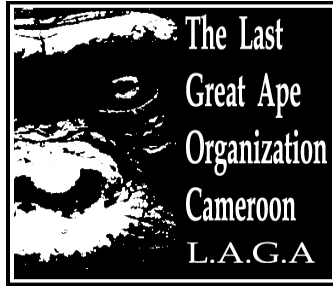


THE LAST GREAT APE ORGANIZATION, CAMEROON LAGA

FIRST SEMESTER REPORT JANUARY– JUNE 2025



Executive Summary

Achievements were recorded in LAGA's collaboration with the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife (MINFOF) despite the mounting number of challenges faced. These achievements were obtained in the fields of investigation, arrest, prosecution, media exposure, government relations and international activities. Focus was on the fight against the illegal wildlife trade in apes. The EAGLE Central Coordination Unit collaborated very closely with the investigations ensuring vital support that enabled the arrest of 3 traffickers.

The semester was marked by very poor results and only 3 traffickers were arrested and with all of them staying behind bars from the day of arrest for up to 7 days. This shift in results, from past years we recorded very high number of arrests during every semester, is still to be fully analysed. Nevertheless, efforts are seriously being intensified to get more traffickers arrested. New and intelligent techniques are being put in place for better results. All three traffickers were charged the cases forwarded to examining judges are furthering investigations. 4 traffickers were found guilty and sentenced to 6 months in prison. They were arrested for the illegal possession of African grey parrots, a protected wildlife species.

The EAGLE network achieved substantial results as 34 traffickers were arrested across 5 countries.

LAST GREAT APE ORGANISATION, CAMEROON (LAGA)
SEMESTER REPORT
January - June 2025

OVERVIEW

Investigations

- A total of 92 investigation missions (of varying lengths) were carried out in 7 regions.

Operations

- The semester was marked by the arrest of 3 traffickers during two operations. Strategies were put in place to improve on this dire situation during the second semester of the year.
- The Operations were carried out a couple of months apart in the Littoral Region and were both related to the trafficking of two ivory tusks.

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Legal

- 3 new cases were brought to court. All the cases are being handled by an examining judge.
- 4 traffickers were found guilty and handed a prison sentence of 6 months and the payment of fines of 400 000 FCFA. (about \$800).
- This was the only court ruling was passed during the 6-month period.

Media

- A total of 88 media pieces were produced in national media (radio, written press and internet) achieved at a rate about 4 media pieces per week.

Management

- The annual report of 2024 was made available online.
- Focus was on improving professionalism, team work and motivation, to overcome the many challenges that were faced in the semester.

External Relations and Policy

- Several 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 ivory trafficking.
- The strategic focus was on improving professionalism, team work, motivation and recruitment and testing of investigators, taking into the consideration the not too good results obtained for some time now.
- The CCU evaluated and provided strategic assistance to management, operational and organisational functioning.

EAGLE Activities

- A total of 34 traffickers were arrested across 5 countries of the network during this semester.

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Also available:

1. Annual Financial Statement 2024
2. Annual Activity Report 2024
3. Media archive – Excel database linked to recorded media pieces
4. Photo archive for media use

For copies contact email; eric@laga-enforcement.org

NARRATIVE REPORT

This report covers the period January to June 2025 and 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, 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 92 investigation missions in 7 regions of the country during this period. Investigations were particularly difficult during the semester as traffickers are extremely cautious. Traffickers are highly aware of law enforcement activities being carried out in the country and have improved on their concealment techniques, rendering them more sophisticated and not easily unravelled. The team continued to double efforts and worked on several strategies and techniques to meet up with the ever evolving trafficking techniques. Focus were on the strict respect of basic investigative procedures and techniques while devising new complementary techniques. We also trained investigators on some of the improved tactics and techniques used by traffickers. Particular emphasis was put on recruitment that was intensified with some candidates interviewed and two candidates who were undergoing training for the positions since last year continue this semester.

The head of the department was 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. He visited several law enforcement and customs officials in some regions of the country to build and or improve collaboration in the fight against wildlife crime.

The challenging security situation that the country has been facing in some parts witnessed marked improvements we started carrying out some activities in these areas, specifically in the South West Region.



Figure 1: Number of Investigations Missions per Month

2. Operations

LAGA and the Government of Cameroon carried out two operations in the Littoral region resulting in the arrest of 3 traffickers. Several factors could account for the poor performances of the semester and management has brought in new orientations and strategies to keep up the high standards the organisation has always maintained. The three traffickers arrested below:

In February, 2 ivory traffickers were arrested with 2 elephant tusks. One of them is a notorious regional trafficker at the center of criminal networks stretching to Chad, Congo and CAR. He is linked to several illicit activities including trafficking in precious stones and cars, in the sub region. He travelled over 500 km from the Ngaoundere to Douala to organize the illegal trade of the tusks. He is connected to several trafficking rings in the North of the country especially in Ngaoundere. He specializes in facilitating the trafficking of elephant tusks in the country and beyond.

In April, a woman was arrested for her connection to ivory trafficking arrests that took place in February, in Douala. She was arrested during a follow up operation, after additional investigations and interrogation, revealed she was the holder of the elephant tusks that were seized from 2 traffickers in February. She concealed the elephant tusks at her residence in a neighbourhood in Douala, where the first arrests took place

Operations Table

| <i>Number of Operations</i> | <i>Number of Traffickers</i> | <i>Contraband</i> |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------|
| 2 | 3 | 2 elephant tusks. |

Figure 2: Operation Table

3. Legal

A total of 3 new cases reached the court. The new cases are under examination by a judge. All of the cases including the old cases were being followed up. The old cases were scheduled, and the trials in court strictly followed. . A court g sentenced 4 traffickers to 6 months in prison and ordered them to pay 400 000 FCFA as fines. They were arrested in Akonolinga on the December 7, 2022 with 28 grey parrots.

All of the cases initiated within this period did not yet reach the judgement stage and the rate of keeping the accused behind bars at the onset of the procedure stood at with 100%

A total of 43 missions were carried out of the Centre Region for follow-up of cases and the creation and strengthening of relations with judicial authorities. A single court ruling was passed during this period sentencing 4 traffickers to 6 months in jail.

Legal advisers held several meetings with judicial and wildlife officials to strengthen collaboration in the fight against wildlife crime. Some meetings were equally held with customs and administrative officials for the same purpose.

4. Media

A total of 88 media pieces were produced and pushed into media including numerous articles in all media – radio, written press and the internet; achieved at a rate of about 4 media pieces every week. This is far below the targeted number of media pieces and improvements to catch up with the situation shall be done during the second semester. The drop in the number of media pieces could be accounted for by the low number of operations obtained during the semester. April recorded the highest number of media pieces and May the lowest. No TV broadcasts were done during the period, a situation that shall be corrected during next semester, especially if the number of operations increase.

Subjects focused on wildlife law enforcement including the Douala arrest of 2 traffickers with 2 elephant tusks; the arrest of 90 traffickers across 7 African countries; the arrest of a woman in connection with 2 elephant tusks that were seized in Douala in February; the court hearing of 3 traffickers arrested with 91kg of pangolin scales in Ntui.

No TV media pieces were published during the semester and efforts are being made to correct this discrepancy during the second part of the year.

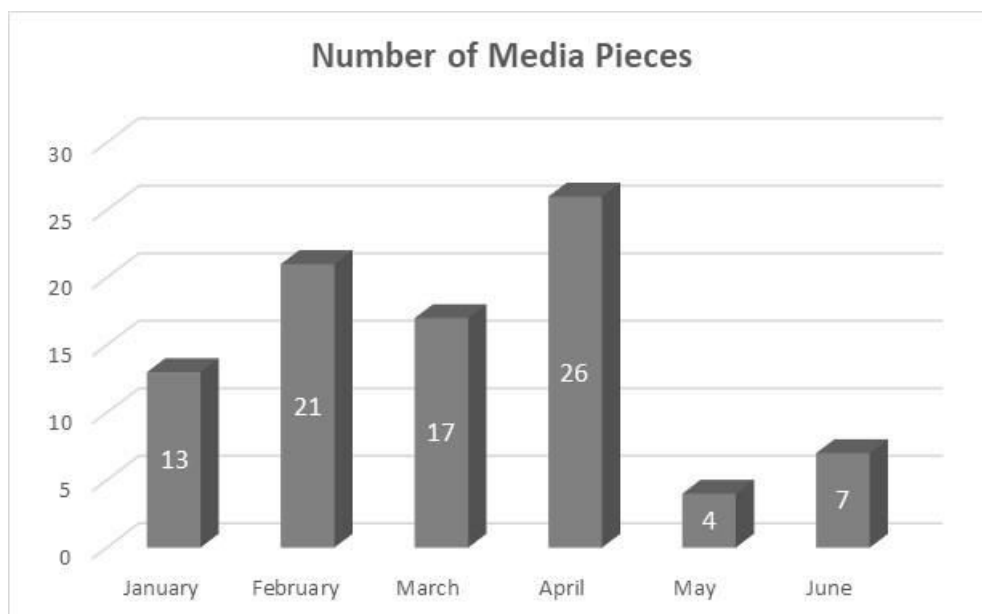


Figure 3: Number of Media Pieces Produced and Published

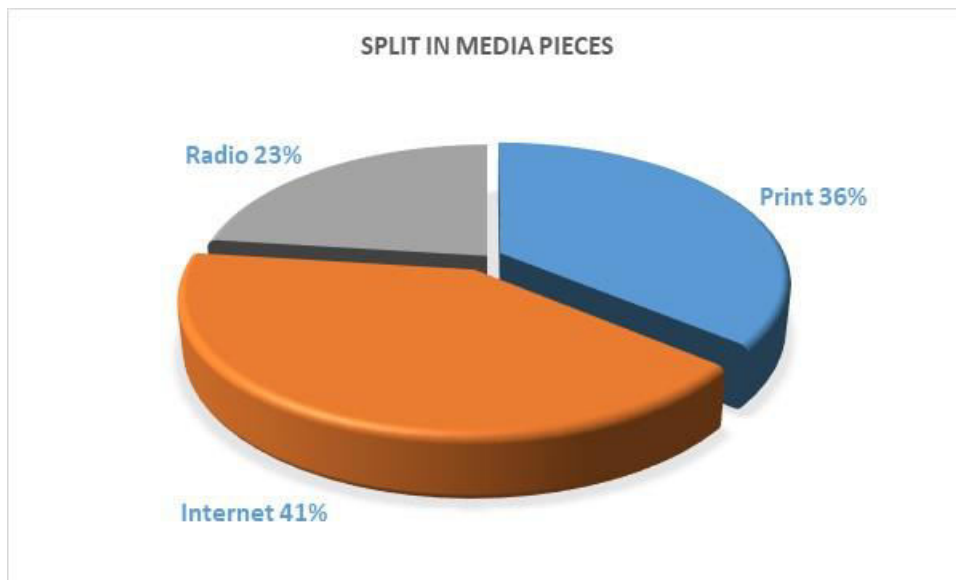


Figure 3: Split in Media Pieces

5. Management

Despite difficulties many challenges management faced during the semester which were mostly linked to producing of high level results, investigation difficulties, all the departments worked hard to improving on the results of the semester. The annual report of 2024 was uploaded online. The electronic versions are available online 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.

Several strategies were developed last year to help improve on results were evaluated and improved upon to continue the fight against wildlife crime in a more effective disposition.

Some meetings and activities were held in one of the two other regions of the country that are seared by security problems. The South West Region is witnessing an improved security situation and we have put plans in place to increasingly cover the region as the situation gradually improves.

The annual financial and activity reports of 2024 were successfully completed. The activity report was published online alongside the second semester report of 2024.

Recruitment for the investigations departments continued and some candidates were interviewed. A new super volunteer arrived the country from Nairobi, to be trained and mentored for the position of a coordinator in another EAGLE project.

A couple 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

Several meetings were held with MINFOF officials, the diplomatic community, national and international NGOs to discuss issues on collaboration, governance, wildlife law enforcement among others. Here is a summary of some of the meetings.

The Deputy Director held a meeting with the Head of the Division of Cooperation at the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife to discuss issues related to wildlife law enforcement and strengthen collaboration in the fight against wildlife crime. He was accompanied during the meeting by the Head of the Legal Department.

He held a meeting with three officials of the British based Environmental Investigation Agency to discuss wildlife law enforcement in the country and the sub region as a whole and strengthen the excellent collaboration between the two structures.

He held a meeting with the Director of Wildaid for Francophone Africa to discuss a public awareness campaign on the new wildlife law and strengthen collaboration in the fight against wildlife crime.

He held a meeting with an official of the Wildlife Conservation Network to discuss issues related to pangolin scales trafficking and strengthen collaboration in the fight against wildlife crime.

The Head of Department participated at a workshop in Cochin, India on the assessment of environmental damages and their direct allocation to the different structures specifically responsible for wildlife protection in the respective countries. The aim of this workshop was to produce a guideline for common remedies and damages claims in environment cases for publication by the Specialist of IUCN's World Commission on Environmental and Biodiversity Law. He did a presentation on the calculation of damages in criminal proceedings relating to wildlife offences in Cameroon. The Deputy Director held a meeting with the Head of the Division of Cooperation at the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife to discuss issues related to wildlife law enforcement and strengthen collaboration in the fight against wildlife crime. He was accompanied during the meeting by the Head of the Legal Department.

The Head of the Legal and Investigation Departments held a meeting with the South West Regional Delegate of Forestry and Wildlife to map out wildlife law enforcement activities in the region that is gradually returning to normalcy following several years of insurgency and violence.

They equally held a meeting with the Divisional Delegate of Forestry and Wildlife for Fako Division, in the same region, to discuss wildlife law enforcement and strengthen collaboration.

They held a meeting with the Conservator of the Limbe Wildlife Centre on the calculation of damages and expensed incurred on chimpanzee rescue and rehabilitation.

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

All the activism fostering 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>**

Presentation

A power point presentation was given by the Head of the Media Department on employee led activism and how companies can handle it. The presentation was centred on activism, employee led activism within and outside the workplace and why a company should listen to their voices, and what it takes to improve. Debates were around activism the difference between activism and ideology.

The Head of the Investigation Department gave a power point presentation on anger management. He defined anger, listed some triggers of anger and how one could manage anger not to escalate to irreparable damages. Everyone at the end of his presentation shared their different ways of managing their anger.

The Chief Investigator gave a power point presentation on the management of waste in the country inspired by the overcrowded waste found at every corner of the town of Yaounde. He talked on various ways waste could be disposed while calling on the government to improve collaboration with non-governmental entities to manage domestic waste.

Discussion centred on:

- What are the causes leading to huge waste stockpiles and pollution in our cities?
- Who should be blame or take responsibility?
- How can the situation of waste stockpiles in our towns be resolved?

The Interim Director did a power point presentation on medal awards. He started by giving the origin of medal awards, the different types of award, the awarders and the awardees. He ended by describing the process of medal awarding, the office in charge of medals and the number of medals given out to Cameroonians every year in the country. He equally listed the most decorated Cameroonians with different medals awarded to them.

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 chimp, gorilla and ivory trafficking.

9.1 Ivory Trafficking

Two ape traffickers were arrested in the in Douala, the Littoral Region, one of them travelled from Ngaoundere, that is over 1000km from the north of the country to organise the illegal trade. He is specialised in moving illegal contraband (including precious stones and cars), between Cameroon and some neighbouring countries including the Central African Republic and Chad and running a criminal network in the north of the country. This single arrest demonstrates once more the ability of ivory traffickers to be sophisticated in their dealings and organise highly intricate criminal activity.

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. When 2 ivory traffickers were arrested in February, family members of one of the arrested traffickers tried to bribe the wildlife law enforcement officials who were establishing the offence report. They proposed money to the judicial police officers who stood their grounds. They did not stop there, they also tried with LAGA team members present on the ground and finally tried to bribe the examining magistrate handling the case with the sum of 500 0000 FCFA (about \$1000) but failed.

Annex I – List of Cases of 2024 and 2025

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

Annex II - the Semester in Pictures



Two, including a notorious regional trafficker, arrested with two ivory tusks in Douala. They pose at the Wildlife office in Douala above, waiting for official to start drawing complaint reports against



Deputy Director held a meeting in June, with EIA officials at LAGA office. In attendance was super volunteer Antonia.

Annex III- Some media links

Some online news sites carried stories on the trafficking and arrest, here are some examples:

In January, Cameroon fact finder news site, published the arrest of 2 traffickers with 2 elephant tusks in Douala. The traffickers were arrested in a crackdown operation conducted by Wildlife officers in collaboration with the Police and technically assisted by LAGA.

<https://cameroonfactfinder.com/illegal-ivory-trade-two-arrested-in-douala/>

In March, the news site, published a story on the arrest of 90 traffickers across 7 African countries including Ivory Coast, Guinea, Uganda, Senegal, Togo and Cameroon during crackdown operations carried out under the framework of the government's collaboration with EAGLE network that assists wildlife officials in the application of the wildlife law in these countries.

<https://cameroonfactfinder.com/wildlife-trafficking-on-the-high-side-with-90-arrests-in-2024/>

In April, Camer. be an online news site, published an article on the arrest of a woman in connection with 2 elephant tusks that were seized in Douala on February 2025. The suspect is the daughter to a former Delegate of Tourism and Leisure.

<https://www.camer.be/89131/11:1/cameroun-lutte-anti-braconnage-une-femme-trafiquant-les-defenses-delephant-aux-arrets-cameroon.html>

In May, Cameroon fact finder, news site, carried the story of the arrest of a woman in connection with 2 elephant tusks that were seized in Douala on February 2025.

<https://cameroonfactfinder.com/woman-arrested-in-connection-with-douala-ivory-trafficking/>

In June, the same site, news site, published the story on three suspected traffickers in the Ntui Court of First Instance who appeared to answer to charges brought against them. They were arrested in September 2023 with 91kg of pangolin scales

<https://cameroonfactfinder.com/suspected-pangolin-scales-trafficker-to-reappear-in-court/>