of 84 traffickers were arrested across 9 countries of the network during this semester.
- An investigator travelled to Uganda to provide assistance and experience sharing with the young Ugandan team
- The planning, hosting and departure of an investigator from Gabon was carried out.

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### Also available:

1. Annual Financial Statement 2020
2. Annual Activity Report 2020
3. Media archive – Excel database linked to recorded media pieces
4. Photo archive for media use

For copies contact email; [eric@laga-enforcement.org](mailto:eric@laga-enforcement.org)

## **NARRATIVE REPORT**

This report covers the period January to June 2021 and it focuses on progress in the activities of each department notably investigations, operations, legal, media and management, strategic overview of and the impact of operations on wildlife crime in Cameroon, progress in relations with the Cameroonian government, non-governmental bodies, collaboration with international partners and non-enforcement initiatives that LAGA undertook.

### **1. Investigations**

LAGA's investigation unit carried out 87 investigation missions in 6 regions of the country during this period. Improvements in the collaboration with all departments were made and the CCU, provided vital investigation support and guidance. Restrictions to fight off the Covid 19 pandemic continued to pose enormous challenges but strategies were put in place to ensure investigations progressed smoothly following a challenging last year. This required that new investigations methods were developed and implemented. Teamwork and combination of efforts continued to be put to good use and this enable the realization of some important operations.

The Head of the Investigations Department held meetings with the Conservator of the Dja Wildlife Reserve, the MINFOF Divisional Delegate for the Dja and Lobo Division and some security officials of the division to enhance and strengthen collaborative platforms in the fight against wildlife crime.

Following a rigorous selection and training exercise, a new investigator. was recruited and he wasted no time in proving to be potentially a capable field investigator. It is expected that this would improve on results in the department. The head of the department and his deputy were all part of the operation team during all operations carried out during the first period of the year and this greatly boosted the operation capacity of the whole team.

The country continues to face a challenging security situation in some parts and investigations were not carried out in these regions. Plans have been put in place to fully cover these areas once the situation improves.

An investigator travelled to Uganda to provide assistance and share experiences with the young Ugandan team and this wasted no time in producing two good operations.

The department hosted an investigator who came in from Gabon and spent three weeks with the team, sharing experiences.

## Number of Missions



**Figure 1: Number of Investigations Missions per Month**

## **2. Operations**

LAGA and the Government of Cameroon carried out operations in 4 regions against 12 individuals resulting in 12 court cases at a rate of one every two weeks. A combination of old and new strategies resulted in more complex and sophisticated operations to meet up to the changing tactics of traffickers. Ivory traffickers were not part of operations carried out for the first time during a six-month period. Live primate operations represented 33.3% of those arrested, 33.3 % for pangolin scales and the remaining 33.3% represented operations related to the seizure of leopard skins and a crocodile skin.

In February, a trafficker was arrested with a live mandrill in Ambam, South. The young and hungry animal was rescued from the hands of the trafficker, a customs official who had been keeping the animal for over one year at his residence. He was arrested as he tried to sell the animal in Ambam. He is specialized in animal trafficking as he had earlier sold a mandrill to another trafficker who travelled from Douala. He was planning to continue dealing in primates and planned to buy a baby gorilla for the same business. He bought the primates from Lele, a locality closed to Djoum, the ivory trafficking hub in the South. The mandrill was immediately provided first aid care and food. It was later transported to Yaoundé, Mvogbetsi zoo for further care.

In March, a trafficker was arrested in Bertoua, East Region with two bags full with pangolin scales weighing 109kg. He activated several smaller traffickers in a number of localities including Mampang, Mendim, Moutcheboun and Nkolesseng in the East Region and regularly supplied the scales to bigger traffickers who came in from Yaoundé and Douala. He had loaded the pangolin scales in two rice sacks and was just about offloading the scales when he was arrested.

The month of May saw the arrest a trafficker in Nanga Eboko, Centre Region with a live baby chimpanzee. The baby chimp was rescued during a high risk, nerve-racking cross river operation. Courage and initiative saved our investigator and the chimp from the hands of a trafficker. He traveled dozens of kilometers to the banks of the Sanaga River (the longest in Cameroon) and camped there holding our investigator captive, refusing to cross over to the safer side of river. The trafficker got the chimp from an area called Ndongzoua, that is considered to be a hotspot for bushmeat. The arresting team stormed in to take the chimp and trafficker to the safer side of the river. As the team, wildlife officers and the authorities got to the station and prepared for interrogation, the criminal

suddenly made a run into the bush attempting to escape. He was hotly chased and captured. The baby chimp, a survivor of the slaughter of his family, was smuggled in a tiny closed box, and was pulled out frightened and stressed. He was given special first aid attention and care by the team. The chimp is in the Sanaga Yong Sanctuary for his lifetime care.

During a second operation of the month of May, 2 traffickers were arrested in Mbalmayo in the Centre Region with 72kg of pangolin scales. The seizure alone represents up to 360 slaughtered pangolins (depending on the species). When the arresting team arrived the home of one of the traffickers, they found a grain bag full with pangolin scales in the corner of the living room. The traffickers operated at a strategically important road junction, a gateway to the towns in the south of the country where wildlife traffickers are very active. They are experienced pangolin scales traffickers. One of the traffickers tried every trick in the book to avoid arrest saying he has been arrested in the past.

Three operations were carried in June. During the first operation a trafficker was arrested in Dimako, East Region with 60kg of pangolin scales. He is an experienced pangolin scales trafficker who posed as a hawker in second hand dresses. He bought pangolin scales from smaller traffickers and poachers he activated in villages around Dimako where he is resident. He is connected to many pangolin scales trafficking networks in the East Region. He took every precaution to avoid arrest. He had collected the 60kg in just 6 days having profound knowledge of the area, where to get the scales and how to move them around.

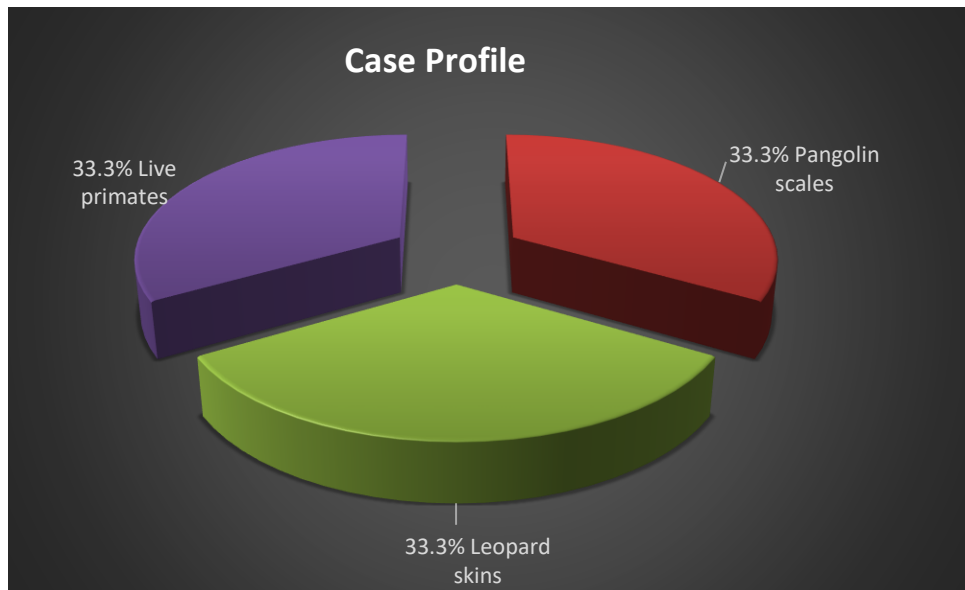
4 traffickers were arrested in Balessing in the Menoua Division of the West Region with 3 leopard skins and a crocodile skin during the second operation of June. The traffickers belong to a network of experienced leopard skin traffickers. One of them was recently arrested but she bribed her way out of jail. They seem to have connections with a law enforcement official who supplies the skins. They arrived the place of transaction individually on bikes, with two grain bags containing the skins. They obtained the skins from other regions in the country. The region is notorious for skins trafficking and traffickers use traditional titles and functions to cover their illegal trade in leopard skin. One of the traffickers is a traditional ruler. A fifth trafficker of the gang is on the run

A trafficker was arrested in Mintom in the South Region with a live baby mandrill during the third and last operation of the first semester. She regularly traffics live primates in collaboration with her father who is a traditional ruler The operation team was gearing to rescuing two mandrills but one died the day before the operation, the trafficker admitted that a third mandrill she tried to sell died as well. She added that her father who is a traditional chief lends his gun to poachers that he activates and he is her supplier, while she has a regular buyer for live primates. He has been accused and stands prosecution.

**Operations Table**

<i>Number of Operations</i>	<i>Number of Traffickers</i>	<i>Contraband</i>
7	12	A live mandrill, 109kg of pangolin scales, A live baby chimp, 72kg of pangolin scales, 60kg of pangolin scales, 3 crocodile skins and a crocodile skin, a live mandrill

**Figure 2: Operation Table**



**Figure 3: Operations profile**

### **3. Legal**

A total of 12 new cases reached the court and the cases joined old cases that were scheduled, followed-up and tried in various courts. Some jail visits were organized. A court gave a five-year imprisonment term to two who were arrested last year trafficking in human bones while another court gave a two-year sentence to a notorious ivory trafficker and repeat offender. Damages awarded to MINFOF amounted to some 216,100,000 FCFA (about \$432,200). Most of the cases initiated within this period have not yet reached the judgement stage with 42% imprisoned during trial.

A total of 54 missions were carried out of the Centre Region for follow-up of new cases and the creation and strengthening of relations with judicial authorities. More emphasis as a direct result of operations was on pangolin scales that produced close to half of all the cases while ivory cases followed in second.

During the period, 7 court judgements were passed with 9 traffickers found guilty and 8 of them given a prison sentence while one received a suspended sentence. 4 others were found not guilty. An appeal was lodged in January

The Ebolowa Court of First Instance found the accused ANGO'O ASSAKO Samson guilty and sentenced him to a 3-month suspended sentence during 3 years and to pay 110,000 FCFA as fines. He was also ordered to pay 2,200,000 FCFA (about \$4400) as damages. He was arrested in Ebolowa on the 26/08/2020 for illegal possession of 23 kg of pangolin scales.

The Bertoua Court of First Instance found the accused POMELA ABELA Aimé, NGOUALONG Kuete, MOHAMADOU Nabi and TCHENE Maxime not guilty and MBOKI MPORI Clément and JOVAH Yahwé Christian guilty. MBOKI MPORI Clément was sentenced to serve 5 months imprisonment and to pay 400,000 FCFA (about \$800) as fines. JOVAH Yahwé Christian was sentenced to serve 2 years imprisonment and to pay 1,000,000 FCFA (about \$2000) as fines. They were also ordered to pay 5,000,000 FCFA (about \$10,000) jointly as damages. They were arrested in Bertoua on the 02/12/2020 for illegal possession of 4 ivory tusks.

The Ambam Court of First Instance found the accused MOHAMADOU Ibrahim guilty and sentenced him to a 4 months in prison and to pay 1,000,000 FCFA (about \$2000) as fines. He was also ordered



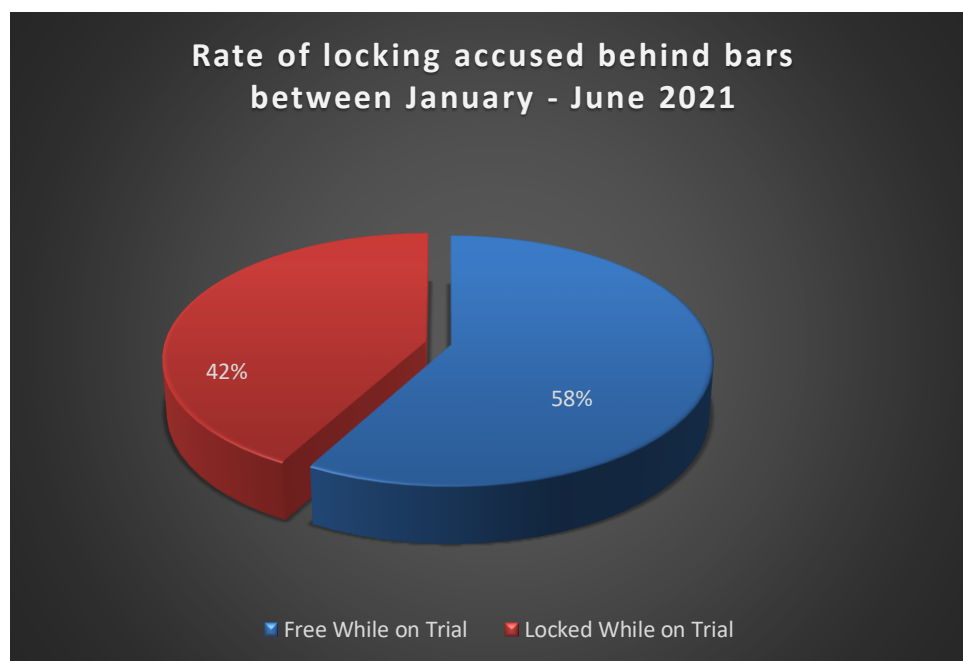
to pay 60,000,000 FCFA (about \$120,000) as damages. He was arrested in Ambam on the 21/10/2020 for illegal possession of 626 kg of ivory tusks.

The Kribi Court of First Instance found the accused BEMEHIHE Clara Rosalie guilty and sentenced her to a one-month imprisonment term and to pay 500,000 FCFA (about \$1000) as damages. She was arrested in Kribi on the 10/12/2020 for illegal possession of 1 mandrill.

The Foubot Court of First Instance found the accused LONTSI Saint-Claire guilty and FONDIKOU FAKOUO Aminou guilty and sentenced them to 5 years in prison and to pay 100,000 each FCFA (about \$200) as fines They are wildlife traffickers arrested on the 26/06/2020 for the illegal sale of two human skeletons.

The Court of Appeal maintained AKANZE AKONGLO Bertrand's 6 months imprisonment sentence and acquitted TEGOUM Alphonse Raoul, BOUGNIA Kamta Francis and TCHAMTCHEU Francis Romuald. On the other hand, the Court overturned the lower court's decision with regards to the damages and ordered AKANZE AKONGLO Bertrand to pay the sum of 163.000.000 FCFA (about \$326,000) as damages. They were arrested in Douala on the 14/03/2019 for illegal possession, circulation and commercialization of 156kg of ivory tusks and 1,500kg of pangolin scales.

The Mbalmayo Court of First Instance found the accused NSIA ONDOA Raphaël and EBOGO Hélène guilty and sentenced them to one month in prison and to pay 200,000 FCFA (about \$400) as damages. They were arrested in Mbalmayo on the 19/05/2021 for the illegal possession, circulation and commercialization of 72kg of pangolin scales.



**Figure 4: Rate of locking accused behind bars**

#### **4. Media**

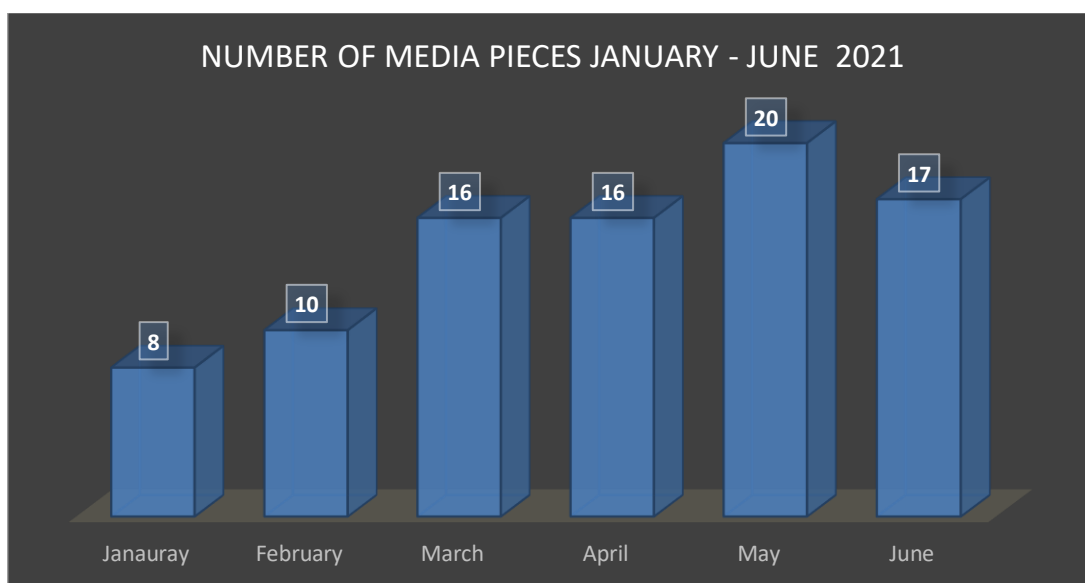
A total of 147 media pieces were produced and pushed into media including numerous articles in all media – radio, television, written press and the internet; achieved at a rate of one media piece per day.

March and June months recorded the highest number of media pieces and April witnessed the lowest record because of the absence of operations during the month

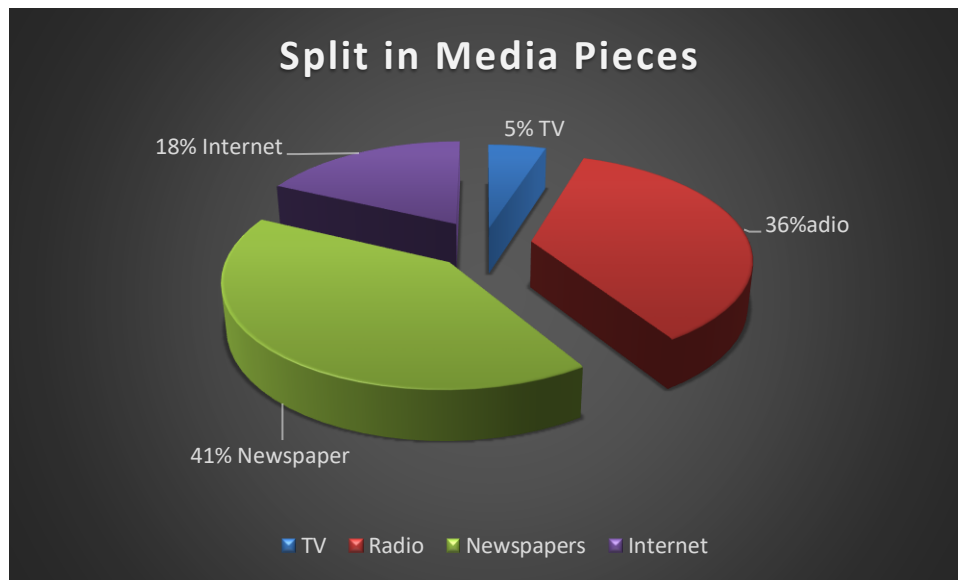
Subjects focused on wildlife law enforcement including: the court judgment of six traffickers arrested in Bertoua with four ivory tusks; the publication of the 9th edition of the “Wildlife Justice” journal; court hearings of a wildlife trafficker arrested with 40kg of pangolin scales in Doume, the World Pangolin Day; the Yaoundé court hearings of two people arrested with one leopard skin and one lion skin, the Ambam customs official arrest for unlawful possession of a live mandrill, the Bertoua arrested of a man arrested with more than 100kg of pangolin scales; the Nanga Eboko arrest of a trafficker with a baby chimp; the Mbalmayo arrest of two with over 70kg of pangolin scales; the Dimako arrest of a trafficker with 60kg of pangolin scales and the Balessing arrest of 4 traffickers in 3 leopard skins and a crocodile skin.

Interviewees and quotes were from: The Director of Wildlife and Protected Areas at the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife; Pricelia Tumenta, a Cameroonian Lion specialist and Director of the Lion Recovery Fund; the Upper Sanaga Divisional Delegate of Forestry and Wildlife and the Director and the Deputy Director of LAGA.

The distribution of Wildlife Justice Magazine continued. Wildlife Justice is a thematic journal that focuses on wildlife law enforcement and conservation issues.



**Figure 5: Number of Media Pieces Produced and Published**



**Figure 6: Split in Media Pieces**

## **5. Management**

The fight against the Covid 19 pandemic continued relentlessly and LAGA took a critical step in the fight by setting up extra protective measures. Special efforts were made to providing face marks and hand sanitizers as well all other items needed to protect against the pandemic. Several guidelines that aligned to government’s measures were enforced. Investigations and operation ipso facto became more challenging and new adaptive management techniques were applied to ensure the smooth functioning of all activities. Two other regions of the country that are seared by security problems continue to pose a challenge but plans have been put in place to quickly cover the regions once the situation on the ground improves.

An audit was carried was carried out and all measures put in place to ensure a smooth and proper running of the activities of the audit team.

LAGA lost one of its founding members and the entire team fully participated at activities to mark the farewell of Vincent Gudmia Mfonfu.

An investigator travelled to Uganda to provide assistance and share experiences with the young Ugandan team. This resulted in two significant operations carried out in Uganda.

The planning, hosting and departure of the investigator from Gabon was carried out.

Recruitment for the investigations department continued with two volunteers tested and one retained for the positions of an investigator.

The annual report of 2020 was uploaded online. The electronic versions are available online on the LAGA website [www.laga-enforcement.org](http://www.laga-enforcement.org). This is a result of teamwork involving all the departments in LAGA – Investigations, Legal, Media, Operations and Management.

A series of thought-provoking sessions of presentations and debates for the LAGA team were organised to foster activism and leadership skills. A wide range of topics including activism were presented and debated. This initiative also aims at strengthening the capacity, unity and values of the LAGA family.

## **6. External Relations and Policy**

The Deputy Director accompanied by the of the Legal Departments held a meeting with Secretary General to discuss prosecution procedures and wildlife cases.

The Deputy Director held a meeting at the US Embassy with the Deputy Chief of the Political Section and the Environment Specialist to discuss the organisation's yearly plan and activities while also focusing on problems affecting effective wildlife conservation in the country. Some solutions were discussed and how these could be implemented

The Deputy Director participated at a meeting held at the Mvogbetsi Zoo and chaired by the Minister of Forestry and Wildlife, that focused on areas of collaboration and intervention by CSOs in the forestry and wildlife subsector.

The Deputy Director trained ecoguards of the East Antenna of the Dja Biosphere Reserve on information collection and management and on techniques in fighting corruption during a workshop organised by ZSL to strengthen the law enforcement capacity of the ecoguards.

The Deputy Director and the Head of the Legal Department held meetings with some regional wildlife officials to strengthen collaboration with the Centre Regional Wildlife Delegation.

He participated at a Zoom meeting organized by Save Pangolins to introduce to the pangolin conservation community in Cameroon, the new Senior Manager of Pangolin Crisis Fund. Discussions focused on the presentation of their areas of activities by the various participants and avenues for collaboration.

The Deputy Director participated at a meeting of the Cameroon Pangolin Working Group that was focused on drawing avenues for collaboration and an action plan for pangolin protection by the group.

The Deputy Director and the Head of the Legal Department trained some wildlife rangers and teachers of the Garoua Wildlife School during a training workshop in the North of the country that focused on the law enforcement procedure.

The Deputy Director participated at the signing ceremony of an MoU between the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife and a pangolin rehabilitation project – the Tikki Hywood Foundation. He met with several MINFOF officials.

The Head of the Legal Department participated at a workshop in Djohong – Mbere Valley National Park that was organized by CABAG and aimed at strengthening the capacity of frontline wildlife ecoguards in the fight against wildlife crimes. He did presentations on the wildlife offence statements, the management of court cases and techniques in auditioning.

The Head of the Legal Department actively participated in a workshop in Douala which sought to train the trainers in wildlife law enforcement and strengthen collaboration in the fight against wildlife crime in Cameroon. Within the course of the workshop, he did two presentations; the first on the basic wildlife law procedure and the second on the calculation of civil damages in wildlife cases.

A legal adviser participated at a workshop in Douala where he did two presentations on the basic wildlife law enforcement procedure and the calculation of damages. The workshop focused on strengthening the capacity of law enforcement and judicial authorities in fighting wildlife crime in the Littoral and South West Regions of Cameroon.

## **7. LAGA and the EAGLE Network**

LAGA's new model for NGO – Government collaboration establishing wildlife law enforcement, bringing about results with an innovative approach geared at changing the existing system and triggering a paradigm shift in the way NGOs tackle wildlife crime is being realised within the EAGLE network. The model is focusing on the prosecution of major traffickers, not the small-time poacher who is motivated by the city dwelling traffickers. This involves fighting head on the major obstacle to the application of the wildlife law in Africa – Corruption. LAGA's experience and model is currently operating within the EAGLE network that group 9 countries.

The replication of the LAGA model is also geared at 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>**

The EAGLE network is now responsible for the replication activity of the LAGA model but LAGA continued to host training sessions in the country and in this regard, LAGA hosted a super volunteer who received training and participated in numerous field activities.

## **8. Fostering Activism**

During this period, LAGA continued to foster activism internally and externally. 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 in to an

independent NGO paperbook. The function of leadership is not producing more followers but to produce more leaders.

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

The month of March was marked by the celebration of International Women's Day which is held on March 8 of each year. This day was an opportunity for Cameroonian women to ask several questions related to their gender including female leadership roles. LAGA held a family dinner to celebrate women's right.

Activism was focused on documentaries and presentations listed below.

#### **Presentation: The International Labour Day.**

The presenter takes us through the origin of the labour day, why do we celebrate it, how is it celebrated around the world, what are the main problems faced by workers, what are the solutions and the employer-employee dialectics. A debate on the working conditions in the organization ensued and the general vision and procedure in solving the problems were explained by the Deputy Director who enjoined all to relax and celebrate as it was the day of the worker.

#### **Movie: Omo Child: The River and the Bush**

Lale Labuko documents his moves to save children who are killed by their very own people because tradition says so. They are the "Mingi", children born with some disabilities or perceived disabilities or simply out of wedlock among the Kara people in Ethiopia. They simply have to die because tradition says they are a curse and of course Lale disagrees. He fights on and wins the fight to preserve the lives of these children after saving and taking over dozens from the mouth of death. His initiatives fully capture all what activism is about that the dedication of one man can make a change. The debates concentrate on the tradition itself, activism and the will to fight on, against all the odds.

### **9. 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 and its impact on the 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, the LAGA-MINFOF work sheds light on the nature of illegal wildlife trade in the sub-region. The strategic focus over this period was on pangolin scales, primates (chimps and a mandrill), ivory and leopard skins.

#### ***9.1 Live Primates***

The illegal trade in live primates witnessed an expected trend with seizures in mandrill particularly significant. The trade in live primates is carried out even by officials who are supposed to be the guardians of the law. This was also accompanied by the seizure of a live chimpanzee.

A customs official was arrested with a live mandrill in Ambam, South Region after driving his green Toyota carina car from Kye- Ossi where he is stationed to Ambam. He drove the car with the animal clinging on him and arrived Ambam where he tried to sell the mandrill. He had been keeping the animal in iron chains in a small and unsuitable cage for over one year. He had earlier traded a mandrill in the same town to a live animal trafficker who travelled from Douala for the deal. He had been searching for a baby gorilla to buy before his arrest. The hungry and frail looking mandrill was immediately taken care of following its rescue and moved to the zoo for further care

An ape trafficker was arrested with a baby chimp in Nanga Eboko. The baby chimp was rescued during a high risk, nerve-racking cross river operation. Courage and initiative saved our investigator and the chimp from the hands of a trafficker. He travelled dozens of kilometres to the banks of the Sanaga River and camped there holding our investigator captive, refusing to cross over to the safer side of the river. The arresting team stormed in to take the chimp and trafficker to the safer side of the river. As the team, wildlife officers and the authorities got to the station and prepared for interrogation, the criminal suddenly made a run into the bush attempting to escape. He was hotly chased and captured.

Operations to save live animals need to be done pretty fast their time is counted due to the proper treatment and handling from the traffickers. A trafficker arrested in Mintom in the South Region with a baby mandrill. The plan was to rescue two mandrills but one died the day before the operation, showing how crucial it is to rescue these baby primates fast as they live on borrowed time. The trafficker admitted that a third mandrill she tried to sell died as well. She added that her father who is a traditional chief lends his gun to poachers that he activates and he is her supplier, while she has a regular buyer for live primates. He has been accused and stands prosecution

### ***9.2 Pangolin Scales***

Seizures in pangolin scales continue as usual as the trade keeps expanding. Despite a brief period of uncertainties caused by the Covid-19 pandemic business seems to be coming back to normalcy as the traffickers are picking up steam. A trafficker arrested with 109kg of pangolin scales in Bertoua in the East Region. He was arrested as he offloaded two bags of pangolin scales from his car. A search of his home found smaller quantities of pangolin scales concealed in a black plastic bag and hidden inside his kitchen. He activated several smaller traffickers in a number of localities in the area and regularly supplied the scales in the bigger cities.

2 traffickers arrested with 72kg of pangolin scales in Mbalmayo, Centre Region. The seizure, represents up to 360 slaughtered pangolins (depending on the species). They operated at a strategic road junction, gateway to the South Region. When the arresting team arrived the home of one of the traffickers, they found a grain bag with full pangolin scales in the corner of the living room. They had been in the illegal business for quite a long time.

A trafficker arrested in Dimako, East Region with 60kg of pangolin scales. He is an experienced pangolin scales trafficker who posed as a hawker in second hand dresses. He bought pangolin scales from smaller traffickers and poachers he activated in several villages. This seizure is a mere snapshot of the regular two-weeks activity of the trafficker. This one sack represents the killing of up to 300 pangolins (depending on the species).

### ***9.3 Leopard skins***

The illegal trade in leopard skins has taken hold in the west of the country because of traffickers taking advantage of culture to launder their illegal business. They use the cover of tradition and culture of the West Region to illegally trade in leopard skins with impunity. 4 traffickers arrested in Balessing in the West Region with 3 leopard skins and a crocodile skin. The traffickers belong to a network of experienced leopard skin traffickers. The region is notorious for skins trafficking and traffickers use traditional titles and functions to cover their illegal trade in leopard skin. One of the traffickers is a traditional ruler. A fifth trafficker of the gang is on the run.

## **10. Corruption and Wildlife Crime**

LAGA has been an experiment field for methods of fighting corruption within a law enforcement and application process. All bribing attempts are documented into our case tracking systems. LAGA is not an observer of corruption; it was created to fight corruption, redirecting the positive pressures existing within the system, usually wasted in large conferences, to specific corruption attempts and the field realities that form corruption. These bribery attempts are vigorously fought against and vehemently condemned by LAGA. LAGA is not a watchdog group and not created as an observer, it fights directly whenever corrupt practices or bribery attempts have been observed.

This ongoing fight is directed towards issues that touch on corruption and bad governance. In November last year, two suspected traffickers were arrested for parrot trafficking and one other arrested on the instruction of a judge. During the trial of the case in court, a judge would order that the court go to the zoo where the parrots were kept for physical observation and verification. This could not take place because the conservator claimed the parrots had escaped.

### **Annex I – List of Cases Semester 1, 2021**

The list of cases and details of specific cases are made available on demand. Please contact [eric@laga-enforcement.org](mailto:eric@laga-enforcement.org) for further information.



**Annex II the Semester in Pictures**



***Mandrill Rescued in February***

***In February, customs official arrested with mandrill***



***Mandrill rescued in June (left) and woman was found attempting to sell the animal (above)***



*Arrested with 109kg of pangolin scales in March*



*Pangolins are totally protected in the country and these scales represent up to 250 pangolins to have been massacred in the wild*



*Two arrested in in Mbalmayo in custody of 72 kg of pangolin scales in May.*



*Baby chimp rescued from a chimp trafficker in Nanga Eboko at the banks of the River Sanaga, the trafficker camped on the banks of River Sanaga with a baby chimp that was later rescued*



*Arrested for trafficking 60kg of pangolin scales in June*



*Four arrested leopard skin trafficking in June*



## **First Semester 2021 Links**

In January, the online news site Alwihda.info published a story on the publication of the 9<sup>th</sup> edition of the “*Wildlife Justice*” Journal entitled “*Pangolin Trafficking*”.

[https://www.alwihdainfo.com/Cameroun-Wildlife-Justice-Journal-se-penche-sur-le-trafic-de-pangolins\\_a99909.html](https://www.alwihdainfo.com/Cameroun-Wildlife-Justice-Journal-se-penche-sur-le-trafic-de-pangolins_a99909.html)

In February, Camer.be, an online news site focused on the court hearing of two people arrested in Yaounde with one lion skin and a leopard skin. They shall be heard on March 25, 2021 at the Court of First Instance of Yaoundé. The news site underlines the fact that lions and leopards are totally protected species by the wildlife law of the country.

<https://www.camer.be/mobile/84817/11:1/cameroun-deux-trafiquants-despeces-sauvages-au-tribunal-a-yaounde-le-25-mars-prochain-cameroon.html>

In March, Alwihda info treated the arrest of a customs official with live mandrill in his possession. The site says trafficking in primates is becoming recurrent in the country and the suspect used his status of Customs official to carry out his illegal activities. The news site also laid emphasis on the importance of the species that needs absolute protection.

[https://www.alwihdainfo.com/Cameroun-Un-commis-de-douane-arrete-avec-un-mandrill-vivant-a-Ambam\\_a101256.html](https://www.alwihdainfo.com/Cameroun-Un-commis-de-douane-arrete-avec-un-mandrill-vivant-a-Ambam_a101256.html)

In May, Camer.be, published the story of the arrest of a man who was ferrying a baby chimp to sell. He was arrested and the chimp rescued by the joint effort of wildlife officials and LAGA.

<https://www.camer.be/86348/11:1/cameroun-arrested-in-nanga-eboko-for-chimp-trafficking-cameroon.html>

In June, Camer.be, published the story of the arrest of a second hand clothes trader in Dimako with 60kg of pangolin scales. He used his business as a cover to illegally trade in pangolin scales.

<https://www.camer.be/86651/11:1/cameroun-man-arrested-with-60kg-of-pangolin-scales-cameroon.html>