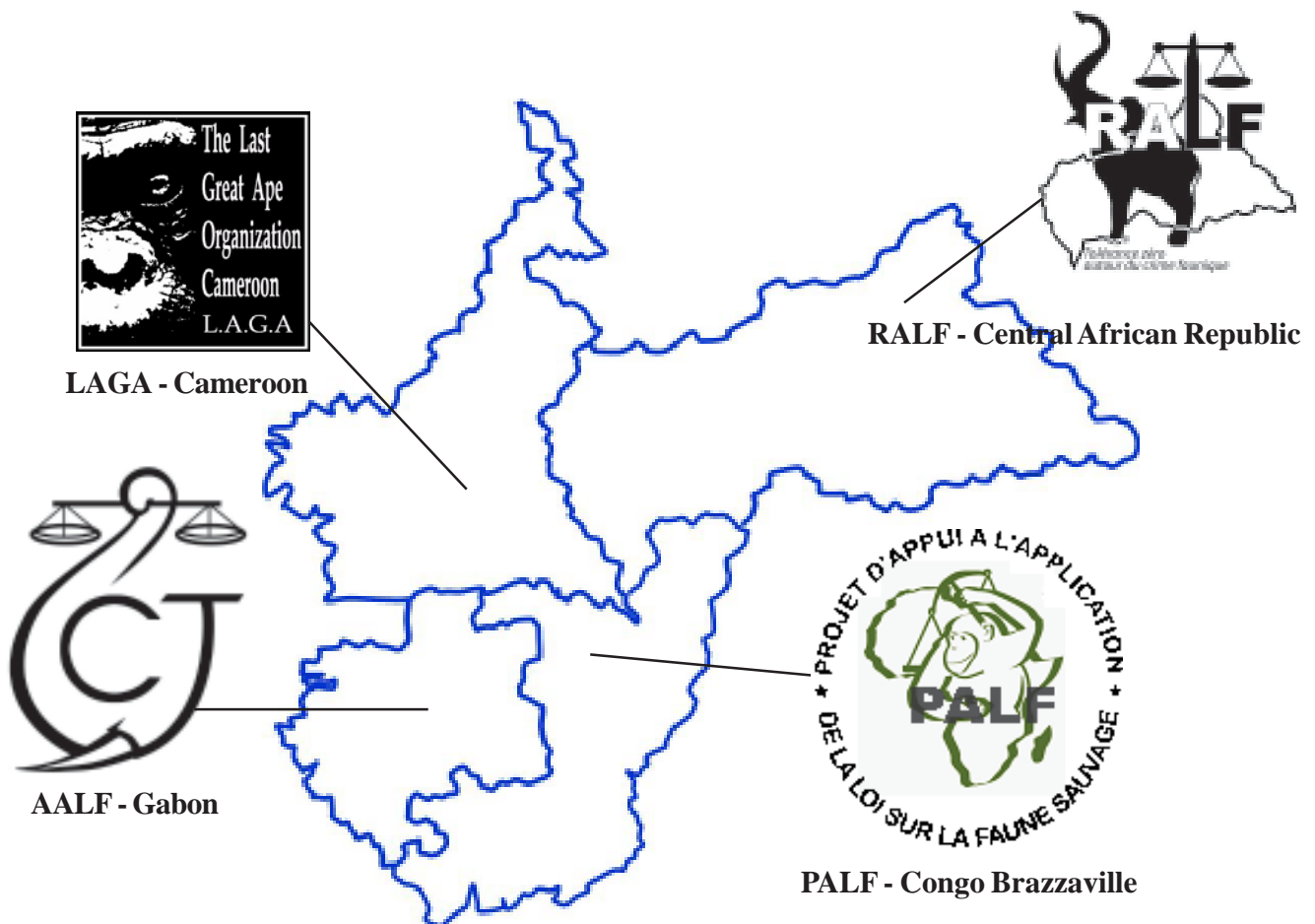


# Wildlife Justice

No.007 - December 2010 *A wildlife law enforcement journal*

## REPLICATION

### OF THE WILDLIFE LAW ENFORCEMENT MODEL



*«We are quite open and happy to know that we are at least inspiring other countries of the sub-region to do as we have done»*

*Prof Elvis Ngolle Ngolle, Cameroon's Minister of Forestry and Wildlife*

**«This is a great work that every institution in Africa has to adopt and follow if you are to succeed in wildlife law enforcement, because it detects corruption, to ensure that wildlife cases are handled successfully»,  
Barrister Vincent Opyene, Ugandan Government's Lawyer**



**PUBLISHER**  
OFIR DRORI

**EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**  
ERIC KABATAH

**EDITORIAL TEAM**  
ANNA EGBE  
SERGE BANYIMBE  
VINCENT GUDMIA MFONFU  
AKWEN CYNTHIA

**CONTRIBUTION**  
Advisor Congo: NAFTALI HONIG  
Advisor CAR: HUBERT YAMANDE  
Advisor Gabon: LUC MATHOT

**PRE-PRESS**  
ERIC KABATAH

**PRINTERS**  
MAMA PRESS  
PO BOX 1839, YAOUNDE  
TEL: (+237) 77 58 15 23/94 24 39 13

**DISTRIBUTION**  
MEDIA & EXTERNAL RELATIONS  
DEPARTMENT-LAGA  
TEL: (+237) 75523180, 77317571

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Tel: (+237) 75221166  
BP: 4916, Nlongkak, Yaounde  
Email: ofir@laga-enforcement.org  
Website: www.laga-enforcement.org

## **The Future for Wildlife Law Enforcement**

Years back when wildlife law enforcement in Central Africa was just a dream, the sceptics were many. «It will never work», they said, «corruption will always find its way to halt the application of the law somewhere along the procedure». With the first prosecutions, sceptics still insisted: «ok, but it will never work with the bigger criminals».

We proved them wrong getting white collar criminals behind bars. This game of challenging our work continued with us finding great satisfaction, time and time again, in proving sceptics wrong. But then we got a new argument – «even if law enforcement works in Cameroon, dealers will just shift to neighbouring countries». That time we couldn't prove them wrong. That time they were right.

The illegal wildlife trade is international, and is not restricted to one country's borders. In my recent missions in the Central African Republic and Gabon we recorded wildlife dealers talking about enforcement in Cameroon and about relocating their business. Some of the biggest ivory traffickers were traced to shift their base from country to country in the sub region. Illegal wildlife operations were observed to stretch between not only countries but sub regions.

From the inception of LAGA, it was created as a model to be replicated in other countries, as fighting the international wildlife trade entails several countries working together. This vision became a reality with the replication of the LAGA model in the Republic of Congo, in the Central African Republic, and later on, in Gabon. The four neighbouring countries started to form a block and worked together in regionally coordinated operations. With groundwork done in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Nigeria, we are hoping more countries will take a leap forward and join the regional enforcement initiative.

This issue of Wildlife Justice focuses on this aspect of replication and the opportunity of regional enforcement and international collaboration in fighting the international illegal trade. We bring together interviews and information from different African countries, and explore the achievements as well as the challenges of working together guided by a global vision.

Ofir Drori  
Director LAGA

## Cameroon's Leadership Role in Wildlife Law Enforcement in Africa

Eric Kaba Tah

For a country that is well known for some of the wrong reasons; getting international acclaim for its effective wildlife law enforcement process is not only a welcome relief but a huge tribute to the authorities for making this happen. Despite a 1994 wildlife law that came into force with its decree of application signed by the Prime Minister in January 1995, it was not until 2003 that the country started experiencing effective wildlife law enforcement followed by the first arrests and prosecutions. Zero enforcement, was a situation Cameroon shared with countries in the West and Central African sub-regions.

What therefore must have moved Cameroon from such a poor track record in enforcing its own wildlife laws to a leading position in the African continent within such a short time? Amidst the non enforcement of the law, the period covering 1994 to 2003 passed with not much result in wildlife protection. Much of the time was spent in conference rooms and organising seminars. There was much talking with little effort made in actually enforcing the law. The country worked as though no laws existed in the wildlife sector. There were no shortage of wildlife offenders, but they went scout free from their offences. But in 2003 something changed. The Ministry in charge of wildlife at the time, the Ministry

of Environment and Forestry (MINEF) made a courageous decision to go ahead with a collaborative and innovative idea put to the table by LAGA. The idea was to create a successful model of government – NGO collaboration in the domain of wildlife law enforcement, seeking to provide the missing ingredient in conservation formulas in Africa south of the Sahara – the deterrent factor, which could only be created by truly applying the law. So, the wildlife law enforcement model came into existence. It focuses on threatened species, and mainly on the dealers, the primary generators of the illegal protected species business.

### Efforts

Seven years down the road and it is a very different story. Cameroon is boasting hundreds of arrests and prosecutions and though it has been a long and tough journey, Cameroon's

wildlife officials have stuck to the task. The Ministry in charge of wildlife and its Minister have left no stone unturned to ruthlessly chase down wildlife traffickers who want to deplete the country's wildlife resources. The present Minister of Forestry and Wildlife, Professor Elvis Ngolle Ngolle, has been an apostle of the crusade against illegal wildlife dealers and he warns that «We would not allow our wildlife... to be in a state of depletion. Those who want to deplete our wildlife species cannot succeed because we have all the control mechanisms in place to regulate the exploitation of wildlife».

A crop of highly experienced and well organised officials, with the technical support of LAGA, has emerged and they are now pursuing wildlife criminals as never before. They may be called experts or specialists in their own right. Their manner of pursuit of criminals has been revised and perfected making it worthy of emulation in the continent. 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.

Seven years down the road and it is a very different story. Cameroon is boasting hundreds of arrests and prosecutions and it has been a long and tough journey though, but Cameroon's wildlife officials have stuck to the task.

No doubt many from far and near are recognising Cameroon's leadership status and are coming calling. Bush-free Eastern Africa Network Programme is based in Uganda and gives wildlife law enforcement assistance to some countries in the East African region and it's Coordinator, Barrister Vincent Opyene, a Ugandan government's lawyer just completed a working visit to LAGA. He says «I think this is one thing that we need to do for the rest of East Africa countries because enforcing laws amidst corruption wouldn't work. You need to ensure that the laws you are enforcing are straight and that nobody is practising corruption behind your back». This is auguring well for Cameroon that nevertheless should wipe out some vestiges of old behaviours among others reluctance by some wildlife officials to carry out their law enforcement functions, bureaucratic bottlenecks, lack of procedural commitment by some of these officials and corruption.

By and large, the wildlife enforcement process is at such a good level that it is actually spreading to some other countries also. Not only are some replicating the experience as it is the case with Central African countries but others are inviting experts from LAGA to share experiences to improve on their own enforcement processes. LAGA has been invited to carry out, through its legal department head, many presentations in various Interpol meetings held in countries as far and wide as Brazil, Cote d'Ivoire and France.

The wildlife law enforcement process in Cameroon has equally embraced new and emerging crimes which include internet scam and wildlife crime perpetuated at the level of the internet. The methods of combating and eradicating this crime is utterly new and ground breaking because as you may know, such crimes are very difficult to track because they are committed through the internet with little or no physical contact between the criminal and his victim. Cameroon's wildlife law enforcement officials have been busy tracking down, arresting and prosecuting internet wildlife criminals, thus setting the stage for future virtual wildlife crime intelligence and subsequent prosecution.

The courage to take necessary and important decisions and the political will to actually implement the decision has proven that it is possible to turn things around. At the moment, many are looking forward to replicate and gain experience on wildlife law enforcement from a country that had never prosecuted a wildlife dealer just a couple of years back. African countries are proving today that it is not always the wars, poverty and corruption that is coming out of Africa and that these countries do indeed have a thing or two that they can actually do to help each other. Today, it is Cameroon's experience in wildlife law enforcement that is being replicated around the sub-region – who knows, tomorrow it may be Gabon, Congo or any other country setting models on how to combat child trafficking, money laundering etc.

However, for wildlife law enforcement to land a knockout blow to the illegal trade in protected wildlife species both at the national and international level, it must be accompanied by efforts on the part of government to equally bring down corruption. The simple reason for this condition is that the two, illegal wildlife trade and corruption go together; complementing each other.

## «Cameroon's wildlife law serves as an example for other countries»

**Professor Elvis Ngolle Ngolle – Cameroon's Minister of Forestry and Wildlife.**

**E**nvironmental criminal activities including illegal trade in protected wildlife species is a form of serious organised crime. Controlled by powerful individuals through established criminal networks, such sophisticated criminal activity requires an equally sophisticated enforcement response. This explains why Governments of countries in Africa as a whole are clamouring for the replication of Cameroon's widely acclaimed law enforcement pilot programme in their own countries.



*His Excellency Professor Elvis Ngolle Ngolle  
Cameroon's Minister of Forestry and Wildlife*

To Cameroon's Minister of Forestry and Wildlife, Professor Elvis Ngolle Ngolle, the rush for the replication of Cameroon's wildlife law enforcement experience in these countries is due to the fact that Cameroon has distinguished itself as a leader in wildlife law enforcement in the Central African sub-region.

*You say Cameroon has distinguished itself as a leader in wildlife law enforcement in Central Africa, reason why countries in the sub-region are rushing for the replication of the wildlife law experience?*

Yes, Cameroon has distinguished itself as a leader in Central African sub-region in wildlife policy reform. Our wildlife law is a reference law which is being emulated by other countries of the sub-region.

And we are quite open and happy to know that we are at least inspiring other countries of the sub-region to do as we have done. In fact, we would like to know that the operational framework for control which we have been able to put together in Cameroon by working with non-government organisations, such as LAGA

*“We are quite open and happy to know that we are at least inspiring other countries of the sub-region to do as we have done”*

and the Forces of Law and Order is already being emulated in other countries, and we are quite happy to know that our partners like LAGA go to Chad, Congo and so on to do work there which we have become used to in Cameroon and they don't quarrel with that and these countries are happy to adopt our tactics and methods. I think that is quite good.

*How instrumental is COMIFAC to the replication process?*

You know that Cameroon is the initiator and full member of the Central African Forest Commission (COMIFAC). That is a commission which includes all countries in the Central African Sub-region which are found in the Congo Basin

Forest zone, COMIFAC is headquartered in Yaounde – the Capital of Cameroon. Being the major initiator, Cameroon takes the work of COMIFAC very seriously. And COMIFAC in its functioning and organisation has elaborated 10 principles which are referred to as the Convergence Plan which enables all the countries which are members to align their policies in a very common manner so that the policies look alike, so that there is no centralisation.

After all, we are all managing the same ecosystem and we are all contributing to managing our forest and wildlife not only at the bilateral level. We are also working in other countries in our sub-region in the wildlife sector.

At the multilateral level we are also working within the framework of COMIFAC to make sure that we achieve common goals and common purposes in the forest and wildlife sector.



## Countries Clamour for Replication of Cameroon's Wildlife Law Enforcement Model



Anna Egbe

The Cameroon's pilot project on effective wildlife law enforcement was launched in 2003. It aims at creating a successful model that provides the missing ingredient in the wildlife conservation formula; seeks at identifying, arresting and bringing to justice high profile traffickers in endangered wildlife species amidst wide media publicity in order to create deterrence to wildlife crime.

The Cameroon government collaboration with LAGA – an international non-governmental organisation specialised in wildlife law enforcement, has yielded massive results. That is from zero prosecutions before the project began to a prosecution per week – a stable track record that was kept for the past 6 years. This success story and acclamation both nationally and internationally has led to requests from other countries for the replication of the same model. LAGA is thus responsible for the replication of Cameroon wildlife law enforcement model to other countries at the request of the government of these countries.

In the process of replication, LAGA decided not to open LAGA branches in the various countries but rather assist local NGOs in setting in-country projects, developing local capacity with support from the LAGA regional headquarters in Cameroon.

In Congo, the replication of LAGA's model is carried out by the wildlife law enforcement support project known by its French acronym PALF. It works with Aspinall Foundation, a British-based organisation and assist the Congolese government in the enforcement of its wildlife law. It is worth underscoring here that Congo was the very first country to request for Cameroon's model to be replicated in the wildlife sector of its country.

In the Central African Republic (CAR), the replication project is carried out by World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF). WWF assists the C.A.R government in enforcing its wildlife law via a project known as the reinforcement of the application of the wildlife law better known by its French acronym, RALF.

In Gabon, Conservation Justice with the same spirit from Congo – Brazzaville, where the replication started, is assisting the Gabonese government to put in place an effective wildlife law enforcement in that country through the support project for wildlife law enforcement known by its French acronym, AALF.

The various projects have been receiving diverse support from the regional headquarters in all the departments of the model. The investigation departments receive constant advice on investigation techniques and challenges with investigators on the field getting constant orientation and support from regional

headquarters. This enables the swift and rich transfer of experience. There is a programme in the pipeline for the exchange of investigators among the projects.

The legal department at regional headquarters has been busy training jurists from the projects and providing advice on tactics, strategies and methods at every step of the legal proceedings involved in bringing to justice wildlife criminals. It should be noted that the support given to the various projects by regional headquarters is real time.

The media department provides technical support and training on issues of archiving of published newspaper articles, broadcast material over the radio or television and photos of operations, website and youtube publishing, while ensuring an appropriate follow-up for the smooth running of media activities.

*"It makes us much more responsible, committed and dedicated, and we believe that we shall not relent, because relenting is tantamount to betrayal of trust"*

Elvis Ngolle Ngolle  
Forestry and Wildlife Minister

Concerning follow-up, the management department is even more rigorous as members at the regional office, work continuously on book-keeping and financial records, cross-checking, supervising and controlling financial records of the various projects. The various projects received management support during their initial setup as some LAGA members travelled to these countries to help start these projects.

Cameroon's unique model has attracted interest from other parts of Africa, like Ugandan Government's lawyer, Barrister Opyene Vincent, coordinator of the of Bushmeat-free Eastern Africa Network who came to learn how to use the model in East Africa. Bush meat Free Eastern Africa Network is a cooperative agreement between the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and Wildlife Conservation Society. Bush meat Free Eastern Africa Network gives law enforcement support to law enforcement agencies in 4 countries in East Africa (Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania and Southern Sudan).

It is not just replication alone, as some other aspects of Cameroon wildlife law enforcement experience is being requested by some other countries as well. The Wildlife Action Group (WAG) in Malawi needed some advice on effective prosecution of law offenders and in Zambia, the South Luangwa Conservation Society, an NGO that is in charge of wildlife protection in South Luangwa National Park and

the neighboring Game Management Area also sought for the same advice. Reason why the Director of LAGA was invited and visited the two countries for working sessions. It was noticed that prosecutions scarcely dealt with big dealers who after their arrests usually found themselves out, avoiding prosecution. Using LAGA's experience, some recommendations were made and discussions were held with the judiciary, police, and other government officials. In both countries, it was not the replication of the Cameroon government-NGO project as a whole but drawing from the rich experiences, some aspects which are of specific use to these particular instances.

The future holds even much more as Chad, Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of Congo are in the pipeline for similar replication activities. An official from SOS Elephant, Chad, the project that is planning to host the replication in Chad is expected in the country shortly. She will hold working sessions with the LAGA team to better understand how the project is run. Contacts for the replication in Nigeria is already in an advanced stage as the Head of the LAGA's Legal Department visited the country and held talks with wildlife law enforcement officials on the feasibility and the replication of the project. Contacts and work on the replication of the Project in the Democratic Republic of Congo is well underway. The Director of LAGA has visited the country several times to this effect.

Cameroon has proven the idea behind replication and is moving it forward to countries in the sub-region. *"It makes us much responsible, committed and dedicated, and we believe that we shall not relent, because relenting is tantamount to betrayal of trust"* says the Minister of Forestry and Wildlife, Elvis Ngolle Ngolle.

The Director of LAGA, Ofir Drori, points out that *"when we are dealing with organized crimes as is the case with protected wildlife species, it is necessary to work the same way that the criminals are working, which is international"*.

The objective of replication in the sub region is to crackdown on international crime in the wildlife sector as stated by Ofir Drori, the Director of the LAGA, *"...we need to start working together. So the vision is that we have seven countries in Central Africa following the same model and we will have the ability to start exercising regional law enforcement. We will have the ability for countries to start collaborating with each other. And if a criminal is moving let's say from Cameroon to Nigeria he will still be caught and prosecuted."*

## Congo and the PALF Project

Eric Kaba Tah



In September 2008, two LAGA members travelled to Congo to help kick-start the first ever replication and within a short period of time it started spreading to other Central African countries and it is now being recognised by top world experts on wildlife law enforcement as the way forward. It was the first time ever the experience had to be replicated and it needed an experienced LAGA staff. Josias Sipehou from the legal department of LAGA, conducted the experience and the Congolese wildlife authorities collaborated immensely with the process.

The Wildlife Law Enforcement Support Project (PALF project) known in French as *Projet d'appui à l'application de la loi sur la faune sauvage* was hosted by the Aspinall Foundation ran by Luc Mathot, «we officially started in Congo two years ago, even before then we had some activities. At that moment, I was the representative of the Aspinall Foundation and I coordinated another project called *Gorilla Protection Project*. We were confronted with the problem of no application of the wildlife law». PALF worked in close collaboration with the Ministry Sustainable Development, of Forestry Economy and Environment to lay the foundation for its implementation and in view of replicating the Cameroon model. PALF equally has as objective the fight against corruption in the wildlife sector and beyond because this constitutes the main handicap for the effective application of wildlife law in the Republic of Congo.

Amid a period of no prosecution and enforcement in Congo, the LAGA/PALF partnership set out to do its work building the project from scratch. The project was set on the same basis and framework as the one operating in Cameroon; the LAGA – Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife (MINFOP) pilot project. It was all about replicating the model tried and tested at regional headquarters in Cameroon. «We use the same method; we have four departments: investigation, legal, media and arrests which are carried out by the Congolese gendarmerie. This is done, in collaboration with the Ministry of Sustainable Development, Forest Economy and Environment. We use the same method, but adapt for small differences Congo and Cameroon are not all the same at the level of institutions and ministries; you have structures which are a little bit different but generally it is the same method», says Luc Mathot .

Today, the project is building on its first steps, gaining steam and experience, counting numerous operations including arrests, prosecutions and jail terms meted out already. Naftali Honig now coordinates the project and he says, «Basically we are working with the Congolese Government, particularly with the Ministry of Sustainable Development, Forest Economy and Environment. That means that we are working with agents whose work is similar to that of The Last Great Ape Organisation (LAGA) in Cameroon. We are in the process of the replication of Cameroon's model of wildlife law enforcement with them, to basically increase the efficacy of wildlife law enforcement in Congo. PALF has also expanded to work more and more in other parts of Congo. At first, we started our



### Naftali Honig PALF Coordinator

work in Brazzaville, and then we moved out to Pointe Noire after having had about 20 cases of wildlife traffickers arrested in Brazzaville».

But the man who launched the project in Congo Luc Mathot says «We have had cases of big traffickers and this is where it becomes more difficult. We have been a little bit disappointed by these sentences, but we continue, we are doing

some work at the level of the courts to improve on this.».

The regional headquarters is stepping up support to the various projects in the sub-region. It provides diverse technical assistance to this project. The legal department at regional headquarters works with the project during legal proceedings, giving advice and direction in the prosecution and follow-up of particular cases while the media department is helping the project in organising and setting up its media archive system. The other departments, especially the investigation department at regional headquarters, equally give technical support to this project.

A jurist from the PALF recently had a month-long training at the regional headquarters. While in LAGA, she was very involved in the work of the legal department and other departments during her stay in the country. She worked on the legal proceeding that is carried out during before and after arrest of wildlife law offenders, the follow-up of the files right up to court rooms and equally followed court proceedings and hearings, while learning offence statement writing skills and also archiving within the legal department as well. Her mission paves the way forward for the PALF project, which needs to step up its professionalism so as to meet higher targets and objectives. The future of wildlife law enforcement in Congo now rests squarely on the shoulders of PALF and on its ability to make change in the way the many relevant branches of the Congolese government apply their wildlife law. It should not be forgotten that PALF is the first in the line of the replication history.

### Wildlife Law Enforcement Operations in Congo-Brazzaville

Two weeks after the onset of the project, a Senegalese-born trafficker was nabbed with 43 pieces of ivory. Two weeks later, 5 traffickers were arrested with 4 leopard skins, 2 gorilla hands and a host of other products of primate species. Within the 2 years, 35 traffickers have been arrested and the longest sentence has been 15 months imprisonment which is actually being served by some traffickers and some 12-month sentences and this include the arrest of three ivory traffickers in October 2009. They crossed over from Congo Kinshasa and were immediately arrested with some 30 kg of ivory sculptures and were later tried and convicted within a one month period in what was described as a speedy rendering of justice.

# The Central African Republic and the RALF Project

Serge Banyimbe



We are living at a historic moment – a time in which the world’s wildlife diversity is being rapidly destroyed through illegal wildlife trade. It is in the wake of this destruction of our species that the pilot programme on effective wildlife law enforcement was launched in Cameroon in 2003 to assist the government effectively enforce her wildlife law by bringing offenders to justice.

The second country to request for the replication process was the Central African Republic, whose wildlife law is being enforced with the technical support of the World Wide Fund for Nature – Central African Regional Programme Office (WWF – CARPO). As in the other countries of the sub-region, prosecuting wildlife dealers for their crimes was lacking and David Greer, the Coordinator of the African Great Ape Programme WWF – CARPO says, « *While we had an effective law enforcement team on the ground, one of the things that we discovered was that most of the arrests that were occurring in the field would arrive the tribunal system only to disappear through corruption*». This was the reason behind the coming to being of the project known by its French acronym RALF (Reinforcement de l’application de la loi faunique) which was launched in 2009 and has been working very hard to make sure that traffickers are brought to court.

On the 20<sup>th</sup> of September 2009, full with the Congo experience, Josias Sipehouo travelled to the Central African Republic to help kick-start the RALF project. The Central African Republic is in the heart of the sub-region and holds a very strategic position in the fight against wildlife crime. As was the case in the other countries of the sub-region wildlife law enforcement was equally absent with zero prosecution being the norm. The laws were there but its application was never carried out.

In a collaborative approach with the Ministry of Forestry, Hunting and Fishing and the RALF project, the first arrests were made barely two weeks after the project started work. Emphasis for this project now is on increasing the number of arrests and prosecution of wildlife traffickers and to work in a coordinated and concerted way in sub-regional wildlife crime crackdown operations. It is on this basis and within the framework of the support regional headquarters is giving to the various projects that Hubert Yamande Koualayom who works with RALF recently spent 3 weeks in Yaounde to improve



*Josias Sipehouo and Wildlife Law Enforcement Officials in the Central African Republic*

on his wildlife law enforcement skills and share with LAGA officials some ideas on how to move a step up in the wildlife law enforcement process in the Central African Republic. He now emphasises the objective of his visit, « *My visit had as objective to build my capacity to the benefit of the RALF project that we have in the Central African Republic*».

Local capacity building is a very important aspect in the replication process as this project has been receiving constant attention from the various departments based in regional headquarters. Regional headquarters has been active giving advice on investigation methods and the investigation department provides real time

directions and support to RALF investigators on the field, helping them overcome delicate and difficult situations. The manual with precise information on investigation procedures, behavioural patterns of investigators in front of situations and advice has been handed to this project. Another example of such collaboration came at the end of last year, when the legal department at regional headquarters worked in a collaborative approach with the project and the state counsel on the prosecution of traffickers involved in an ivory and skins case. Many other activities involving the regional headquarters and RALF are ongoing. The project is hosted by WWF Central African Republic.

### *Wildlife Law Enforcement Operations in CAR*

On October 2, 2009, an ivory trafficker who had been in the business for over 21 years was arrested in Bangui. He had been carrying out the illegal trade for that long without any arrest and he equally had international connections with Turkey and Italy. That was not all, on the same day; a second wildlife trafficker was apprehended, this time a lady with dual French and Central African nationalities, in possession of a huge consignment of ivory products and ivory tusks weighing more than 100 kg. A third operation ended with the arrest of a third dealer who had parts of protected wildlife species. But the biggest operation so far for this project took place in November 2010 and resulted in the arrest of 2 wildlife traffickers with 5 leopard skins, 2 lion skins and some ivory tusks. They were given the maximum punishment of 1 year in prison and 2 million francs fine.



## Gabon and the AALF Project



Anna Egbe



Luc Mathot, AALF Coordinator

Given the repeated failures of the usual strategies for conservation in Central Africa and elsewhere in the world, additional actions and new directions must be employed if any progress in this domain is to be made. The greatest difficulty encountered by organizations for the protection of nature in developing countries is the lack of enforcement by wildlife authorities.

In November 2011, as part of the LAGA replication and the vision of regional enforcement, the Director of LAGA travelled for a one-week mission to assist Luc Mathot, head of Conservation Justice in kick-starting wildlife law enforcement in Gabon. Conservation Justice was created by Luc Mathot, an activist who launched the PALF project in the Republic of Congo with the support of LAGA and he recommends sub-regional regional enforcement in tracking down wildlife criminals, «*We should therefore work a lot in all of these countries because if we work only in Cameroon, there will always be traffickers to and fro Gabon and vice versa. So it is necessary that it is a sub-regional work and we are going to do everything to ensure that at the level of Gabon they can equally benefit from the exchanges with LAGA and obtain the same exceptional results that have been obtained in Cameroon.*

The objective is to establish the Cameroon model in the sub-region by the creation of independent bodies headed by motivated and competent people. Accompanying measures are also conducted through awareness and support of any potential partner to participate in the enforcement of wildlife; this is how Conservation Justice came into existence.

The youngest of all the projects, the AALF (Appui à l'application de la loi sur la faune) project is hosted by Conservation Justice that is supported by WWF, WCS and Brainforest. Luc Mathot says «*For a start, it takes a little bit of time, to make it out with the authorities and how it will function with NGOs.*». Emphasising the replication aspects of the project he observes «*Again we are going to once more follow the same method we have here in Cameroon and equally in Congo. We will work on existing experience.*

A Jurist from the AALF Project in Gabon traveled to Cameroon for a training session. He was trained on activities of each LAGA department: Investigations, Legal, Operations, Communication and Management. He attended court hearings and participated in an operation assisting in the arrest of an ivory dealer in Muyuka – South West Region. The regional headquarters is looking forward to continuously give assistance to the youngest of the replication projects. The legal department at regional headquarters has been particularly active giving constant real time advice on tactics and strategies in the follow-up of prosecution and court cases. There has been several instances of legal advice on particularly difficult situations which has seen positive outcomes. Case analysis and decision making has also been part of the support given to this project from regional headquarters. Management at regional headquarters is collaborating positively in the day to day running of activities linked to financial and personnel

management, while the media department works on exchange of information and database of photos and documents to facilitate work.

Young as it is, this project has just pulled off one of the most spectacular arrests in the sub-region with 3 police raids which saw 16 traffickers of diverse nationalities arrested with over 100 kg of ivory seized. The operations formed part of a larger crackdown on wildlife criminals in the sub-region. As with other countries of the sub-region with similar laws, the Gabonese law on wildlife according to its articles 274 and 275 punishes anybody who contravenes the law with fines of up to 10 million CFA francs and imprisonment terms of up to 1 year. These traffickers are going to taste what it means breaking wildlife

***The Coordinator of the African Great Ape Programme of WWF – CARPO, David Greer, talked to Wildlife Justice about the replication of Cameroon's wildlife law enforcement process in the Central African Republic.***

Excerpt:

***How did you gain your experience in wildlife law enforcement?***

I worked in Central African Republic for almost 9 years and now I am working with World Wide Fund for Nature – Central African Regional Programme Office here in Yaounde. While working in Central African Republic, I spent half of my time working on wildlife law enforcement in a protected area complex. While we had an effective law enforcement team on the ground, one of the things that we discovered was that most of the arrests that were occurring in the field would arrive the tribunal system only to disappear through corruption. And so we wanted to try and have a better hand on this, and knowing what LAGA has done in Cameroon, we thought that we could replicate their approach by joining them in the top down and bottom up strategies with the police as well and doing direct protection efforts in the field.

And so with that in mind, we thought that we had a lot to learn from the LAGA model here in Cameroon. So we started late in 2009 by setting up RALF in the Central African Republic – something similar to the LAGA – Cameroon government approach to wildlife law enforcement.

So what we have done is spread RALF entity under the WWF umbrella and so WWF is

### ***Wildlife Law Enforcement Operations in Gabon***

Within the framework of the AALF project, following information obtained and confirmed, implicating ivory sculptors and the trafficking of raw ivory, an operation targeting the crafts market was carried out in November, 2010 in Libreville. Twelve sculptors were arrested in an ivory workshop and a total of over 105 kg of sculpted ivory was confiscated. The collaboration between the Contre-Ingérences and the MINEF for the execution of this operation was ideal. The former demonstrated a high level of professionalism and the latter showed a strong determination to learn more about such sting operations



## Replication

obliging itself to be much more involved in judiciary, in addition to wildlife law enforcement efforts in the field. Now, WWF is trying to tackle the problem from both ends, that is, the judiciary and field enforcement efforts. And so this RALF project has put us in contact with the Ministry of Justice, Interior, as well as, the law enforcement Ministry.

Now we are able to make this link with high level trafficking, that is the LAGA model in Bangui which is quite young. We are still working primarily in Bangui, the capital of Central African Republic, but we will be able to draw up the rest of the documents from the field, as well and put them together and even make a better connection

where wildlife trafficking is emerging from and where this is eventually getting to.

With this in mind, this RALF new project that we have got in the Central African Republic will be hugely important for us in future. In fact, it has already given us a good result. We have had, since we started RALF, a LAGA legal expert to the project to let us get the project on its feet in Bangui.

***How can training in wildlife law enforcement be carried out to ensure that when LAGA agents are away the endeavour is sustained?***

A lot of training is required because it is not only a new programme but also a new project in Central

African Republic. So a lot of it will be trial and error by dedicated, motivated and committed individuals that we have already located and with the leadership of LAGA experts, we will continue to locate more of these in Central African Republic to participate in this project. Meanwhile, folks like myself who have experience in wildlife law enforcement and individuals from LAGA will continue to support the Project as long as they can provide periodic audits to ensure that it is functional and sticking to its philosophy of being efficient and effective in the judiciary aspects.

## Southern Africa: Learning from Cameroon's Experience

Vincent Gudmia Mfonfu

The Cameroon experience in wildlife law enforcement is attracting a lot of attention from different countries across Africa, not just immediate neighbours in Central Africa but also in countries as far as Southern Africa, like Zambia and Malawi where conservationists, even at the local levels, want to know more about how they can increase collaboration with the government of Cameroon that has a rich experience in wildlife law enforcement.

Consequently, Zambia and Malawi with the financial support of the World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA) invited LAGA, to come and examine the kinds of problems and challenges they are facing in enforcing the wildlife law and to assist, using the unique experience of Cameroon, in finding solutions.

While in the two countries, LAGA Director met with non-governmental organisations, the judiciary, police officials and government authorities. In Malawi, he met with the Wildlife Action Group (WAG) and where for instance two reserves, (Thuma Forest Reserve and Dedza-Salima Reserve) had prosecution problems. The Coordinator WAG Malawi, Lynn Clifford says «what LAGA is doing in Central Africa caught our attention, because here in Malawi we are dealing with similar problems - The big poachers keep on being released. LAGA's approach of wildlife protection beyond just anti-poaching - fighting corruption and following up court cases - was an experience we wanted to learn from. Although Malawi is far off from Cameroon, Congo, CAR or Gabon - many of the lessons from LAGA's work seem to be relevant here, and the question is how to integrate these lessons into a field project protecting a National Park».

The project had recently changed management and tried to restart wildlife law enforcement. According to LAGA Director, it would appear the old difficulties that had been experienced in Cameroon in the past are happening there too. That is, a lot of issues on coordination and some on corruption in the wildlife sector. They all wanted to know how they could control this in a better way and how they could collaborate better on projects that could follow up the wildlife cases from start to finish and actually tackle all different kinds of obstacles, fight corruption and get better application of the wildlife law and have bigger traffickers behind bars.

In Zambia, South Luangwa Conservation Society is an NGO that is in charge of wildlife protection in South Luangwa National Park and the neighboring Game Management Area. And just like in Malawi, with similar difficulties, wildlife law offenders are actually obtaining intelligence from authorities supposed to enforce laws. One

incriminating anyone caught in possession of snares. They all sought to know how effective law enforcement could be stepped up.

### Recommendations

The same problems of insufficient prosecutions were discussed with both government authorities and non-governmental organisations. It was gathered that both small and big wildlife traffickers were being arrested but the big ones were always finding their way out, avoiding the legal procedures.

*“Although Malawi is far off from Cameroon, Congo, CAR or Gabon - many of the lessons from LAGA's work seem to be relevant here” Lynn Clifford*

The authorities and NGOs lack communication flow between them, that is, communication amongst those involved, including the judiciary, the police and other local authorities. «The major point was to show them that they can have better collaboration and a more transparent system in which they see how wildlife cases are moving from start to finish with a lot of supervision so that after that they will stop accusing one another» says Ofir Drori, the Director of LAGA. In this way, Ofir explains, «they will start enjoying good results with big dealers behind bars».

### Scouts

In Southern Africa, most conservation efforts until now are concentrated on anti-poaching around protected areas or national parks. In these protected areas a lot of emphasis are placed on eco-guards or scouts who are totally oblivious to the problems that happen outside protected areas. The result is that most big wildlife traffickers hide in the towns around and feel protected because most of conservation energy are spent within national parks.



***Gorilla Head trafficker arrested in the East Region of Cameroon***

can easily scent corruption here as it is the big problem with enforcement in this part of Africa as well. The ivory trade is booming here and there is a big problem with snares despite a law

## Relevance of the Model in East Africa

*«This is a great work that every institution in Africa has to adopt and follow if you are to succeed in wildlife law enforcement, because it detects corruption, to ensure that wildlife cases are handled successfully»*

**Vincent Opyene, Coordinator, Bushmeat-free Eastern Africa Network Programme and wildlife lawyer representing Ugandan government**

The Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) has noted that there is a wide recognition amongst Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) that efforts on effective enforcement of wildlife law are lacking and that the mechanisms to Parties are not being fully utilised. In order to tackle wildlife crime effectively, it becomes imperative for Parties to make use of all available mechanisms and to implement strategies of proactive, coordinated and intelligence-led wildlife law enforcement through specialised units.

Cameroon has a unique model in wildlife law enforcement and has drawn interests from far and near. Barrister Vincent Opyene is Uganda Government's lawyer and also coordinator of Bushmeat-free African Network (BEAN). BEAN is a cooperative agreement between the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and Wildlife Conservation Society, and assists wildlife law enforcement agencies in 4 East African countries including Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania and Southern Sudan in matters of wildlife law enforcement. Barrister Opyene was in Cameroon towards the end of 2010 on a working mission to learn from the Cameroon experience on the pilot project on effective wildlife law enforcement.

At the end of the mission, the Coordinator of the Programme, Barrister Vincent Opyene talked to Vincent Gudmia Mfonfu, about the purpose of his mission and what he gained from it.

Excerpts:

**What is the Bushmeat Free Eastern Africa Network Programme and what is its purpose?**

It is a cooperative agreement between the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS). We have a number of activities that we do with governments of Eastern Africa. And when we talk of the Bushmeat-free Eastern Africa Network (BEAN) we talk of Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania and Southern Sudan. And with these 4 countries, I have mentioned, we give wildlife law enforcement support to law enforcement agencies in these countries.

We also help them in doing investigations. We are also involved in research and do publications in which we share with wildlife investigators in the 4 countries.



*Barrister Vincent Opyene*

**What was your mission to Cameroon?**

My mission to Cameroon was to team and share experiences with wildlife law enforcement agents because one area in which I am directly involved is an improvement of the wildlife law enforcement in Eastern Africa. I am doing this at the level of training for magistrates, prosecutors, police officers and law enforcement rangers.

I was advised that Cameroon is doing it better and that I should move there and see how I can collaborate with them better. So my purpose of coming here is to learn and share experiences in this domain.

**During your brief stay in Cameroon who did you meet and what were your subjects of discussion?**

I met with the Head of the Legal Department of LAGA, Mr. Alain Ononino who introduced me to new things I had not known. I only thought that LAGA was just doing traditional law enforcement norms of going to court to follow cases and record because we were treating LAGA just like an NGO that was doing this in Cameroon.

But what I got from LAGA was amazing. This is a great work that every institution in Africa has to adopt and follow if you are to succeed in wildlife law enforcement, because it detects corruption, to ensure that wildlife cases are handled successfully.

I was very happy to hear about damages and fines being awarded for wildlife crimes and cases

of corruption and related issues that are involved in the courts in Cameroon. I think this is one thing that we need to do for the rest of East Africa countries because enforcing laws amidst corruption wouldn't work. You need to ensure that the laws you are enforcing are straight and that nobody is practising corruption behind your back, I also worked with the Director of LAGA, Mr. Ofir Drori. We did exchange information on how he has been working and coordinating with other institutions in Cameroon to make sure that they get all the best out of the cases they file in. I was impressed about the data base designed for monitoring and controlling cases.

**Which were the places you visited?**

I visited the Court of First Instance and the Court of Appeal in Bamenda and was impressed, 4 people following one case and that shows the level of commitment in following cases in Cameroon and what LAGA is doing to ensure that matters are followed up.

It was impressive meeting this team that took me through all the courts from Court of First Instance through the Court of Appeal to the High Court. I followed up the proceedings in all the courts and was happy to be in them.

### LAGA MANUAL

The first edition of the LAGA Manual was completed and printed. This manual capitalises 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 manual elucidates what makes this experience possible and sets out steps that should be followed to accomplish set objectives. This manual can be of great use not only to those working in the field of wildlife law enforcement and conservation but in numerous other fields as well. Copies of the manual can be obtained from the Regional Office, Yaounde through the following email contact: [eric@laga-enforcement](mailto:eric@laga-enforcement).

## Regional Wildlife Law Enforcement: a Vision for Central Africa

Eric Kaba Tah

The world is gradually coming to the realisation that only concerted and coordinated international efforts on wildlife law enforcement should be used to combat a crime that is becoming increasingly organised, powerful, dangerous and international, working within the confines of criminal networks and syndicates. This is what the Central African sub-region understood as Cameroon and its neighbours are working for, within the framework of the government – NGO collaboration approach and the replication of the Cameroon wildlife law enforcement model. According to John Sellar, a former Aberdonian Police Chief and who now works for CITES, Police forces in the world should learn from environmental NGOs in matters of investigation and exposing poachers and smugglers, if efforts to halt the illegal wildlife trade are expected to produce any impact. Sellar is quoted as saying. *«If we brought to bear the investigative skills that we bear on other criminals, we'd be infiltrating these networks and markets and taking action against them.»* And he further outlines the job NGOs are doing, infiltrating and exposing criminal syndicates,

Wildlife criminals regularly jump borders, moving from one country to the other ignoring the boundaries we create. While enforcement may be working in one of the countries, fighting the decimation of wildlife species by ruthless money mongers, the same animals are being shot and killed when they cross over to areas with little or no enforcement at all. So too, are the dealers who move from one country where the enforcement is working to areas where enforcement is absent. A wildlife dealer who crossed over from Cameroon to the Central African Republic clarifies their migratory activity and says, *«We are very careful because it was passing in Cameroon in Zaire in Congo... they send the people to the field to search for the ivory, to come to the hotel, and then the catch you, do you understand? In Cameroon there is one of my small brothers that was arrested he was doing 8 months for selling ivory.»* This is the nature of international wildlife crime and the motivation behind the replication of Cameroon's pilot project.

### Collectively operations

In order to respond to the migratory trend of both wildlife and traffickers a coordinated and sub-regional effort is necessary and it is in this spirit that the last week of November 2010 marked a significant step in the enforcement process with 4 operations taking place simultaneously in the different countries in which the wildlife law enforcement projects are being carried out. 4 operations were carried out in 4 countries that led to major arrests and seizure of large quantities of products of protected wildlife species. Now these 4 countries with coordinated arrests almost at the same time is the beginning



*Leopard and lion skin dealer arrested in the East Region of Cameroon*

of the regional wildlife law enforcement vision. There was a great operation in Gabon which witnessed the arrest of 13 wildlife traffickers with more than 100 kgs of ivory in 3 operations, two operations in Cameroon in which 17 turtle shells were seized from 3 traffickers including some Nigerians, one in Central African Republic where a truck destined for Nigeria was stopped and in it found hidden 7 leopard skins, 2 lion skins and some elephant tusks and finally a great operation in Congo, Brazzaville in which a dealer was arrested with 30 kgs of ivory.

### Partnership with Interpol

Another dimension to the sub-regional concerted wildlife law enforcement action is partnering with Interpol. With National Central Bureaus in each of these countries and with a Regional Central Bureau in Yaounde, Interpol offers the opportunity to put in place an unprecedented network of collaboration. In fact, Interpol has a

*«We must encourage and develop a culture of cooperation and criminal intelligence sharing to stop transnational trafficking in endangered species.» Yuri Fedotov of UNODC*

very effective information sharing system, the Ecomessage, which enables the forwarding of information on illegal activities notably wildlife crime to its regional headquarters from national central bureaus. The smooth sharing of information among national central bureaus will enable a better tracking of wildlife crime networks and a better collaboration in the arrests of cross-

border wildlife criminals in the Central African sub-region. This collaboration has already won the Interpol Ecomessage Prize for the government of Cameroon in 2007 for its collaboration with Interpol in the seizure in 2006, of 3.9 tons of ivory in Hong Kong, coming from Cameroon.

This is the vision: coordinated and collective work and that after a year when 7 countries in Central Africa including Cameroon are working together, they will have the increased ability to exercise regional wildlife law enforcement. In that way, if a criminal is moving, let's say, from Cameroon to Nigeria, then he will still be caught and prosecuted. Wildlife enforcement agents should move from one country to the next and that is what is called regional wildlife law enforcement. The objective in the future is to expand the replication to other countries including Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Chad so as to create a regional block of seven countries effectively applying the law and to promote partnerships and coalitions with some international institutions specialised like Interpol. Yury Fedotov of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime sums this up by saying, *«We must encourage and develop a culture of cooperation and criminal intelligence sharing to stop transnational trafficking in endangered species.»*

The Director of LAGA, Ofir Drori, points out that *«when we are dealing with organized crimes as is the case with protected wildlife species, it is necessary to work the same way that the criminals are working, which is international».* For this to succeed, some difficulties must be overcome and these include the reluctance of some government officials to fully cooperate in the replication process and the inevitable problem of corruption. The replication and the projects themselves make up a new and ground breaking experience with little trained staff in these domains and that is why these projects find it very difficult to get competent personnel and the need to step up training of staff in Cameroon that already boost good long years of experience.

Despite the seemingly unsurmountable difficulties, there is a vision and the Director of LAGA presents this vision, *«...we need to start working together. So the vision is that we have seven countries in Central Africa following the same model and we will have the ability to start exercising regional law enforcement. We will have the ability for countries to start collaborating with each other. And if a criminal is moving let's say from Cameroon to Nigeria he will still be caught and prosecuted.»*



## Beyond Conservation Cross-sector Lessons and Replication of the Model

Akwen Cynthia

While the LAGA model in Cameroon has been replicated geographically to spread wildlife law enforcement, a parallel transfer of experience has started across sectors. Reinventing the wheel, the unique experience offers lessons among which, in activism, in fighting corruption in the judiciary, in expanding the role of civil society, and in getting a law applied.

### Fighting Corruption

LAGA took a decade-long baseline of zero prosecutions under the existing wildlife law - a shocking baseline shared with almost all Central and Western African countries with sharp contrast to the amount of public funds poured into conservation - as a symptom of failure of the aid business, and its inability to tackle the first obstacle to development - corruption. It served an experiment field for methods of fighting corruption within a law enforcement and application process. Bribing attempts are documented in 85% of our field arrest operations, and 80% of all court cases within the legal system. But with the LAGA model, the NGO 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.

The project is considered to have moved Cameroon from the decade long zero wildlife prosecution baseline to a one per week rate of a major wildlife dealer arrest and prosecution, and achieved legitimacy for an NGO to fight corruption within a governmental process.

These lessons have been used in the creation of an off-shoot NGO, AC - Cameroon, that is trying to use the LAGA experience of establishing wildlife law enforcement to push for anti-corruption law enforcement. In its first pilot project - «Fighting Corruption through Citizen Legal Action» AC tries to group ordinary victims of corruption acts and lead them to confront officials in court, then fight corruption within the legal process achieving a prosecution of a government official both on civil as well as penal charges. The idea of this pilot project is empowerment of ordinary citizens to fight corruption.

The LAGA experience is often presented in different anti-corruption forums as a reference to innovation in the fight against corruption, expanding the impact of the wildlife law enforcement model, way beyond wildlife.

### Fostering Activism

In the approach taken by LAGA, the NGO is not a technical institute in charge of mere execution of Program because in addition to that it should foster activism and act in the spirit of fighting for a cause and undertake a secondary goal to produce activists, leaders and bring a positive change to their country beyond the

service of the NGO. In this regard, LAGA's experience has been called upon by The US Peace Corps for integrating activism in their programs and in rural communities. A manual on Fostering Community Activism was presented.

Fostering Community Activism is a field that is largely ignored in education work in the developing world context. Teaching skills for individuals is different from developing a community. Community activism relates to the social capital of a community - the shared norms or values that promote social cooperation, instantiated in actual social relationships. Transfer of skills is therefore not all that is needed in order to develop a community. We need to instill a spirit of community service valuing the public interest. When we refer to «Strengthening a Community», «Developing Community Leadership», «Mobilizing a Community» - we do not refer to mere transfer of skills. We do not refer to human capital but to social capital. LAGA continues to collaborate with the Peace Corps in integrating these important lessons on activism.

### Producing Leaders

Creating independent activists is one aspect that LAGA uses to foster activism in the vision that «The function of leadership is not producing more followers but to produce more leaders». 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 do develop the project in the vision of turning it in to an independent project or even an NGO. This year alone LAGA family members have opened 2 new NGOs, as a fruit long term projects. One is known as Action for Citizen and Community Development (ACCOD) and aims at working with grass root communities, through education and information dissemination programmes, geared towards its principal mission which is building informed and participatory citizens necessary for a democracy, as well as development to grow. The second one is known as SCATI (Stop Child Abuses and Trafficking Initiatives). It aims at coordinating several precise domains of action (health, community empowerment, law enforcement, policy making, social work, social mobilization etc.) enabling them to act in favour of the eradication of the causes, the factors and the consequences of child abuses and trafficking. The second project aims at putting in place a platform of organizations which will work together to fight child trafficking from the denunciation of traffickers to the judgment through the withdrawal of victims and their coverage at different level.

As more projects are in motion, LAGA hopes more NGOs will be created as the fruit of this initiative, stretching the impact of its experience far beyond conservation.

### Fighting Child Trafficking

Recently, the Cameroon bureau of Catholic Relief Service (CRS) also showed its interest in the model after a series of exchanges that held in Yaounde between officials of this international NGO and the Director of LAGA. Dupleix Kuenzob is the CRS Assistant Project Manager on Human Rights in Yaounde and in the interview below he justifies the interest CRS is showing in the LAGA model. Excerpts

#### **1-Your are a well known international organisation but you are interested in wildlife. Why this interest in LAGA?**

Catholic Relief Services (CRS) as an actor of the civil society and thus a partner of the government, is called upon to fully play the role that is incumbent to this category of actors of development, which gives it at least two functions to fulfil. The function of an advocate for the preservation and the defence of the interests of the populations (According to the social vision of the Church, CRS has a preferential option to the favour of the poor) and a watchdog function on government's activity. According to this perspective, LAGA's intervention approach in matters of wildlife law enforcement appears sufficiently original to us because it makes the law effective, enabling it to punish the offenders. As you will certainly know, Cameroon is a country that has a reputation for having good laws, but its weak application or its very limited application perpetuates the crime that these laws are supposed to punish. This creates a feeling of impunity that demotivates the citizens in referring to or using the existing laws to defend themselves. The LAGA method teaches us that, as civil society, we can enable the application of the laws on the condition that we are methodical and set ourselves objectively identifiable indicators to show the effectiveness of the law. Our interest in LAGA is to see how this approach can be replicated in other domains and sectors of activity in such a way that Cameroon becomes a veritable state of law as announced in the Strategy Document for Growth and Employment (SDGE). CRS that gives much importance to promoting governance wants to be inspired by the LAGA experience to give its contribution to «reinforcing the state of law and the security of persons and goods» which is a major axis of the SDGE.

#### **2. Why precisely in this domain and why do you think the LAGA method can bear fruits?**

CRS has targeted the fight against child trafficking as an entry point because we should say that if we can master the LAGA model, it is evident that it should be spread to other areas of our action. But, we chose the child trafficking project because prosecution and sanctions against the authors is quite rare to be able to dissuade other traffickers.