

Briefing Note n°02

Of the External¹ Independent Forest Monitoring Mission reports



<i>Période covered :</i>	<i>November 2016 – Décembre 2016</i>
<i>Localities concerned :</i>	<i>Ngweï (Sanaga Maritime, Littoral Region), Lokoundjé (Ocean, South Region) Messamena (Haut-Nyong, East Region)</i>
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¹ External IFM is the IFM done by Civil Society organisations.

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APV-FLEGT	Voluntary Partnership Agreement – Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade
BNC	National Control Brigade
BRC	Regional Control Brigade
CAE	Annual Certificate of Exploitation
CeDLA	Centre for Local Development and Alternative
FC	Comunity Forest
FC^{le}	Communal Forest
FODER	Forests and Rural Développement
MINFOF	Ministry of foresstry and Wildlife
NFE	National Forest Estate
OIE	External Independent Monitoring
PAPEL	Programme for Livestock and Biodiversity Conservation
RTM	Community-based Real Time Monitoring Forest
SNOIE	Standardized External Independent Monitoring System

Introduction

The Standardized External Independent Monitoring System was developed to serve the Government, the civil society, the private sector and citizens by providing them information at different times to improve practices, change of behaviour, promotion of legality and governance in the forest - environment sector. Following the test phase, the system has been implemented since August 2016 under the project "Implementation of the Standardized External Independent Monitoring System" (SNOIE project) with financial support from the FAO UE-FLEGT programme. This project, carried out under the aegis of the association Forests and Rural Development (FODER), with the contribution of PAPEL (Support Programme for Livestock and Biodiversity Conservation) and CeDLA (Centre for Local Development and Alternative) - local partners based in East and South regions of Cameroon - aims at the sustainable management of forest resources and the efficient implementation of VPA-FLEGT in Cameroon. The cooperation with local communities to identify and denounce forest activities potentially illegal to inform competent authorities and stakeholders helped for repressive measures taken against crooked operators. The field missions carried out by these local partners resulted in the production of reports describing the situation in the different intervention areas of the project. From November to December 2016, reports of independent monitoring missions in the South, East and Littoral regions provided information on several cases of suspected illegal logging in Lokoundje, Messamena and Ngwei subdivisions. These reports permitted to highlight the misdeeds of many operating companies in these different localities. After verification of denunciations by the members of partner organizations implementing the SNOIE project, and evaluation by the Technical and Ethical Committee, these reports were sent to the Regional Delegations of the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife with the objective to draw their attention on these illegal exploitation cases perpetrated in these localities and eventually to provoke monitoring missions.

1. OIE missions conducted



Between November and December 2016, the organizations CedLA, PAPEL and FODER, with the contribution of the community-based organization SUHE - under the project RTM-, carried out External Independent Monitoring (OIE) missions to observe, collect and document facts which would constitute illegal logging activities. Raids conducted by these various organizations following denunciations and alerts by the communities bordering these areas were carried out respectively in Mabenanga and Edoungangomo villages; Mboumo area and Logbii.

2. Summary of achievements

2.1. Illegalities observed

Main illegalities found during those missions are:

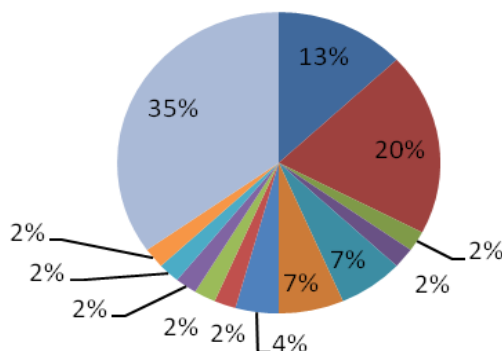
- Unauthorized exploitation in a National Forest Estate
- Unauthorized logging complicity in the Mboumo's GIC Mpag'ra
- Acts of corruption
- Non-compliance of Messaména / Mindourou's council with the dispositions of the Management Plan
- Destruction of ancestral lands as a result of forest activities of the FC^{le} Messaména / Mindourou;
- Problem of management of incomes from logging activity
- Logging operations carried out under a misleading label

These offences are punished by Sections 65, 156 (4) et 157 of the 20 January 1994 law n°94/01, sections 9, 134, 134-1 and 312 of the Penal Code of Cameroon, 128 of law n°81/013

2.2. Targeted species

The reports produced during OIE missions have revealed a few timber species that have been valued by operators found guilty of illegal logging: Tali, Ekopbeli, Azobe, Padouck, Ovincole, Sapeli, Ayous, Okan, Mavingui , Ozambili, Amingré blanc, Fraquet, Kosipo.

Pourcentage des essences ciblées par les exploitants



2.3. Submission of reports and initiation of monitoring missions

Following missions to verify illegal logging cases in Messamena, Lokoundjé and Ngwei subdivisions, three mission reports accompanied by denunciation letters were sent under confidentiality to the regional delegations of forestry and wildlife of these various localities with ampliation to the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife. These reports globally identified as offences unauthorized logging in the National Forest Estate (NFE), an operation without an Annual Certificate of Exploitation (CAE) in VC 1002219 and FC^{le} Messaména / Mindourou, and finally exploitation without title in the NFE. These offences subsequently led to verification missions by the South, Littoral and East BRC agents (Service Memorandum 17/0367 / NS / MINFOF / DRE / BRC / C1 of 03/02/2017 for the field mission for verification), respectively in the localities of Mabenanga, Mboumo and Logbii. In addition to the BRC, the communities of Logbii also saw the controllers of the Edea Departmental Delegation of Forestry and Wildlife and the agents of the BNC.

2.4. Media coverage

Despite these various raids, fraudulent activities continued in the locality of Ngwei but did not stop the people to denounce the public opinion. Journalists from the *Quotidien de l'Economie* and Equinoxe TV relayed these incessant complaints through their various media. For example, on Tuesday, 24 January, Le Quotidien l'Economie n° 01218 dedicate a page in "Le cahier du mardi" of the *Agribusiness* section to the efforts of the local inhabitants who became independent observers in this illegal logging center. Equinoxe TV broadcast three reports highlighting the precarious situation in which these people, although surrounded by a vast forest area, do not benefit from it.

2.5. Reaction of the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife

In February 2017, the Ministry reacted on the cases presented in the South, East and Littoral regions after the transmissions of reports through a notification to FODER (ref: 0887/L/MINFOF/CAB/BNC of 23/02/2017). This notification informed the SNOIE coordination of the auction of 68 marbles found on the site, i.e a volume of 770,386 m³ by the successful company Ets Mvondo Germaine Ze SARL in Ngwei subdivision. In addition to this notification, in March, MINFOF issued a Decision 0081 / MINFOF of 21/03/2017 appointing officials in the decentralized services of MINFOF. This decision was the occasion to appraise the dismissal of heads of station in the East, South and Littoral. Also, these monitoring missions carried out as a result of the reports often lead to litigation purged by the transaction mechanism between the crooked operators and the forest administration and are not subject of special communication.

2.6. Publication of reports and results

The results of these missions were publicized during a press conference held at FODER's office on the 21st February 2017 in the presence of 13 media from the written press, radio and television (**le quotidien de l'Economie, Mutations, Le Messager, La nouvelle Expression, Le Jour, Eden Newspaper, Magic FM, Kalak FM, CRTV Radio, RTS Radio Environnement, CRTV TV, Canal2 International, Equinoxe TV**). The three mission reports available on the OIE website www.oie-cameroun.org inform on the actions taken by the member organizations of the SNOIE coordination acting to fight against illegal logging. These organizations ensure compliance with legislation on timber exploitation in Cameroon contributing to the issuance of FLEGT authorizations thus to respect the Partnership Agreement signed between Cameroon and European Union. The SNOIE coordination works in a way to advocate for a society respecting the well-being of the people and legal measures.

Conclusion and recommendations

Civil society organizations' support, particularly the organizations member of the SNOIE coordination, is undeniable in the South, East and Littoral regions. Indeed, missions carried out by the SNOIE coordination together with the local populations are always considered relevant and verifiable on the sites. If the responses of the administration in charge of forests in Cameroon are not always prompt, it is obvious that the dynamism of these organizations contributes to the improvement of forest governance in our country. Nevertheless, efforts are still needed to ensure compliance with standards, and this requires the effective contribution of national and international organs. For this reason, the SNOIE coordination recommends to the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife:

- To carry out with more diligence monitoring missions and dispositions necessary imposed to ensure compliance with the legislation in force in these different localities

- To act promptly against the operators by requiring the immediate cessation of exploitation, by taking measures to prevent recidivism; And, finally, by taking responsibility for compliance with measures
- To frequently initiate monitoring missions in the FC, FC^{le}, VC; and participatory missions of evaluation on the impact of communal forest exploitation on indigenous people.
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For more than 10 years, Forests and Rural Development (FODER) has been working for the protection of forests and the promotion of local and indigenous community rights depending on forests, trees and associated resources.