

# The Last Great Ape Organization – LAGA

## December 2010 Report



### Highlights

- **3 international wildlife traffickers arrested in Buea – South West Region with about 700 African Grey Parrots and corruption attempts observed.**
- **2 other arrest operations carried out against 2 dealers.**
- **A female wildlife dealer sentenced to 8 months imprisonment in Sangmelima – South.**
- **The first edition of the LAGA Replication Manual completed and printed.**
- **The 7<sup>th</sup> edition of Wildlife Justice on Replication and Regional Law Enforcement published.**
- **The year ended with excellent results from all the Departments.**

### General

This month was marked by 3 operations against 5 major wildlife traffickers with a network of international traffickers in African Grey parrots busted in Buea – South West Region.

A big network of international traffickers in live African Grey parrots was busted in Buea – South West Region. They normally send the parrots to Nigeria through Idenau - South West Region. **3 members of the network were arrested with about 700 live African Grey parrots. They attempted to bribe the Legion Commander in charge of Gendarmerie in Buea - South West Region with an amount of 5 Million Frs. CFA (about \$10 000).** It is suspected that they however succeeded to bribe some elements of the Gendarmerie Brigade in Buea, where they were kept after arrest. Investigations that started on the suspicion of corruption evolved into something bigger and **a court case has been established against the suspected gendarme officers.** One of the arrested traffickers was allowed to escape from the Gendarmerie Brigade thereby giving credence to the bribing suspicion. 1 Million Frs. CFA (about \$2000) cash was found on one of the arrested traffickers and 1.5 Million Frs.CFA (About \$3000) was allegedly found in the home of one of the gendarme suspects.

In 2 other operations, **a well known dealer in leopard skin with supplies from the Western Region of Cameroon was arrested with a large leopard skin while trying to illegally trade in it in Douala - Littoral.** He resisted arrest and fought with the arresting officers in the vehicle that was used in transporting him. And a regular dealer in elephant products who hides behind bike riding to illegally trade in wildlife products **was arrested in Muyuka – South West Region with 2 elephant tusks both weighing less than 5 kg.** He claims that he got the ivory from a supplier in Bamenda - North West Region. Investigations are still ongoing to get the said supplier. After the arrest, **he tried to negotiate and bribe the arresting officers with a sum of 20000 Frs. CFA (about \$400)** which LAGA fought against.

The Court of First instance of Sangmelima **sentenced a female wildlife dealer to 8 months imprisonment and to pay over \$ 1800** as fine and damages. Her accomplice was sentenced to pay about **\$700 as fine and damages.** They were arrested in Sangmelima for illegal trade of 1 leopard skin.

**The LAGA Manual was completed and printed.** This manual valorizes LAGA's work with all procedures and evaluation factors well spelled out from all Departments. The manual is intended to serve as a blueprint for not only the replication of LAGA activities, but for other organizations that intend to take up wildlife law enforcement and other conservation activities. Experience from Cameroon has proven that enforcing existing wildlife laws and providing measurable standards for the effectiveness of the enforcement, that is the number of major wildlife law violators receiving

and serving a deterring punishment, is possible. The LAGA is the first specialized Law Enforcement NGO in the sub-region. It focuses on threatened species, and mainly on the dealers, the primary generators of the illegal bush meat business, the ivory trade and the pet trade.

**The 7<sup>th</sup> edition of Wildlife Justice was published and this edition focuses on Replication and Regional Law Enforcement.** It looks at the impact of transnational wildlife trade and on ways governments should be working together to combat this trade. It extensively shows how government and NGOs can work in collaboration to apply wildlife law enforcement using the LAGA model that is actually spreading to other countries of the sub-region with the goal of creating a coordinated sub-regional response to trans-border wildlife crime. Wildlife Justice is a thematic journal that focuses on wildlife law enforcement and conservation issues.

**The year ended with excellent results - all the departments meeting up with the set targets** despite the financial problems that plagued LAGA during the course of the year.

### **Investigations**

- **21 investigation missions** of varying lengths were carried out in **7 Regions** of Cameroon- North West, South West, South, West, East, Center and Littoral.
- Investigations led to the arrest of 2 dealers in 2 different operations in Douala – Littoral and Muyuka – South West.
- Focused evaluation and new expectations and procedures continued this month with encouraging results in the form of produced operations.
- 1 Investigator was dismissed this month for giving conflicting reports and not being effective in giving accurate information and low return of produced operations. Generally there is zero tolerance in lying and any Investigator caught doing that is immediately dismissed despite any good results furnished. Active search for lies is always done and efforts made at uncovering it even with the best investigators.

### **Operations**

**3 operations** were carried out this month against **5 subjects**.

- **07/12/10** – A big network of international traffickers in live African Grey parrots was busted in Buea – South West Region. They normally send the parrots to Nigeria through Idenau - South West Region. **3 members of the network were arrested with about 700 live African Grey parrots. They attempted to bribe** the Legion Commander in charge of Gendarmerie in Buea - South West Region **with an amount of 5 Million Frs. CFA (about \$10 000)**. It is suspected that they however succeeded to bribe some elements of the Gendarmerie Brigade in Buea, where they were kept after arrest. Investigations are still ongoing **and a court case has been established against the suspected gendarme officers**. One of the arrested traffickers was allowed to escape from the Gendarmerie Brigade thereby giving credence to the bribing suspicion.
- **10/12/10** - A well known dealer in leopard skin with supplies from the Western Region of Cameroon was **arrested with a large leopard skin while trying to illegally trade in it in Douala - Littoral**. He resisted arrest and fought with the arresting officers in the vehicle that was used in transporting him.
- **15/12/10** - A regular dealer in elephant products who hides behind bike riding to illegally trade in wildlife products **was arrested in Muyuka – South West Region with 2 elephant tusks both weighing less than 5 kg**. He claims that he got the ivory from a supplier in Bamenda - North West Region. Investigations are still ongoing to get the said supplier. After the arrest, **he tried to negotiate and bribe the arresting officers with a sum of 200000 Frs. CFA (about \$400) which LAGA fought against**.

## Legal

- LAGA Legal Department carried out **23 missions** out of Yaounde - Centre Region: 4 in Douala (Littoral), 4 in Buea (South West), 1 in Muyuka (South West), 2 in Limbe (South West), 4 in Abong-Mbang (East), 2 in Sangmelima (South), 2 in Kribi (South), 1 in Dschang (West), 1 in Bafang (West), 1 in Foumban (West) and 1 in Bamenda (North West).
- There are **17 dealers behind bars during this month**: 2 in the East Region, 9 in the South West Region, 4 in South Region, 1 in the littoral Region and 1 in Centre Region.
- **29 cases** were followed up by the Legal Department this month.
- **25 cases** are scheduled and being trailed in the court this month.
  
- **Prosecutions**: 2 dealers were sentenced this month.
  - 21/12/2010: The Court of First instance of Sangmelima sentenced Bisso Régine to pay **\$700 as fine**, Ntiomkol Zang for **8 months of prison** and to pay jointly over **\$1.800 damages and court charges**. They were arrested in Sangmelima for illegal trade of 1 leopard skin.

## Media front

- **36 media pieces** were produced and pushed through to radio and written press including: 4 written press materials in English, 28 radio news flashes 12 in English and 16 in French, 1 news feature in English and 3 talk shows (2 in English and 1 in French).
- Guests include: Minister of Forestry and Wildlife, the Director of LAGA, South West Regional Delegate for Forestry and Wildlife and LAGA Legal Head of Department.
- Subjects focused on wildlife law enforcement including- 4 dealers arrested with about 700 parrots in Buea; 4 countries simultaneously clamped down on wildlife traffickers in the sub region, Gabon ivory arrest of 16 traffickers with 100kgs and leopard skin dealers sentenced in Sangmelima – South.
- 19 media pieces in English, 17 in French making a percentage of 52.8% in English and 47.2% in French.

## External Relations and Policy

- Head of legal department travelled to Nigeria in order to meet the authorities of National Environmental Standard Regulation and Enforcement Agency (NESREA) and discussed about the replication of wildlife law enforcement in Nigeria.
- Meeting between LAGA Director and the Vice President of the Appeal court, Head of Cameroon Association of Female Jurist (CAFEJ) on maintaining peace during the election, corruption and the judiciary system.
- LAGA Director held meeting EU intern working on the thesis; Forest Sector and the politics of Belly, to discuss LAGA's work, corruption in the forest sector, corruption in the NGO sector and possible solutions.
- “Médecins sans frontières” held meeting with LAGA Director on early alert system against violence.

## Management

- 1 Investigator was dismissed this month for giving conflicting reports and not being effective in giving accurate information and low return of produced operations. Generally there is zero tolerance in lying and any Investigator caught doing that is immediately dismissed despite any good results furnished. Active search for lies is always done and efforts made at uncovering it even with the best investigators.
- In the replication of LAGA activities, 2 trainees – Gervais from the AALF Project in Gabon and Leslie from the PALF Project in Congo – Brazzaville ended their training sessions with LAGA in Cameroon. Under the supervision of the Head of Legal Department, they were

trained on activities of each LAGA department: Investigations, Legal, Operations, Communication and Management.

- LAGA family members went for a 3 weeks holiday that started on the 17<sup>th</sup> of December 2010 with a special lunch and Christmas bonuses for good produced results despite the financial problems that plagued LAGA during the course of the year.

### **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>. This month, the following educational activities were carried out:

#### **-Pay it forward - Film**

In the film Young Trevor McKinney, troubled by his mother's alcoholism and fears of his abusive but absent father, is caught up by an intriguing assignment from his new social studies teacher, Mr. Simonet. The assignment: think of something to change the world and put it into action. Trevor conjures the notion of paying a favor not back, but forward--repaying good deeds not with payback, but with new good deeds done to three new people. Trevor's efforts to make good on his idea bring a revolution not only in the lives of himself, his mother and his physically and emotionally scarred teacher, but in those of an ever-widening circle of people completely unknown to him.

#### **Questions for debate:**

1. Explain the “pay it forward” idea; is it applicable to local realities?
2. Why were people not doing it before the child started the idea?
3. What were the people participating in “Pay it forward” stand to gain”?
4. Why did the teacher give the assignment of “changing the world” in the beginning of each year?

### **Finance**

#### **LAGA Expenditure by budget line for December 2010**

Amount CFA	Budget line		Amount USD
2,131,300	Investigations	22 inv, 7 Regions	\$4,306
790,300	Operations	3 Operations against 5 subjects	\$1,597
3,043,390	Legal	follow up 29 cases 17 locked subjects	\$6,148
2,057,185	Media	36 Media pieces	\$4,156
1,876,245	Policy & External Relations	Congo/Gabon/CAR/USA/UK	\$3,790
975,100	Management	Coordination	\$1,970
2,244,043	Office		\$4,533
13,117,563	<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE DECEMBER</b>		<b>\$26,500</b>

#### **LAGA Expenditure by donor for December 2010**

AmountCFA	Donor	Amount USD
3,974,490	FWS	\$8,029.3
1,801,245	FWS-Replication	\$3,638.9
4,069,978	BornFree Foundation	\$8,222.2
523,050	Rufford Foundation	\$1,056.7
2,748,800	Neu Foundation	\$5,553.1
13,117,563	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$26,500.1</b>

## THIS MONTH IN PICTURES



**A regular dealer in elephant products arrested in Muyuka – South West Region with 2 elephant tusks both weighing less than 5 kg. After the arrest, he tried to negotiate and bribe the arresting officers with a sum of 200000 Frs. CFA (About \$400).**



**A well known dealer arrested with a large leopard skin while trying to illegally trade in it in Douala - Littoral. He resisted arrest and fought with the arresting officers in the vehicle that was used in transporting him.**



**About 700 African Grey parrots seized when an international network of wildlife traffickers was busted in Buea – South West Region. 3 members of the network were arrested with about 1000 live African Grey parrots. Corruption was observed and a court case has been established against 3 gendarme officers suspected to have received bribes from the traffickers. One of the arrested traffickers was allowed to escape from the Gendarmerie Brigade thereby giving credence to the bribing suspicion.**

## **Links of the Month**

- Confronting Corruption – LAGA Director winning the battle against corruption in conservation by refusing to ignore it – Conservation Magazine.

Discussing the influence of corruption on conservation is a bit like bringing up religion or politics with a new neighbor. The subject remains somewhat taboo—possibly because some in conservation view it as a necessary evil while others say it is too big a beast to fight, much less clearly understand. While corruption affects all societies, the incidence is highest in developing nations—which, as fate would have it, contain much of the world’s biodiversity. Countries with unstable governments are most vulnerable, but the world’s richest, most stable countries are not immune.

<http://www.conservationmagazine.org/2010/12/confronting-corruption/>

- Central Africa: four-nation 'sting' operation busts wildlife smuggling ring – Conservationists hail breakthrough in regional co-operation to fight illegal traffic in ivory, parrots, skins and live animals – The Guardian.

Sting operations by wildlife activists in central Africa have broken up highly organised smuggling rings sending endangered species abroad, leading to the arrest of key dealers and the recovery of hundreds of kilos of ivory, turtle shells and animal skins.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2010/dec/12/africa-wildlife-ivory-smuggling>