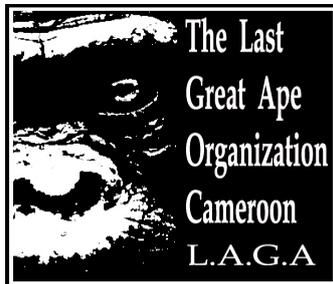


# THE LAST GREAT APE ORGANIZATION, CAMEROON LAGA

SECOND SEMESTER REPORT JULY - DECEMBER 2020



## Executive Summary

Despite the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic and several other difficulties, the LAGA team pushed forward and through, obtaining tangible achievements in its collaboration with the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife. Achievements were obtained in the fields of investigation, arrest, prosecution, media exposure, government relations and international activities with focus on the fight against corruption and the illegal wildlife trade, principally trafficking in ivory and pangolin scales. The team revised and adapted its procedures and strategies taking into the consideration the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic and governments barrier measures to fight the spread of the disease. Trafficking in ivory tusks and pangolin scales drew much of the attention. 10 traffickers were arrested during the month of December alone and 6 were members of an ivory trafficking network with connections to Nigeria.

16 major traffickers were arrested and 71% stayed behind bars from the day of arrest and 29% were released on bail as the trials started. Corruption was observed and combated in two cases. 17 new cases were brought to the courts while 19 traffickers were found guilty and damages totalling 122,592,000 FCFA (about \$245,184) was ordered to be paid by the convicts to the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife (MINFOF). Media exposure was at a rate of one media piece per day.

88 traffickers were arrested across 7 countries of the EAGLE network. LAGA continued to provide technical assistance to some of the EAGLE projects during investigations, operations and media outreach.

Just a couple of meetings were held with government and diplomatic officials and other stakeholders because of the health crisis posed by the Covid-19 disease. . .

Strict internal measures and regulations were put in place alongside government's regulations amidst very strong supervision to ensuring the Covid-19 disease was kept at bay. Every member of the team did at least one Covid-19 test and they all returned negative.

The death of one of the organisation's founding fathers was announced. Vincent Gudmia Mfonfu died on December 26, 2020 in Yaounde.

**The work of LAGA was supported by: US Fish and Wildlife Service, Wildcat, The Born Free Foundation, Pro Wildlife and CIDT.**

**LAST GREAT APE ORGANISATION, CAMEROON (LAGA)**  
**SEMESTER REPORT**  
July - December 2020

**OVERVIEW**

**Investigations**

- A total of 107 investigation missions of varying lengths were carried out in 6 regions.
- The network of informants continued producing results leading to a couple of good operations.

**Operations**

- Operations were carried out in 3 regions arresting 16 major traffickers and 17 court cases were started. 4 other cases were from an operation done by the police following investigations carried out after a LAGA assisted operation and one other case emanated from a customs operation. LAGA provided technical assistance in the legal follow up of the all of cases.
- Operations on ivory trafficking accounted for 38% of the arrested traffickers, while pangolin scales stood at 25%, and parrots at 19%.
- The rate of imprisonment of arrested offenders was 71%,

**Legal**

- 17 new cases were brought to court and represented. LAGA provided legal assistance to MINFOF and authorities in all of the cases. Many of the 17 cases began during the period have not yet reached the judgement stage but trials are ongoing.
- 8 court judgements were passed during the 6-month period.
- 19 traffickers were found guilty and handed at least two of the following: prison sentences, suspended prison sentences, fines, damages and penalties, except for a single case that received an order to pay a fine only. Damages amounted to some 122,592,000 FCFA (about \$245,184) to be paid to MINFOF.
- The period was marked by a couple of weak court rulings and an acquittal
- 2 appeals were lodged during this semester because of these poor court decisions.

**Media**

- A total of 184 media pieces were produced in national media (TV, radio, press and internet) achieved at a rate of almost one media piece per day.
- The Deputy Director was guest on a TV news programme that discussed ivory trafficking and the seizure of 118 ivory tusks with the arrest of a trafficker by customs in the south of the country.
- The 9<sup>th</sup> Edition of Wildlife Justice Magazine was published under the theme “Pangolin Trafficking”.

**Management**

- The first semester report of 2020 was made available online.
- A super volunteer finished her 3 months long training, working with the various departments of the organization.

- Internal collaboration amongst the departments was redesigned to suit the trying moments and emphasis was placed on distant communication even when everyone was present in office.

### **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 strategic focus over this period was cracking down on the illegal trade in ivory and pangolin scales that collectively represented 63% of the operations carried out.
- Attention was also concentrated on pushing on and getting operations carried out while respecting organisational and government's measures put in place to prevent coronavirus infections.

### **EAGLE Activities**

- A total of 88 traffickers were arrested across 7 countries of the network during this semester.
- LAGA provided technical support during investigations, legal activity and media outreach to some of the projects across the network

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### Also available:

1. Annual Financial Statement and Semester I 2020
2. Monthly Financial and Activity Reports January to June 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 organisation’s activities from July to December 2020. The report includes the progress in the activities of each department, specifically the investigations, operations, legal, media departments and management. It also looks at the strategic overview of and the impact of our operations on wildlife crime in Cameroon, the progress in relations with the Cameroonian Government, non-governmental bodies, activities in the international arena, as well as non-enforcement initiatives undertaken by the organisation.

### **1. Investigations**

LAGA’s investigation unit carried out 107 investigation missions in 6 regions of the country. The department worked closely with the CCU’s investigation officer and this enabled smooth and important investigations to be carried out. Weekly meetings were held in the department to plan activities, develop strategies, techniques and team spirit to improve results, identify and cover key trafficking areas.

New investigative methods and techniques based on the advent of the coronavirus were elaborated and made adaptable to the health crisis raging across the globe. This enabled the department to continue carrying out its activities despite the challenges posed by the situation.

The Head of the Investigations Department held meetings with some customs and security officials at the Nsimalen International Airport and the Douala International Airport to enhance and strengthen collaborative platforms; that have been built over the years. He equally held meetings with some security and customs officials at the Douala International Airport for the same purpose and was accompanied by the Head of the Legal Department.

No arrests were done during the month of July, a month that witnessed peaks of the coronavirus trends in the country and in October. Nevertheless, the department put in effective strategies which brought very good results especially in December that recorded the highest number of traffickers (10) arrested within year.

An investigator was relieved of her duties after coming to the end of the road following 7 years’ collaboration and fruitful relationship with the organisation.



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

## **2. Operations**

LAGA assisted the Government of Cameroon in carrying out operations in 3 regions against 16 individuals resulting in 17 court cases with an additional case coming from an operation done by the customs. 6 traffickers were arrested in December when an ivory trafficking network with connections to Nigeria was dismantled in the East Region. 4 of the traffickers were arrested in Yokadouma by the police after a follow up investigation following the arrest of the first 2 in Bertoua. LAGA provided legal assistance to all of the cases and to the case that resulted from an operation carried out by customs in Ambam in the south of the country.

In August, 2 traffickers were arrested in Yaounde, Centre Region with a lion skin and a leopard skin. The first trafficker who was very cautious was arrested shortly after he had consulted a soothsayer to determine if his illegal business was going to be risk free and he changed destinations several times as he moved the products. He had two artisanal shops as front businesses for cover of the illegal wildlife trafficking he carried out. A woman who was formerly a secondary school teacher was arrested an hour later at her residence and she claimed the skins belong to her.

During the second operation in August, a trafficker was arrested in Ebolowa, South Region with 23kg of pangolin scales. He had under his employ several small time traffickers he activated in several villages in the south. Their job was to collect the scales for him. He travelled by night to avoid arrest from Akom II to Ebolowa where he tried to sell the scales, shortly before his arrest.

In September, 2 traffickers were arrested in Yaounde, Centre Region with 3 African grey parrots and 6 Rose-ringed parakeets. The first trafficker was arrested selling 2 African grey parrots and 4 Rose-ringed parakeets at the Vogt Junction in Yaounde and the owner of the parrots and parakeets was arrested one hour later at his residence with one additional African grey parrot and 2 Rose-ringed parakeets. The second trafficker is a major dealer who belongs to one of the most important international bird trafficking networks in the country and has spent 3 years evading justice. They had to be arrested twice because, the Company Commander who had the responsibility of keeping them in custody simply released them following the first arrest and this necessitated rearrests after LAGA intervened. This would prove a very complicated task as one of them simply tried to escape and was given chase and in a desperate attempt to flee one of them went in a stream close to his residence but was pursued into it and arrested.

In November, a trafficker arrested in Yaounde, Centre Region in connection with the case against two arrested in Yaounde for parrot trafficking in September. He is a long time parrot's trafficker with dozens of years of experience and had been evading justice. He was arrested following an arrest warrant issued by an examining judge handling the case against the two parrot traffickers arrested in September. They all revealed who supplied the parrots and this led the examining judge issuing an arrest warrant for the big time trafficker who is credited with dozens of years in the illegal parrot business in the country.

In December, three operations were carried with 10 traffickers arrested. During the first operation, 2 traffickers were arrested with 4 ivory tusks in Bertoua and 4 more arrested the next day in Yokadouma in the East Region. One of the traffickers is a Nigerian national who had been the target of law enforcement and had served jail term for ivory trafficking. He is one of the backbones in the criminal gang that moves ivory from the East Region, across the country to Nigeria. One of the traffickers travelled from Yokadouma to Bertoua with the ivory and was arrested as he arrived the residence of one of the suspects who was also arrested. The gang proved difficult to break and was very cautious in their undertakings.

During the second operation, 3 traffickers including an ex-military man were arrested in Batouri, East Region with 70kg of pangolin scales. Under the protection of the former soldier, they travelled from

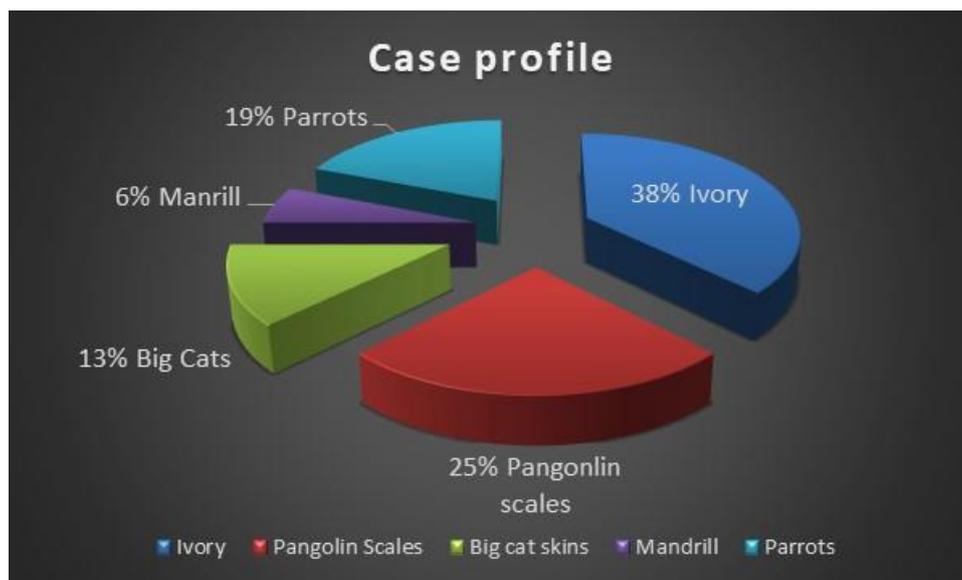
Mindourou to Batouri and were arrested shortly before their planned transaction to sell the scales could go ahead. They activated a host of smaller traffickers and poachers who supplied the pangolin scales in and around Mindourou. The scales were carefully back in four flour bags.

During the third operation, a live animal trafficker was arrested and a young mandrill safely rescued. The young and hungry animal was immediately provided first aid care and food as it thirstily clung to a water bottle. As often is the case, the young animal lived in a filthy small cage. Earlier, another mandrill the animal trafficker tried to sell died in her possession

**Operations Table**

<i>Number of Operations</i>	<i>Number of Traffickers</i>	<i>Contraband</i>
7	16	A lion skin, a leopard skin, 23 kg of pangolin scales, 3 African grey parrots, 6 Rose-ringed Parakeets, 4 ivory tusks, 70kg pangolin scales, a live mandrill

**Figure 2: Operation Table**



**Figure 3: Operations profile**

### **3. Legal**

During this period, 17 new cases reached the court and the cases joined old cases that were scheduled, followed-up, tried in various courts and jail visits were organized. 12 of the cases resulted from operations assisted by LAGA 4 cases were from operation carried out by the police after further investigations following a LAGA assisted operation. One other case was from an operation carried out by customs officials. LAGA provided technical assistance in the legal follow-up of the all the cases. Most of the cases initiated within this period have not yet reached the judgement stage with 71% imprisoned during trial

A total of 58 missions were carried out of the Centre Region for the follow-up of new cases and the creation and strengthening of relations with wildlife and judicial authorities. The majority of the missions were focused on ivory and pangolins scales matters resulting from past operations.

During this period, 8 court judgements were passed with 19 traffickers found guilty and 7 of them given prison sentences, 9 others were given suspended prison sentences while 3 were found guilty and ordered to pay fines only and one was declared not guilty by the courts. A very high number of weak sentences were witnessed and this is a continuing trend that has been witnessed over a couple of years now. Two appeals were lodged. The court gave a full one-year sentence to a wildlife trafficker while 4 suspected wildlife traffickers who were arrested with human bones were given 5 years' jail terms. The department assisted the Ministry and Customs in the follow up of a very high profile case in Ambam in the South Region where customs seized 118 ivory tusks from an international trafficker. Damages amounted to some 122,592,000 FCFA (about \$245,184) to be paid to MINFOF.

The Mfou Court of First Instance found the accused BIKAI ONGUENE Joseph Kevin guilty and sentenced him to 6 months suspended sentence during 3 years and to pay 100,000 FCFA (about \$200) as fines. He was arrested in Yaounde on the 17/04/2020 for illegal possession of a mandrill.

The Bandjoun Court of First Instance found the accused TCHAPTCHET Noe guilty and sentenced him to pay 100,000 FCFA (about \$200) as fines. He was arrested in Bandjoun on the 24/02/2020 for illegal possession of 5 leopard skins.

The Douala – Bonaberie Court of First Instance found the accused NDONGO Jean, TEGWI TIKU Clifford and Emmanuel Willy BRIGHT guilty and sentenced them to 6 months' imprisonment and to jointly pay 90,592 000 FCFA (About \$181,184) as damages. They were arrested in Douala on the 23/12/2020 for the illegal possession and circulation of 274 African grey parrots, 3 ivory tusks and 3 bags of pangolin scales.

The Yaounde – Ekounou Court of First Instance found the accused ATOUBA BEKONO Martin Paul, AYO'O ATOUBA Marguérite Nélie and ETOA MVIE Marcelin Junior guilty and sentenced them to one year suspended sentences during 3 years and to pay 500,000 FCFA (about \$1000) each as fines, 8,000,000 FCFA (about \$16,000) jointly as damages. They were arrested in Yaounde on the 07/06/2020 for the illegal possession, circulation and commercialization of 400kg of pangolin scales.

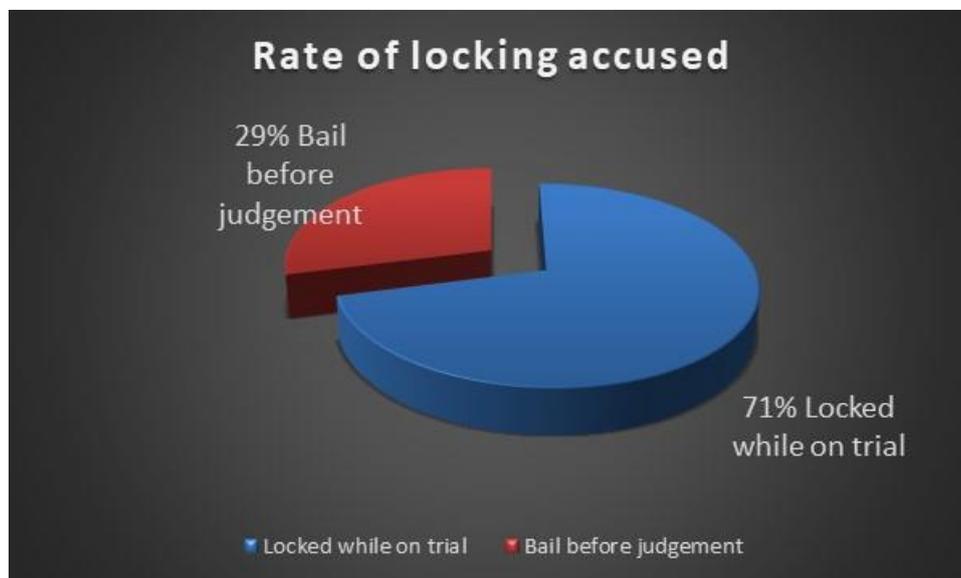
The Bertoua Court of First Instance found the accused NDINGA BABA Stanislas and TOUMAYA Jérémie guilty and sentenced them to 3 months' imprisonment and to pay 33,500 FCFA (about \$67) each as court charges. They were arrested in Bertoua on the 03/06/2020 for the illegal possession of 2 ivory tusks.

The Douala - Ndokoti Court of First Instance found the accused TCHIEKOU Théophile, MANYOMBE Samuel and MAKEMBE Lydie guilty. TCHIEKOU Théophile and MAKEMBE Lydie were sentenced to one year suspended sentence during 3 years and MANYOMBE Samuel was sentenced to a one-year imprisonment term. They were also sentenced to pay 200,000 FCFA (about \$400) each as fines and 6,000,000 FCFA (about 1200) jointly as damages. They were arrested in Douala on the 07/05/2020 for the illegal possession of 2 ivory tusks.

The Foubot Court of First Instance found the accused AMADOU TIJANI, KPOUHENZEN Radifatou, SAPTT Aboubakar and ABDEL Aziz guilty and sentenced them to 5 years in prison and to pay 100,000 FCFA (about \$200) each as fines. They are suspected wildlife traffickers arrested on the 20/05/2020 for illegal sale of a human skeleton.

The Batouri Court of First Instance found the accused ZOLA BEINA Roland not guilty and NDAYA Jean Balise and, NSANGOU guilty. NDAYA Jean Balise and NSANGOU were sentenced to pay 100,000 FCFA (about \$200) each as fines and 2,000,000 FCFA (about \$4000) jointly as damages. They were arrested in Batouri on the 03/12/2020 for the illegal possession of 70 kg of pangolin scales.

Two appeals were lodged during this period against court rulings; one in July and the other in December



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

#### **4. Media**

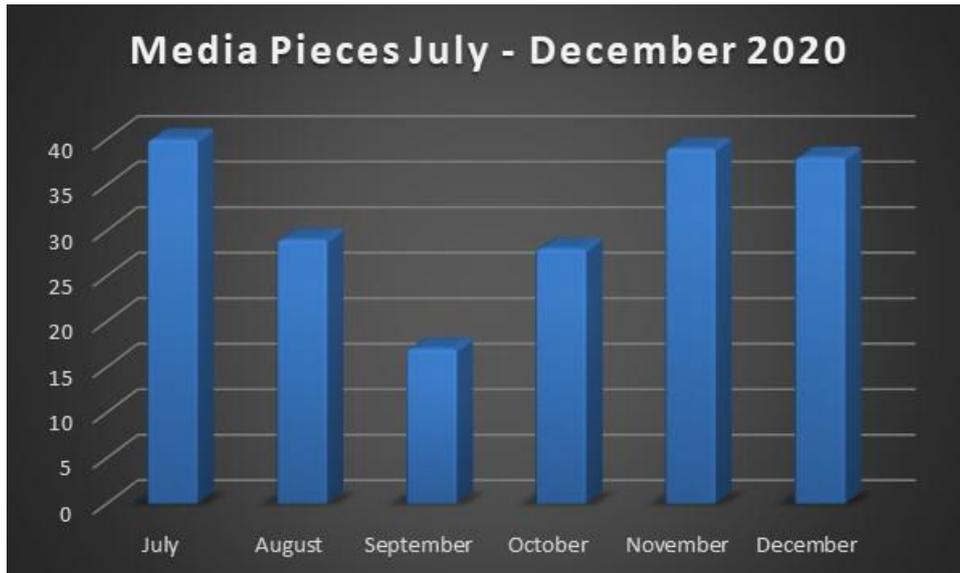
A total of 184 media pieces were produced and pushed into media including numerous articles in all media – TV, radio, television, written press and the internet; achieved at a rate of one media piece per day. August and November months witnessed the highest number of media pieces recorded while September had the lowest number.

Subjects focused the arrest of 2 human bones traffickers in Foubot; the court hearing of 3 ivory traffickers arrested in Douala; the court hearing of the 2 human skeleton traffickers that were arrested in Foubot; the Yaounde arrest of two people with a leopard skin and a lion skin; the Ebolowa arrest of a trafficker with 23kg of pangolin scales and the subsequent court hearing; the arrest of two people with 3 African grey parrots and 6 Rose-ringed parakeets in Yaounde; the arrest of an ivory trafficker with 626kg of ivory in Ambam; the court hearing of three traffickers arrested with 26kg of ivory tusks in Douala as well as their judgement and the Bertoua arrest of six traffickers with four ivory tusks.

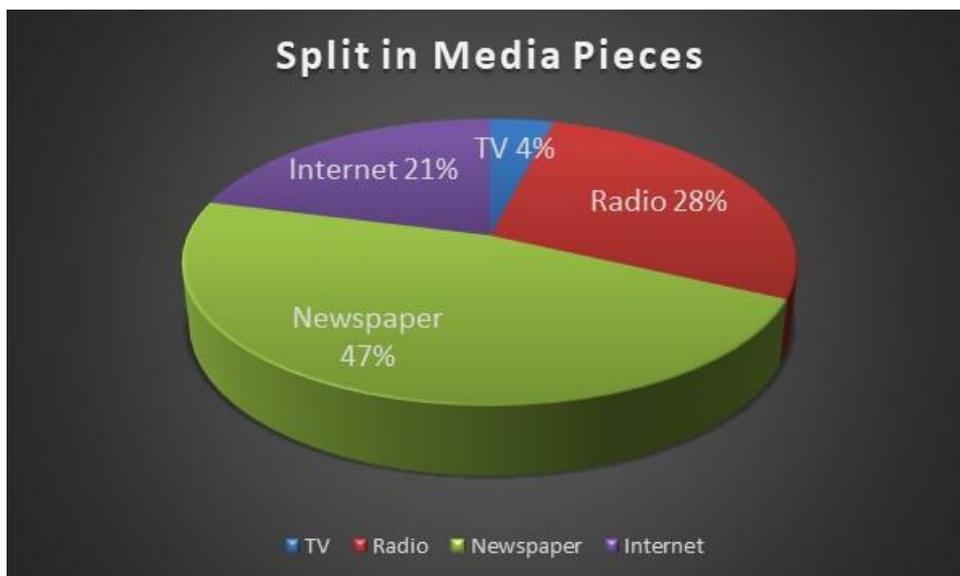
Interviews and quotes used in the various media pieces were from the Director of LAGA, the Gendarmerie Company Commander in Foubot, the Foubot Gendarmerie Brigade Commander, Precillia Tumenta, a lion specialist and Coordinator of the Center for Environment and Development Studies and the Deputy Director of LAGA

The Deputy Director was guest on prime time CRTV News programme Twilight to talk on the seizure of 118 ivory tusks in the south of the country, the causes and consequences of ivory trafficking and elephant extinction.

- The 9<sup>th</sup> Edition of Wildlife Justice Magazine was published under the theme “Pangolin Trafficking”, with contribution from several local and international experts.



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



**Figure 6: Split of Media Pieces**

## **5. Management**

Activities were severely obstructed by the Covid-19 pandemic but adaptive measures were put in place to address the situation. The top priority was managing the Covid-19 crisis while ensuring that work continued. Some preventive measures accompanied government’s own measures to fight the pandemic and ensuring the spread did not affect members of the organisation. They were strictly implemented, supervised and controlled. Wearing of facemasks in office and out, social distancing and disinfecting hands and surfaces were some of the measures strictly applied. Those travelling on public buses were allowed to pay for two seats to enable distancing in the buses. Anyone who felt sick was immediately isolated and asked to return home. A protocol to take charge of anyone who was suspected of exposure to Covid-19 was put in place. Members were equally obliged to do a Covid-19 test and other tests to determine the cause of any malaise or affliction. All staff did a routine Covid-19 test that returned negative.

Sustained efforts were made by management to ensuring efficient and effective use of resources and skills available to the organisation. A couple of team building activities were carried out during the period and included common office lunch and a visit to the seaside resort town of Kribi.

A super volunteer completed a three and a half month working visit. She worked with all departments and AC, our sister anti-corruption organisation to build her skills in fighting corruption.

A team from an audit firm worked with the finance department for an in-depth auditing of the organisation.

The first semester of 2020 uploaded online. The electronic versions are available on line 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 thought-provoking session of presentation and debates for the LAGA team was organised to foster activism and leadership skills. This initiative also aims at strengthening the capacity, unity and values of the LAGA family.

Three general meetings were held to first of all define targeted results and activities to be carried out within the period and to examine the efficacy of measures put in place to prevent against Covid-19, secondly to evaluate what had been achieved and lastly to ensure efforts were redoubled to achieving the expected results as the year drew to a close. During the last meeting there was a review of measures taken to ensuring comprehensive protection of everyone during the pandemic

An investigator was relieved of her duties after coming to the end of the road following seven years of fruitful collaboration.

The entire LAGA team went on annual vacation and end of year activities were carried out. Office reopens in January 2021. Everyone gathered at the table and extended season's greetings during an end of year lunch. Christmas gifts were equally distributed to every member.

Two fellows from the Mentor Bushmeat Programme of ZSL were hosted and trained in the office on wildlife law enforcement.

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

The Deputy Director accompanied by the heads of investigations and legal departments and a controller from the regional delegation held a meeting with the Commander of the Gendarmerie Operational Command Post to discuss issues pertaining to parrot trafficking and the rearrests of the two parrot traffickers

The Deputy Director did three presentations in Sangmelima (South) on Information Gathering within the context of wildlife law enforcement, on Investigation Techniques and on Information Management and Operations during a workshop organized by ZSL that brought together stakeholders from the South and East regions that is home to some of the most important parks such as the Dja Biosphere Reserve – a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The Head of the Legal Department and the Investigations Department held meetings with the South Regional Police Chief, South Regional Forestry and Wildlife Delegate, Head of Customs at the Freight Department at the Douala Airport and at the Nsimalen Airport and the Nsimalen Chief of

Forestry and Wildlife Post. The focus of the meetings was on building active and collaborative platforms for eventual operations. The Heads of the Legal Department and the Investigation Department held a meeting with the Foubot Public Security Commissioner on discussions to foster collaboration.

The Deputy Director, heads of the legal department and the investigations department held a working session with the Centre Regional Delegate, during which they discussed collaborative initiatives to improve on wildlife law enforcement in the area and worked on strategies which would lead to the arrest of the 2 parrot traffickers. Before the meeting, the Deputy Director had held an earlier meeting with the newly appointed Delegate to appraise the wildlife law enforcement situation in the region. He equally held a meeting with the Research Officer No. 2 at MINFOF on issues connected to the Memorandum of Understanding binding the two parties.

The Deputy Director attended the ceremony presided over by the Minister of Forestry and Wildlife that saw the presentation of the National Anti-Poaching and Wildlife Crime Strategy document and a copy of the document was given to LAGA that participated in the elaboration of the strategy.

The Deputy Director facilitated a workshop that focused on contributing to the deepening and harmonization of the understanding of institutional actors of the causes and consequences of agro-pastoral conflicts. The workshop, organized by human rights group Recodh brought together state actors and NGOs working in the domain.

He participated at a workshop organized by TRAFFIC that focused on presenting the preliminary analysis of the impact of training workshops organized and the tools developed by TRAFFIC and WWF to combat wildlife crime in Cameroon between 2015 and 2019.

The Deputy Director did a presentation on the trafficking of the African grey parrot in the country during a virtual workshop organized in Nigeria to discuss issues related to the conservation of the species which has been intensely trafficked over the years in the country and in the Central African sub region.

He held a meeting with the new Project Manager of the Tikki Hywood Foundation who arrived the country and they discussed several issues relating to pangolin conservation and wildlife conservation in general.

The Deputy Director held another meeting with GFA consultant Stephane Crayne to discuss law enforcement initiatives around the Mt. Cameroon area and strategies to effectively fight wildlife crime in the area.

He participated at a Cameroon Pangolin Working Group meeting that was aimed at relaunching the activities of the group that has been lethargic since the coming of Covid 19.

The Deputy Director did a presentation on the legal procedure relating to the prosecution of wildlife offenders during a TRAFFIC organised workshop in Douala that focused on introducing an INL funded project that shall work to strengthening the capacity of law enforcement in the country.

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

LAGA's new model for NGO – Government collaboration establishes 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 and 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 that was formerly the handled by LAGA. Activities carried out with the other EAGLE projects were focussed on information sharing. LAGA provided technical advice on investigations, operations and media outreach to some other projects.

## **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/paper/book. The function of leadership is not producing more followers but to produce more leaders.

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

Activism building was severely handicapped by the Covid-19 crisis and, presentations and debates were suspended. Nevertheless, a family dinner was held to celebrate women's rights with the LAGA team member and the screening of a movie on the historic black woman who saved many from slavery was carried out following the Black Lives Matters protests that spread in the US.

### **Movie: Harriett**

When a young black woman escapes from her slave master she comes back to take the man she loved to her new abode only to get disappointment as he is married off to another woman and this mission turns into a slave freeing mission as she uses underground routes to start freeing slaves. Harriett is a captivating movie and she is a heroine of the slave era with courage, determination and commitment. The young lady demonstrates extraordinary bravery and leadership in the dangerous task of freeing slaves under the noses of rampaging gun wielding white men. Her guide is her religion she constantly calls upon to lead her way. Discussions focused on slavery, activism, Black Lives Matter and other social ills faced by the society in those days and faced by the society today.

## **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 in reducing the level of 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 ivory, pangolin scales, parrots and leopard skins.

### ***9.1 Ivory***

A big ivory trafficking network was dismantled in the East of the country and two members of the network were arrested in Bertoua while 4 others were later arrested in Yokadouma not too far from the border with the Republic of Congo. They had connections with ivory trafficking across the country to Nigeria and one of the traffickers is a repeat offender who had earlier served jail term for the same offence. They moved the ivory from the Yokadouma travelling several hundreds of kilometres to Bertoua not only demonstrating their ability to safely move contraband over long distances but equally hitting home the idea that ivory trafficking is invariably international and attracts huge interest from traffickers from every part of the sub region.

### ***9.2 Parrots***

A notorious parrot trafficker who, over the years, masqueraded as a bona fide parrot seller was finally arrested after a man hunt. He activated a group of parrot traffickers who openly sold African grey parrots and other birds on the streets of Yaounde and following the arrest of 2 of them, information collected linked the notorious trafficker to the business. The parrot business has the particularity that it was a legal business for a very long time before government decided to close it but some who may have traded parrots legally quickly went underground and joined dark forces to continue their business albeit illegally this time. The illegal parrot business has decimated the population of African grey parrots that is fast dwindling to levels that may lead to unviable populations in the forests of the country.

### ***9.3 Pangolin scales***

An ex-soldier was arrested alongside two others as they attempted to supply pangolin scales in the East Region. On a number of occasions, military people have been arrested for trafficking in wildlife products and often they use their status to protect the illegal business. He accompanied his accomplices to the town where they intended to sell the scales and provided the much needed protection as they travelled with their contraband.

### ***9.4 Big Cat skins***

Two traffickers were arrested in Yaounde with a lion skin and a leopard skin. The first trafficker who was very cautious was arrested shortly after he had consulted a soothsayer to determine if his illegal business was going to be risk free. In this respect he changed destinations several times as he moved the products. He had two artisanal shops as front businesses for cover of the illegal wildlife trafficking he carried out. A woman who was formerly a secondary school teacher was arrested an hour later at her residence and she claimed the skins belong to her. The issue of using front business comes up regularly as traffickers do business with lots of planning and strategy to avoid arrest. They strategically plan their business as intelligent professionals.

### ***9.5 Mandrills***

A woman was arrested in the south of the country with a young mandrill and it was found out that another mandrill had died in her possession. She had a bar and had contacts to several people The trade in young primates continue to be carried out also by ordinary people doing ordinary jobs. They are the bedrock on which bigger and international pet traffickers build their trafficking syndicates. Live animals need special care and attention otherwise they simply die but operations tell us that ordinary folks are a vital clog in the chain that supplies illegal and legal zoos around the world.

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

LAGA was 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 conference, 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.

When two traffickers were arrested in Yaounde in August, one of the traffickers who said the lion skin belonged to her proposed a huge amount of money to the gendarmerie brigade commandant, who was handling the matter to stop the prosecution at his level and surprisingly asking that her lion and leopard skins be given back to her. This was categorically rebuffed but she continued and tried to negotiate with the LAGA team who accompanied the gendarmerie on the ground and was quickly shut up.

When two parrot traffickers were arrested in Yaounde in September and held in police custody at the Yaoundé II Gendarmerie Company, the commandant illegally released them from the cell for very dubious motives. The LAGA team worked hard to ensure the illegal procedure was rectified and the traffickers rearrested. A third trafficker, allegedly the brain behind the trafficking, was later arrested following an arrest warrant by an examining judge. He had earlier been treated to an abnormally lenient preliminary process by wildlife officials handling the matter

# Overview of International Wildlife Traffic in Cameroon



## Annex I – Case Tracking System – July – December 2020

Case No.	Operation date	Location	Case name	Offence	Profile	Remarks	Int. Connection	Status
663	06/08/2020	Yaounde, Centre	<a href="#">ADAMA Mama</a>	illegal possession of 1 leopard skin and 1 lion skin	Craftsman / Seller	He belongs to a network of trafficking in varied wildlife products notably leopard skins, lion skins and elephant trophies. He is based in Yaounde and receives products from partners, use his connections to sell them and his commission is paid based on the sales he makes.	Botswana	Free on settlement
664	06/08/2020	Yaounde, Centre	<a href="#">KANGAM Epse TCHAMGME NDJENDE Mario</a>	illegal possession of 1 leopard skin and 1 lion skin	retired teacher	Anotehr member of a big network that exports leopard skin and lion skin coming from Botswana to the international black market. She is real owner of 2 sikins seized	Botswana	Free on settlement
665	26/08/2020	Ebolowa, South	<a href="#">ANGO'O ASSAKO Samson</a>	illegal possession of 23 kg of pangolins scales	Sawyer	A member of a big network involved in pangolins scales. He is in charge to collect pangolin scales in South region especialy in Akom 2, Campo and sell	None	Free on settlement
666	25/09/2020	Yaounde, Centre	<a href="#">BEKOMBO GUIWA Bruno</a>	illegal possession of 1 African Grey parrots and 2 rose-ringet	Farmer	Head of a big network of captor of totally protected species, particularly the grey parrots and rose-ringet parakeet.	None	locked while on trial
667	25/09/2020	Yaounde, Centre	<a href="#">NKWASSI Sylvester</a>	Illegal possession of 2 Grey parrots and 4 rose-ringet parakeet	Farmer	Another member of a well established network of captor of grey parrots and rose-ringet parakeet	None	locked while on trial
668	21/10/2020	Ambam, South	<a href="#">MOHAMADO U Ibrahim</a>	illlegal possession of 626 kg of ivory tusks	Driver	A notorious dealer and member of an international network involved in trafficking Ivory tusks. He works in partnership with some trafickers in Gabon and Equatorial Guinea. He was caught in Amba trying to transport huge quantities of Ivories (118) From Ambam to	Gabon, Equatorial Guinea	locked while on trial
669	04/11/2020	Yaounde, Centre	<a href="#">NDZANA Celestin</a>	Illegal possession of 2 Grey parrots and 4 rose-ringet parakeet	Capturer	A well-nkow international parrot trafficker connected to a big export network. Uses much money to sponsor the illegal export of African Grey parrots with the use of falsified government documents.	None	Free on settlement

<u>Case No.</u>	<u>Operation date</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Case name</u>	<u>Offence</u>	<u>Profile</u>	<u>Remarks</u>	<u>Int. Connection</u>	<u>Status</u>
670	02/12/2020	Bertoua, East	MBOKI MPORI Clément	illegal possession of 4 ivory tusks	Teacher /Seller	Another member of a well established network of ivory trafiker between Messok, Lomie Yokadouma and Bertoua around Dja Biosphere reserve and national Park of Boumba Bek who are known for illegal killing for illegal of	Nigeria	locked while on trial
671	02/12/2020	Bertoua, East	TCHENE Maxime	illegal possession of 4 ivory tusks	Civil servant	Used cover as a civil servant to carry out illegal trade in wildlife.	Nigeria	Free on settlement
672	02/12/2020	Bertoua, East	JOVAH YAHWE Christian	illegal possession of 4 ivory tusks	businessman	A regular dealer of Nigerian nationality with no official resident documents for Cameroon. He is well known by the divisional delegation to be a ivory dealer	Nigeria (Nigerian)	locked while on trial
673	02/12/2020	Bertoua, East	POMELA ABELA Aimé	illegal possession of 4 ivory tusks		A member of JAVAH network involved in ivory trafficking in the east region. He is responsible for searching	Nigeria	locked while on trial
674	02/12/2020	Bertoua, East	NGOUALONG KUETE	illegal possession of 4 ivory tusks	Farmer	A well-known dealer arrested for trading in the ivory tusk. Used cover as a farmer to carry out illegal trade in wildlife.	Nigeria	locked while on trial
675	02/12/2020	Bertoua, East	MOHAMADOU Nabi	illegal possession of 4 ivory tusks	trader	He is a middleman and does many activities and gets his commission.	Nigeria	locked while on trial
676	03/12/2020	Batouri, East	ZOLA BEINA Roland	illegal possession of 52 kg of pangolins scales	Retired from military	The biggest wildlife traffiker he is a retired military. He is at the center of a vast network of traffickers. He uses his military status to traffic wildlife products	None	locked while on trial
677	03/12/2020	Batouri, East	NSANGOU Aboubacar	illegal possession of 52 kg of pangolins scales	Driver	A member of a big network involved in pangolins scales. He is in charge to collect pangolin scales. Used cover as driver to sell pangolin	None	locked while on trial
678	03/12/2020	Batouri, East	NDAYA Jean Blaise	illegal possession of 52 kg of pangolins	Farmer		None	locked while on trial
679	10/12/2020	Kribi, South	BEMEHHE Clara Rosalie	illegal possession of 1 mandrill	Trader	She belongs to a network of primate selling, he has agents he sends to the villages to get animals while he maintains and create new markets,	None	locked while on trial

## Annex II - Semester in Pictures



***African grey parrots in tiny little cages and sold along the streets of Yaounde. They were seized in September with two traffickers arrested leading to the issuance of an arrest warrant and the arrest of a big time parrot trafficker who supplied the parrots to other traffickers and street vendors***



*Lion and leopard skin trafficker arrested and at the gendarmerie office shortly before the legal process to prosecute him began. It should be noted that experts say less than 300 lions are found in the wild in the country.*



*Woman arrested for trafficking in mandrills and baby mandrill rescued*



*One member of a gang of 6 arrested for ivory trafficking 4 ivory tusks in Bertoua, East, is taken to police station.*



*Arrested for pangolin scales trafficking in the East, one is an ex-soldier*



*He activated several poachers and traffickers in pangolin scales in the South of the country. He was arrested as he attempted to sell 23kg of pangolin scales in Ebolowa*

### **Annex III - Semester Media Links**

In July, the online news site Camer.be focused on the arrest of two human bones traffickers in Foubot with almost two entire human skeletons. The news site underlines the fact that it is the second time in just a month that human bones traffickers are arrested in Foubot.

<https://www.camer.be/mobile/81115/11:1/cameroun-two-entire-human-skeletons-seized-from-traffickers-cameroon.html>

In August, the online news site Africtelegaph.com published the arrest of two wildlife traffickers with a lion and a leopard skin in Yaounde. The news site says both lions and leopards are threatened and totally protected species.

<https://africtelegaph.com/cameroun-deux-personnes-arretees-pour-traffic-illegal-despeces-sauvages/>

In September, the online news site Alwihda.info highlights the court case against a man arrested with 23 kg of pangolin scales in Ebolowa. The article underlines the fact that pangolin scales trafficking still continues despite the Covid-19 pandemic.

[https://www.alwihdainfo.com/Cameroun-Ebolowa-Un-homme-arrete-avec-des-ecailles-de-pangolin\\_a93336.html](https://www.alwihdainfo.com/Cameroun-Ebolowa-Un-homme-arrete-avec-des-ecailles-de-pangolin_a93336.html)

In October, the online news site Camer.be focused on the arrest of the two with 3 African grey parrots and 6 Rose-ringed parakeets in Yaounde. They belong to a big parrot trafficking network in the country.

<https://www.camer.be/mobile/82568/11:1/cameroun-arrest-of-a-notorious-african-grey-parrots-trafficker-cameroon.html>

In November, the online news site Stopblablacam publishes the court hearing of three traffickers arrested with two ivory tusks in Douala. The news site underlines the need for an exemplary sanction to serve as deterrence.

<https://www.stopblablacam.com/societe/1911-5478-douala-trois-hommes-au-tribunal-pour-un-traffic-d-ivoire>

In December Africtelegaph focused on the arrest of six people in connection to ivory trafficking in the East Region. They were arrested in Bertoua and Yokadouma with four ivory tusks.

<https://africtelegaph.com/cameroun-arrestation-de-six-trafiquants-presumes-divoire/>