CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

Stakeholder consultation with members of the Network of Traditional Chiefs of Central Africa (ReCTrad) on transparency in timber supply chains

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVED MONITORING OF TIMBER SUPPLY CHAINS ALONG LAND, RIVER, AND RAIL ROUTES

31 March 2026 | Yaoundé | Compiled by: Dr. Achille Djeagou, Steeve Wankeu, Achille Ewolo, Gibrile Kenfack, Mirna Tchuinte, Duclaire Mbouna, Samuel Nguiffo, Igerha Bampa, Sophie Labaste, and Dumont Tazo

Background

The World Resources Institute (WRI), the Center for Environment and Development (CED), Field Legality Advisory Group (FLAG), and Forêts et Développement Rural (FODER) benefited from a grant for the implementation of the project entitled: "Promoting transparency in Cameroon's forest sector through the promotion of the Open Timber Portal (OTP) and the implementation of independent forest monitoring (OTP-OI CAM)." The PAMFOR program aimed to improve the governance of natural resources in forests within the framework of the Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) signed between Cameroon and the European Union in 2011. The OTP-OI CAM project contributed to the specific objective of the PAMFOR programme on the legal harvesting and export of timber under the FLEGT VPA (Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade Voluntary Partnership Agreement).[1] The OTP outreach project focused in particular on improving transparency through: i) an Independent Forest Monitoring (IFM) mechanism and ii) the establishment of a portal providing online access to information about the sector.

Introduction

The Center for Environment and Development (CED) participated in the OTP-OI CAM project by deploying observers along critical timber transport routes to collect data on timber flows by land, river, and rail. These activities aimed to map illegal timber trafficking corridors in the southern part of Cameroon, using the Timby application[2].

Between 2021 and 2024, the Timby application, through a network of 10 professional investigators, was able to identify several cases of illegal timber being transported by land, river, and rail. The biannual prioritization workshops organized as part of the OTP-OI CAM project led to the selection of three pilot departments to identify the mechanisms used by illegal operators to evade the forest controls along the entire transport route up to the point of export.

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These conference proceedings reflect the presentations and discussions of participants and do not necessarily represent the views of the World Resources Institute or other participating institutions.

Four workshops were organized by the Network of Traditional Leaders for the Sustainable Management of Ecosystems in Central Africa (ReCTrad) to share the results of the mapping of land, river, and rail routes used to illegally harvested timber and to draft recommendations calling for action by public authorities. These workshops were held September 6 and 7, 2023 in Yokadouma, on June 12 and 13, 2024 in Ntui, July 26 and 27, 2024 in Messamena, and February 14 and 15, 2025 in Nanga-Eboko.

Methodology

Selection of the topics to be discussed during the four multi-stakeholder workshops in Yokadouma, Ntui, Messamena, and Nanga-Eboko

The multi-stakeholder workshops served as important forums for dialogue, bringing together customary and ancestral forest custodians and a wide range of stakeholders involved in forest governance. These workshops provided these actors and other key stakeholders with the opportunity to not only stay informed about developments in forest legality but also to share their views and perspectives on the implementation of the forestry and environmental commitments ratified by Cameroon. These multi-stakeholder workshops also served as mechanisms for listening to different actors, an important element for the co-construction of ecologically, socially, and economically viable solutions. The selection of topics covered in these workshops was guided by the findings of the investigations on illegal logging carried out by CED, sometimes indicating direct or indirect complicity of traditional leaders.

Moderation of the workshops: The workshops were convened by the ReCTrad, moderated by its president, and co-chaired by the Departmental Delegate for Forests and Wildlife and the mayor of the locality concerned.

In short, these consultation workshops were organized to present the results of the investigations conducted by CED and to help strengthen legality and improve forest governance at the local, regional, and national levels. By promoting open dialogue, collaboration, and the commitment of all stakeholders, these meetings have contributed to building a future in which forests are managed sustainably and equitably for the well-being of all.

Selection of participants

Forest governance relies on the diverse participation of stakeholders involved in the conservation and management of forest resources. For the multi-stakeholder workshops, participants were carefully selected from a wide range of engaged actors, reflecting the plurality of forest-related perspectives and interests.

One of the main selection criteria was the active engagement of stakeholders along the forest value chain. This ensured that the voices of key actors, intervening at different levels of the chain, were heard and taken into account in the decision-making processes. Thus, sectoral administrations[3], decentralized territorial entities, the private sector, civil society representatives, traditional chiefs, representatives of local communities (community leaders), community-based organizations, technical and financial partners, and the media were represented.

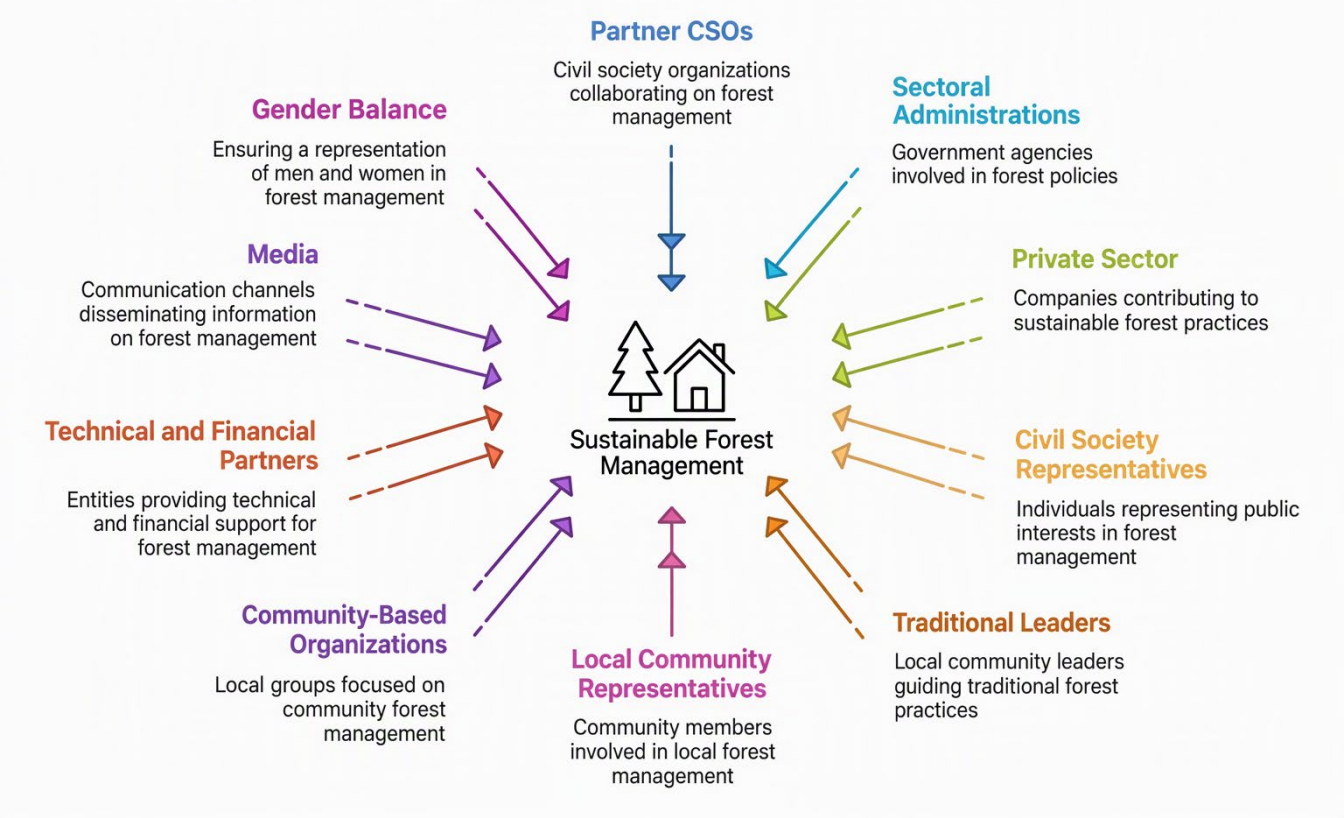
In this spirit of inclusiveness, special attention was paid to the issue of gender. Invited organizations were encouraged to ensure a balanced representation of men and women among their delegates, thus recognizing the integration of gender into sustainable forest management.

Inviting and confirming participants and sharing documents

The process of selecting and inviting participants was rigorous and transparent. Official invitation letters were sent, followed by regular communications via phone, WhatsApp, or even *in-situ* meetings. Working documents were proactively shared via digital and physical channels when sending invitations, ensuring that all participants had access to relevant information prior to meetings.

In summary, the diverse stakeholder participation reflected the commitment to transparency, inclusiveness, and multi-sectoral collaboration in the management of forest resources. By working together, we can ensure a sustainable future for our forests, benefiting both present and future generations.

Workshop Participant Selection Matrix



Invitation letters

TABLE 1 | Representativeness at the multi-stakeholder workshops in Yokadouma, Ntui, and Messamena

CODE	GROUP OF ACTORS	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	INVITATION METHOD
A	Administrations involved in the Timber Legality Assurance (TLAS) system	6	Letter and follow-up
B	Research institution	1	Letter and follow-up
C	Private sector and trade unions	4	Letter and follow-up
D	Civil society	5	Letter and follow-up
E	Media	5	Letter and follow-up
F	International NGOs	2	Letter
G	Representatives of directly affected local communities	10	Letter and phone call
H	Representatives of indirectly affected local communities	2	Letter and phone call
I	Independent experts/consultants	2	Letter and activity sheet for the activity to be carried out during the workshop
J	Parliamentarians	1	Letter and follow-up
K	Technical and financial partners	2	Letter and follow-up
L	Other state institutions involved in the application of the forestry law: Customs, Directorate General of Taxes (DGI)	3	Letter and follow-up

The content of invitations to participants

The content of the invitations indicated the context in which the workshop was organized, the objective of the meeting, the topics under consideration, and the location. Depending on the themes discussed, the invitation was addressed to certain leaders of the target organizations to mention the need to prepare a presentation to be delivered. It should be noted that the general theme of each meeting was: *"Multi-stakeholder workshop with traditional leaders for better transparency in supply chains in the target regions."*

Agenda

TABLE 2 | General agenda of multi-stakeholder workshops

HOURS	ACTIVITIES	MANAGERS
9:00–9:30 AM	Arrival and registration of participants	ReCTrad
9:30–10:00 AM	Introductory remarks and presentation on the context and objectives of the meeting	MINFOF, mayor, and WRI
10:00–10:30 AM	Group photo and coffee break	
Session 1: Impact of illegal logging on forest products, traditional pharmacopoeia, and our traditional knowledge		
10:30 AM–12:00 PM	Presentations and discussions	
12:00–2:00 PM	Lunch break	
Session 2: Overview of logging in the target area (Yokadouma for Boumba-et-Ngoko, Ntui for Mbam-et-Kim, and Messamena for Haut-Nyong)		
2:00–4:00 PM	Presentations, discussions, drafting calls to action	ReCTrad, CED and WRI
4:00–5:00 PM	Summary, closing remarks, and end of the workshop	ReCTrad, CED

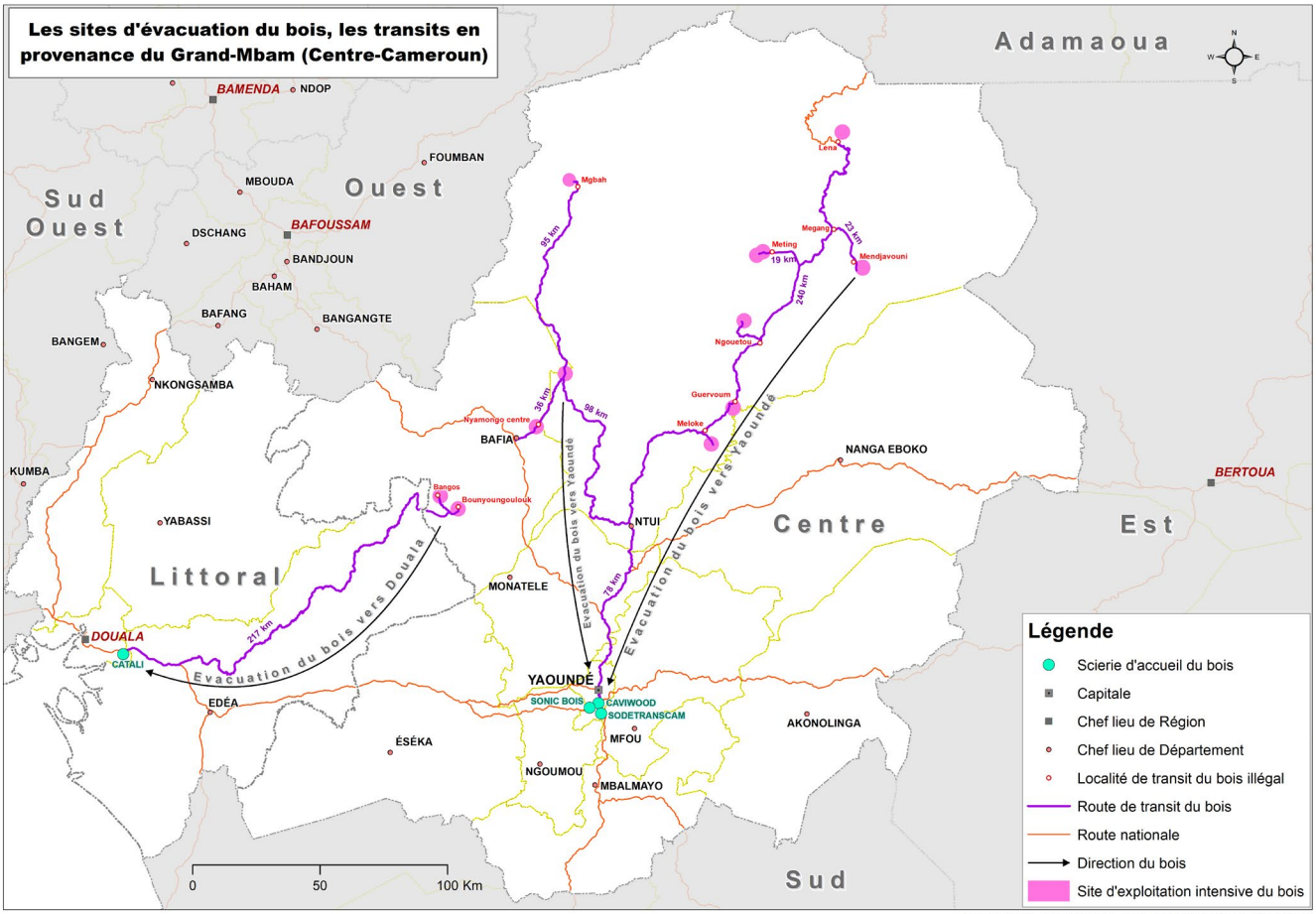
During the workshop

During the workshop, presentations covered weak links in the supply chain, and vulnerabilities in the system for monitoring timber flows, among other topics.

Areas of investigation into illegal logging

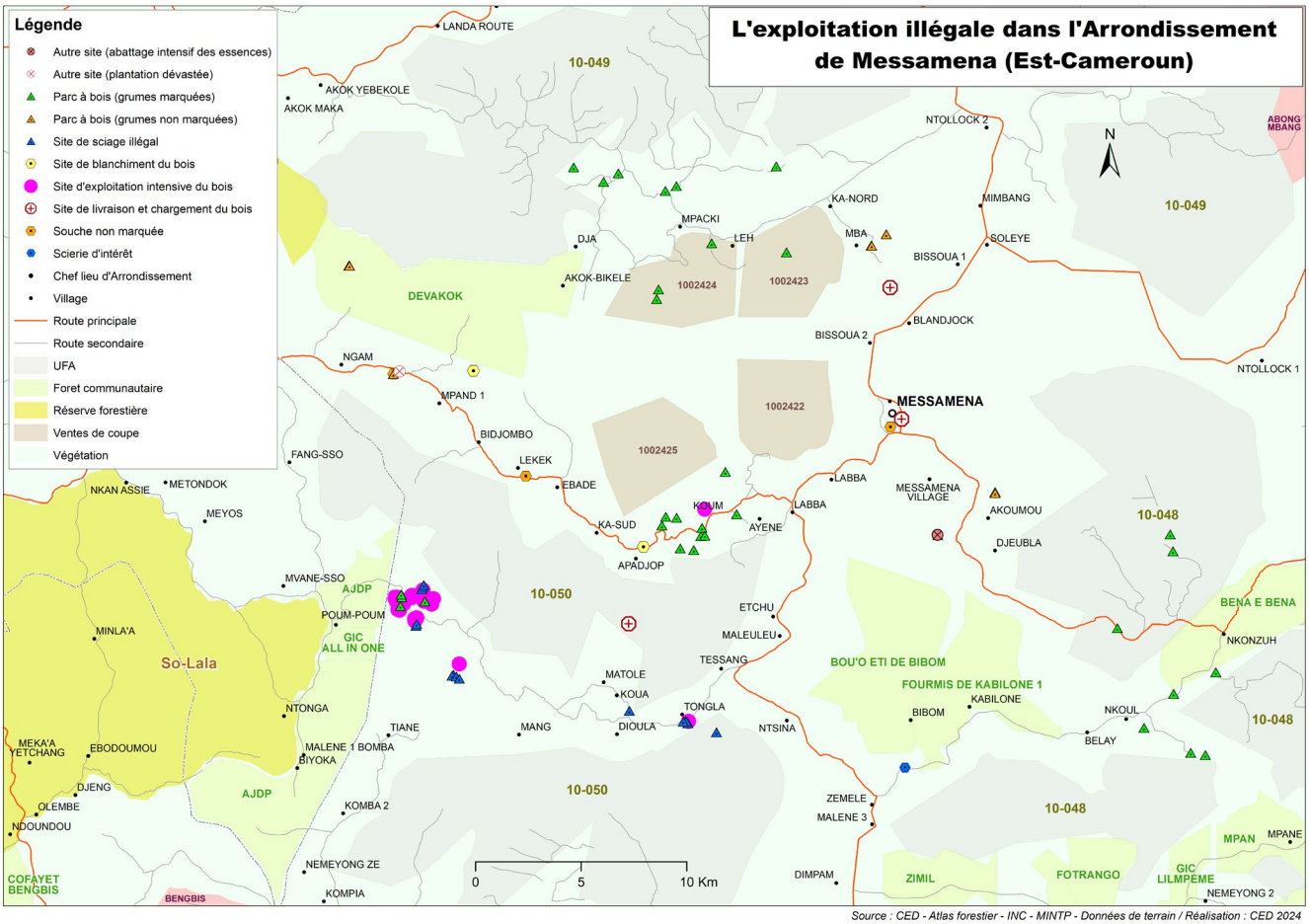
The map below shows the investigation areas. These include the following areas:

Districts of Ntui, Yoko, and Ngambé Tikar in the department of Mbam-et-Kim, Centre region



Source : CED - Atlas forestier - INC - MINTP / Réalisation : CED 2024

Districts of Messamena, Abong-Mbang, Somalomo, and Mindourou
in the Haut-Nyong department, East region

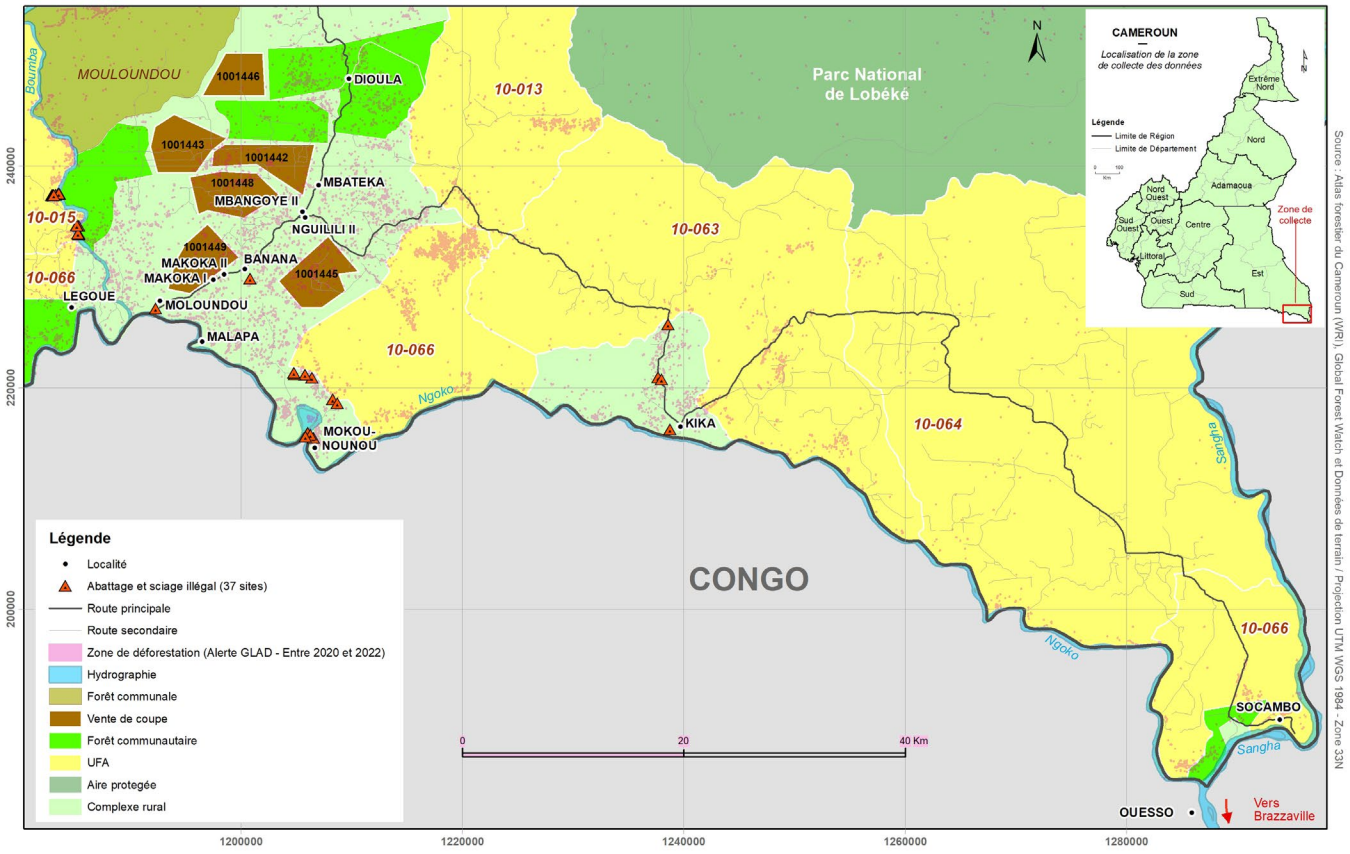


Source : CED - Atlas forestier - INC - MINTP - Données de terrain / Réalisation : CED 2024

Districts of Moloundou, in the Boumba-et-Ngoko department, East region

LES PRINCIPAUX SITES D'ABATTAGE ET DEBITAGE ILLEGAUX DU BOIS DANS LA COMMUNE DE MOLOUNDOU
(MOIS DE COLLECTE : JUILLET, AOÛT ET SEPTEMBRE 2022)

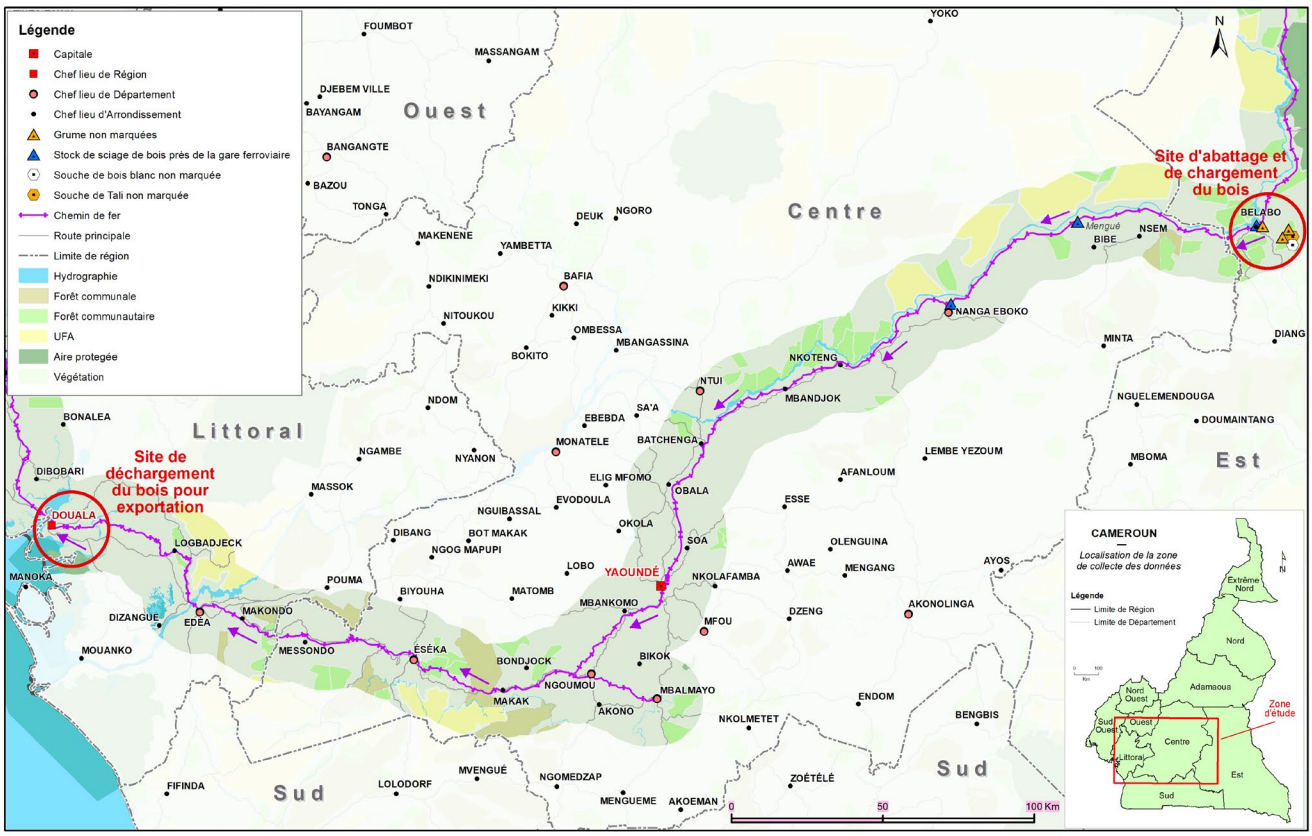
Arrondissement de Moloundou ; Département de la Boumba et Ngoko ; Région de l'Est



The Belabo-Douala railway route

ITINÉRAIRE DE TRANSPORT DU BOIS PAR VOIE FERRÉE DE BELABO À DOUALA AUX FIN D'EXPORTATION

Les sites de chargement et de débarquement du bois coupé illégalement



Source : Atlas forestier du Cameroun (WRI) & INC / Projection UTM WGS 1984 - Zone 33N

Summary of the group work conducted during the four multi-stakeholder consultation workshops

<table>
<tr><th></th><th>YOKADOUMA WORKSHOP</th><th>NTUI WORKSHOP</th><th>MESSAMENA WORKSHOP</th><th>NANGA-EBOKO WORKSHOP</th></tr>
<tr><td>Local communities</td><td colspan="3">There are community forests owned by elites, civil society organizations (CSOs), and forest logging, but no community forests that truly belong to the communities. There is a need to ensure real ownership of community forests by the communities themselves and to diversify activities within those forests.

Local communities are often unaware of the reasons that led to the creation of community forests in their regions. It is therefore important to raise their awareness of the other alternatives that community forestry offers apart from timber harvesting. The example of the conservation and agroforestry project in the district of Yoko can be a model that could be replicated in the district of Moloundou.

The Regional Council of the East Region has expressed its interest in a study trip to Yoko to draw lessons for its replication in the East Region.</td><td>Regulate the supply of artisanal timber from community forests</td></tr>
<tr><td>Government agencies</td><td>A lack of navigation equipment has been identified as a weakness in forest monitoring in Moloundou district. There is a need to foster collaboration between different sectors to ensure the security and monitoring of the timber trade on the Ngoko River.

It would be advisable to consider joint patrols including the defense and security forces, forest rangers, and merchant navy along the Ngoko River in order to dismantle networks of illegal loggers.

However, river-based enforcement operations are complex and expensive.

Lack of synergies and/or multi-stakeholder consultations within and between states in the fight against the issue.

Facilitate the establishment of a domestic timber market to meet Congolese demand for legal timber (community forests and the communal forest of Moundou could supply said market).

Set up a multi-stakeholder platform (DR/Est, DD/BN, Lobeke Conservations, NKI, forestry operators, local authorities, etc.) to fight against illegal logging in the Moloundou area.

Set up a fund to combat this issue. The fund will be financed by the various successful bidders of valid titles, municipalities, etc. Contributions from the conservation services in terms of logistical and human resources are strongly encouraged.</td><td></td><td>It should be noted that there are multiple timber-exit locations: Akonolinga, Ayos, Akok, Makat all served by a single forestry station with four officers. How can officers from the Ministry of Forests and Wildlife be mobilized in all these titles in the event of blatant violations?</td><td>Update the MINFOF/CAMRAIL Convention on the Control of Wood and Non-Timber Forest Products Transported by Rail by taking into account the following elements

▪ Set up permanent and effective checkpoints by MINFOF and CAMRAIL at the intermediate stations of Nanga-Eboko, Mengué, Obala, and Batchenga, and other critical points before any loading.
▪ Implement a real-time verification system: Develop a joint MINFOF-CAMRAIL interface for instant verification of waybills notes and Special Boarding Authorization against valid logging titles.
▪ Sanction document fraud: Strictly apply the penalties provided for the falsification or double use of transport documents.
▪ Audit CAMRAIL flows: Conduct regular audits of CAMRAIL transport data and compare them with MINFOF data to identify inconsistencies.
▪ Raising awareness among station managers: Strengthen the training and awareness of station managers on the procedures and the importance of respecting agreements with the MINFOF.
▪ Strengthen oversight of community forests: Conduct audits on community forests suspected of providing illegal timber in order to ensure that their management and production practices comply with the law.</td></tr>
</table>

	YOKADOUMA WORKSHOP	NTUI WORKSHOP	MESSAMENA WORKSHOP	NANGA-EBOKO WORKSHOP
Traditional leaders	Traditional leaders often grant access to forests to artisanal loggers without taking into account the provisions of the forest law. It is important to sensitize them, as auxiliaries of the administration, on their role in the participatory management of forest resources. Traditional leaders are not safe when they denounce certain forest malpractices. It will be wise to ensure their training and protection before, during, and after such denunciations. How are the 22 community forests managed? Are the communities involved in the management as provided for in the regulations?			▪ Regulate the supply of artisanal timber (helping to make community forests active)
Private sector	Forest Management Units (FMUs) 10-015, 10-063, 10-013, 10-064, and 10-066 are threatened by illegal activities. Operators must take measures to avoid being considered as accomplices by reporting these activities to the Ministry of Forests and Wildlife (MINFOF) and by providing financial and logistical support to combat this issue. Inactivity of some titles in the zone: It has 4 FMUs, of which 3 are inactive (10-066, 10-063 and 10-064), 11 communal forests all inactive. It is essential to carry out socio-economic studies to identify communities and their needs in order to better take them into account during the implementation of the specifications. Lack of a mechanism for the legal supply of timber to the Congolese market.			▪ Transporters: Raise awareness of responsibilities in the event of fraudulent transport (MINFOF circular). Issue citations and confiscate the equipment of repeat offenders.
Civil society	Civil society can play an important role in helping communities develop community projects using revenue from community forests and Village Committees for the Development and Management of Forest Resources (COVAREF). It is crucial for them to sensitize communities to the provisions of the Forest Code and the procedures for obtaining timber harvesting permits with a view to formalizing timber harvesting and regularizing the associated cross-border trade in this district.		How to ensure that information meetings are held about the management of forest titles and that specifications are signed? Do the municipalities and local populations receive their share of the annual forest tax for active FMUs and sales of standing volume (ventes de coupe in French)? How can communal forests facilitate the creation of processing units to train young people in cabinetmaking to supply urban areas with high-value-added products? What can assist in the development of other types of activity such as reforestation in order to access climate finance like the municipality of Yoko?	▪ MINFOF: Integrate the precise origin of the wood into COMCAM, regularly cross-reference COMCAM, SIGIF2 and PSRF data to detect volume discrepancies and fraud.

Group photo of participants at the workshop in Yokadouma



Group photo participants at the workshop in Ntui



Group photo of participants at the workshop in Messamena



Group photo of participants at the workshop in Nanga-Eboko



Abbreviations

VPA	Voluntary Partnership Agreement
ASE	Special Boarding Authorization
COMCAM	MINFOF database on timber exports from Douala
CAMRAIL	Cameroon Railways Corporation
CED	Centre for Environment and Development
DGI	General Directorate of Taxation
DFNP	Non-permanent forest estate
FLAG	Field Legality Advisory Group
FC	Community Forest
NDS	Forests of the National Domain
FODER	Forêts et Développement Rural
GIC	Joint Initiative Grouping
MINFI	Department of Finance
MINFOF	Ministry of Forests and Wildlife
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
IFM	Independent Forest Observation
OTP-OI CAM	Open Timber Portal and the implementation of independent forest monitoring in Cameroon
PAMFOR	Programme for Improving Governance in Forestry
PSRF	Forest Revenue Security Program
ReCTrad	Traditional Leaders for the Sustainable Management of Ecosystems in Central Africa
SEPBC	Société d'Exploitation des Parcs à Bois au Cameroun
SND-30	National Development Strategy – Horizon 2030
GPS	Global Positioning System
SVL	Timber Legality Verification System
SOMAC	Forest Information Management Information System
SIGIF II	Second-generation Forest Information Management Information System
UFA	Forest Management Unit
VC	Sale of standing volume (vente de coupe in French)

Endnotes

1. Forest Law Enforcement Governance and Trade
2. https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=org.timby&hl=fr
3. Ministry of Forests and Wildlife (MINFOF) and Ministry of Finance (MINFI)

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World Resources Institute works to improve people's lives, protect and restore nature, and stabilize the climate. As an independent research organization, we leverage our data, expertise, and global reach to influence policy and catalyze change across systems like food, land and water; energy; and cities. Our 2,000+ staff work on the ground in more than a dozen focus countries and with partners in over 50 nations.

About CED

The Center for Environment and Development (CED) is a nonprofit environmental organization with an international focus, founded in Cameroon in 2002.

About ReCTrad

The Network of Traditional Leaders for the Sustainable Management of Ecosystems in Central Africa (ReCTrad) is an international, non-profit environmental organization founded in Cameroon in 2002. The organization is dedicated to promoting the sustainable management of natural resources while upholding the rights and well-being of local communities.



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