

Last Great Ape Organisation - LAGA

February 2007 Report



Highlights

- **A meeting with Cameroon's Prime Minister achieving institutional changes.**
- **Operation in the South capturing a fugitive major ivory dealer.**
- **First case against a corrupt Ministry official.**

General

February month, as expected, has continued with low capacity. Stretching recruitment processes in three LAGA departments is still a major setback, especially in investigation and legal units where the recruitment was supposed to compensate an already expected capacity drop. Despite this major setback this month, as in January has seen political and operational achievement in the important context of the fight against corruption.

LAGA met with the **Prime Minister and Head of Government** to brief him on the progress made on wildlife law enforcement and seek for more government support in the on-going process. LAGA's presentations were of the achievements by the Cameroon government in wildlife law enforcement, the challenges faced in the fight against corruption and the need for more government support.

In seeking **more government support**, LAGA proposed: the adoption of a **holistic approach** which focuses on building the capacity of government institutions in tackling wildlife crimes, which are becoming more and more sophisticated, so that if LAGA phases out these structures remain behind and become institutionalised; **Capacity building** where the General Delegation for National Security and the Ministry of Justice and Keeper of the Seal have started to build capacity for Memorandum of Understanding with LAGA and forming Focal Points on wildlife law enforcement who are easier to work with than services; formation of a **Wildlife Law Enforcement Working Group** in MINFOF which has as its mission to promote more communication and links between relevant Ministries; and creation of a **Focal Point in the Prime Ministers Office** and **Circular Letters** to relevant government bodies on key matters relating to effective wildlife law enforcement. The Prime Minister adopted LAGA's suggestions.

In the operational level the Djoum area has been identified by us and the Department of Wildlife as a hotspot for ivory trafficking that became flourishing in recent months following corruption and complicity of local officials. In this background LAGA was diverting investigations, operations and media efforts towards this area.

As a result of a good collaboration between the Department of Wildlife and LAGA an operation on 26.2.07 brought to the arrest of two defaulters trading in totally protected species – one is a known ivory dealer, already a fugitive in another ivory case he was implicated in, the other is an ecoguard who admitted to working with the ivory dealer and to owning protected species seized. The ecoguard, in trying to use his authority to protect the first ivory dealer, incriminated himself in a grave case of corruption. This is the first case LAGA initiated against a corrupt Ministry official.

Investigations

- **28 investigations** were carried out in **9 provinces** including North West, Littoral, South West, Adamawa, West, East, Centre, and South.
- **Recruitment** of field investigators continued and field test continued. The process may continue in March.
- 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 continued this month as foreseen.
- Investigation in the South succeeded in trapping a long time target – fugitive major ivory dealer.
- Internet investigations continued this month.

Operations

- Djoum area, in the South of Cameroon, has been identified by us and the Department of Wildlife as a hotspot for ivory trafficking that became flourishing in recent months following corruption and complicity of local officials. In this background LAGA was diverting investigations operations and media efforts towards this area.
- As a result of a good collaboration between the Department of Wildlife and LAGA an operation on 26th February brought about the arrest of two defaulters trading in totally protected species – one is a known ivory dealer already a fugitive in another ivory case he was implicated in, the other is an ecoguard who admitted to work with the ivory dealer admitting to own protected species seized. The ecoguard, in trying to use his authority to protect the first ivory dealer incriminated himself in a grave case of corruption. This is the first case LAGA initiated against a corrupt Ministry official.

Legal

- There are **16 dealers behind bars during this month**: 7 in the South province; 1 in the Littoral; 1 in the North, 2 in the Extreme North, and 1 in the Central province
- 6 cases are scheduled and being trailed in the court this month.
- 4 cases waiting for the process of appeal to reach the court of appeal. 2 in the West, 1 in the Littoral and 1 in the Central province. The court of first instance has not completed the file needed for the transmission to the attorney general. With the new criminal code procedure, the person appealing has to reformulate his request before the file is sent to the appeal court.
- 4 cases (Fonseca, Catherine Fouda, Ngbwa Ella, Eyong James) presented to the secretary general with proposed solutions for the problems occurring for those specific cases have not move forward. They are still not transmitted to court.
- 15 cases on execution process.
- Legal department was carrying out 5 field missions out of Yaounde during this month.
- **Capacity of legal unit low** and recruitment process not finished as head of Legal unit gave birth. 4 volunteers continue to manage work but we expect changes next month.

Media

- **24 media pieces** were produced and pushed through to radio, TV and written press: 9 radio news flashes (2 English, 7 French), 6 radio news features (4 English, 2 French), 1 radio talk show (French), 6 written press (3 in French and 3 in English). 2 TV features (1French and 1English)
- Guests include: Secretary General of MINFOF, Provincial Delegate MINFOF North West, Head of Legal Department LAGA, Director of Garoua Wildlife School, Ministry’s lawyer, CARPE Focal Point, Limbe Wildlife Centre Director.

- Subjects focused on wildlife law enforcement including: PM-LAGA Meeting, lion skins dealers arrest in the Far North, Nigerian ivory dealer arrest in Bafut, Leopard skin dealers Bafang, chimp prosecution west province, chimp arrest North West.
- 10 media pieces in English and 14 in French giving the percentages of 41.7% in English and 58.3% in French
- Two media volunteers are on a testing period for one month in the department.

External Relations and Policy

- Meeting with the **Prime Minister and Head of Government** by LAGA officials to brief him on the progress made on wildlife law enforcement and seek for more government support in the on-going process. LAGA's presentations were of the achievements by the Cameroon government in wildlife law enforcement, the challenges faced and the need for more government support.
 - **Achievements** included the increased rate of prosecution being one case per week, the wide use of media in creating deterrence, and the collection of strategic information which has provided the government with information on wildlife crimes. This information is increasingly being validated in Cameroon, indicating Cameroon as a junction for illegal wildlife products from East and Central Africa moving to Nigeria, noted to be a centre of wildlife crimes on the continent, and at the same time serving as an exit point for illegal wildlife trade for the rest of the world. With this knowledge Cameroon has become exceptional in tackling wildlife crimes nationally and internationally.
 - **As challenges** LAGA briefed the Prime Minister of the Taiping 4 affair, Cameroon's ivory smuggled involving the seizure of 3.9 tons of ivory in Hong Kong – Cameroon has been praised constantly for this investigation – and Internet fraud which is an example of how wildlife trade is connected to other forms of crime and needs to be tackled from a more holistic and highly political approach.
 - In seeking a **more government support**, LAGA proposed the adoption of a **holistic approach** which focuses on the building of the capacity of government institutions in tackling wildlife crime, which are becoming more and more sophisticated, so that if LAGA phases out these structures remain behind and become institutionalized, and **Capacity building** where the General Delegation for National Security and the Ministry of Justice and Keeper of the Seal have started to build capacity through a Memorandum of Understanding with LAGA and forming Focal Points on wildlife law enforcement who are easier to work with than services. Creation of a **Wildlife Working Group** in MINFOF which has as its mission to promote more communication and links between relevant Ministries, and a **Focal Point in the Prime Ministers Office** and **Circular Letters** to relevant government bodies on key matters relating to effective wildlife law enforcement. The Prime Minister adopted LAGA's suggestions.
- Meeting with Minister of Forestry and Wildlife as a follow up to the meeting with the Prime Minister and Head of Government.
- Meeting with the Littoral Provincial Delegate of MINFOF
- Meeting with WCS in DRC and WWF in Gabon about possible areas of collaboration in the Congo Basin

Management

- Work on reconstruction of LAGA continues.
- Work on action plans for departments continues.

- Stretching recruitment processes in three LAGA departments is a major setback, especially in investigation and legal units where the recruitment was supposed to compensate expected capacity drop. This situation was expected from last month.
- The position of an Internet Investigator is established with already concrete results.
- Financial and Activity reporting of this month was done independently without LAGA's director.

Finance

LAGA Expenditure for February 07

Amount CFA	Budget line	Details	Amount USD
1,973,367	Investigations	28 investigations,9 provinces + France + Internet	\$3,947
434,500	Operations	1 operation	\$869
1,083,520	legal	follow up 29 cases16 locked subjects	\$2,167
998,870	Media	24 media pieces	\$2,028
82,000	Policy / External	T4+DRC	\$164
1,453,700	Management	Coordination	\$2,907
659,929	Office		\$1,320
6,685,886	TOTAL EXPENDITURE FEBRUARY		0

LAGA Income for February 07

Amount CFA	Donor	Amount USD
82,000	Born Free	\$164.0
1,528,870	BHC	\$3,057.7
2,367,149	FWS	\$4,734.3
2,707,867	Arcus	\$5,415.7
6,685,886	TOTAL	\$13,371.8

Ofir Drori
 Director
 The Last Great Ape Organization

THIS MONTH IN PICTURES



A meeting with Cameroon's Prime Minister achieving institutional changes.



**Operation in the South capturing a fugitive major ivory dealer.
And the first case against a corrupt Ministry official – past seizure**

Links of this month

- Cameroon TV news broadcast of a past seizure of ivory and apes implicating a fugitive apprehended in February 07. The Djoum area in the South of Cameroon has been identified as a hotspot for ivory trafficking that became flourishing in recent months following corruption and complicity of local officials. An operation on 26th February brought to the arrest of two defaulters trading in totally protected species – one is a known ivory dealer already a fugitive in another ivory case he was implicated in, the other is an ecoguard who admitted to work with the ivory dealer admitting to own protected species seized. The ecoguard, in trying to use his authority to protect the first ivory dealer incriminated himself in a grave case of corruption. This is the first case LAGA initiated against a corrupt Ministry official.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zt4pFgq3jMc>

- Cameroon TV news broadcast of LAGA meets the Prime Minister of Cameroon on Wildlife Law enforcement. LAGA met the Prime Minister of Cameroon for the second time on February 2007 seeking and achieving a focal point for wildlife law enforcement in the Prime Minister's office.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XJv2JXdzC0c>