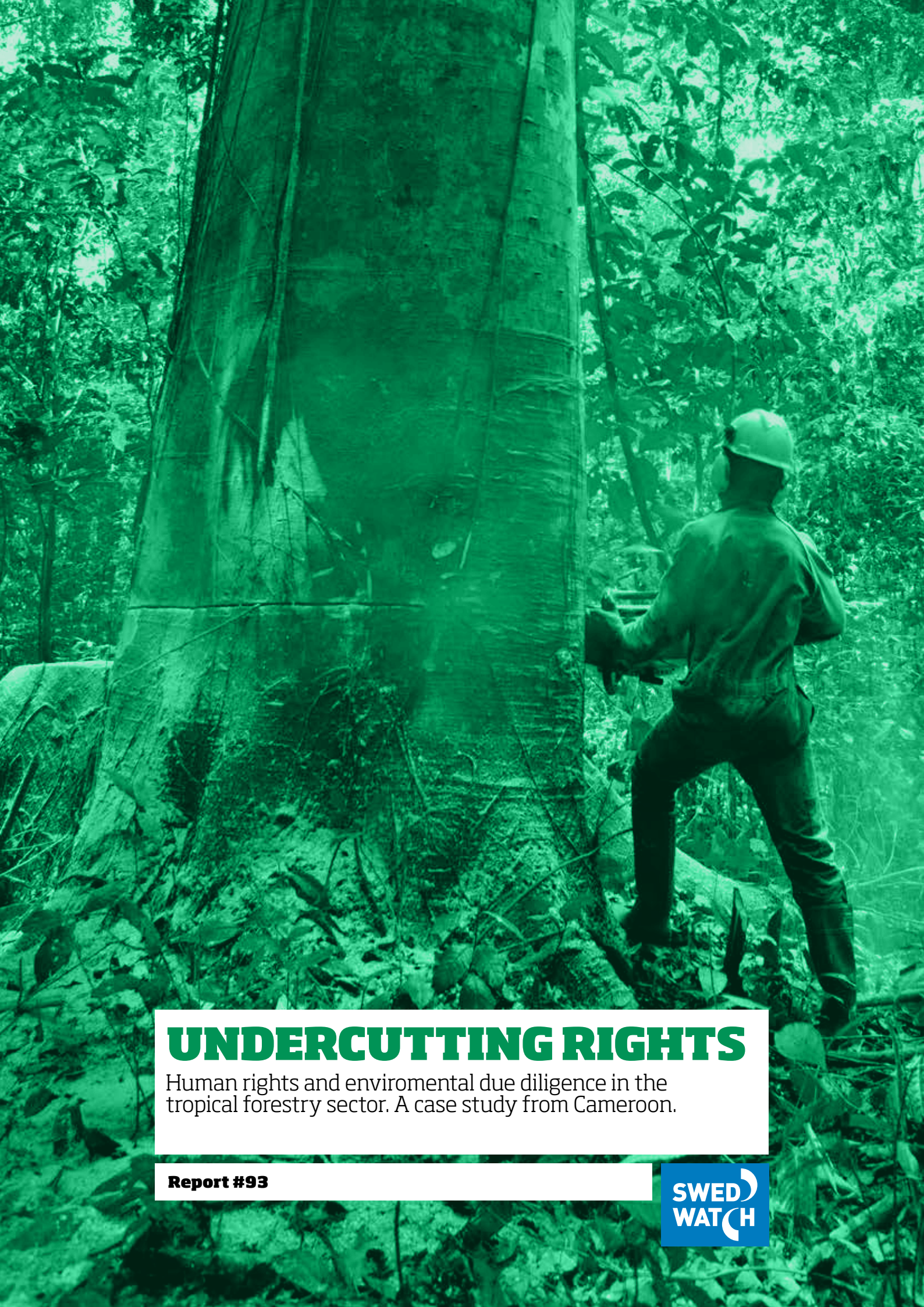

UNDERCUTTING RIGHTS

Human rights and enviromental due diligence in the tropical forestry sector. A case study from Cameroon.

Report #93

SWEDWATCH

Swedwatch is an independent not-for-profit organisation that conducts in-depth research on the impacts of businesses on human rights and the environment. The aim of the organisation is to contribute to reduced poverty and sustainable social and environmental development through research, encouraging best practice, knowledge sharing and dialogue. Swedwatch has six member organisations: Afrikagrupperna, the Church of Sweden, Diakonia, Fair Action, Solidarity Sweden-Latin America and the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation. The Centre for Environment and Development (CED) has contributed to the report as subject matter experts and by conducting and facilitating research.

The Swedish Society for Nature Conservation stands behind this report and has participated in developing its recommendations.

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FACT

List of Abbreviations

AAC	Annual Allowable Cut
AFR	Annual Forestry Royalty (Rédévance Forestière Annuelle)
CAR	Central African Republic
CED	Centre for Environment and Development
CPF	Comité Paysan-Forêt
CSPA	Community Project Monitoring Committee
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
ESIA	Environmental and Social Impact Assessment
EU	European Union
FLEGT	Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade
FMU	Forest Management Unit
FPIC	Free Prior and Informed Consent
FSC	Forest Stewardship Council
NDC	Nationally Determined Contribution
NGO	Nongovernmental Organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UFA	Forest Management Unit (Unité Forestière d'Aménagement)
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNGPs	United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature

FACT

Cameroon forest sector terminology

Annual Allowable Cut
Smaller logging concessions inside Forest Management Units in permanent forest domains. Forest Management Plans for selective logging detail location and timing of logging activities in each Annual Allowable Cut.[1]

Annual Forestry Royalty (Rédévance Forestière Annuelle)
An area-based fee which consists of fixed area-based tax combined with the price offered by a forest concessionaire in bidding for a logging permit. Annual Forestry Royalty needs to be paid both by permit-holders in Forest Management Units, and by those in Vente de Coupe concessions. The state redistributes a percentage of the received Annual Forestry Royalty payments to the municipality in which the logging takes place, a sum ear-marked exclusively for 'development projects run by local populations'. As of 2017 the percentage redistributed for community development was 6,75% of the sum paid by an operation.[2]

Concession
Logging agreement regarding forestry activities in a specified area between the state and a concessionaire.

Exploitation Agreement (Convention d'Exploitation) for long-term concession
Logging permit for forestry activities in specific Forest Management Unit/s with a typical duration of up to 30 years, given for 15 years, with an option to renew for another 15-year period. The maximum size of the long-term concessions is 200,000 hectares. The permit document is referred to as an Exploitation Agreement.[3]

Forest Management Unit (Unité forestière d'aménagement)
In Cameroon, selective logging is permitted within Forest Management Units located within the country's permanent forest domain. Companies and operators who are given logging permits for operations inside Forest Management Units are required to maintain permanent forest cover.[4]

Illegal logging
Global definition as outlined by the European Union Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade: 'The harvesting, processing, transporting, buying or selling of timber in contravention of national and international laws.'[5] Consequently, illegal logging practices in Cameroon are defined as those carried out in breach of national and local legal provisions.

Information meeting minutes (Procès-verbaux de réunions d'information)
Before the start of logging activities, concessionaires in Forest Management Units are required by law to hold an official information meeting with local communities and agree of the social infrastructure, which will be provided by the logging company during the course of the project. Examples of social infrastructure as suggested in legislation are

roads, bridges, health centres and medicines, schools, water supply, electricity supply, sports or cultural facilities, and reforestation projects. The agreement made during the meeting will be recorded in minutes, which are signed by the local Ministry of Forests and Wildlife and government representatives and attached to the Terms and Conditions of the Exploitation Agreement.[6]

Ministry of Forests and Wildlife (Ministère des Forêts et de la Faune, MINFOF)
Cameroon's sector authority responsible for governance of forests, wildlife and fisheries.[7]

Permanent and non-permanent forest domain (domaine forestier permanent, DFP and domaine forestier non-permanent, DFNP)
The government has mapped and classified forests across the country as either permanent or non-permanent domain. (i) Inside the country's permanent forest domain, areas have been assigned to production forests in which delineated Forest Management Units are found, wildlife protected areas, and forest reserves. The long-term selective logging operations in this study are carried out in permanent forest domain areas. (ii) The non-permanent forest domain consists of forest areas, which may be inalterably converted to other land use, such as agriculture or mining. Examples of current forest use in these areas are community forestry activities, community hunting, and conversion logging under Vente de Coup concession agreements, exemplified by the short-term logging concessions described in this report.[8]

Selective logging
A forest management method where a smaller number of species and individual trees are selected for harvesting, with potentially less negative logging impacts on forest quality and diversity than for example clear felling operations. The Forest Management Plans for the long-term operations in this study describes regimes and detailed plans for selective logging activities.[9]

Social Clauses of the Terms and Conditions (Cahier de Charge)
Social Clauses which detail responsibilities of logging companies to share benefits and contribute to sustainable development for communities living adjacent to logging operations. These clauses form part of the Terms and Conditions – in French 'Cahier de Charge' - section of logging permits or 'Exploitation Agreements'.[10]

Vente de Coupe (Sales of standing timber) short-term concession
Permit to conduct logging in non-permanent forest domain issued to harvest timber in a 2,500-hectare area, for a period of three years.[11]

Volume-based payments (stumpage fees)
The law requires permit holders in Vente de Coup concessions to pay a fee per cubic meter of timber extracted – a so-called stumpage fee – to communities. The social clauses of the logging agreement should stipulate the agreed rate of the stumpage fee.[12]

Executive summary

Sustainable management of the world's tropical forests is critical for the achievement of goals outlined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, specifically as regards reducing poverty for the 1.6 billion people who rely on forests for their livelihoods, and for ensuring global climate stability. However, global efforts to address deforestation and degradation are falling short of the challenge and tropical forests are disappearing at an unprecedented rate. Logging is the second largest contributor to the ongoing disappearance of forests and biodiversity after forest clearing for agricultural expansion (see Chapter 1. Introduction, page 11-14).

This report investigates human rights and livelihood impacts associated with deforestation and logging, and the extent of community benefits derived from forestry operations. It presents a case study from Cameroon, host to 10 percent of the Congo Basin forests on which 75 million people, including nearly 150[13] distinct ethnic groups and indigenous peoples, depend for their livelihoods and cultures. The Congo Basin - the second-largest tropical forest in the world after the Amazon - is expected to lose 70 percent[14] of its remaining forest cover by 2040 unless current patterns of infrastructure development and natural resource exploitation are curbed (see Chapter 2. Background: Congo Basin and Cameroon, page 21-22).

The report presents results from research in ten communities affected by three types of logging operations in Cameroon's South Region: a short-term operation in which independent monitoring indicated cases of illegal logging in 2017, and two long-term, large-scale selective logging operations, forest management certified or legality certified under the voluntary Forest Stewardship Council (FSC). The former, where forests were cleared by Asian and Cameroonian operators for a rubber plantation, is associated with fast and irreversible deforestation across large areas, community displacement and human rights violations, mirroring an increasing global trend of impacts when forests are cleared for commercial agriculture (see page 31-37). Adverse impacts were also reported in the other operations, run by Dutch logging and timber trading company Wijma Group and French Rougier Group. Interviewed communities claimed that the operations impacted on forests, water sources and local climate patterns, and undermined the ability to practice and survive on hunting, collection of forest products and small-scale agriculture. Communities further claimed that the influx of workers contributed to an increase in the prevalence of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS (see Chapter 3. Swedwatch and CED investigations in Cameroon page 37-41).

In the long-term operations, the study also found that vulnerable groups such as girls and indigenous peoples were disproportionately impacted. Six out of ten communities in the study described sexually exploitative relationships, stating that logging workers had engaged in sexual relations with girls aged 12 to 17, resulting in child pregnancies and school dropouts. Furthermore, indigenous representatives claimed that their forest-based livelihoods had deteriorated, and that they had not enjoyed the same level of benefits as non-indigenous communities (see Chapter 3. Swedwatch and CED investigations in Cameroon page 42-46).

All interviewed communities also reported some benefits from long-term logging operations, in the form of small infrastructure development, temporary jobs and busi-

ness opportunities. Regarding company engagement with local stakeholders, some positive developments were also noted, although communities claimed they were not adequately consulted or informed regarding potential negative impacts from the logging operations. Neither were they given access to the companies' contractual social obligations – and were thus unable to hold companies accountable to benefit sharing commitments (see page 46-54).

While conducting research in Cameroon, Swedwatch learned that Wijma and Rougier had recently exited from their concessions, citing financial and operational difficulties. Their assets were sold to companies without certification commitments, a development that illustrates the uphill struggle as described in the recent literature for companies with more ambitious sustainability ambitions to cope with difficulties in the operating environment in Cameroon and elsewhere – and to find markets prepared to pay a premium for certified timber (see page 38).

The study clearly illustrates that tropical forestry is a high-risk sector, where business activities may impact on unique tropical forests and the livelihoods and human rights of marginalised groups. While the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) as a certification system has not been scrutinized in this report, results from interviews indicate that also in FSC certified operations, logging activities and the influx of workers into rural communities may have negative impacts on people and forests. Adverse impacts from FSC certified operations have earlier been reported by NGOs and other stakeholders – especially concerning regions with weak forest sector governance.[15] This suggests that certification schemes such as the FSC – which is globally considered to have the highest environmental and social standards in the timber sector – cannot replace human rights and environmental due diligence in line with international norms and standards. It is important to note, however, that in logging operations without certification, negative impacts are likely to be more pronounced, given that the forestry sector actually applies the clear Principles and Criteria set by FSC.

Recognising these significant risks, in order to ensure 'no harm' to communities and their forest livelihoods, the report recommends tropical logging companies to ensure thorough human rights and environmental due diligence where care should be taken to ensure broad-based community consultation and proactive measures to respect the rights of vulnerable groups. The report also recommends government actors in tropical forest regions to consult with local communities to help ensure social improvements and maximise benefits from logging operations. Further, strategic planning at landscape and regional levels is critical to ensure tropical forest cover and quality for mitigation and adaptation contributions under the Paris Agreement and to fulfil the 2030 Agenda.

The companies mentioned in the report, as well as FSC, have been given the opportunity to comment on the findings and present their views and perspectives (see Section on Methodology, page 15-17). Summaries of the company responses are presented in section 4. Logging company perspectives, page 55-58, and FSC's perspectives can be found in Annex 1. Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) perspectives page 64-65. Because of difficulties associated with identifying and locating the smaller Cameroonian and Asian operators in Djoum sub-district, these companies were not given the same opportunity to comment.

Recommendations

To logging companies:

- Go beyond legality requirements and Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification, and urgently implement solid, proactive environmental and human rights due diligence in line with international norms and standards, which ensures that logging operations 'do no harm' to communities, human rights, forests and climate stability. Key elements of the environmental and human rights due diligence for logging companies should be:

  > Good practice Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) and Human Rights Impact Assessment, including consultations with, and assessment of the impacts on, women, children and other vulnerable groups.

  Ensure child rights-centred and gender-sensitive impact assessments and effective measures to protect children from sexual abuse and exploitation by employees and subcontractors.

  Assessment and prevention measures for local and global climate impacts from logging should be an integral part of the ESIA.

  The results from these studies should be integrated into the Forest Management Plan and contracts with subcontractors.

  > Participatory mapping of High Conservation Values in line with good practice guidelines; the results should constitute the basis for delineation and management plans.

  > Specifically, for indigenous communities, a Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) consultation process. Where operations have been initiated without FPIC, companies should re-engage with indigenous communities, conduct participatory mapping of High Conservation Values, and excise identified valuable areas from logging plans.

- Develop and disseminate a strategy for responsible project exit prior to the start of operations.

- Ongoing information sharing, broad-based consultation and community inclusion in decision-making platforms.

- Effective mitigation and management of risks and impacts on communities, human rights, forests and climate stability.

- Remedy for negative impacts on rights holders through legal systems, or locally appropriate grievance and conflict resolution mechanisms.

- In cooperation with local government agencies, logging companies should ensure effective community benefit-sharing mechanisms, and support skills development and alternative livelihoods to ensure that profits from logging operations contribute to inclusive sustainable development beyond the lifetime of the project.

  > The provision of basic services such as education, health services and clean water, as well as skills development, should be prioritised with a special focus on vulnerable groups such as children, women and indigenous people.

  > The design, delivery and monitoring of programmes should be based on results from ongoing, broad-based community consultation.

NOTES FOR CLARIFICATION:

Environmental and human rights due diligence should not be confused with due diligence to ensure legal timber and verified origin, which is required, for example, under the EU Timber Regulation. FSC forest management certification does not in itself constitute – or replace the need for – solid human rights and environmental due diligence. However, relevant criteria and targets in the FSC's forest management and chain-of-custody certification standards may be used to support companies' cycles of continuous improvement in a number of areas.

To importers and buyers of tropical timber:

- Importers and buyers should maximise their leverage and use their consumer power to demand transparently disclosed environmental and human rights due diligence measures and benefit sharing in line with recommendations to logging companies above.

To Cameroon and other host governments in tropical timber-producing regions:

- Conduct proactive upstream assessments such as Strategic Environmental Assessments and/or Cumulative Impact Assessments to determine the combined impact of logging on communities, forests and the climate together with other projects in landscapes and regions, such as agriculture plantations, mining and infrastructure development.

- Ensure that concession allocation, logging regulations and Forest Management Plans together ensure the achievement of climate change targets for the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement.

- In order to ensure responsible, sustainable logging operations that guarantee continued forest cover and long-term climate and community benefits, introduce concession award criteria which reflect recommendations to logging companies above.

- Strengthen project-level ESIA legislation and review: enforce proactive impact assessment; community and public participation and review; and include criteria for climate impact, children's rights and human rights.

- Ensure an integrated, inclusive approach to local sustainable development in which government agencies, in cooperation with logging companies and nongovernmental organisations, support education and skills development for girls, decision-making forums and platforms that include marginalised groups, and upscaling the participatory mapping of community lands and resources.

To donors, international financial institutions, and Swedish and EU governments as signatories of the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda:

- Enhance and underline forests' role in providing livelihoods, cultural value and non-timber forest products for local communities, as well as sustainable forestry contributions and social improvements and NDCs under the Paris Agreement on climate change.

- Strengthen global timber trade systems and regulations in order to ensure a race to the top for long-term sustainable forest management and protection.

1. Introduction

Forests play a crucial role in achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) related to sustainable livelihoods and food security. Many of the poorest households in the world live in and around forests. An estimated 1.6 billion[16] people, many of whom live in the Global South, depend on forests for their livelihoods, and approximately 250 million people who experience extreme levels of poverty live in forests and savannah areas. Access to plants, wildlife, other forest products, goods and services is vital for their livelihoods, both for generating cash income and meeting basic needs. It is estimated that one in five people around the world depend to varying degrees on non-timber forest products, and marginalised groups such as women, children, landless farmers and others in vulnerable situations tend to rely more heavily on forests for their livelihoods.[17] Forests and forest products are also at the centre of many indigenous cultures and practices, which are intrinsically linked to their traditional territories and resources.[18]

At a planetary systems level, healthy, sustainably managed natural forests ensure the quality and abundance of fresh water and contribute to global climate regulation sequestering carbon from the atmosphere and storing it over the long term.[19] In this way, sustainable forest management supports the SDGs on water and climate action, as well as the goal of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.[20]

This report presents a case study from Cameroon, a Central African country rich in natural resources such as oil and gas, timber and minerals. Despite its potential for

In Cameroon and across the Congo Basin, the establishment of logging concessions and clearing of forests for industrial agriculture impact on communities' access to land needed for small-scale agriculture, with negative consequences for household economies and food security. The photo is not related to to the field study and findings of this report.

inclusive economic growth, the country's development is hampered by persistent corruption and an unfavourable business climate. The case study illustrates an ongoing sector development in which companies with certification commitments operating in Cameroon are leaving, citing low profitability and operational challenges.[21] They are often replaced by investors, which export lower-quality wood to markets with less developed regulations designed to stem trade in illegally produced timber.[22]

Cameroon's economic development strategy to 2035 has a strong focus on growth through development of its agriculture and extractive industries.[23] Forests are currently giving way to infrastructure projects and the establishment of agricultural plantations, mines and hydroelectric dams. In a context of weak governance, the impacts of these developments on rural populations are increasing conflicts between communities, companies and state actors.[24]

Like Cameroon, many of the world's other tropical timber-exporting countries are fragile and conflict affected.[25] In countries and regions where forest conversion to agriculture is carried out on a large scale, and where illegal and unsustainable logging practices persist, these lead to deforestation and the degradation of forest ecosystems. Illegal forestry practices compromise the foundations of sustainable development such as strong institutions and healthy government revenues from forestry. The situation is often compounded by a lack of equitable sharing of forest sector benefits and revenues with local forest-dependent communities, which puts their rights and livelihoods at risk.[26]

In spite of initiatives to address global deforestation and degradation including, for example, government efforts to stem illegal logging, and voluntary private sector initiatives such as FSC certification, the world's forests are disappearing at an alarming rate, and most of the loss occurs in tropical areas.[27] Research using satellite imagery to assess the loss of tree cover shows that in 2017 alone the tropics lost 158,000 km^2 of forest – an area larger than Bangladesh. The largest driver of deforestation was forest clearing and conversion to agriculture, particularly for commodities such as palm oil, rubber, soy and beef.[28]

The main objective of this study is to investigate different types of logging operations' positive contributions to local sustainable livelihoods, as well as their negative impacts on local and indigenous communities' human rights and forest livelihoods. Further, the study explores how forest dependent communities and vulnerable groups can be empowered to participate in decision-making, feeding into strategic planning and forest management for global climate stability and inclusive sustainable development at local level.

The case study from Cameroon in the Congo Basin ecosystem explores the situation of ten logging-affected forest-dependent communities. The interviewed communities are neighbours with different types of forestry operations: short-term conversion logging for the establishment of a rubber plantation by smaller Cameroonian and Asian companies, and long-term selective logging operations by the EU business groups Rougier and Wijma.

Methodology

This study presents the results from 44 individual and group interviews carried out in May and June 2018 by Swedwatch and the Cameroonian non-government organisation Centre for Environment and Development. Over 240 men, women and adolescents were consulted in ten local and indigenous communities living adjacent to logging concessions in Cameroon's South Region (see Figure 1 for the location of the two research areas). The objective of the research was to solicit community views on participation, benefits and impacts from three different forestry operations: conversion logging for rubber plantation, legality-certified forestry and forest management certified forestry. (The operations are described in more detail in the next section 3. Swedwatch and CED investigations in Cameroon, page 27-31). The interviews were conducted in an open-ended manner, where respondents were asked to list the most significant benefits and impacts from logging. In each village, the research process was concluded with a larger community interview, where preliminary findings were revisited, confirmed and agreed between community leaders and representatives.

To complement the interview findings, the following information was reviewed and is summarised in the report:

- Information and perspectives provided by Rougier Group (registered in France), and the Netherlands-based Wijma Group in email communication with Swedwatch;
- Publicly available company policies and project documents including Forest Management Plans;
- Maps of concessions and surrounding landscapes;
- Three 2017 mission reports documenting illegal logging as part of a UN Food and Agriculture Organization/EU-supported project on independent monitoring of logging operations by civil society organisations.

Rougier Group and Wijma Group were given the opportunity to comment on the findings and present their views and perspectives. Summaries of their responses are incorporated into Chapter 4. Logging company perspectives, page 55-58. Due to the difficulties associated with identifying and locating the smaller Cameroonian and Asian companies operating with so-called Ventes de Coupe (Sales of Standing Timber) permits, Swedwatch was unable to give them the same opportunity to comment. While the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) as a global certification system has not been scrutinized in this report, the FSC was also given the opportunity to review the findings and the section on the role of certification. Its inputs are summarized in Annex 1. Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) perspectives, page 64-65.

In each sub-district, five communities in relative proximity to the logging operations were selected, since they are likely to have more information and engagement with the companies, and to have experienced both positive and negative impacts from the logging activities. Communities with smaller and larger populations were included, as were those representing the local majority groups Bulu and Zaman, as well as indigenous Baka people.

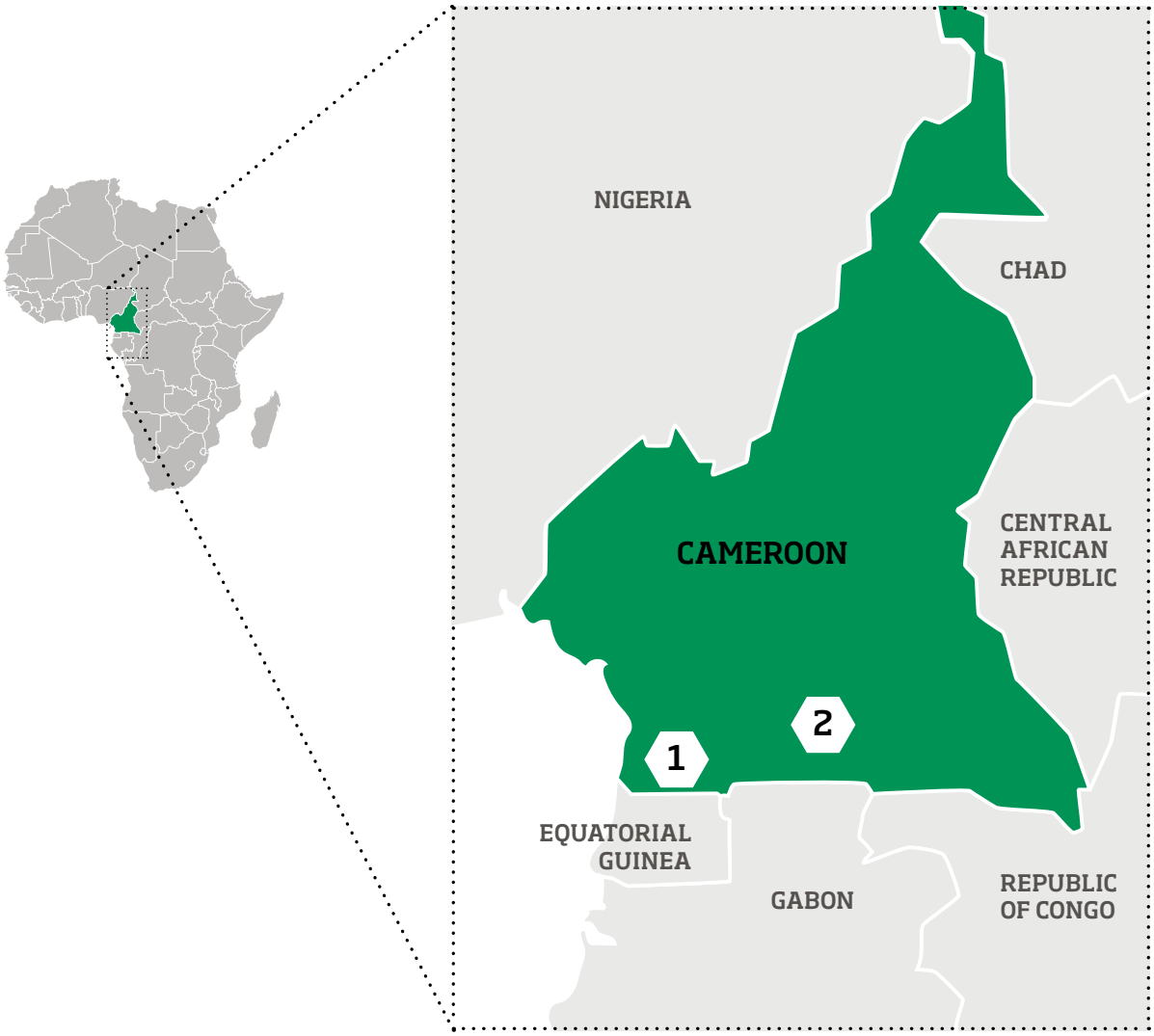

Figure 1: Map of Cameroon, showing the location of the study areas 1. and 2. in the Ma'an and Djoum sub-districts – both in the country's South region.

In recognition of the heightened risk associated with sharing information on corporations and their practices, and to protect the anonymity of the local interviewees in the logging areas, Swedwatch does not refer to community respondents' names or other easily recognisable characteristics.

The study has the following limitations:

1. Although Wijma supplied comments and information in email communication with Swedwatch, the company did not answer Swedwatch's survey questionnaire. This means that a number of the findings from the community interviews cannot be systematically compared to and balanced with company responses.

2. Rougier also supplied some initial comments and information in email communication with Swedwatch. However, the company did not answer Swedwatch's survey questionnaire. In August 2018, the company declared that it was not able to continue

the dialogue with Swedwatch. Swedwatch's following attempts to communicate with Rougier Group representatives per email and phone during the finalization of this report up to its publication in 2019 were unsuccessful. Thus, Swedwatch was not able to obtain updated information regarding the company's current and/or future status and operations within the tropical forestry sector. Swedwatch therefore emphasizes that the facts relating to Rougier presented in this report, are mainly based on public information found on Rougier's website and other online sources. Due to the lack of dialogue with Rougier, findings from the community interviews cannot be systematically compared to and balanced with company responses.

3. The study's methodology focused on breadth rather than depth: it maximised the number of communities interviewed in order to capture a wide array of issues and perspectives. Future studies should investigate in more detail the specific implications of impacts on indigenous people and girls under 18 years, as these issues merit further in-depth analysis.

Forests: Business, Human Rights and the Environment

The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (the 2030 Agenda) define states' joint ambitions to ensure poverty alleviation, food security and sustainable development and to 'leave no one behind'. The 193 UN member states that adopted the 2030 Agenda, including Cameroon, are responsible for planning, supporting and monitoring the implementation of the 17 SDGs, which together form the agenda.[29] The Global Reporting Initiative, an independent international organisation, which helps businesses report on their sustainability impacts, has drafted business disclosures that describe how a business actor contributes under the targets for each SDG.[30]

While states are responsible for protecting their own citizens' human rights, the United Nations' Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs)[31] require companies to respect human rights – including the right to a healthy, sustainable environment[32] – throughout their global operations, including where national legislation and state action fall short. In line with UNGP requirements under the 'Protect, respect and remedy framework', through a continuous process of human rights due diligence, companies should have policies in place that include provisions on human rights. Companies must assess and identify – and then respond to and manage – any identified risks and impacts, and transparently communicate their efforts.

The UNGPs state that the risks and impacts on human rights risks may change over time as the nature of the operations and the context of the business activities evolve. Any decision that could have a negative impact on human rights, including exits or divestment from a project or business entity, should first be subject to a human rights risk assessment as part of a business's due diligence work. Responsible business exit practices are evolving; a key element is for companies to have human rights impact assessment baselines and exit strategies in place from the onset of a project, or at least for these to be developed in preparation for an exit. Before they exit, companies must

also remedy any human rights impacts that have already occurred. The results of the impact assessments should be shared with new business actors taking over operations, and during negotiations the seller should maximise its leverage to minimise the risk that the new owner will engage in practices that jeopardise human rights.[33]

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises[34] and the related implementation support document OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Business Conduct[35] reiterate all companies' duty to respect human rights. They further underline the need to adhere to the environmental principles and objectives in the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development,[36] as well as the 1998 United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Aarhus Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making, and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters.[37] Section 5. Analysis and conclusions, page 59-63 in this report compares the research results with provisions from selected UN SDGs, and standards for corporate responsibility and human rights and environmental due diligence.

Responses to deforestation and unsustainable logging

Globally, stakeholders from governments, private sector, civil society and forest communities are attempting to address the complex causes and drivers of deforestation and degradation through a range of initiatives.

The Forest Carbon Partnership Facility[38] brings together governments, business actors, civil society organisations and indigenous peoples; its activities – often referred to as 'REDD+' (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation, as well as conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks) – aim to:

- Reduce carbon emissions from deforestation and degradation;
- Conserve carbon sequestration in forests;
- Sustainably manage forests;
- Enhance carbon sequestration in forests in developing countries.

However, recent studies have questioned the efficiency of REDD+ as a tool to reduce emissions. According to the foundation Heinrich Böll Stiftung, the expected financial contribution of the private sector, a key component for the success of REDD+, has not yet materialised. Consequently, studies conclude that global emissions and deforestation are increasing despite the introduction of REDD+ as the dominant international forest policy mechanism since 2005.[39]

The EU Timber Regulation and the Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) Voluntary Partnership Agreements are examples of attempts to combat illegality and ensure sustainable trade flows, while at the same time strengthening legislation and forest sector governance.[40] Tropical forest producing countries' governments are also committed to a number of initiatives to improve the sustainability of the forest sector, ranging from support to community forestry and logging benefit-sha-

ring mechanisms for local communities to the provision of infrastructure and services to communities living adjacent to logging operations.[41]

Under the Supply Change initiative, leaders of over 400 large corporations have committed to zero deforestation in commodity supply chains including timber, soy, palm oil and beef.[42] In addition to efforts to address the forestry sector, there is an increasing realisation that local communities' livelihoods are impacted not only by logging, but by a combination of effects from forestry, agriculture, infrastructure and other projects across their landscapes.[43] Participatory tools and methods such as Community-based Human Rights Impact Assessment – a process in which communities mobilise and define the impacts of business activities on their lives and resources – are important ways of empowering communities to assess how their rights and livelihoods are impacted.[44]

At a strategic planning level, upstream impact assessment tools such as Strategic Environmental Assessment and Cumulative Impact Assessment can be developed and used to engage with multiple stakeholders, and to ensure sustainable livelihoods outcomes from combined land-based projects in different sectors.[45]

Trade, law and governance responses to illegal logging

As of 2017, the estimated value of the global illegal logging industry was between 50 and 152 billion USD.[46] In addition to directly causing deforestation through the removal of timber and damage caused by careless harvesting practices, illegal logging is often followed by clearing, burning and conversion of forest areas to agriculture.[47] An estimated 30–50 percent of the tropical timber traded globally comes from illegally cleared forests.[48]

In addition to destroying the environment and hindering efforts to manage forests sustainably so that they absorb and store greenhouse gases and mitigate the impacts of climate change, illegal logging is also closely linked to corruption, conflict and poor governance. Illegal logging creates an uneven playing field in which responsible business actors who operate legally are forced to compete with companies that break the law with impunity.[49] In 2017, the EU trade area imported $296 million in timber from fragile and conflict-affected countries, an increase of almost 20 percent from 2014.[50]

The EU is addressing deforestation and trade in illegal timber through two key initiatives. First, through Voluntary Partnership Agreements with tropical timber-producing countries, the EU supports strengthening of legal systems and forest sector monitoring. The partnerships ultimately aim to establish a FLEGT licensing and certification system that would ensure timber is exported to the EU traceably and legally.[51] Second, the EU Timber Regulation, which came into force in 2013, prohibits the sale of illegal timber, wood, and pulp and paper products in the EU. 'Legal' timber is harvested in compliance with the laws of the country of origin. The regulation requires European importers and traders to have access to reliable information about the source of the timber – including tree species, wood origin, and logging compliance with national laws and regulations. Subsequent traders are obligated to assess and minimise the risk of putting illegal timber on the market.[52]

Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification

In the early 1990s, the multi-stakeholder organisation FSC[53] developed an independent, third-party forest certification programme in response to illegal logging, degradation of forests and social exclusion in logging areas. The certification scheme was designed as a voluntary, market-based tool to ensure responsible forest management operations and supply chains.[54] FSC's international standard is built on ten principles, which are designed as overall 'rules' for socially beneficial, environmentally appropriate and economically viable forest management. The principles have been translated into regional and national standards, which independent auditors use to assess and monitor logging operations. The two main types of certification are:

- FSC Forest Management (FM) certification, which involves a third-party accredited auditor that verifies that the forests are managed in accordance with the ten full set of FSC Principles, and its related Criteria and Indicators; and
- FSC Chain-of-Custody (CoC) certification, where a third-party accredited auditor verifies the legal origin of the timber and ensures the traceability from the forests to the final product.

The uptake of FSC certification by forestry operations world-wide is still limited, with 23 percent[55] of all industrial roundwood coming from certified operations. Just over 5 percent[56] of the total global forest area is under FSC Forest Management certification, and globally 35,223 FSC Chain-of-Custody certificates have been issued.[57] The FSC's certification system is widely considered to be the most prominent and stringent for responsible tropical forest management.[58] Other forest certification schemes which are considered less rigorous and comprehensive, such the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification[59], the Malaysian Timber Certification Scheme[60], and forest certification by the Indonesian Ecolabeling Institute (Lembaga Ekolabel Indonesia)[61], are not discussed in this report.

A number of studies have found that FSC-certified forestry operations cause less deforestation and depletion of biodiversity than non-certified operations around the world.[62] In addition, there are indications that certified operations contribute more to local sustainable development and better respect laws protecting local communities and logging workers.[63] An important provision in the FSC is that Forest Management Plans should ensure participatory zoning of areas of importance for communities, such as hunting grounds – especially for indigenous peoples.[64] A forest sector study found that FSC certification helps to support the development of multi-stakeholder platforms for improved social exchange between communities, companies and other local actors. Although logging companies often dominate dialogues facilitated through the platforms, the study found that the process has reduced community–company conflict and reinforced the legal and social requirements on logging companies.[65]

However, nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) and other stakeholders have criticised the FSC standard itself as well as its implementation and auditing system. Some actors point out the conflict of interest inherent to a system in which logging companies contract and pay the auditors. Critics have also identified weaknesses in

social aspects of the process, such as the failure to identify and protect high conservation values that are crucial to forest communities' livelihoods; unresolved conflicts between companies and indigenous and local communities over land and user rights; and human rights violations – especially in high-risk regions such as the Congo Basin.[66] FSC certification in the Congo Basin was also found to have a negligible effect on preventing the degradation of forest quality and biodiversity.[67]

For more FSC inputs on the role of certification and comments on the findings in this report, refer to Annex 1. Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) perspectives, page 64-65.

2. Background: Congo Basin and Cameroon

Although the Congo Basin is the second-largest tropical forest in the world after the Amazon and contains more than one-quarter of the world's remaining tropical forest,[68] forest concessions and the timber sector have not been policy priorities in the region.[69] Over the last 5–10 years, economic growth in Central Africa has been primarily linked to extractive industries, and – to a lesser, albeit significant, extent – to the expansion of large-scale agricultural commodity production including palm oil, rubber and cocoa plantations. The extractive and agricultural sectors impact the Congo Basin, which spans six countries: Cameroon, Central African Republic (CAR), Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Gabon. Together, these countries contain an estimated 180 million hectares of tropical rainforests. Around 10 percent of the Congo Basin forest (over 18 million hectares of forests) is located in Cameroon, comprising approximately 40 percent of its national territory.[70]

The Congo Basin consists of rivers, forests, savannahs, and wetlands, and provides food, fresh water and shelter to over 75 million people and 150 different ethnic groups, including indigenous peoples – many of whom maintain their traditional hunter-gatherer lifestyles. Local and indigenous forest-dwelling communities depend on the health and integrity of the forest ecosystem and its high levels of biodiversity, which includes an estimated 10,000 species of tropical plants and trees – many of them endemic and not found anywhere else in the world. The region is home to 1,000 bird species, 700 species of fish, and 400 mammal species, among them endangered forest elephants, chimpanzees, bonobos, and lowland and mountain gorillas.[71]

Compared to other tropical regions, the Congo Basin forests are still relatively intact. However, if current unsustainable patterns of infrastructure development and exploitation of natural resources and timber are not addressed, its forests may be decimated by as much as 70 percent by 2040.[72]

Between 2000 and 2014, the Congo Basin region lost over 16 million hectares of forest, almost three-quarters of which was in the DRC. Cameroon's loss of 1.6 million hectares of forest was caused primarily by forest clearing for different types of agriculture (58 percent) and industrial selective logging (22 percent). Over 10 percent of its forest loss was due to large-scale agro-industrial clearing, whereas elsewhere in the region, the national figures on the percentage of deforestation from commercial

agriculture were lower. The new wave of industrial agriculture developments in the Congo Basin since 2004 means that this type of forest clearing is gaining momentum, and is likely to become a more significant contributor to future forest loss in Cameroon and across the region.[73] The government of Cameroon's plans for poverty alleviation and development highlights the potential of economic growth from large-scale agriculture and extractive sectors with implications for forest conversion and forest livelihoods.[74]

FACT

Basic facts about Cameroon

Capital: Yaoundé

Area: 475,442 km2

Population: 25.6 million

Official languages: English and French

Number of languages spoken: 247

UNDP Human Development ranking: 151 (of 189)

Life expectancy: 58 years (men), 60.9 years (women)

Maternal mortality rate: 596 deaths/100,000 live births (15th highest in the world)

Literacy rate: 75 percent

Rural population: 44 percent

Rural poverty rate: 56.8 percent

Corruption Perception Index ranking: 153 (of 180)

Sources: BBC News,[75] CIA World Factbook,[76] Echu 2004,[77] Transparency International,[78] UNDP,[79] World Bank.[80]

Conflict, repression and corruption

Despite having one of the highest literacy rates in Africa, Cameroon's economic progress has been hindered by corruption and authoritarian rule.[81] The forestry sector suffers from low transparency and accountability in the allocation of logging permits and weak efforts to consult with affected communities and stakeholders in decisions about whether to approve concession agreements.[82]

The establishment of industrial logging concessions and large-scale land acquisition for agricultural plantations has contributed to increased conflict over resources within rural communities, and between communities and companies. Due to persistent corruption and negative impacts on livelihoods and community rights to land and resources, many rural communities have negative perceptions of logging companies and state actors in the forestry sector.[83]

There have been documented cases of repression in Cameroon including arbitrary arrests of journalists, teachers, civil society activists and trade unionists, some of whom have faced military tribunals. Many of the arrested citizens were kept in custody based on false national security-related charges.[84] Some cases of intimidation, violence and judicial harassment have been directed at human rights and environment defenders seeking to assert community rights in relation to land investments.[85]

After a long period of relative peace and stability after the creation of the state of Cameroon through the unification of British and French colonies in 1961, tensions grew over the two mainly English-speaking provinces in the south-western part of the country. A secessionist movement emerged in the 1990s that became an insurgency in 2016, which has resulted in extensive violence and the internal displacement of thousands of Cameroonians. Human rights organisations have documented abuses committed by both armed separatists and government forces. Meanwhile, the far north of the country is plagued by a regional insurgency of the Islamist Boko Haram group.[86]

Poverty and the situation of children

By virtue of its relative diversity, Cameroon's economy is more resilient than those of other countries in Central Africa. Its export and trade focus on commodities such as oil and gas, timber and aluminium, and products from the agriculture and mining sectors. In spite of economic growth in some regions, the national poverty levels remained unchanged between 2007 and 2014. According to the World Bank, 5.3 million Cameroonians (23.8 percent of the population) lived below the international poverty line (1.90 USD per capita) in 2014.[87]

The poverty is most severe in rural areas, where the logging sector is a major employer. According to statistics, the number of people employed in Cameroon's formal forestry sector has been estimated to 20,000 and indirect employement from the sector could exceed 150,000 jobs.[88] The rural poor are still particularly affected by a shortage of employment, declining incomes, inadequate school and health care, and insufficient access to clean water and sanitation. Other factors that contribute to the poverty levels are insufficient investments in social safety nets and inefficient financial management in the public sector.[89]

A majority (60 percent) of Cameroon's population is under 25 years of age, a majority of whom reside in the countryside. While fertility rates are decreasing overall, they remain high among poor, rural women partly due to inadequate access to contraception. Over 11 percent of children are born to mothers aged between 15 and 19[90] – the 26th highest adolescent birth rate in the world.[91]

Cameroonian girls lag behind their male peers in access to education: 86 percent of girls were enrolled in primary school in 2013 compared to 97 percent of boys, and for lower secondary education the enrolment figures were 54 percent for girls and 64 percent for boys. This gap is due in part to poor families prioritising boys' education to girls' and because more of the domestic and agricultural work tends to be allocated to girls. In addition, some girls' schooling is interrupted by early marriage and pregnancy.[92]

In a 2017 report, the US Department of Labor stated that Cameroon has made moderate advancements towards eliminating the worst forms of child labour. However, the report states that children in Cameroon are exposed to the worst forms of child labour, including commercial sexual exploitation and performing dangerous tasks in agriculture, industry and services. According to the report, 52.7 percent of children aged 7–14 in Cameroon work and attend school.[93]

Situation for indigenous peoples

The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and other key human rights documents emphasise the right of indigenous people to identify themselves according to their distinct cultures, customs and traditions.[94] In Cameroon, persons belonging to a number of diverse groups self-identify as indigenous, and have a unique cultural and spiritual relationship with their land, forests and natural resources. For example, the traditional livelihoods of the Baka, Bakola, Bagyeli and Bedzan are based on forest hunting and gathering, while the Mbororo are principally pastoralists.[95]

Despite Cameroon's adoption of the UNDRIP in 2007, the country's indigenous communities face significant human rights challenges.[96] According to a 2018 report for the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the government's lack of adequate recognition of indigenous peoples poses a barrier to the full enjoyment of their rights. For example, while the term 'indigenous' is recognised in the Constitution of Cameroon, it does not clearly define to whom it refers.[97] Cameroon has not ratified the International Labour Organization's Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention (ILO 169).[98]

Consequently, indigenous peoples in Cameroon reportedly experience a lack of respect for their rights to land as well as inadequate processes of free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) and participation in decision-making about their forests and territories. The media and international community have highlighted cases of forced evictions in relation to forest exploitation; violence, detention and arrest; discrimination in employment; lack of access to education; prohibition from practicing traditional survival activities in the forest; and judicial harassment of indigenous human rights defenders.[99]

Forestry in Cameroon

The bulk of the country's forest area has been permanently allocated to long-term forest management and production or conservation, and a smaller area has been earmarked for small-scale community forestry activities. The forest sector contributes around 6 percent of Cameroon's gross domestic product and makes up approximately 30 percent of the value of non-oil exports.[100]

As of 2017, Cameroon had allocated 111 concessions in an area of 7.1 million hectares to forestry companies for selective logging in Forest Management Units (FMUs) in areas classified as permanent forest domain. 65 percent of the active concessions had

approved Forest Management Plans. 1.1 million hectares – equivalent to 16 percent of the total area under concession agreements – had obtained FSC certification.[101] As of November 2018, only one FSC certificate remained active, and the size of the certified area was just over 340,000 hectares, which translates to approximately 5 percent of the total area under forest concession agreements.[102]

Outside of concession areas in non-permanent forests, in accordance with its 1994 Forest Law, Cameroon promotes community forest management in order to support sustainable forest management while promoting local development. As of 2011, across the country 301 community forests covering over 1 million hectares had some type of community management agreement in place.[103]

Area of dense forests (million hectares)	**Area under forest concessions** (million hectares)	**Area under forest concessions with a management plan** (area in million hectares / % of all concessions)	**FSC-certified concessions** (area in million hectares / % of all concessions)
6.4	**7.1**	**5.1 (72%)**	**1.1 (16%)**

Table 1: Key information about Cameroon's forestry sector.
Source: Karsenty and Ferron 2017.

Note: As of November 2018, the area of FSC certified concessions in Cameroon had decreased to 341,708 hectares, which corresponds to approximately 5 percent of all concessions (Forest Stewardship Council (FSC). Website. Facts and Figures, retrieved November 2018).

Illegal logging

Illegal logging in Cameroon declined by approximately 50 percent during the early 2000s, according to the UK think tank Chatham House.[104] The decrease in illegal practices occurred entirely in supply chains for industrial timber production aimed for export. There appeared to be a simultaneous increase in small-scale illegal logging for the domestic market.[105] A 2015 follow-up study based on data from 2013 found that Cameroon's response to illegal logging had stalled since 2010. Government, private sector and civil society actors interviewed for the follow-up study estimated that illegally produced logs accounted for 20–50 percent of total production. The study found that enforcement and monitoring information systems were weak, corruption remained widespread, and there was insufficient political determination to instigate change.[106] Research on the implementation of EU Timber Regulation enforcement in 2015–2016 showed that Cameroon was one of the top five sources of illegal timber imported to the EU, together with China, Brazil, Myanmar and the Republic of Congo.[107]

The studies found that logging companies operating in Cameroon, had taken steps towards ensuring legality, by increasing the area of forests with verification of lega-

lity and chain-of-custody certification. In supply chains for timber export, timber from so-called small permits and from Ventes de Coup concessions was found to be particularly prone to illegal practices. Since timber supplies from these types of logging were expected to increase as a result of pressures on forests from other sectors such as agriculture and mining, the study highlighted these illegal practices as a key concern for the future. Finally, it was noted that since the 2000s, Cameroon's timber trade has changed focus from EU to Chinese export markets – a development that will have implications for future strategies on how to best address illegal logging in the country.[108]

As part of its trade and cooperation efforts to address illegal logging, Cameroon is a Voluntary Partnership Agreement partner country under the EU FLEGT initiative.[109] An active NGO platform – the Community and Forest Platform on the Renewal of Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade Voluntary Partnership Agreement between Cameroon and the EU[110] – has played a key role in preparations and negotiations for FLEGT Voluntary Partnership Agreements.[111] A number of Cameroonian NGOs are currently active in independent monitoring of illegal logging as part of global Independent Forest Monitoring efforts that were initiated in 2003 when the first EU FLEGT Action Plan was published.[112]

Concessions and obligations to communities

Production forests in Cameroon are classified by the government as either permanent forests, with land allocated to permanent forest cover, or non-permanent forests, where the land may be cleared and converted to agriculture or used for infrastructure or other projects and developments.[113] Actors in the forest sector in Cameroon, including logging companies, are to adhere to the Forest Law from 1994[114], which governs forest, wildlife and fisheries systems. There are additional legal instruments, which lay out rules for company revenue sharing with communities.[115]

Permits in the form of 'exploitation agreements' are given to companies for long-term selective logging within Forest Management Units (FMUs) in permanent state forests. Each FMU is further divided into logging concessions called 'Annual Allowable Cuts'. The permits typically last for up to 30 years[116] and concessionaires in FMUs and their operators are obliged to maintain permanent forest cover.[117] Short-term Ventes de Coup permits are given to operators for timber extraction in an area of maximum 2,500 hectares in non-permanent forests, covering a 3-year period. According to Cameroonian law, a percentage of the area-based Annual Forestry Royalty paid by companies in both FMUs and Vente de Coupes must be redistributed back to local communities. For Ventes de Coupe, a proportion of volume-based stumpage fees should also be paid to local communities.[118]

For both long-term permits in Forest Management Units, and short-term permits in Ventes de Coup, the Exploitation Agreement should detail what types and amount of social infrastructure and other contributions the company will provide to the local communities. According to the law, the information on company obligations vis-à-vis communities should be included in the Social Clauses (Cahier de Charge) section in the Terms and Conditions of the Exploitation Agreement, referring to agreements

made with communities during an official information meeting before the start of operations. The minutes from the meeting should be signed by local Ministry of Forests and Wildlife officials and representatives of the local government. However, in practice, the Cahiers de Charge often merely contains a standard formulation referring to the minutes from information meetings – without the minutes actually being attached to the agreement.[119] This means that, even in cases where companies did promise benefits to communities during information meetings, without the minutes included in the Exploitation Agreement, it would be hard for communities to hold companies accountable to their commitments.

In accordance with Cameroonian law, communities living within or adjacent to an FMU are guaranteed customary rights to hunting, and collection of non-timber forest products inside the concessions, sometimes under restrictions. Normally agriculture activities are constrained in FMUs, except in cases where a Memorandum of Understanding is established between a logging company, communities and local state representatives, which may allow small-scale farmers to maintain cultivation areas inside the FMU.[120]

3. Swedwatch and CED investigations in Cameroon

In Cameroon's tropical forest areas, where employment opportunities and government services such as clean water, health care and schooling often are insufficient, long-term, sustainable forestry operations have the potential to create new jobs and contribute to local economic growth and sustainable development. At the same time, if risks for negative consequences for communities are not properly assessed and mitigated – as seen in case studies from Cameroon and other tropical forest-exporting countries – logging can undermine forest livelihoods and lead to human rights abuses. Diminished access to land and forests and the impacts on animal populations and non-timber forest products often result in the impoverishment of local communities, especially for indigenous peoples and poor households dependent on traditional hunting, collection of forest products and subsistence agriculture.

The rights of vulnerable groups such as children, women and indigenous peoples are more likely to be impacted when logging operations lead to an influx of workers into forest-dependent communities. When logging roads are constructed through forest areas, this leads to easier access to resources – for both local communities and poachers. Typically, the extraction of wildlife increases, as well as competition and conflicts between local hunters and outsiders.

Cameroon has experienced a strong increase in conversion logging for the establishment of large-scale agriculture projects in recent years. For communities, this trend means that the forest ecosystems that they depend on for their livelihoods are cleared and permanently transformed into privately owned plantations, for example to produce rubber or palm oil.

In order to investigate the benefits and impacts of logging and the influx of workers on forest-based livelihoods and human rights, and to highlight the need for broad-based community consultation and proactive due diligence measures by companies, Swedwatch conducted investigations in Djoum and Ma'an – two sub-districts located in Cameroon's South Province – in May and June 2018. Ten local and indigenous communities that border three different types of logging operations were interviewed regarding their perspectives on the negative impacts and benefits from logging. To assess the extent of company consultation and the involvement of local communities in decision-making processes, the investigations also focused on related processes within the reviewed operations.

Figures 2 and 3 show the concession areas for the three forestry operations that affect the interviewed communities in this study. Many of the local and indigenous communities that live in the two sub-districts visited for this study are located near selective logging projects in permanent forest estates that border national protected areas, which feature unique animals, plants and forest ecosystems.

FACT

Djoum forests and communities

Djoum is part of the Dja-and-Lobo sub-division, and borders Gabon to the south. A number of logging concessions surround the Dja Biosphere Reserve, which is a national protected area and a designated UNESCO World Heritage site. The local communities in the area mostly belong to the Fang ethnic Bantu group. For many of them, agriculture is their main source of livelihood, and their communities are located close to the major roads through the area. The indigenous Baka communities in this area are partly settled in permanent villages. However, they still depend to a large extent on the forests for traditional hunting, and collection of forest products such as honey, wild fruit and yams, caterpillars and snails. In recent decades, the Baka have gradually started to practice subsistence agriculture.[121]

The biodiversity levels and the quality of the forests in Djoum's concessions for selective logging, as well as inside the Dja forest reserve, have suffered a significant decline in recent decades. The affected communities were not adequately consulted before the limits of the permanent forest estates were established, and there has been limited community involvement in managing these forests. While traditional hunting for household needs has been carefully regulated within the reserve, organised commercial poaching by outsiders, to feed the demand for bushmeat in Cameroonian cities, continues.[122]

FACT

Ma'an forests, communities, and new development projects

Ma'an, a sub-district in the Vallée-du-Ntem department that shares its southern border with Equatorial Guinea, hosts a number of selective logging operations. Some logging concessions border the Campo-Ma'an National Park, which is an environmental compensation zone. It was created in 1999 to offset forest and biodiversity loss and the negative environmental impacts resulting from the construction of a large oil pipeline project in the neighbouring Ocean Division – also in the South Region. The rich biodiversity in Campo-Ma'an's protected area, which includes populations of chimpanzees, gorillas and elephants, is under threat from the combined impacts of many large development projects focusing on infrastructure, extractives and commercial agriculture. Many of the projects involve the construction of more roads through the area and a large influx of workers. An international civil society organisation working in the area has proposed a strategic environmental assessment to assess and illustrate the cumulative impacts on biodiversity resulting from these projects.[123]

The local communities in Ma'an belong to six main Bantu ethnic groups, which are principally sedentary, residing permanently in one area: Batanga, Iyassa, Mabi, Mvae, Boulu and Ntumu. The Bagyeli-Bakola ethnic group comprises a range of communities that identify as indigenous peoples, and whose traditional livelihoods focus on hunting and gathering.[124] Since 2015 these communities' lives and livelihoods have been impacted not only by the selective logging projects and the restrictions on access and livelihoods activities inside the protected area, but also by the short-term conversion logging operations in the 39 Vente de Coup concessions described in this study. In the coming years, the impacts on the communities may be further compounded by an influx of workers to the planned extension of the Sudcam rubber plantation, and to possible iron mining projects being identified as part of an ongoing iron ore exploration project.[125]

This section discusses the following types of logging operations undertaken in the study area:

Short-term conversion logging for rubber plantation: Logging by smaller Cameroonian and Asian companies to convert forest areas to large-scale agriculture projects by the Singapore-based company Halcyon Agri's subsidiary Sud-Cameroun Hévéa S.A. (Sudcam).[126]

Long-term, legality certified forestry: Selective logging and sawmill by the French Rougier Group's 65 percent owned Cameroonian subsidiary Société Forestière et Industrielle de la Doumé (SFID) in a joint venture with the Cameroonian operator Ets. MPACKO J.P. (Rougier).[127]

Long-term, forest management certified forestry: Selective logging and sawmill operated by the Dutch Wijma Group's fully owned Cameroonian subsidiary Scieb Sarl (Wijma).[128]

- In order to ensure balanced perspectives on the short-term logging and the establishment of the Sudcam rubber plantation, the Singapore-based rubber company Halcyon Agri has reviewed the information presented in this section. In late 2018 the company informed Swedwatch that they had recently published a new sustainability policy. Further, the company had instructed the SudCam management teams to cease clearing and felling activities until a new multi-stakeholder council, to be established in Cameroon, had conducted necessary inquiries.[129]

- For the sections on the two long-term logging operations, Swedwatch reviewed Rougier's and Wijma's publicly available sustainability policies and information. The companies were consulted and given the opportunity to provide their views and comments on the findings from the community interviews. A summary of the information and their inputs is presented in Section 4.

The two sections 'Short-term logging for conversion to rubber' and 'Long-term selective logging' below present more information about the companies, concessions and logging activities for each of the three logging and forestry operations, followed by summaries of research findings and community voices. At the beginning of each results section, relevant international agreements and norms are summarised for comparison to the study results. A full overview of the norms is available in Annex 2: Norms for analysis of study results, page 66-70.

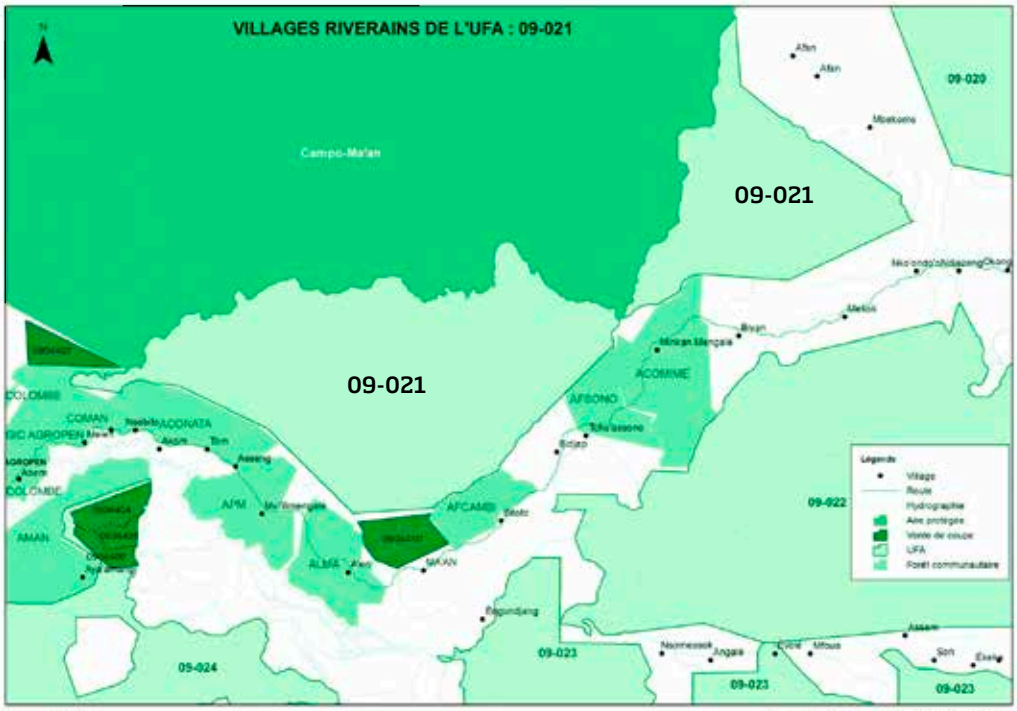

Figure 2: Wijma's concession area in Forest Management Unit 09-021 in Ma'an sub-district.

Note: The map denotes where Wijma conducted logging activities until its exit in 2017.

Source: Centre for Environment and Development.

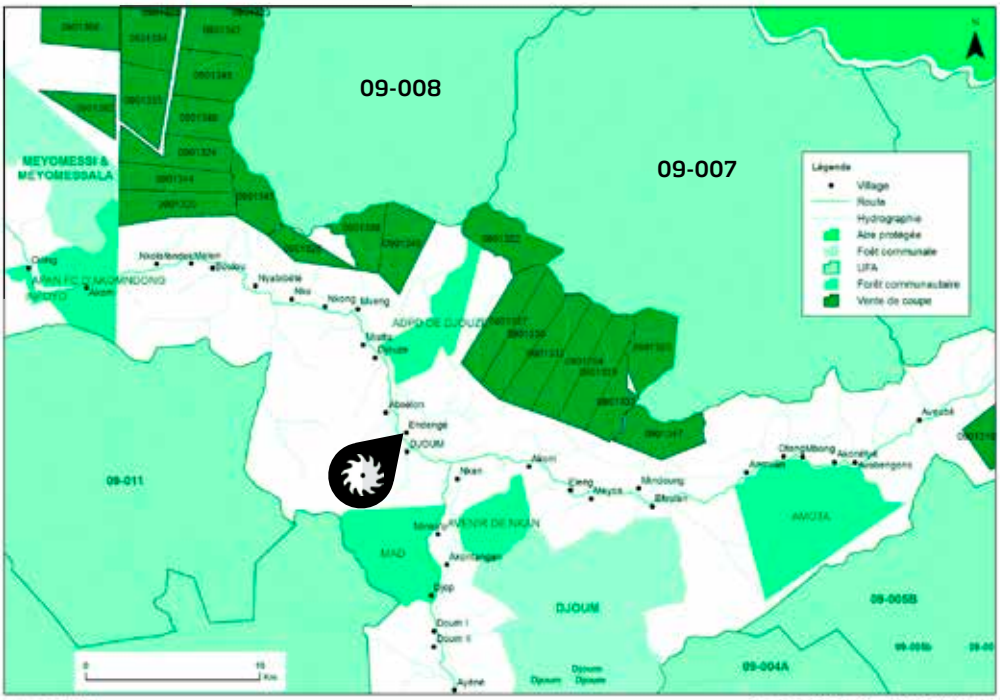

Figure 3: Rougier's concession area in Forest Management Units 09-007 and 09-008 in Djoum sub-district.

Note: The map shows where Rougier conducted logging activities until its exit in 2018. The saw blade symbol shows the location of the sawmill, which is no longer operational. The Ventes de Coup concessions where smaller Asian and Cameroonian operators obtained logging permits for the period 2015–2018 are shown in darker colour. According to Halcyon Agri, the Vente de Coupe operators have no business links to the rubber company Sudcam or its Singaporean parent company Halcyon Agri.

Sources: Centre for Environment and Development; Halcyon Agri News release 27 April 2018. Halcyon Agri's response to Greenpeace and Earthsight reports on our SUDCAM operations next to the Dja Faunal Reserve in Cameroon, West Africa.

SHORT-TERM LOGGING FOR CONVERSION TO RUBBER

The short-term conversion logging for rubber plantation reviewed in this study involved a large number of smaller Cameroonian and Asian companies and their sub-contractors, which were engaged in short-term logging operations in 39 Vente de Coup concession areas for the period 2015–2018 in Djoum sub-district.[130] Under Cameroonian law, a maximum of 2,500 hectares can be allocated under each permit of operation.[131] The purpose of the logging is to clear land for the Singapore-based Halcyon Agri's subsidiary Sud-Cameroun Hévéa S.A. (Sudcam) to expand its rubber plantation, which was under development at the time of writing. No activities to start the plantation of rubber had begun in Djoum as of December 2018.[132]

The interviewees from communities in Djoum sub-district highlighted two key issues. Firstly, they shared their views on the small-scale logging operations in the Vente de Coup concessions. Secondly, they voiced concerns regarding the potential future impact of the rubber enterprise to be developed on the cleared land in the coming years.[133]

FACT

Sudcam rubber plantation project

Sudcam's rubber plantation is being established across a large concession area spanning Djoum, Mayomessala and Meyomessi sub-districts – all in Dja-et-Lobo district in South Region.[134] Together with a similar project in another part of Cameroon, the business group states that its Cameroon rubber plantations form the largest in the world.[135]

The Sudcam plantation, which consists of three parts referred to as 'North', 'Central' and 'South', covers 58,931 hectares.[136] As of April 2018, according to Sudcam's parent company Halcyon Agri, the North concession was fully established and active, and the Central concession was under construction. The company clarified that the South concession remained undeveloped, and that Sudcam only had a provisional concession covering an area of 13,000 hectares.[137]

According to the business group, 8,000 hectares have already been planted with rubber, in areas not adjacent to the interviewed communities in this study, and the first tapping of latex – the milky fluid extracted from the stem of the rubber trees – took place in April 2018. Through a large-scale plantation programme, the group intends to increase the area of land used for rubber production to its maximum capacity of 27,000 hectares over the next 15 years. The Sudcam latex processing factory is expected to be fully functional by the first quarter of 2019 and will be followed by the construction of a second factory in 2019.[138]

The communities interviewed for this study live adjacent to the Central and South concessions. Thus, their perspectives focus on the impacts to date of the ongoing plantation establishment in the Central concession and the potential future development of a rubber plantation in the South concession.

Criticism of Sudcam rubber plantation and company responses

Researchers and civil society organisations have criticised Halcyon Agri for the severe impacts its operations have had on forests, biodiversity, dispossession of community land and human rights – including those of indigenous Baka people. The expansion of the plantation involves clearing tens of thousands of hectares of natural forests.[139] Further, the demarcated forest areas are adjacent to the Dja Faunal Reserve national park discussed above, which threatens its rich biodiversity and protected species. While the rubber plantation project may create employment for local residents, many of the affected communities are not eligible for compensation for the loss of their customary land under Cameroonian law.[140]

Since 2011, Sudcam has cleared more than 10,000 hectares of dense tropical forest – an area the size of Paris – to establish its rubber plantation.[141] From 2017 to 2018, the rate of clearing accelerated to an area of almost ten football pitches per day. In addition to the impacts of clearing, the influx of rubber plantation workers and their families is likely to increase the extraction of wildlife and forest products from the Dja Faunal Reserve and disturb the fauna. The buffer zone around the protected area, which should be 5 km to ensure minimal disturbance, is only 100–200 m in many places. This means that the rubber plantation will be developed in very close proximity to the sensitive protected forest area.[142]

Local communities have been displaced from their customary land without adequate compensation, and indigenous communities have been evicted from their indigenous territories

and their settlements destroyed – all in breach of international human rights norms such as the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and International Labour Organization's Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention (ILO 169). Sudcam's Environmental and Social Impact Assessment from 2011, and subsequent assessments of High Conservation Values, were not conducted in line with good international practice.[143]

In 2018 Halcyon Agri responded publicly[144] to the criticism and described its commitment to an environmental and social programme devised to minimise any negative impacts. The business group highlighted the following points in their response:

- Sudcam is in full compliance with Cameroonian government frameworks, including the Dja Reserve Development Plan.
- The company has not violated community rights or other provisions under Cameroonian law.
- Sudcam does not log any forests. All logging activities are carried out by entities unrelated to Sudcam or Halcyon Agri. The plantation activities carried out by Sudcam start with the clearing and subsequent rehabilitation of logged landscapes.
- Sudcam and Halcyon Agri do not have special ties to the Cameroonian government, nor do they support a political party.

In December 2018 Halcyon Agri informed Swedwatch that it had recently published a Natural Rubber Supply Chain Policy, and a trip report by WWF with recommendations on for example local grievance mechanisms, and review of impact assessments carried out to date, with a special focus on land, livelihoods and food security issues.[145]

Illegal logging

As part of Cameroon's efforts to stem illegal logging (i.e., practices related to harvesting, processing and trade in timber and timber products that are in breach of national or sub-national laws), in 2017 independent monitoring missions in Djoum detected and verified cases of logging that violate national law by Cameroonian and Asian operators in some of the 39 Ventes de Coup concessions.[146] The main types of illegalities found by the monitoring team[147] were: (i) logging titles were illegally issued for concession areas, which were not listed under the approved areas for the extension of the Sudcam rubber plantation. The mission documented a number of active illegal logging sites in these concessions; (ii) operators harvested logs outside the concession boundaries, and fraudulently marked them with ID numbers referring to approved concessions – a practice commonly referred to as 'timber laundering'; (iii) unmarked logs were found in active illegal logging sites; (iv) illegal opening up of logging roads and tracks in order to access illegal logging areas; and (v) no credible information was provided on volumes taken out, making it difficult for villages to determine remuneration in the form of stumpage fees per cubic meter of timber extracted.

In addition to counteracting efforts to achieve SDGs on climate protection and the sustainable management of forests, illegal logging undermines the achievement of a number of SDGs on ending poverty and hunger for the over one and a half billion people whose livelihoods depend on forests. Illegal logging is linked to weak governance, decreases in government revenue from logging and the exacerbation of conflict in many fragile states, counteracting the achievement of SDG 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions. (For detailed norms, see Annex 2. Norms for analysis of study results, page 66-70)

SWEDWATCH AND CED FINDINGS

During Swedwatch interviews in the five selected communities in Djoum, some respondents volunteered information on the logging operations in the Ventes de Coupe concessions. According to one interviewee, the government advertised for bids in 2015, and negotiated the agreements with the companies, which were then valid for 3 years.

A second interviewee stated that at the time of the interview in mid-2018, the local logging company operating in his area should have ceased its operations 2 months previously, when the concession agreement expired. Seemingly in breach of the agreement, the company continued to harvest logs illegally through informal arrangements with some community members. The community had tried to draw the authorities' attention to this problem, but have not been content with the response to date:

"In 2016, my community, with support from the village chief, wrote to regional authorities to report on an illegal company which refused to identify themselves to us. Four months later we received a response that our letter was not a valid complaint since it was not supported by the whole community."

Interviewees who provided information on illegal logging to Swedwatch underlined that there were operators in the area that engaged in logging with no permits or authorization, in apparent breach of national forest legislation.

"Some sub-contractors logging in our area are not registered and have no license for exploration", said one local villager.

Lack of information & uncertain benefits

The fact that Vente de Coup companies in Cameroon are not required by law to carry out any assessments of the environment and social impacts constitutes a substantial risk for illegalities.[148] When no impact assessment is carried out, or where communities are not properly consulted, affected communities are left without adequate information about the potential impacts on their forest-based livelihoods.

In a standard agreement format for terms and conditions – called 'Cahier de Charge' – for Vente de Coup permits, agreed between the EU and Cameroon, the concessionaires are obligated to contribute to community development and social infrastructure. However, the formulations of the social obligations are often generic, and do

not include details on specific company contributions. In addition, the Cameroon Forestry Law does not clearly support these obligations for Vente de Coup companies.[149] An operator is legally required to hold an information meeting with local communities before the start of logging operations, during which the social obligations should be agreed and form part of the signed minutes.[150] In practice, the responsible government officers and companies often fail to share these social obligations with communities, which are left with no information on the company's obligations to contribute to their community development needs.[151]

Public access to information and inclusive, participatory decision-making are at the core of SDG 16 on peaceful, inclusive societies and access to justice for all. Human rights law and international norms on corporate responsibility reiterate that citizens and business-affected communities have the right to information, consultation and participation in decision-making about their lives and their environment. One key aim of these norms is to promote "governance by disclosure" in efforts to facilitate a shift toward an environmentally responsible society. (For detailed norms, see Annex 2. Norms for analysis of study results, page 66-70)

SWEDWATCH AND CED FINDINGS

According to an interviewed community member, only one of the Vente de Coup companies held an official information meeting before the start of its operations, as required by national legislation. During this meeting the company detailed how much the communities would receive in stumpage fees per cubic meter of timber extracted. The communities presented their priorities for company community contributions. Another interviewee described how this meeting showed that the company in question did not intend to maintain good communication and relationships with the communities.

"At this meeting the company distributed food to everyone, but that doesn't really help our community and our forest. And the other small operators did not even hold a meeting before the onset of their operations."

In the opinion of a young male community member interviewed for the study, the small-scale operators are not honest in their communication with communities.

"These companies 'play with words' and postpone the benefits they have promised. Then they leave. In the local language, the same words are used for 'short-term' operation and 'illegal logging' – to the communities it seems like one and the same."

The local NGO Appui à l'Auto Promotion et Insertion des Femmes, des Jeunes et Désœuvrés (APIFED) informed Swedwatch that the Vente de Coupe operators' communications with communities were mostly informal. Consequently, it was difficult for the communities to hold the companies accountable for the volume of timber harvested and taken out, and therefore they could not be sure that they had been properly compensated at the amount agreed to in the official information meeting. Also, the speed at which the Vente de Coupe projects were approved and implemented made it difficult for the NGO to support communities in the dialogue.

"Some communities brought maps of their forests to the meeting. These maps have been developed through a participatory process and they show how the households use different forest areas and resources. The communities wanted to show these maps and use them as a basis for negotiations on compensation for logging impacts with the companies. But the Vente de Coupe logging was implemented so fast, the communities couldn't stand their ground and make their claims in time.", said the APIFED representative.

Another interviewed community member explained that the villagers who have individual agreements with the operators do not have the appropriate equipment to be able to double-check the harvested volumes. The respondent explained that, because of the uncertainty in the measurement of timber volumes, the community cannot be sure it is receiving the agreed level of remuneration. In some cases, the company does not want to purchase the harvested timber in the end and logs are left behind. The compensation for logging damage to crops and trees, for example, is through informal dialogue, which weakens the communities' ability to access fair compensation.

Uncertain community benefits from future Sudcam rubber plantation

During the research, a number of interviewees shared their doubts regarding future benefits and employment opportunities in the Sudcam rubber plantation, which was to be established on the cleared land. One of the interviewed communities had received a proposal from Sudcam outlining that the plantation starts as close as 2.7 kilometers from the village. The community had made a counter-offer and suggested that the plantation should be at least 15 kilometers away in order to ensure that their requirements for agriculture land for the next generation be secured.

"This company is not giving any firm promises on future employment, and we have heard from other villages that the work is hard and the salaries low. We prefer to continue to engage in agriculture and hunting", said the village chief.

The village chief added that he was also concerned about the very long project time frame for the rubber plantation.

"In the Forest Management Units, the companies are given logging concessions for 30 years, but the government is granting the rubber company rights to the land for 99 years", he concluded.

The local NGO APIFED stated during an interview with Swedwatch that it had provided support to this and other communities in the negotiations, using participatory maps which showed how the Sudcam expansion impacted on agriculture plots and forest resources. The APIFED representative added that some communities have experienced even more severe impacts on their land and livelihoods, with the delineation of the rubber plantation only 1.5 km from their villages.

A leader from another village had great concerns for the future in light of the new proposed developments in the area.

"We are concerned about the rubber plantation; we don't know but maybe Sudcam will use our land as well."

According to this local leader, once community forest land is cleared, the government can decide about new projects and developments over the heads of the communities.

"When there are no trees left in the forest, the government will decide, and it will depend on the individual investor whether our rights are respected or not."

He concluded by stating that in his opinion, only secure rights to land for cultivation could provide a stable future for him and his children.

"As an employee in a logging project or a rubber plantation you have no security, even if you work hard."

LONG-TERM SELECTIVE LOGGING

The first Forest Management Plans for selective logging operations were developed in the 1990s, followed by the emergence of FSC certification of operations in some concessions starting in the 2000s.[152] The case study in this report illustrates a region-wide trend in Congo Basin selective logging, where European logging companies are selling their operations to Asian investors, which have substantial capital and export to markets that accept lower-quality wood derived from a larger number of tree species.[153]

Rougier's and Wijma's long-term forestry operations presented in this study are examples of logging operations initiated during the 2000s, which had management plans and different types of certification in place. The companies obtained permits for a maximum 30 years of operations.[154]

The Dutch logging company Wijma obtained voluntary FSC Forest Management Certification for its logging activities in Ma'an subdistrict (described in this study) from 2005 to 2017. French Rougier started its operations in Djoum sub-district without certification and then secured FSC chain-of-custody certification, for the years 2014–2017. Table 2 compares the key characteristics of the two operations.

FACT

Wijma and Rougier exit from concessions during research process

During the course of the research for this report, Swedwatch and CED were informed that Wijma and Rougier did not renew their FSC certification and exited their concessions in 2017 and 2018, respectively. After filing for bankruptcy in March 2018,[155] in July of the same year Rougier sold all of its subsidiaries and forestry activities in Cameroon and the Central African Republic to the Cameroon-based business group Société de distribution nouvelle d'Afrique (Sodinaf).[156] Rougier explained that it was exiting a complicated situation with many challenges, and that a social plan was being developed and implemented during the second half of 2018. The company did not share details with Swedwatch on what this plan entailed.[157] Wijma did not publicly comment on the reasons for its exit from the Ma'an concession 09-021 or its sale of the operation to the Hong Kong-registered company Vicwood.

According to media and academic reports, the challenges leading to Rougier's exit from Cameroon include common, generic problems for the export sector, such as difficulties in shipping the timber to its export destinations caused by the limited capacity and delays in the main export port in Douala. Further, there are delays from the government side in reimbursing companies for VAT payments. In addition, Rougier and Wijma had both engaged in low-intensive logging focusing on a few specific timber species such as sapele and azobé. The decline and slow regrowth of these species affected the profitability of the two operations and is thought to be another factor leading to the companies' exits.[158]

The results sections below summarise key findings on logging benefits, impacts and community participation in decision-making from interviews with five communities living near the Rougier operation, and five communities located adjacent to Wijma's logging operation. At the beginning of each results section, there is a summary of international agreements and norms for comparison; the full overview of norms can be found in Annex 2. Norms for analysis of study results, page 66-70.

Name of operation in this study	Location	Business activities, concession	Operating business entities in focus of this study (active as of 2017)	Neighbouring communities	Key characteristics of logging operation
Rougier's legality-certified forestry project in Djoum	Djoum sub-district, Dja et Lobo district	Selective logging and sawmill activities in concessions Forest Management Unit 09-007 and 09-008	The French Rougier Group's 65 percent owned Cameroonian subsidiary SFID in JV with the Cameroonian operator Ets. MPACKO J.P. *Since 2018, Rougier Group is no longer an owner of SFID.*	22 neighbouring communities with a total population of 5,070 in 2006	• FSC chain-of-custody certification obtained in 2014 • Rougier sold the concessions to the Cameroonian company Société de Distribution Nouvelle d'Afrique (Sodinaf) in 2018 • Sodinaf started small-scale operations in September 2018
Wijma's forest management certified forestry project in Ma'an	Ma'an sub-district, Vallée-du-Ntem district	Selective logging and sawmill activities in concession Forest Management Unit 09-021	The Dutch Wijma Group's fully owned Cameroonian subsidiary Scieb Sarl. *Since 2017, Wijma is no longer an owner of Scieb Sarl.*	Not listed in management plan tables or narratives	• FSC Forest Management certification obtained in 2005 • Wijma sold the concession to Hong Kong-registered Vicwood Group in 2017 • No forestry activities were ongoing in 2018

Table 2: Overview of the three forestry operations' locations within Cameroon's South Region, business activities, companies, affected communities and key characteristics.

Sources: Rougier's forest management plan (Groupe Forêt Ressources Management (FRM Group), SFID, UFA 09-007 & 09-008 Plan d'Aménagement, Periode 2006 à 2035, 2009); Wijma's forest management plan (FORM Ecology Consultants SARL, Wijma Douala S.A.R.L., Plan d'Aménagement Durable, UFA 09-021, 9 December 2004); information from the two companies' websites.

Impacts on forest livelihoods, environment and health

Where logging operations are illegal or unsustainable, Cameroon's local and indigenous communities experience negative impacts on their forest-based livelihoods. Although selective logging causes less damage to the canopy than clear felling, it has both direct and indirect negative impacts on the environment. Logging companies often construct roads and tracks into large forest areas in order to be able to log and extract selected species and individual trees. Both logging activities and road construction have physical impacts on the forest and facilitate access to forest areas for poachers engaged in the local bushmeat trade. As a result, communities' agriculture plantations in the forest, and their access to meat and forest foods for subsistence and small-scale trade, are impacted negatively.[159]

The use of heavy logging machines, which compact the soil and create grooves in the soft soil of the tropical forest floor, can affect local water quality. Deforested and degraded areas also experience higher daily temperatures, as well as a higher frequency of temperature extremes, and reduced rainfall.[160] Logging in Cameroon is likely to produce similar changes in local weather patterns, which has implications for local communities' well-being and agricultural yields.

Globally, there is well-documented and recognised risk that projects such as mining, infrastructure and logging can lead to an influx of workers into remote areas with rural communities, and may bring Sexually Transmitted Diseases, including HIV/AIDS. Transmission of these communicable diseases are linked to a number of factors including workers' sexual behaviour patterns, power relationships and interaction between workers and community members.[161] Key principles for safeguarding against this type of health impact are to assess and manage risks on an on-going basis throughout the project implementation, and to incorporate mitigation measures into operators' contract clauses.[162]

In line with international norms, companies have a responsibility to ensure that their operations 'do no harm' to local inhabitants and the environment. For companies in the logging sector, this responsibility entails a duty to sustainably manage forests and protect biodiversity, ecosystem services and climate stability. These are all necessary prerequisites for community livelihoods and a healthy and sustainable environment. Through an ongoing cycle of human rights and environment due diligence, businesses must proactively assess and mitigate the potential negative impacts of their operations on forests, the environment and human rights, and provide remedy where impacts have already occurred. Responsible businesses must ensure that – at a minimum – their operations do not counteract or undermine the achievement of the SDGs on ending poverty and hunger, ensuring clean water, good health and well-being for forest communities. (For detailed norms, see Annex 2. Norms for analysis of study results, page 66-70).

SWEDWATCH AND CED FINDINGS

One important finding from the interviews – which was repeated univocally and underlined by all ten communities – was that logging operations had led to a significant decrease in forest foods and non-timber forest products. According to the interviewees, shrinking populations of wild animals, as well as a decrease in the availability of wild fruits and medicinal plants, have had a negative impact on forest-based livelihoods.

An interviewed village leader described how logging has reduced wildlife populations in the area. He clarified that before Rougier arrived, local people only hunted for private consumption with the use of traps. After the logging operation began, hunting with guns became common, which increased the efficiency of the extraction and multiplied the pressure on many species of animals.

Four of ten communities reported that the establishment of logging roads had led to a large influx of people from other areas who engaged in poaching, and three of these communities described competition and the rise of conflicts between local hunters and poachers from other areas.

Swedwatch interviewed a young man who grew up in a village adjacent to Rougier's logging operation in Djoum sub-district. He described how, when he was a small boy, there used to be wild animals just behind his house:

"When I was little, snakes were common in our forest, but now they are hard to find. It's the same with gorillas, chimpanzees and elephants – they have disappeared from our area. Now you can only find them really far from the village."

According to this interviewee, the decrease in wildlife is due in large part to Rougier's construction of roads and tracks through the forest:

"Now the poachers can drive into the forest on the new logging roads without being seen, and they engage local hunters and give them guns to hunt wild game", said the young man.

Four of the interviewed communities reported that the establishment of FMUs – where the establishment of new small-scale agriculture is prohibited – had stopped much-needed expansion of their agricultural areas in response to ongoing population increases. Another factor affecting small-scale agriculture was that six out of ten communities stated that after the logging, the micro-climate in their area had changed. Some had observed stronger winds when many of the larger trees were gone, and more irregular weather patterns that affected their yields of vegetables, fruit and other crops cultivated for household subsistence needs and cash income.

According to eight of the ten communities, the companies' logging activities caused water logging and compaction of soil, as well as pollution of water courses. According to a number of communities, the quality of the drinking water had deteriorated and there had been negative impacts on freshwater fish and shrimp populations. One community was suffering from increased numbers of mosquitoes, which bred in stagnant pools of water created by the use of heavy logging machines close to the village, with the potential of increasing mosquito-borne diseases such as malaria.

According to the interviewed communities, the influx of workers affected the prevalence of communicable diseases in both logging areas. Six communities – five of which had accommodated logging workers in their villages – reported an emergence of Sexually Transmitted Diseases and HIV/AIDS after the onset of logging. According to the interviewees, this was linked to the influx of workers and the contact between them and local women and girls. Four communities that did not accommodate logging workers in their villages, including the two indigenous communities, did not raise this issue during the interviews. Communities in Djoum sub-district reported that awareness-raising activities on HIV/AIDS prevention had been conducted across the logging area.

Impacts on girls' rights

Swedwatch was unable to locate reports on the extent of the problem of sexual exploitation[163] of local girls by logging company workers, even after reviewing the international literature and asking Cameroonian experts.[164] Swedwatch did not focus research on this aspect and it was clear that further research and analysis is needed. However, based on international lessons learned elsewhere, the influx of logging workers into often remote forest areas increases the risk of sexual exploitation of children and women, with risks for child pregnancies and interrupted schooling. Girls from poor households and indigenous girls are especially at risk, as shown in severe, documented cases from other tropical logging countries such as Malaysia and the Solomon Islands.[165] The human rights risks for girls from logging are likely similar to mining sector cases from several countries in Africa.[166] Girls living in rural areas of Cameroon where logging, mining and infrastructure projects are being carried out, are likely to face risks similar to those described in international literature.

There is a lack of data on the number of children at risk of negative impacts from business operations in rural areas in Cameroon.[167] During a 2017 meeting of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child focusing on the situation of children in Cameroon, experts raised concerns about the negative impacts of large extraction and logging operations on children's rights.[168]

Although there are general provisions in Cameroon's penal law that may cover these issues, it is unclear whether laws or policies are efficient to protect children and ensure business accountability.[169, 170] (For detailed norms, see Annex 2. Norms for analysis of study results, page 66-70).

Empowerment and an end to violence against girls and women are at the core of SDG 5 on gender equality, while SDG 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions contains provisions on ending child abuse and exploitation in all forms. The corporate responsibility to respect the rights of all children under 18 to protection from sexual abuse and exploitation by business staff, and staff of business partners, is clearly described in the UNICEF Children's Right and Business Principles. International good practice standards, including the FSC certification standard, advocate the evaluation and management of the social risks and impacts from operations, based on consultations with all affected groups.

SWEDWATCH AND CED FINDINGS

Six out of ten communities in the study described sexually exploitative relationships, stating that logging company workers had engaged in sexual relations with girls aged 12 to 17. During interviews, community members described that the implications were that many of the affected girls had dropped out of school, and in a number of cases became pregnant. In each of the six communities that raised the issue, it was described as one of the significant negative impacts from the forestry operations, and the finding was confirmed by community leaders. The communities, which reported on this issue, had all accommodated logging workers in their villages, while the four communities that did not raise this issue during the interviews - including two indigenous communities - had not provided local accommodation for workers.

An interviewed community member in Djoum stated that in his opinion the logging company employed some 'irresponsible workers', which had resulted in pregnancies for young local girls. This person added that suspected cases of logging workers' sexual relationships with underage girls were never reported to companies, and in his opinion officers in management positions were not aware of the extent of the problem.

"It was a hidden problem. If someone had reported it to the company, I'm sure they would have taken measures to reprimand the workers who were in relationships with young local girls."

The interviewed community members had different views on whether the companies had a responsibility and whether they had shown willingness to protect local girls from the risk of sexual abuse by their employees and subcontractors. In Djoum sub-district, interviewees had not heard of any written staff rules or regulations for local workers and subcontractor staff. Some respondents stated that there might be rules for foreign staff not to engage in what they referred to as 'relationships' with local residents – including both children and adults.

During the research, many community respondents stated that the logging workers had not used threats or violence against the girls. They added that workers had a 'higher economic standing' than local men, and that workers 'fooled' girls into believing that they would go on to marry them. A female respondent in Djoum described how she perceived the problem and explained how parental pressure on daughters enhanced the risk of sexual relations between logging workers and young girls:

"This is a poor area. At first, many of the parents were happy that their daughters brought home a new 'son-in-law' with money and a job at the logging company. But then the men left. Many of the 14- and 15-year-old girls got pregnant."

A representative from the local NGO APIFED confirmed the picture of high poverty levels and the situation for girls in Djoum. APIFED had conducted a survey where 80 percent of the girls stated that their parents expected them to marry and get a dowry or otherwise contribute to the household economy. This same pressure to contribute money to the household was not put on boys. This interviewee described how this parental expectation contributed to the vulnerability of girls to sexual abuse by employees in, for example, logging and other projects, as well as military staff based in camps in the area, and explained that the problem was at its most serious during the period 2006-2010.

"Sexual abuse of girls, often as young as 12-13 years old, became common, and the school drop-out rates due to child pregnancies were very high. The problem was caused by influx of both workers and military staff into our area. The number of local girls attending school started going down from early teenage years, and in the final graduation year there were no local girls at all.", explained the APIFED representative.

She added that as a result of awareness work with youth and families in the area, the school attendance for local girls has started to improve slowly from the low levels recorded during the late 2000s.

Impacts on indigenous peoples' rights

In recent developments, indigenous communities in Cameroon have acted in collective initiatives to address rights violations resulting primarily from agro-industries, forestry concessions and mining. In September 2017, the Gbabandi platform of indigenous peoples' associations in Cameroon, which represents more than 50 indigenous communities, released a declaration calling for the respect of their customary tenure rights. The declaration highlights the need for the state of Cameroon to protect forest indigenous peoples' rights to ancestral land. Gbabandi identifies several components as crucial to ensuring the survival of their cultures and peoples, including the right to Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC), participation in decisions and processes that may affect territories, indigenous peoples' right to self-determination, and the sharing of benefits from forestry activities with indigenous communities.[171]

In a later event, indigenous representatives and key stakeholders held a meeting in Yaoundé, Cameroon, in December 2017 to promote more systematic progress towards translating the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) into laws and regulations. The workshop participants called for a national strategy and an observatory to support and monitor the implementation of the declaration in Cameroon.[172] During 2018, an EU-funded project has provided Cameroonian indigenous representatives with training on a tool to monitor the implementation of UNDRIP.[173]

The 2030 Agenda makes multiple references to indigenous peoples, particularly relating to the importance of their participation in decision-making, in SDG 2 on zero hunger, and in SDG 4 on education. Indigenous peoples' right to self-determination and right to maintain their long-standing connections to traditional forests and territories on which they base their livelihoods and cultures, is well established in international human rights instruments such as the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and International Labour Organization's Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention (ILO 169). Before any logging or other project is implemented on their traditional territories, indigenous peoples have the right be consulted through an FPIC process, and to give or withhold their consent to proposed developments. According to international good practice, as part of the FPIC process, indigenous peoples should be engaged in participatory mapping of community and cultural biodiversity values – so-called High Conservation Values numbers 5 and 6. (For detailed norms, see Annex 2. Norms for analysis of study results, page 66-70)

SWEDWATCH AND CED FINDINGS

The two indigenous communities interviewed in Djoum stated that they have experienced impacts by a number of forestry operations, the main one being Rougier's long-term logging. The interviewees reported that important forest areas have been destroyed, and they have seen a considerable decrease in access to non-timber forest products,

medicinal plants and wildlife. Hunting has become more difficult, and they need to venture further away from the village to find game.

One indigenous leader described his community's recent history and the changes in their access to traditional territories and forests over the past 70 years. When the Dja National Protected Area was established in the 1950s, they moved and established their village in the current area, which now overlaps significantly with the FMU. According to the interviewed community leader, a logging company that was active in the area before Rougier arrived failed to consult with the community before starting its logging activities. As a result, their sacred site was destroyed in the late 1990s and could not be re-established.

"The sacred site used to be over there, and at the time all trees were as tall as that one over there (indicating a single older tree still standing in the midst of a lower regrowth forest). This is where we used to hold our dance ceremonies and initiation to culture and traditions for the young boys", said the indigenous leader.

Since Rougier established its operation in the FMU, the households' land for agriculture is limited and their ability to hunt and collect forest products has been reduced. For a few years they have been aware of the Sudcam rubber company's plans to expand the plantation onto the community's already limited land (see section Short-term logging for conversion to rubber, page 31), into areas that are not part of the Rougier FMU. Currently, they are worried for the future and do not know how to address their concerns to the Sudcam company. They hope local NGOs will help them initiate a dialogue.

"We are worried that we will lose the land that we still have. We want to continue to have access to our traditional forest either here or inside the Forest Management Unit. We just want to practice small agriculture and be able to continue our traditional hunting. We hope that at least they could give us a small area that will be ours", the indigenous leader said.

In terms of benefits from Rougier's operations, both communities reported, for example, that 2–3 persons per community had gained employment, and that the company had built meeting halls in their villages. Members of one community received free health care at the local clinic. One community had been trained in agriculture as an alternative livelihoods support. Neither community had experienced any increase in business opportunities as a result of the company's presence.

One of the indigenous communities interviewed stated that it had benefited from Rougier's efforts at participatory mapping and delineation. A process similar to FPIC, which included a High Conservation Values assessment, was implemented during the 2010–2015 period when the company was preparing to obtain FSC chain-of-custody certification. The community described how it had been involved in participatory mapping of areas for logging, hunting, fishing and gathering.

According to the interviewed community members, the company had asked for their consent before initiating logging activities in their forests. After internal community discussions, this consent was given in a formal meeting with the company. In this

community, interviewees generally expressed a positive attitude towards the company. However, there was disappointment that during the information meetings held before the start of logging activities in each Annual Allowable Cut (AAC), the company had neglected to inform them of how the logging would impact negatively on their lives and livelihoods.

According to interviews with the other indigenous community in the area, the company did not make any similar efforts at participatory mapping and consultations before initiating logging activities adjacent to their community at the beginning of the operation during 2005–2009. Interviewees in this community were not content with the information provided by the company before the onset of logging.

"At the beginning, the company only told us about the positive benefits of logging. It was only with time that we saw how our forests were depleted", said one indigenous Baka man during the community interviews.

Restricted community participation in decision-making

Under Cameroonian law, company obligations on social infrastructure for communities should be agreed at an official information meeting before the start of logging operations.[174] Under the country's legislation on Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) companies who are preparing for a selective logging project inside an FMU have the duty to record possible local opposition to the project, and organise a discussion forum on the findings of the EIA study for affected populations. There are indications that many communities have negative perceptions of the public consultation process facilitated by government representatives, and do not feel that they are adequately involved in decisions regarding concession forestry projects.[175] International norms on good practice EIA, such as the International Finance Corporation's (IFC) Performance Standards, and the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises have more far-reaching requirements on the extent and quality of public consultation with affected populations during project planning and feasibility stages, as well as during implementation.[176]

SDG 16 on peaceful, inclusive societies and access to justice for all, and international norms on corporate responsibility all reiterate that citizens and business-affected communities have the right to information, consultation and participation in decision-making about their lives and their environment. Community participation in decision-making in a logging project can be supported, for example, through consultations and platforms that allow affected communities and vulnerable groups to voice concerns and influence the planning and project implementation. As part of an ongoing cycle of human rights due diligence in line with the UNGPs, when a company is exiting a project, communities should be informed about the potential impacts of the closure. (For detailed norms, see Annex 2. Norms for analysis of study results, page 66-70).

SWEDWATCH AND CED FINDINGS

A few of the interviewed communities in this study describe how Wijma and Rougier held formal information meetings before the start of operations. In Djoum, interviewed community members explained that the first contact between Rougier and the communities was through an information meeting, which they described as 'one-way communication'. One interviewed woman recalled that company representatives and the local administration introduced the company and promised local job opportunities.

"When they asked what we wanted for our community, we wished for T-shirts and a football field."

Seven out of ten[177] interviewed communities stated that neither Wijma nor Rougier had explained that the planned forestry projects may have negative impacts on forest livelihoods. The remaining three communities reported that they had been made aware to some extent of the potential negative impacts.

Nine out of ten interviewed communities stated that they had not seen the Terms and Conditions detailed in the logging permit (Cahier de Charge) and were not aware of the content of the social clauses contained therein. In the tenth community, the village chief had obtained a copy of the social clauses of the Terms and Conditions, however he stated that the document did not help him understand the company's obligations to his community.

Seven communities reported that they had not been consulted at all on impact assessments or project studies such as Environmental Impact Assessment, High Conservation Values assessments and socio-economic studies, and participatory mapping. Two communities neighbouring the Wijma operation said that their representatives on the Community Project Monitoring Committee (CSPA) had participated in meetings as part of some project studies. None of the communities had received information regarding the company exits, the handover to the new companies, or information about the post-project situation.

A number of communities stated that during the early years of operation, both Rougier's and Wijma's communication with the communities had been minimal. One interviewee noted that there was almost no contact with Rougier until the late 2000s.

"There were logging operations for many years in our area before Rougier started to contact and communicate with us around 2008, 2009."

Other community members stated during interviews that Rougier's decision to apply for FSC chain-of-custody certification was a turning point when relations with the company started to improve. According to an interviewed member of the Comité Paysan-Forêt (CPF), this committee was established in 2012 to bring together representatives from all the communities neighbouring the Forest Management Unit where Rougier operated at the time. Three to four meetings were held each year until the company exited the project in 2017.

Members of Cameroon's indigenous Baka communities, many of whose traditional territories overlap with forest concessions and large-scale agriculture plantations, depend to a large extent on hunting and the collection of plants, herbs, and forest products for their livelihoods, food security and nutrition. Forest areas, animals, trees and plants are at the centre of Baka cultures and religions. The photo is not related to to the field study and findings of this report.

"Before the CPF committee was established there was not a good relationship between the company and the community. For example, we didn't know what kind of job opportunities there were in the logging operation for our young people."

During the years when the CPF platform was active, the communities explained that their representatives attended regular meetings, received information and some training, resolved potential conflicts, for example regarding hunting regulations within the FMU, and had been able to express their development priorities. One interviewee described that the representatives on the committee learned 'how to look after the forest' and started to understand what sustainable forest management meant in practice. Indigenous community representatives who participated in meetings of the Rougier-hosted CPF platform recall that they were struggling to voice their priorities and concerns in larger meetings with representatives from the non-indigenous communities.

In Ma'an, four communities concurred that the establishment of the CSPA improved their relationships with Wijma. Through this committee the company held meetings with communities and provided comprehensive information on potential negative impacts before the start of logging in an AAC, a smaller concession inside the Forest Management Unit.

All ten communities stated that they were represented in the Annual Forestry Royalty committee, where decisions were taken on types and distribution of community projects such as infrastructure or alternative livelihoods support. A majority of the communities were not content with the transparency of how projects were allocated to different communities. Also, in many cases the projects that materialised were not in line with their submitted wishes and priorities.

Benefits: employment, business opportunities and small infrastructure

Cameroon's Vision 2035 – a roadmap for economic development – underlines the need for economic development through infrastructure development, large-scale agriculture, hydropower and mining projects. However, the forest removal and negative impacts on biodiversity that could result from this type of development on a large scale risk undermining the forest-based livelihoods of the country's rural communities.[178]

Companies have an important role to play in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda: they can maximise their positive impacts and adapt their business models to help achieve the SDGs on decent work for all, ending poverty and hunger, ensuring clean water, education, good health and well-being for forest communities. Specifically, under Cameroonian legislation, part of the area-based Annual Forestry Royalty should be redistributed back to communities, and some volume-based fees should be designated to benefit local communities. The social clauses of the Terms and Conditions of many types of logging permits detail companies' obligations to the communities. (For detailed norms, see Annex 2. Norms for analysis of study results, page 66-70)

SWEDWATCH AND CED FINDINGS

In all ten interviewed communities, Rougier and Wijma had provided employment for some community members in the logging operations, especially for young men. Seven communities reported that 1–5 people had been employed in logging, while three communities estimated that 10 to 'over 25' community members had gained some type of employment during the course of the logging operation. A number of communities emphasised the lack of training and coaching for local employees, which prevented them from obtaining higher, better-paid positions in the operation. Only one community described how a few young men had been trained on the job by the company to become mechanics and electricians.

In five of the interviewed communities, where logging workers had been living in the village, respondents described how the presence of the companies had led to increased small business opportunities, mostly for women – in the form of food sales, restaurants, bars and through renting out accommodation. One community also reported how young people engaged more in hunting and agriculture to sell game and forest products either directly to the workers or to other small businesses.

In Djoum sub-district, many of the small businesses created during the height of Rougier's operation were located outside the sawmill:

"Outside the mill, along the main street, women opened around ten small stalls and sold peanuts, bread, fish dishes, bush meat and palm wine to the workers", a middle-aged woman recalled.

An interviewed director of the local NGO APIFED described how, in her assessment, the economic activities in the area quickly closed down when Rougier closed the operations one year previously and the workers left.

"Look how empty Djoum town is now! A year ago, these small restaurants were full of workers. Many locals rented out houses and made good money. Now there is no one here."

Table 3 below provides an overview of the number of persons employed in the logging operations in each of the ten communities based on the results from Swedwatch and CED interviews and indicates whether the influx of workers translated into small business opportunities.

In the ten interviewed communities, benefits from the logging operation in their area included small infrastructure development such as meeting halls and village offices, guard houses, water wells, small road repairs and extensions of school buildings. The number and size of the infrastructure provided varied in significance among the ten communities. While one village had only received assistance with small road repairs, another community had benefited from the construction of two classrooms, one small clinic, one water pump, a new roof for their market and a new office for the village head.

	Communities included in the study (I-X)									
Benefits: Employment & business opportunities	**I**	**II**	**III**	**IV**	**V**	**VI**	**VII**	**VIII**	**IX**	**X**
Employment in logging operation (no. of persons)	1	2	1	5	3	Yes (no number given)	2	25+	3	10+
Increase in small business opportunities (sales of food and drinks, accommodation for logging workers)	No/very limited	No/very limited	Yes	Yes	No/very limited	Yes	No/very limited	Yes	No/very limited	Yes

Table 3: Overview of employment and business opportunities created in ten neighbouring communities during the implementation of Rougier and Wijma's forestry operations in Djoum and Ma'an sub-districts

In addition to the infrastructure, five interviewed communities described how the company had contributed building materials, small machinery and food, drinks and cash contributions for community gatherings and ceremonies. Table 4 shows how the number and type of small infrastructure, donations and in-kind contributions varied among the ten villages in the study, based on the results of Swedwatch and CED interviews.

The communities reported few improvements in health and education services. The most common mentions of service improvement were provisions of school supplies, salary for teaching assistant and scholarships in one community. According to the interviewed community members, the only improvement in health care linked to the logging operations was free health care provision for one indigenous community. The support to alternative livelihoods reported by communities during interviews included agriculture inputs as well as two examples of concrete projects: one chicken farm and one coal production project. For an overview of service provision and livelihoods support, see Table 5.

One Djoum village received some support from Rougier for alternative livelihoods activities in the form of agriculture inputs, a chicken cooperative and – with input from the German development cooperation body GIZ179 – a charcoal production project using the leftover wood from the sawmill.

	Communities included in the study (I-X)									
Benefits: Infrastructure & in-kind contributions	**I**	**II**	**III**	**IV**	**V**	**VI**	**VII**	**VIII**	**IX**	**X**
Small infrastructure provided	1 meeting hall 1 visitor's cabin	3 guard houses 1 market teacher's accommo-dation	1 guard house Water wells Electrical network extension Contribu-tion to church construc-tion	3 guard houses	1 guard house Road repairs	Road repairs	1 meeting hall	Road repairs	1 meeting hall	2 classrooms 1 clinic 1 water pump (no longer functioning) Roof for market Office for village head
In-kind donations and materials from logging company	–	–	–	Building machinery & materials Generators	Building materials Machetes Generators Food and beverages for com-munity gatherings	Building materials	–	Free leftover planks from saw-mill Food and beverages for com-munity gatherings	–	Building materials Free leftover planks from sawmill

Table 4: Small infrastructure, donations and materials provided to ten neighbouring communities during the implementation of Rougier and Wijma's forestry operations in Djoum and Ma'an sub-districts

"The charcoal technology was introduced by outsiders, and the locals learned from them. First the coal was sold locally, and then transported to buyers all the way over in the city of Douala. New coal companies were created both in this village and in a neighbouring village."

In terms of skills development, one community mentioned that Rougier had provided training on agriculture micro-projects. Table 5 shows improvements in service provision and support to alternative livelihoods, as reported during community interviews.

	Communities included in the study (I-X)									
Benefits: Services & livelihoods support	**I**	**II**	**III**	**IV**	**V**	**VI**	**VII**	**VIII**	**IX**	**X**
Education & health services	School supplies	–	School supplies	School supplies and scholarships	School supplies	Salary for teaching assistant	Free health care	–	–	–
Support to alternative livelihoods	–	Agriculture inputs	Agriculture inputs	Agriculture inputs	–	Agricul-ture inputs Training on micro-projects	Agriculture inputs	Agriculture inputs Chicken farm Coal produc-tion from sawmill scraps	–	Agriculture inputs

Table 5: Education and health services, and support to alternative livelihoods provided to ten neighbouring communities during the implementation of Rougier and Wijma's forestry operations in Djoum and Ma'an sub-districts

Lessons learned from Rougier & concerns about a future without forests

A member of the Rougier-supported CPF platform for community involvement said that in hindsight, the skills shortage was a problem for the community. Because of low levels of education and skills, and limited on-the-job training and coaching, the young people recruited by the company did not attain higher positions, and often did not stay in their jobs for very long. She was concerned that they would have the same challenge if new developers came to the area. For example, the community had heard that a mining project was to be established in their area, and since their young people were still not trained, this company may choose not to recruit locally.

"Now, the forest is already finished. If we had known ahead and been able to ensure that our young people were trained, we wouldn't have had these problems of not being able to benefit from job opportunities in future projects."

This interviewee also said that the community had learned about how to protect the long-term forest cover, regeneration of tree species and how to ensure continued benefits from their forest.

"Rougier taught us so much about sustainable forestry, how to maintain the forest. Now the forest is disappearing. What will happen when Rougier leaves?

Member of one of Cameroon's indigenous communities collecting non timber forest products for food consumption.The photo is not related to to the field study and findings of this report.

4. Logging company perspectives

Wijma's and Rougier's publicly available information, statements and policies shed light on their commitments to sustainability norms and standards and explain some of their due diligence systems and processes. While Wijma provided detailed feedback to draft findings presented in Section 3 of this report, Rougier, which was in the process of restructuring its organisation, only supplied a short statement in response to Swedwatch's contact requests.

Rougier Group

In its publicly available information, reviewed by Swedwatch, the construction and forestry company Rougier Group states that its business activities focus on the segments Natural forests, Forest Plantations, and Importation and distribution of tropical timber to France. The company states that it controls the full value chain from forestry operations to the processing, import and sales of timber.[180]

On its website, Rougier describes FSC certification as a key tool for the timber sector to contribute to sustainable development. As of 2018, the company publicly disclosed the following active certificates in Cameroon:

- FSC Forest Management – Société Forestière et Industrielle de la Doumé (SFID), Mbang (Eastern region)
- FSC Chain-of-Custody – SFID Mbang and Djoum (South region)
- FSC Controlled Wood – SFID in Cameroon

In the region, the company also maintains an FSC chain-of-custody certificate for Rougier Afrique International in Gabon, and an FSC Forest Management certificate for Gabonese concessions.[181]

Rougier's public sustainability policies include a 'Social policy in favour of local populations and indigenous peoples'. This text describes a process of awareness raising and participatory mapping before the start of logging in each AAC within a concession. The outcome should be an agreement on protection and management measures, for example bans on felling certain trees, or buffer zones around sacred sites. The agreement would then be formalised in a Memorandum of Understanding between the company and the neighbouring communities. The policy does not contain explicit reference to indigenous communities' right to FPIC.[182]

In its Social and Environmental Policy, Rougier commits to participatory forest management approaches, which involve local communities and indigenous peoples, in order to 'preserve and enhance their traditional customs and know-how'. The policy further highlights the importance of the High Conservation Values methodology in protecting fragile ecosystems.[183]

Operation 2 in this study was conducted by Rougier's subsidiary company SFID together with MPACKO J.P. in Forest Management Units 09-007 and 09-008 in Djoum sub-district, until their exit in March 2018. The 2009 Forest Management Plan describes the operation.[184] Preparations for FSC chain-of-custody certification were initiated in 2012 and resulted in certification for the period 2014–2019.[185]

In response to Swedwatch's questions regarding the Djoum operation, Rougier clarified that the company had sold its subsidiaries in Cameroon and thus was no longer concerned by questions about these operations. In addition, company staff who would have been able to respond to questions regarding Djoum company activities were no longer employed by the company. Rougier further explained that it was exiting a complicated situation, and that a 'social plan' was being implemented, however it did not share details on the content of the plan.[186]

Wijma Group

According to publicly available information, the Netherlands-registered company group Kloninklijke Houthandel G. Wijma and Zonen B.V. (Wijma Group), is a forestry operator and products manufacturer. The company has a fully integrated and

complete supply chain of hardwood from tropical forests. The group owns and manages its own forestry concessions in West and Central Africa, and conducts timber drying and processing on site. Further, the Wijma Group global network of offices supports sales and distribution of sawn timber and finished wood products such as jetties and platforms, garden furniture, fences and poles.[187]

On its website, Wijma Group states that it was the first timber company in the Congo Basin to obtain FSC certification in 2005, and that the group has an explicit aim to certify all forest concessions under its management. In 2013, the company had 315,087 hectares of forest concessions FSC certified in Cameroon.[188] In addition to its FSC certificates, Wijma also obtained Timber Origin and Legality (OLB) certificates, which guarantee the origin and legality of the timber and wood products, issued by Bureau Veritas for the operations and sawmills.

In spite of its public commitment to ensuring FSC certification of all its concessions, as of 2018 the company had no concessions with FSC Forest Management certification anywhere in the world. Its active FSC certificates are exclusively for chain of custody for one sawmill in Cameroon, and for processing and sales of timber at the headquarters in the Netherlands and for the trading companies in France and Germany.[189] The company's Environmental Policy describes commitments to certification and environmental sustainability. The document contains reference to communities and underlines that the company is committed to 'enhancing the understanding of sustainable forestry practices by local communities' and that it supports social forestry projects.[190]

According to publicly available information accessed and interpreted by Swedwatch in 2017, it seemed apparent that Scieb Sarl (SCIEB), which conducted the forestry operations in Forest Management Unit 09-021 until 2017[191], was one of three independent Cameroonian-registered companies fully owned by Wijma's holding company Wijma Cameroon A.S.[192] In contrast, in communication with Swedwatch, summarised in the paragraphs below, Wijma clarified that SCIEB was a 'partner company', to which it transferred this forest concession in 2013. Wijma did not respond to Swedwatch's question to clarify the legal nature of the partnership between Wijma and SCIEB.

The voluntary Forest Stewardship Council Forest Management-certification obtained for the Wijma operation between the years 2005-2012, was subsequently transferred and managed as a Forest Stewardship Council group certification with the purpose to assist partner companies to be forest management certified. The transfer was considered by Wijma as the best way to share acquired experience with other companies. In 2017, Wijma sold the concession, and during 2018 no forestry activities were conducted.[193]

According to Wijma's communication with Swedwatch, in 2017 SCIEB and one other Wijma partner company in Cameroon transferred their major forestry activities to other companies (unrelated to Wijma) due to financial problems. Before this transfer, the partners decided to leave the FSC certification system in order to enable the new companies to make their own choices regarding forest management. Regarding other operations in Cameroon, Wijma highlighted that in 2018, one of its partner compa-

nies, which had an FSC Forest Management-certified concession of 70,000 hectares, had its certificate suspended due to a socio-political crisis where it is located.

In response to Swedwatch's findings on the negative impacts from Wijma's selective logging on forest livelihoods, environment and health, Wijma 's view on the responsibilities of their company and its partners was restricted to impacts occurring within the Forest Management Unit. Wijma elaborated that the management system practiced in the FMU was characterized by community participation. According to Wijma, the feedback received from neighbouring communities at the time was different from the Swedwatch findings on decreases in wild food, animals and medicinal plants.

According to Wijma, a survey conducted by WWF in FMU 09021 in 2015 showed that the responsible forest management system there had a positive impact on fauna populations and had reduced illegal activities in the area. The company suggested that the communities' descriptions of the negative impacts presented by Swedwatch in the report might refer to the agro-forestry zone outside the Forest Management Unit. According to Wijma, this zone is the responsibility of the communities themselves and the government, and not of Wijma or its partner companies.

During Swedwatch's interviews, a number of communities stated that they were not content with the transparency of the process of allocating infrastructure and livelihoods projects to different communities. In addition, a number of communities stated that the selected projects were not always in line with their submitted wishes and priorities. In response to these findings, Wijma underlined that all social projects implemented were the choice of each community, following a prioritisation process. The selection was also documented in minutes from official meetings, which included attendance-lists. The minutes were signed by the traditional and administrative authorities before proceeding to project implementation.

Wijma concluded its response by commenting on the following two Swedwatch findings, presented in the report: (1) Wijma and its partners did not renew their FSC Forest Management certification, and sold the operation to a new company;
(2) Wijma and its partners did not have responsible exit strategies in place to ensure long-term sustainable livelihoods for neighbouring communities after its exit and did not ensure proper environmental and human rights due diligence of the new company before the transfer. In Wijma's view, local development is the responsibility of many stakeholders including companies, communities and the government.

Wijma and partners maintain that they have done their part by managing the forest responsibly, providing capacity building in the communities, financing and implementing social projects, and transferring competences to other companies. According to Wijma, local communities (with assistance from the government) should maintain the experiences gained from these activities. Wijma stated that it was aware that sustainable forest management is the best way to ensure local development of the neighbouring communities, and that consumers should support responsible forest management by selecting sustainably produced wood products.

5. Analysis and conclusions

The case study from Cameroon provides an illustration of worrying trends in deforestation and unsustainable forestry practices, which threaten to undermine the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. Instead of representing empowered communities who are involved in local development planning and decision-making regarding the use of their forests, the interviewed communities in the study described sparse and short-term benefits from logging, while negative impacts on forest livelihoods and human rights were significant, with long-term implications.

At a landscape level the clear-felling operations for expansion of Sudcam's rubber plantation across an area of several thousand hectares, is a typical case that illustrates how agriculture is a strong driver of tropical deforestation around the world, with implications both for global climate stability and for local communities' livelihoods. In the case of the short-term conversion logging in Djoum subdistrict, preparing for the expansion of the Sudcam plantation, interview results and findings from independent monitoring missions indicate that some of the forest conversion was carried out in accordance with the law, while there were also cases of reported illegal logging.

Findings from the literature review show that Congo Basin governments are prioritising large-scale agriculture development over support to sustainable forest management. The interviewed communities' views on future employment in the Sudcam rubber plantation are negative: The establishment of the plantation is seen as a threat to current livelihoods rather than an employment opportunity for local communities. Typically, the large-scale agriculture enterprises which are replacing forests may employ workers from the local communities. In this type of transition from forest cover to large-scale agriculture, there is a high risk that communities and vulnerable groups are impoverished and that their household livelihoods become less resilient: Wage-based employment provides fewer benefits than forest livelihoods, which include forest products for food, cultural and religious practices, and land for small-scale agriculture.

The Sudcam case illustrates that – in order to stop large-scale tropical deforestation and the resulting carbon emissions threatening climate stability and sustainable development – government measures to combat illegal conversion logging are nowhere near sufficient. There is an urgent need for governments to support and promote sustainable, long-term forestry operations that ensure forest cover and quality in both permanent and non-permanent forest areas. For governments, the use of upstream strategic planning and impact assessment tools such as Strategic Environmental Assessments and Cumulative Impact Assessments will be useful for strategically minimising irreversible impacts and maximising benefits across landscapes.

The study confirms findings in international literature of the risk of irreversible logging impacts on forest ecosystems with global and local values, and human rights impacts on vulnerable groups such as children, women and poor households. Wijma and Rougier did take some measures to ensure that their logging operations did not

harm communities, vulnerable groups or the environment. For example, according to Wijma's responses to Swedwatch, the company had a strong programme on sustainably managing wildlife populations inside the Forest Management Unit.

During the interviews, communities described a few good examples of how communities were informed, consulted and engaged in decision-making, which materialised after approximately 5–10 years of operation. The most important were the establishment of the community dialogue platform in the Wijma project, and Rougier's FPIC-like process with participatory High Conservation Values assessment with one indigenous community. In these cases, the certification process seems to have been an important incentive for the companies to improve their practices.

Still, a majority of the communities stated that during the first decade of the forestry projects, they were not well informed or clear on their rights to benefits and how projects were decided on and distributed between communities. Even in 2018, none of the communities knew the content of the companies' social infrastructure obligations towards communities, as part of the Exploitation Agreements, according to the interviewees. The communities all stated that they were not informed in advance of Wijma's and Rougier's respective premature exits from the projects. Neither company responded to Swedwatch's questions regarding the existence of responsible exit strategies to ensure long-term sustainable livelihoods for neighbouring communities; nor did they ensure proper due diligence of the new companies before the takeover.

However, a review of public company documentation and the communities' observations and perspectives indicates gaps and shortcomings in Wijma's and Rougier's due diligence to ensure 'no harm' to forest livelihoods and human rights. During Swedwatch's research and communication with the companies, there was no indication that operations were initiated with adequate information and consultation with the neighbouring communities. There was no indication that either company conducted or published reports from Environmental Impact Assessments, socio-economic studies, or High Conservation Values assessments, which included consultation with affected communities and vulnerable groups in line with international standards.

According to the publication dates, the Forest Management Plans were finalised several years after the establishment of Rougier's sawmill and the start of logging activities. Based on Swedwatch's review, the management plans lack reference to consideration of human rights and climate impacts from the logging. These gaps are in stark contrast to international norms on citizen's rights to information, consultation and participation in decision-making, as expressed for example in the Aarhus Convention on the right to environmental information and participation in decision-making about the environment.

The study findings indicate that two vulnerable groups in the area – indigenous peoples and young girls – have been impacted negatively with very few discernible benefits: Indigenous peoples' forest-based livelihoods have been undermined, and they have had a weak voice in decision-making regarding their land and forests, and benefit-sharing from logging. Also, six out of ten communities in the study described

In Djoum sub-district in Cameroon's South Region, industrial logging projects are followed by the development of large-scale agriculture projects and mining exploration for iron ore. The photo is not related to to the field study and findings of this report.

sexually exploitative relationships, stating that logging workers had engaged in sexual relations with girls aged 12 to 17, resulting in child pregnancies
and school drop-outs. This in turn can have negative implications for their well-being, education and futures[194]. Neither the contacted companies nor the FSC provided comment regarding this finding in their responses to Swedwatch.

The 2030 Agenda calls for inclusive sustainable development that 'leaves no one behind and reaches the furthest behind first'. Although indigenous communities have enjoyed some benefits from the logging operations, they have also been dispossessed from their land by numerous land developments, and therefore risk losing their traditional livelihoods, their cultures, connection to forests and land and being trapped in poverty.[195]

Based on study findings and the review of international literature, it can be concluded that the tropical logging industry is a high-risk sector, where businesses need to conduct solid human rights and environmental due diligence for projects and value chains. Currently in the tropical logging industry FSC-certified operations are widely considered 'best in class'. However, this type of voluntary certification should not be seen as the sole tool to ensure prevention of impacts on human rights and the environment. Voluntary certification cannot replace the need for corporate responsibility and good forest sector governance in line with international norms. Instead, business

actors and government agencies in the tropical logging value chain need to embrace their responsibility to 'do no harm' and ensure positive contributions to the 2030 Agenda. This means that regulations and new incentives should be put in place to ensure that an ongoing cycle of environmental and human rights due diligence becomes part and parcel of business operations. In its response, FSC states that "it is controversial to attribute a causal link between indigenous and local communities' land and user rights, human rights violations and FSC certification" (see Annex 1. Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) perspectives page 64-65). However, Swedwatch's study does not explore or indicate such a causal link, instead it points to the key conclusion; that also in FSC-certified operations, communities report on impacts on their basic rights.

In practice, the due diligence measures should include: Community participation in decision-making and climate impact requirements in forest management plans; Participatory community mapping, gender-sensitive and child rights-centred impact assessments and management plans, and broad-based consultation on the need for infrastructure, education for girls and boys, skills development and health services should be considered for communities in logging areas.

Wijma's and Rougier's operations generated some positive benefits for communities in terms of jobs, local business opportunities and small infrastructure. However, few people from each community were employed, and many were so only temporarily. Similarly, in communities that reported an increase in small and medium-sized enterprises during the period when workers were accommodated in their village or came to purchase goods and frequent small bars and restaurants, this income generation was temporary and has ceased with the winding down of logging and sawmilling.

The study results show that qualified jobs were mostly given to people moving in from other areas, while local youth were employed in less qualified positions. In addition, according to the communities, the companies did not provide adequate skills development, training or coaching to allow local employees to make a career either in the logging company, or elsewhere, beyond the lifetime of the logging project. The fact that interviewed community members describe agriculture and hunting as the most profitable and secure ways of generating an income indicates that the jobs provided to date have not been sufficient in numbers or salary levels to bring local households out of poverty.

According to interviewees, the provided infrastructure such as community halls, class rooms and road maintenance, was not always in line with communities' own priorities for development. There were few indications that the forestry operations led to corresponding improvements in the provision of services such as education and health care.

By capturing community voices and experiences, this study has generated important lessons learned both for large-scale agriculture enterprises, and for logging companies in the Congo Basin and other tropical forest regions. However, unless a combination of key requirements and conditions in the forestry and agriculture sector

in Cameroon change, there are no guarantees that the shortcomings and negative impacts on communities and forest livelihoods, the scarce benefit sharing, and the abrupt company exits will not be repeated in coming years. In addition, national and local planning for sustainable land-based investments and poverty alleviation must ensure that forestry operations address community needs and priorities and contribute to sustainable livelihoods and poverty alleviation. Benefit sharing and skills development should become compulsory requirements and standard modes of operation for the logging industry. Governments should also strengthen their support to community forestry operation models, where communities have more influence over their forest resources, and can maintain a higher percentage of the benefits from the operations.

Cameroon's civil society has an active role in supporting logging-affected local and indigenous communities and advocating for strengthened laws and policies to protect their rights and ensure their involvement in decision-making and planning. However, with increased pressures and the marginalisation of forest communities, there is still a need to strengthen and support Cameroonian civil society to better represent rights holders' interests and hold businesses accountable. Stronger involvement from international actors could help develop the strong institutions and the consultation and planning tools needed to empower poor and marginalised groups affected by logging in Cameroon.

Annex 1: Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) perspectives

This annex provides a summary of the Forest Stewardship Council's (FSC) views in relation to the report findings and the role of FSC certification.[196] In its communication with Swedwatch, FSC highlighted the history of forced migration of both local and indigenous communities across the Congo Basin region during the 1950s. According to FSC, forest communities were forced to resettle in more populous areas or around road networks, and this led to the deterioration of their living conditions. According to the FSC, in light of this history of poor governance, which never favoured indigenous and local communities' rights, it is controversial to attribute a causal link between indigenous and local communities' land and user rights, human rights violations and FSC certification.

FSC underlines the importance of the Voluntary Partnership Agreements (VPAs) between the European Union and the three Congo Basin nations Cameroon, Central African Republic and Republic of Congo, under the Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) initiative. According to FSC, evaluations of the FLEGT Action Plan 2004-2014, encourage key implementing organisations to work more closely with credible private certification schemes, especially in light of the fact that the Congo Basin countries currently do not have functioning national timber legality assurance systems. FSC provided an example of a key recommendation from one of the evaluations[197]:

"The void created by the absence of FLEGT licensing has been filled to a large extent by private certification bodies, which contribute significantly to meeting the due diligence requirements of the EUTR. However, the Commission did not sufficiently explore the possible synergies between FLEGT and these private schemes."

On the topic of biodiversity, FSC clarified that there are key scientific articles, which state that FSC certification has a significant effect to maintain forest stands, protect great apes, and reduce poaching – through measures taken be forest managers in line with criteria under FSC's Principle 6 on ecosystem services, environmental impacts and High Conservation Values.

Finally, FSC Congo Basin has established a regional working group - endorsed by organisations such as WWF (World Wide Fund for Nature), the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) and World Resources Institute (WRI) - which has developed a set of indicators to manage, maintain and monitor so-called Intact Forest Landscapes in certified concessions.

These are publications recommended by FSC with relevance to biodiversity and certification in the Congo Basin:

Medjibe, V. P. *et al.* Environmental Management. 2013. *Certified and Uncertified Logging Concessions Compared in Gabon: Changes in Stand Structure, Tree Species, and Biomass.*

Kusonyola Kalonga, S. *et al.* Forest Ecology and Management. 2016. *Forest certification as a policy option in conserving biodiversity: An empirical study of forest management in Tanzania.*

Bahaa-el-din, L. *et al.* Biological Conservation. 2016. *Effects of human land-use on Africa's only forest-dependent felid: The African golden cat Caracal aurata.*

Morgan, D. *et al.* IUCN/SSC Primate Specialist Group. 2013. *Great Apes and FSC: Implementing 'Ape Friendly' Practices in Central Africa's Logging Concessions.*

Romero, C. *et al.* Occasional Paper 91. CIFOR, Bogor, Indonesia. 2013. *An overview of current knowledge about the impacts of forest management certification: A proposed framework for its evaluation.*

Polisar J. *et al.* Ambio. 2017. *Using certified timber extraction to benefit jaguar and ecosystem conservation.*

Karsenty A. *et al.* Land Use Policy 65, 2017. *Deforestation and timber production in Congo after implementationof sustainable management policy: A reaction to the article by J.S.Brandt, C. Nolte and A. Agrawal.*

Annex 2: Norms for analysis of study results

This annex starts with an overview of SDGs and targets relevant to the study. It also provides separate summaries of key agreements, international law, and good practice norms and provisions that are relevant to each type of finding or issue area. The norm summaries are used as a reference point for discussing and analysing the results from the interviews.

Forests are at the core of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with 1.6 billion people worldwide depending on forests for their livelihood, many of them living in the Global South. The maintenance of healthy, diverse forest ecosystems is a prerequisite for the achievement of many of the 17 UN SDGs, which together form the 2030 Agenda. SDG 15 aims to sustainably manage forests, halt deforestation and restore degraded forests. Since forests play a major role in sequestering carbon from the atmosphere and thus mitigating climate change, SDG 13, which focuses on actions to combat global climate change, is also closely linked to the issue of forests.

Regarding the social and economic dimensions of sustainable development, the sustainable management and use of forests can contribute to positive impacts on forest-dependent communities and help to achieve Goals 1 and 2 (to end poverty and hunger) and address Goal 5 (gender equality) and Goals 8, 9 and 12, which relate to decent work, industry, and responsible production and consumption.[198] The table below gives an overview of selected targets for SDG 1, 13, 15 and 16 on poverty, terrestrial ecosystems and forests, and peace, justice and strong institutions.

Key SDGs relevant for this study	SDG targets in focus
SDG 1: No poverty	**Target 1.1:** By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than USD 1.25 a day. **Target 1.2:** By 2030, reduce by at least half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions. **Target 1.4:** By 2030, ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including microfinance.
SDG 13: Climate action	**Target 13.2** Integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning.
SDG 15: Life on land	**Target 15.2:** By 2020, promote the implementation of sustainable management of all types of forests, halt deforestation, restore degraded forests, and substantially increase afforestation and reforestation globally. **Target 15.9:** By 2020, integrate ecosystem and biodiversity values into national and local planning, development processes, poverty reduction strategies and accounts
SDG 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions	**Target 16.2:** End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and the torture of children. **Target 16.7:** Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels. **Target 16.10:** Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements.

Issue area: Illegal logging

Relevant norm	Key provisions
SDG 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions	Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. **Target 16.3:** Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all.
Cameroonian legislation applicable to timber harvesting and social obligations in Vente de Coupe concessions	Legal provisions on the issuing of titles, harvesting within concession boundaries, correct marking of logs, construction and use of logging roads, clear information on timber volumes and benefit sharing with communities. For more details, see independent monitoring reports: Voix des Citoyens pour le Changement. University of Wolverhampton. Centre for International Development and Training. Centre for Environment and Development. June-August 2017. Mission reports 1, 3 & 4 from Dja et Lobo Department, South Region, Cameroon.

Issue area: Community access to information, community consultation and participation in decision-making

Relevant norm	Key provisions
SDG 15: Life on land	Ecosystem and biodiversity values should be integrated into poverty reduction efforts, and socio-economic development planning at the local and national levels.
SDG 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions	Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.
UNECE Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (The Aarhus Declaration)	Secures opportunities for citizens to access environmental information and enhances environmental governance. The convention underlines a trustworthy relationship between civil society and governments and public participation in the decision-making process and guarantees access to justice. The convention promotes "governance by disclosure" that leads a shift toward an environmentally responsible society.
OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises (OECD Guidelines)	Provisions on public participation in environmental impact assessment and management.
Internationally recognised High Conservation Values methodology.	Rights to High Conservation Values for community needs and cultures (High Conservation Values 5 & 6). Good practice provisions on participatory assessment, management and monitoring of High Conservation Values.
Cameroon Environmental Impact Assessment legislation	Includes provision for public consultation on Environmental Impact Assessment study draft.

Issue area: Negative impacts on forest livelihoods, the right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment, and the right to enjoyment of physical health

Relevant norm	Key provisions
SDGs 1, 2, 3, 13 & 14	End poverty, no hunger, provision of health services to all. Forests and other life on land and climate action.
Universal Declaration on Human Rights	Human rights to livelihoods, food, water, health and education.
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Framework Principles on Human Rights and the Environment	16 principles from international human rights law on the right to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment. Special consideration for forest-dependent persons, and for groups more vulnerable to impacts such as women, indigenous people and children.
International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	Article 12: The right of everyone to enjoy the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. Businesses should identify and mitigate cases where their operations exacerbate the transmission and prevalence of communicable diseases in the local community.
UNGPs Human Rights Due Diligence	Businesses must proactively assess and mitigate potential human rights impacts and provide remedy where negative impacts have already occurred.
High Conservation Values methodology	Participatory assessment of High Conservation Values 5 & 6: Right to community and cultural forest ecosystem values, areas, animals, plants and products.
Cameroonian Environmental Impact Assessment legislation	Logging projects should undergo Environmental Impact Assessment, and key results and provisions should be incorporated into Forest Management Plans.
OECD-DAC Strategic Environmental Assessment and IFC Cumulative impact assessment	Assessment and strategic consideration of combined, cumulative impacts of multiple development projects on local livelihoods.

Issue area: Indigenous peoples' rights to self-determination, FPIC and forest community and cultural values (High Conservation Values 5 & 6)

Relevant norm	Key provisions
The 2030 Agenda	References to indigenous peoples in the preamble, particularly relating to the importance of their participation in decision-making, in SDG 2 on zero hunger, and in SDG 4 on education.
UNDRIP and ILO 169	Indigenous peoples': - Right to FPIC process, including rights to information and participation in decision-making. - Right to self-determination, to give or withhold consent to a proposed development on their traditional territories at the end of an FPIC consultation process.
High Conservation Values methodology	Participatory assessment of High Conservation Values 5 & 6: Right to community and cultural forest ecosystem values, areas, animals, plants and products.

Issue area: Girls' right to protection from sexual abuse and exploitation

Relevant norm	Key provisions
SDG 5: Gender equality	Empowerment of girls and women. **Target 5.2:** Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.
SDG 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions	Ending child abuse in all forms. **Target 16.2:** End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and the torture of children. **Target 16.2.3:** Proportion of young women and men aged 18–29 years who experienced sexual violence by age 18.
United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child	The right to protection from sexual exploitation. Further clarified in: Committee on the Rights of the Child, General comment No. 13 (2011), The right of the child to freedom from all forms of violence. Article 25. Sexual abuse and exploitation.
UNICEF Children's Right and Business Principles	The corporate responsibility to respect children's rights applies to the business's own activities and to its business relationships linked to its operations, products or services. Principle 4: All businesses should ensure the protection and safety of children in all business activities and facilities. a. Addressing safety and protection risks to children's rights posed by business facilities and staff in the course of business activities. iii. Make clear to staff that the business's zero tolerance policy for violence, exploitation and abuse applies in all business activities, even when conducted away from business facilities. iv. Take appropriate action when concerns of possible violence, exploitation or abuse arise.
FSC Criterion 4.4	Management planning and operations shall incorporate the results of evaluations of social impact. Consultations shall be maintained with people and groups (both men and women) directly affected by management operations.
Law nr 2016/007 of 12 July 2016, relating to the Cameroonian penal code	Section 74-1 of the law states that corporate bodies shall be held criminally responsible for offences committed on their behalf by their organs or representatives. Sections 295-1, 346-1 and 3, and 347-1 detail punishments for sexual offences committed by individuals and give special details on in cases where the victims of these crimes are children.

Issue area: Forestry sector contributions to poverty alleviation and sustainable development

Relevant norm	Key provisions
SDGs 1, 2, 3, 4, and 8	End poverty, no hunger, provision of health and education services to all, and decent work and economic growth.
Forest Law of Cameroon	Forestry companies in Forest Management Units have the following obligations to communities: - A percentage of the area-based AFR should be redistributed back to communities. - A proportion of some volume-based fees or taxes is designated for the benefit of local communities. - Social infrastructure should be included in the social clauses of the Terms and Conditions of logging permits that require them, in which case the social clauses are agreed at an information meeting signed by local Ministry of Forests and Wildlife and government representatives.
UNGPs article 18	Responsible exits and due diligence.

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