



Verification of log diameters by government officials.

INDEPENDENT MONITOR HELPS TO FIGHT ILLEGAL LOGGING

A unique government-NGO partnership that monitors logging and forest law enforcement in Cameroon has increased transparency and accountability in a crucial step towards better logging practices.

For some logging companies, one way to avoid forest legislation in West-African Cameroon is through so-called 'timber recovery permits'. These permits allow logging companies to recover timber felled for the realization of development projects in forest areas. In reality, however, many of the projects are not realised and the permits are solely used for logging. This is just one of the illegal practices confronting Cameroon's embattled forestry sector. Weaknesses in key areas of law enforcement, illegal logging, deforestation and administrative fraud to evade payment of tax all pose significant problems. These issues need to be tackled for Cameroon to achieve sustainable forest management.

ACTIVITIES Core work of the UK-based Resources Extraction Monitoring (REM) is the independent monitoring of forest law enforcement, governance and forest exploitation in order to support more sustainable forest management. In 2005, the organisation was made an official Independent Monitor of Forest Law Enforcement in Cameroon. It established a local office and staff in Yaoundé, to monitor and report to the Minister of Forests and Fauna and the international donor community on forest law enforcement and administration in Cameroon.

REM builds capacity within Cameroonian law enforcement services through identifying problems in methods of law enforcement and providing recommendations. REM also monitors forest activities by harnessing information on logging practices from local NGOs, documents infractions and monitors the progress of cases brought to Court. The project is part of a larger three-year initiative funded by the EU.

IMPACT One of the project's effects has been the suspension of illegal logging operations and of many of the forest 'titles' previously used for illegal logging practices.

Government agencies, NGOs and the private sector all agree that the project has improved logging practices in Cameroon. Besides tackling forest infractions, REM made concrete proposals to improve procedures and techniques for forest law enforcement within governments.

The project's positive results led the World Bank to provide REM with funding for scoping studies to assess the potential for replication in Congo-Brazzaville (RoC) and in the Democratic Republic of Congo. As a result, the RoC government has requested a long-term project on this basis. The request includes training for civil society so it can become formally involved in monitoring logging and forest law enforcement, which is an unprecedented step for the region. This project, which includes a regional component to replicate the approach, has been accepted for funding by the EU and is expected to start in January 2007. REM has also implemented a similar scoping mission in Tanzania in June 2006 funded by the Finnish Embassy.



Monitoring government officers enforcing the law. All photos: REM.

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