

U.S. FOREST SERVICE CENTRAL AFRICA PROGRAM



AT A GLANCE:

 **Over 100 forestry agents, customs & law enforcement officials, prosecutors, and judges trained on investigating, developing, and prosecuting illegal logging cases in the Central Africa region**

ILLEGAL LOGGING & WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING

OUR WORK

Globally, illegal logging is devastating the environment and causing rapid deforestation. Illegal timber can be sold for much less than legally harvested timber, undercutting honest suppliers who adhere to legal practices. In Central Africa, in addition to the valuable tree and wildlife species that are extracted, these illegal activities can threaten the health and livelihoods of the 1.6 billion people who depend on forests. The U.S. Forest Service aims to strengthen forest governance and improve countries' capacity to investigate and prosecute illegal natural resource cases in the region to deter illegal logging and wildlife trafficking.

Both wildlife trafficking and illegal logging pose major threats to forested areas in Central Africa, and their trafficking networks are often linked. Poaching, illegal trade in ivory and other wildlife products, and other forms of illegal exploitation of biodiversity and timber harvesting have increased alarmingly throughout the region. A lack of alternative economic opportunities and high prices for rare wildlife goods, bushmeat and timber drive poachers into the forest despite national and international efforts to prevent it. For example, in some parts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, despite it being a traditional and desirable protein source for forest communities, 90 percent of bushmeat hunted is estimated to be sold at market. This meat is enjoyed mostly by those who can afford the high prices, making the choice to hunt very attractive, especially for those living in extreme poverty. Illegal logging, likewise, can deprive forest communities of their resources and revenue, as foreign governments, companies, and individuals extracting timber illegally are not in compliance with local laws concerning land rights and community compensation.

GABON

Following on the series of regional and country-specific trainings outlined below, the U.S. Forest Service, through support to the Gabon-based NGO, Conservation Justice, continues to build institutional capacity of prosecutors, judges and investigation teams in Gabon by providing provincial-level trainings on how to conduct investigations and build and prosecute cases on illegal logging activities. The aim of these trainings is an increase of cases brought to court and prosecuted, creating deterrence for illegal logging activities.

CENTRAL AFRICA REGION

In partnership with the U.S. Department of Justice, since 2016, the U.S. Forest Service has held a series of regional and country-specific workshops on combatting illegal logging in Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon and the Republic of the Congo. These trainings have trained investigators, including forestry agents, customs officials and law enforcement, prosecutors and judges on investigating, developing and prosecuting illegal logging cases in the region. These trainings have facilitated cross-sector collaboration within countries including exchange with civil society as well as strengthened broader regional exchange between countries.

CONTACT

Richard Paton

Central Africa Program Coordinator
richard.a.paton@usda.gov

Olivia Freeman

Central Africa Field Program Manager
olivia.freeman@fs-ip.us

Learn more: usfscentralafrica.org

