

The Last Great Ape Organization – LAGA

October 2011 Report



Highlights

- **A baby gorilla rescued in Ngoyla – East Region.**
- **2 fugitive dealers** involved in the illegal detention of 20 elephant tusks **arrested again to serve their 6 months imprisonment term.**
- **LAGA Director carries out a replication visit in Gabon.**
- **2 dealers sentenced** this month in Abong Mbang – East and Muyuka – South West.
- **The French version of the LAGA Manual printed**

General

This month was marked by the arrest of 2 fugitive dealers, the printing of the French version of the LAGA Manual, and the important meetings held by the LAGA Director in Gabon.

2 fugitive dealers sentenced to six months imprisonment term each by the Court of First Instance of Abong Mbang - East **for illegal detention of 20 ivory tusks** in September 2011 were **arrested** at Salapoumbe around Lobeke National Park – East. LAGA assisted in their transfer to Abong Mbang prison and putting the right legal procedures in place so that they could effectively serve imprisonment term.

There were many difficulties in getting arrest operations this month due to the limited number of field missions as a result of the presidential elections. Movement was limited and collaborators in the Ministry in charge of Wildlife could not travel, also, officers of the forces of law and order used in operations were all on security alert, therefore not available to go to the field.

Despite the elections, **a baby gorilla was rescued** and plans are underway to arrest the dealer/poacher who captured it after killing the mother according to investigations. The dealer is known to illegally trade in other protected wildlife and wildlife products especially ivory.

Regional collaboration increased this month with LAGA Director travelling to meet with Conservation Justice Director in Gabon and worked on evaluation wildlife prosecutions, combating and prosecuting corrupt officers, regional strategy, obstacles to operations etc. Series of meetings were held in Gabon with the diplomatic community, USFWS, high government officials such as the Minister of Justice; Interpol and the forces of law and order and NGOs among others. The procedures in the Manual are geared to facilitate capacity building of the networks' projects.

2 dealers were sentenced this month. The court of First Instance of Abong-Mbang - East sentenced a chimp dealer to **1 year suspended sentence for 3 years** and to pay about \$1000 as damages. Also, the Court of First Instance of Muyuka – South West against an ivory dealer. He was sentenced to **1 year 8 months suspended sentenced for 3 years** and to pay about \$1000 as fines and damages. He was arrested for illegal detention and traffic of 2 elephant tusks.

The French version of the first edition of the LAGA Manual was completed and printed this month. The manual valorizes LAGA's work with all procedures and evaluation factors well spelled out from all Departments. It is intended to serve as a blueprint for not only the replication of LAGA activities and to facilitate capacity building of the networks' projects, but for other organizations that intend to take up wildlife law enforcement and other conservation activities, the fight against corruption and activism with well spelt out values, transparency and accountability. It is worth noting that **this manual was entirely written and translated into French by the LAGA family.**

Investigations

- **21 investigation missions** of varying lengths were carried out in **4 Regions** of Cameroon- East, Littoral, South and Center.
- Investigations led to the identification of a dealer in Ngoyla – East that led to the rescue of a baby gorilla. More investigations are ongoing to arrest the dealer in question.
- Investigators started to be more involved in writing reports on illegal trade of protected wildlife and wildlife products. One investigator wrote a report on ivory trade in Cameroon and all encouraged by the LAGA Director to undertake more of such initiatives.
- 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.
- There will be continued focus on regional enforcement with missions scheduled towards the borders with Gabon, Republic of Congo and Central African Republic.
- This month saw continued involvement in investigations and operations procedures in the replication projects especially PALF – Congo and AALF – Gabon.
- 1 new Investigator was tried this month in the field with encouraging results.

Operations

1 operation carried out this month against **2 fugitive ivory dealers**

- **29/10/11 – 2 fugitive dealers** that were **sentenced to six months imprisonment term each** by the Court of First Instance of Abong Mbang - East for illegal detention of 20 ivory tusks in September 2011 were arrested at Salapoumbe around Lobeke National Park (East Region of Cameroon). LAGA assisted in their transfer to Abong Mbang prison and putting the right legal procedures in place so that they could effectively serve imprisonment term.
- There were many difficulties in getting arrest operations this month due to the limited number of field missions as a result of the presidential elections. Movement was limited and collaborators in the Ministry in charge of Wildlife could not travel, also, officers of the forces of law and order used in operations were all on security alert, therefore not available to go to the field.

Legal

- LAGA Legal Department carried out **17 missions** out of Yaounde - Centre Region: 2 in Douala (Littoral), 1 in Limbe (South West), 3 in Muyuka (South West), 1 in Bamenda (North West), 1 in Lomie (East), 3 in Abong-Mbang (East), 2 in Kribi (South), 2 in Djoum (South), 1 in Ebolowa (South) and 1 in Bafoussam (West).
- There are **17 dealers behind bars during this month**: 2 in the East Region, 3 in the South West Region, 1 in the North West Region, 9 in the South Region and 2 in the West Region.
- **42 cases** were followed up by the Legal Department this month.
- **34 cases** are scheduled and being trailed in the court this month.
- **Prosecutions**: 2 dealers were sentenced this month.
 - **08/11/2011**: The court of First Instance of Abong-Mbang - East sentenced BININI Bile Armand to **1 year suspended sentence for 3 years and to pay 495000 FCFA** as civil damages. He was arrested on 24/06/2011 for killing and illegally trying to trade in a chimpanzee and a yellow backed duiker amongst other wildlife species.
 - **09/11/2011**: The Court of First Instance of Muyuka – South West sentenced TEWINDIKUM Emmanuel to **1 year 8 months suspended sentenced for 3 years** and to pay 380.000 FCFA as civil damages and 97280 FCFA as fine or serve **6 months imprisonment**. He was detained in jail for 1 month in default of payment of fine. He was arrested on the 15 December 2010 in Muyuka for illegal detention and traffic of 2 ivory tusks.

- Two Appeals have been made in the court of First Instance Kribi - South after the unsatisfactory decisions given by the court in the case of MESSI Alphonse and Edjenguele Mboula Paul who were arrested on 21/04/2011 for illegally dealing in a live chimpanzee and 9 sea turtle shells respectively.

Media front

- **20 media pieces** were produced and pushed through to radio, and written press including: 18 written press materials (8 in English and 10 in French) and 2 talk shows all in English.
- Guests include: North West Regional Delegate of MINFOF and LAGA Head of Legal Unit.
- Subjects focused on wildlife law enforcement including; Buea wildlife Internet wildlife dealer arrest, judgment of Ebolowa mandrill trafficker arrest, judgment of Abong Mbang ivory trafficker arrest, judgment of Djoum ivory trafficker arrest, the court cases of Muyuka concerning ivory dealer arrest, and the Bamenda internet wildlife dealer arrest.
- 10 media pieces in English, 10 in French making a percentage of 50% in English and 50% in French.

External Relations and Policy

- LAGA Director met with the World Bank Governance officer on increasing transparency and accountability of projects.
- The Director of LAGA met with the coordinator of CARPE on wildlife law enforcement and the status of Cameroon's wildlife legislation.
- LAGA Director gave a presentation to a group of American university students on development, corruption, wildlife law enforcement among others.
- LAGA Director met with US State Department Cameroon Desk Officer on the challenges of corruption in Cameroon.
- Director of LAGA participated in a reception to US FWS International Program Director in the house of the US Ambassador and had first extensive discussion with the German ambassador on wildlife law enforcement and the fight against corruption.
- A meeting with GIZ health unit on the upcoming evaluation of the Global Fund of the distribution of mosquito nets and corruption incidents.
- LAGA Director met with WWF-CARPO Regional Conservation Director on challenges of corruption in the region and ways to combat corruption in WWF.
- LAGA Director met with BDCP on environmental challenges, wildlife law enforcement, and shrinking space of civil society.

LAGA Director visited Gabon and had the following meetings:

- Meeting with the French ambassador on wildlife law enforcement.
- Meeting with the Minister of Justice on evaluation of wildlife prosecutions.
- Meeting with the US ambassador on wildlife law.
- Meeting with head of cabinet of the Gendarmerie Search Brigade on corruption in the gendarmerie and procedures to arrest and prosecute corrupt officers.
- Meeting with civil society activists.
- Meeting with Paul Elkan of WCS regional evaluation Officer – on Gabon, Nigeria, Chad and Southern Sudan.
- Meeting with Richard Ruggiero head of Wildlife without Borders of FWS on regional strategy (3 times).
- He also met with WCS MIST coordinator and WWF Program Manager Minkebe park
- Meeting with legal adviser of the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife on the Accord of CJ with the Ministry and engagement with lawyers that are not state lawyers.
- Meeting with WCS country director for Gabon civil society and conservation context.
- Meeting with Minister's adviser for wildlife on the Accord of CJ with the Ministry and engagement with lawyers that are not state lawyers.

- Meeting with the Director of Wildlife and his deputy on obstacles for operations.
- Meeting with Secretary General of the Ministry of Justice on evaluation of wildlife prosecutions
- Meeting with head of ANPN – Gabon National Agency of National Parks
- Met with CI representative in Equatorial Guinea on law enforcement challenges in EG.

Management

- LAGA carried out changes in personnel this month. In line with the objective of being more cost effective with matching performance, 2 members were let go, one from the Legal Department and the other from the Media Department. This came after a long period of evaluation of 1 year and 2 years respectively and the conclusion was that they failed to step up to the next level in terms of performance and output. It is hoped that they will stay in touch with the LAGA family, and participate in some of our events.
- The test period of one volunteer in the Legal Department was also terminated after 2 months for unsatisfactory results.
- The various Departments are continuing to effectively put in place plans to reconstruct and measures to cut costs while maintaining the good results.

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 activity for this month was on:

1) Election in Africa: A melting pot for conflict

This presentation depicts the deplorable situation of electoral exercise in Africa during pre-election, election proper and post election. Election during the above mentioned periods always result to conflict between parties because of the struggle for power. That is the opposition parties trying to bring down the party in power and the party in power doing all it can to remain in power.

By Che Bernard

2) Film - Kekexili

Kekexili is a film on the activities of group of individuals in protecting mountain antelopes. The film is about wildlife activists who saw the need to save and protect antelope from extinction since nothing was done or no effort was made by government to enforce law against the killing of antelope to prevent their extinction. The rapid disappearance of this animal and the fight put up by this group of individuals even though with no arrest or prosecution prompted government to be involved in the fight.

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. More information on replication is available on

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

October month has seen progress in the projects in all four countries. In Cameroon 2 fugitives were arrested and a baby gorilla rescued, in the Central African Republic 3 dealers in elephant meat and other protected species were arrested in a significant improvement of arrest rates for the RALF project. In Congo PALF has seen good follow up of its work by other collaborators as well as requests from the authorities for the project's interventions. The intensified collaboration resulted in 5 court cases of arrested wildlife dealers this month. In Gabon the project expended significantly with a legal antenna becoming operational in the north as well as an investigation antenna. AALF

investigation antenna turned operational in Minvoul and Mitzic exposing an ivory trafficking network of 29 major dealers identified and located. A long term AALF investigation on the trade of weapons and ammunition in Libreville exposes shocking organized criminality involving trafficking is falsified documents and ammunition shops illegally selling ammunition without permits.

Corruption was identified and combated in all countries. In Cameroon poor court judgments in Kribi have become systematic, enough to inform the Minister of Justice of suspicion of corruption. In the Central African Republic corruption of the head of wildlife brigade becoming an obstacle to wildlife enforcement triggered the project to ask for a different focal point. In Gabon the project has been instrumental in assisting ANPN in the fight against corruption achieving a successful prosecution of 2 dealers sentenced to 5 months in prison for corruption and illegal possession of arms, despite the absence of any ivory or poaching evidence. In Congo an arrest of a village chief had advanced the fight against local authority complicity and impunity among other 3 similar court cases. The project maintained zero prisoners released from all cases followed this month, fighting numerous corruption attempts, ranging from traffic of influence by phone to a bribe of 430,000 CFA offered to a policeman. PALF was also invited by the CNLCCF (Congo's Anti-Corruption Commission) to participate in a mission in Ouessou investigating a corrupt official who frees wildlife criminals for bribes.

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In Congo, 2 elephant meat dealers were arrested in Cuvette-Centrale with supervision of interrogation and legal follow up by PALF. The State Prosecutor was the one alerting PALF asking for its intervention in an encouraging sign of growing legitimacy and healthy relationship with the judiciary. Following a PALF investigation of a previous gorilla poacher case in Sangha, the village chief activating him was caught by PROGEPP. PALF is currently working on 3 wildlife cases implicating village chiefs, highlighting the importance of breaking the impunity of local authority, often owning the guns used for poaching and behind wildlife trafficking. A major elephant poacher in Cuvette-Ouest was arrested by PNOK Ecoguards. PALF is working with the judicial authorities in order to uncover who illegally provided the weapon and ammunition to the poacher.

In Gabon, a long term AALF investigation on the trade of weapons and ammunition in Libreville exposes shocking organized criminality involving trafficking is falsified documents and ammunition shops illegally selling ammunition without permits. Big quantities of ammunitions are thus sold illegally to poachers. Moreover, ammunition that is exclusively used for killing elephants (Caliber 12 bullets) can easily be purchased despite the fact that elephants are entirely protected in Gabon and hunting season is closed.

Emphasis was put this month on relations with institutions and more meetings were held including with US Ambassador, French Ambassador, Minister of Justice, Secretary General of Justice, Interpol National Director, and Head of ANPN among others. The MoU proposal between Conservation Justice and MEF was finalized at the level of the Director of Cabinet and ready to be tabled to the Minister. A letter of endorsement was equally asked for from MEF for a project proposal sent by AALF to USFWS.

In C.A.R, RALF arrested 2 wildlife dealers while trying to sell a badger skin in Bangui. A female dealer was arrested attempting to sell elephant meat in Bangui. Also, a working visit was carried out

by the US Ambassador in the RALF project. The Ambassador pledged to assist the project in improving relations with the judiciary.

On a daily basis all LAGA Departments assist in the various activities of the replication projects (PALF – Congo, AALF – Gabon and RALF – Central African Republic etc.) on all managerial and financial issues especially reports; Investigations and Operations planification and supervision; legal follow-up of all court cases; and publishing and pushing through all the media pieces with all the necessary information posted on the various project websites. For this month, LAGA assisted in:

- Assisting PALF in the coordination of investigation missions and operations.
- Assisting Hubert (RALF) on Investigations and Operations procedures.
- Ensuring that the media pieces concerning the various operations and court decisions were produced and pushed through to the respective national media.
- Ensuring that the activity and financial reports of the past months are all updated and posted on the various websites.

Finance

LAGA Expenditure by Budget Line for October 2011

Amount CFA	Budget Line		Amount USD
1,381,970	Investigations	20 inv, 6 Regions	\$2,879
629,500	Operations	1 Operation against 2 subjects	\$1,311
2,475,005	Legal	follow up 42 cases 17 locked subjects	\$5,156
1,381,605	Media	20 Media pieces	\$2,878
1,171,685	Policy & External Relations	Congo/Gabon/RCA	\$2,441
945,900	Management	Coordination	\$1,971
1,294,620	Office		\$2,697
230,600	LAGA Family		\$480
9,510,885	TOTAL EXPENDITURE OCTOBER		\$19,814

LAGA Expenditure by Donor for October 2011

AmountCFA	Donor	Amount USD
3,128,750	FWS	\$6,518.2
1,121,685	FWS-Replication	\$2,336.8
451,120	BornFree UK	\$939.8
1,381,970	Rufford Foundation	\$2,879.1
629,500	BornFree USA	\$1,311.5
1,669,860	Future for Nature	\$3,478.9
1,128,000	ARCUS Foundation	\$2,350.0
9,510,885	TOTAL	\$19,814.3

THIS MONTH IN PICTURES



The baby gorilla rescued at Ngoyla - East Region despite violence from the villagers. The baby gorilla had been with the owner for about 1 week and the mother was killed by the poacher/dealer who was looking for a buyer for the baby gorilla. It was maltreated, very sick and stressed. It also came with a serious wound to her wrist with damaged tendons. The baby gorilla now at the Mefou National Park is doing quite well and receiving special attention.

Links of this month

New Form of Communication through Caricatures - LAGA now undertakes a new form of communication by caricature. The “POPOLI Newspaper”, a Cameroon private newspaper that publishes several times a week and whose editorial line is in caricature publishes articles on LAGA’s arrest operations, court procedures and judgements.

<http://www.laga-enforcement.org/Portals/0/pictures/2010%20pictures/2011%20pictures/11%2010%2021%20Popoli%20newspaper%20pg,%208.jpg>