

# The Last Great Ape Organization - LAGA

## February 2008 Report



### Highlights

- A **wildlife dealer** is **sentenced** for illegally **trading in gorilla meat**.
- **Personnel strengthened** with further studies for more capacity building.
- **Civil strife limiting the month's results**.

### General

February month was marked by a **week of transporters' strike** that resulted into civil strife and unrest for most of the month. In Yaounde, the office was opened and work continued despite the barricades erected on roads and insecurity, showing a real **dedication to the achievement of LAGA goals**. The **riots** that crippled the country were described as the worst in 15 years. Some analysts pointed out the **connection of such instability with corruption**.

This period of unrest negatively affected the smooth running of LAGA activities. Movement was impossible because of transportation problems, insecurity was high and the safety of workers at stake, food supplies cut off, the unavailability of the forces of law and order for operations because they were all engaged in the maintenance of peace and order etc.

The Court of First Instance of Abong Mbang **sentenced** a wildlife dealer who was guilty for illegally trading in gorilla parts for **9 months suspended for 3 years**. The offender is a **retired military officer**; he was caught with a consignment of meat from an industrial refrigerator for sale including the legs and heads of gorillas. He attempted to corrupt the arresting officer and the State Counsel without success.

This month saw the LAGA Development Office Assistant Akwen Cynthia continuing her studies in Britain assisted by the LAGA family. The challenge will be to **continue engaging her in activism** while she is in the UK. This was Marius Talla who was in France doing his PhD on wildlife law while doing missions for LAGA and is now back with LAGA. She represented LAGA in the PAW Partnership Open seminar with discussions on wildlife crime and wildlife law enforcement in the United Kingdom. Feed back sheets concerning the seminar were filled and sent to the PAW partnership office in Bristol, UK

The Annual Report for 2007 was printed and distributed to all the stakeholders. An electronic version is available on line on the LAGA website **www.laga-enforcement.org**. This is a result of teamwork involving all the departments in LAGA – Investigations, Legal, Media, Operations and Management.

### Investigations

- **32 investigations** of varying lengths were carried out in **7 provinces** including - North West, South West, West, East, South, Littoral and Center.
- Field investigations were made **difficult** this month because of civil unrest and transporters' strike action. Agents had to suspend many field missions because movement was impossible, insecurity, food supplies cut-off etc.
- Field tests continue for **new candidates**. Before the recruitment process is finished, the investigation unit is in low capacity and sending candidates to "test missions" results in **low** return rate of produced operations. This problem is likely to continue next month
- **Collaboration concretised** with an informer in Douala in connection to the international trafficking of a **live hippo** that was sent to the Lahore Zoo in **Pakistan**.

## Operations

- It was difficult to carry out operations this month due to perturbations as a result of the **civil strife that paralyzed the country** for most of the month. Movement was impossible because of transportation problems, insecurity was high and the safety of workers at stake, food supplies cut off, and the unavailability of the forces of law and order for operations because they were all engaged in the maintenance of peace and order.

## Legal

- LAGA legal department carried out **12 missions** out of Yaounde - Center Province: 3 in Douala (Littoral), 1 in Bertoua (East), 1 in Ebolowa (South), 2 in Abong Mbang (East), 1 in Djoum (South), and 2 in Bamenda to follow up operations and cases before the courts.
- There are **7 dealers behind bars during this month**: 2 in the Littoral Province, 1 in the Central Province, 2 in the West, 1 in the South West Province and 1 in East Province.
- **30 cases** were followed-up by the legal department this month as active cases in courts.
- **16 cases** are scheduled and being trailed in the court this month
- **7 cases** waiting for the process of appeal to reach the court: 4 in the West, 2 in the Littoral and 1 in the South Province (Djoum). The court of First Instance has not completed the file needed for the transmission to the Attorney General
- **Prosecutions:**  
The Court of First Instance Abong Mbang sentenced Mabaya Innocent guilty of illegal trafficking of gorilla parts for 9months suspended for 3 years and to pay a fine of 200.000 FCFA (About \$400) and damages of 500.000FCFA (About \$1000) to MINFOF.

## Media front

- **24 media pieces** were produced and pushed through to radio and written press including: 2 written press materials (all in English), 15 radio news flashes (7 in English, 8 in French), 2 TV news features (all in English).
- Guests include: MINFOF Minister, MINFOF Provincial Delegate East Province.
- Subjects focused on wildlife law enforcement including; Retired military officer arrested for trading in gorilla meat-Abong-Mbang, Traders in ivory products in court in Douala, Steps being taken to safeguard the lives of the 4 stolen Cameroon gorillas recently repatriated from S.A, High profile wildlife cases in court-parrot case, Nature and Conservation and luxurious workshop, 5<sup>th</sup> edition of wildlife justice printed and distributed, Traditional rulers assist government in wildlife law enforcement.
- 16 media pieces in English, 8 in French making a percentage of 66.7% in English and 33.3% in French.

## External Relations and Policy

- LAGA meets with the Minister of forestry and Wildlife on the subject of wildlife law enforcement and fight against corruption, follow-up of the two parrot cases, revision of MoU, and approval of future operations against ape trade.
- LAGA had meeting with INTERPOL on the follow-up of wildlife cases of last year, the improvement of working collaboration between LAGA and INTERPOL and the future creation of sub-regional INTERPOL bureau.
- LAGA meeting with US embassy on wildlife law enforcement, fight against corruption, ivory cases in the US and recent parrot cases in Douala.
- LAGA was invited to serve at the CARPE small grant committee. This was a good platform of cautioning against corruption in development projects, lack of measurable standards and accountability issues.
- LAGA met with CED (Centre for Environment and Development) on issues of corruption inside NGOs. LAGA held meetings with senior managers of WWF. These meetings were

with 2 lawyers who requested audience with the Director of LAGA, the WWF Regional Director, the technical Director of WWF Cameroon programme office accompanied by another senior official of WWF to discuss about corruption in the organization and how to tackle it with the assistance of LAGA.

- LAGA participated in the PAW Partnership Open seminar with discussions on wildlife crime and wildlife law enforcement in the United Kingdom. Feed back sheets concerning the seminar were filled and sent to the PAW partnership office in Bristol, UK
- LAGA held talk with Sheri Speede of IDA – Africa on illegal trade in Apes.

## Management

- February month was marked by a **week of transporters' strike** that resulted into civil strife and unrest for most of the month. In Yaounde, the office was opened and work continued despite the barricades erected on roads and insecurity, showing a real **dedication to the achievement of LAGA goals.**
- This month saw the LAGA Development Office Assistant Akwen Cynthia continuing her studies in Britain assisted by the LAGA family. The challenge will be to **continue engaging her in activism** while she is in the UK. This was Marius Talla who was in France doing his PhD on wildlife law while doing missions for LAGA and is now back with LAGA. This is a continuation of capacity building of LAGA members for more effective output. She represented LAGA in the PAW Partnership Open seminar with discussions on wildlife crime and wildlife law enforcement in the United Kingdom.
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## Finance

### **LAGA Expenditure by budget line for February 08**

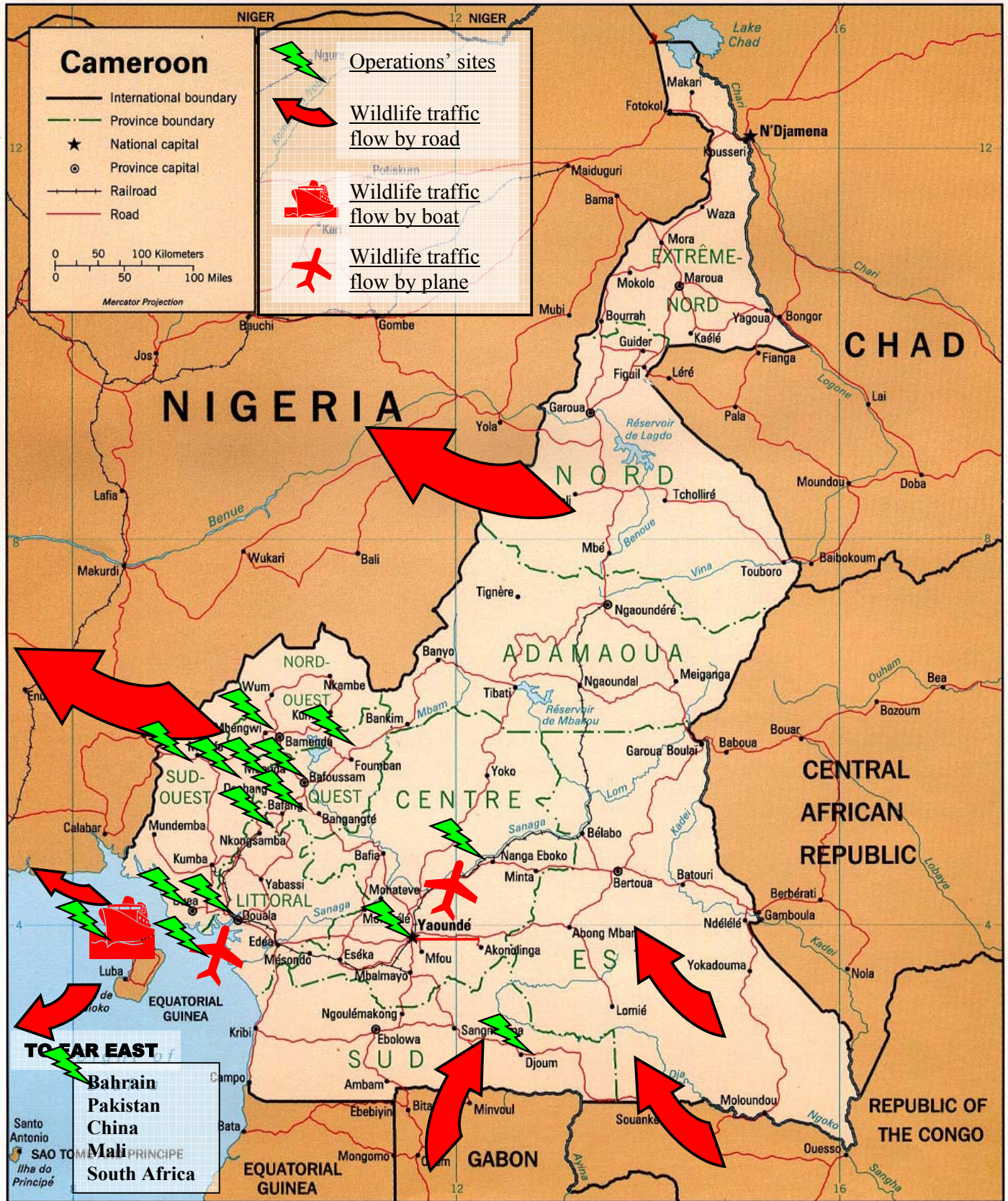
Amount CFA	Budget line	Details	Amount USD
2,871,188	Investigations	32 inv,7 provinces	\$6,525
410,000	Operations	0 Operation	\$932
2,397,225	Legal	Follow up 30 cases 7 locked subjects	\$5,448
1,407,845	Media	24 media pieces	\$3,200
258,323	Policy / External	UK/France/Ireland	\$587
975,200	Management	Coordination	\$2,216
851,109	Office		\$1,934
9,170,890	TOTAL EXPENDITURE FEBRUARY		\$20,843

### **LAGA Expenditure by donor for February 08**

AmountCFA	Donor	Amount USD
0	Born Free	\$0.0
1,497,845	BHC	\$3,404.2
2,740,020	FWS	\$7.7
0	UNEP-Congo	\$0.0
558,634	UNEP-General	\$1,269.6
2,996,650	Rufford Foundation	\$6,810.6
290,000	Parrot Trust	\$659.1
994,427	WSPA	\$2,260.1
0	SFA France	\$0.0
93,314	EIA	\$212.1
9,170,890	TOTAL	\$20,843

# THIS MONTH IN PICTURES

## Overview of International Wildlife Traffic in Cameroon and Operations' Sites 2007



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### **Links of this month**

- Cameroon Wildlife Sector condemns dealers in wildlife protected species – Cameroon National Television Broadcast. The dealer, a retired military officer was caught with a consignment of meat from an industrial refrigerator for sale including the heads and legs of gorillas. The operation was carried out by the forces of law and order, the Divisional Delegation of Forestry and Wildlife with the technical support LAGA.

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