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GEF 7 IP CAMEROON NEWSLETTER

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE GEF 7 IMPACT PROJECT IN CAMEROON

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Editorial

As we enter the project's fifth year, we take a moment to appreciate the remarkable successes achieved across Cameroon's vital transboundary landscapes.

Over the past four years, our efforts have transformed our ambitions into tangible actions. Focusing on the iconic landscapes of Campo Ma'an, the Tri-National Dja-Odzala-Minkébé (TRIDOM), and the Tri-National Sangha (TNS), the project has demonstrated that conservation and community development are part of mutually sought goals.

One of our cornerstone achievements has been the integration of land-use planning. By bringing together diverse stakeholders, we have begun to harmonize economic development with ecological integrity. This integrated approach has been complemented by significant strides in strengthening the governance of High Conservation Value forests, ensuring that these critical ecosystems receive the protection they deserve.

In the TRIDOM landscape, our work on the sustainable management of Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs) is already bearing fruit. By developing value chains for these resources, we are creating tangible economic opportunities for local communities and indigenous peoples, reducing pressure on timber resources while empowering those who depend most on the forest.

The fourth year of the project has been particularly impactful, across our operational components.

Component 1 (Land-Use Planning): A major step toward ensuring the long-term success of the participatory Local Land-Use and Development Plans (PLADDTs) was realized. Through our partners (Integrated Planning and Development Program for the Dja Mining Loop) PADIDJA and (The National Observatory on Climate Change) ONACC, we successfully edited 200 reports on the natural capital accounts for the Ngoyla and Mintom communes. Furthermore, 353 members of the village land-use monitoring committees (CATVs) were sensitized on sustainable natural capital management, including 36 Baka and 317 other community members.

Component 2 (Governance and Co-management): Significant results in community engagement and conservation action have been obtained. Conservation efforts led to 928 patrols, the identification of 73 marine turtle nests, and the release of 3,500 baby turtles by TUBE AWU. This was complemented by the strengthening of complaint management mechanisms, with 20 community relays designated and a harmonized data collection sheet developed by (The Pygmy Concerted Action Research Network) RACOPY and (Bagyeli's Cultural and Development Association) BACUDA, ensuring community rights are respected.

Component 3 (Sustainable NTFP Value Chains): Significant progress was made in developing inclusive value chains for Non-Timber Forest Products across the TRIDOM landscape. Through partners (Network for NGOs in the South-East) ROSE and (Support for the Self-Promotion of Women of Boumba and Ngoko) AAFEBEN, the project supported 16 producer organizations, constructed 05 durable warehouses, and expanded group coverage from 2 to 16 groups across three communes, reaching 418 direct beneficiaries. Economic results were impressive: wild mango producer numbers increased by 49% and production more than doubled, while Djansang revenues surged by 48% between 2024 and 2025, reaching over 108 million FCFA. A total of 47.65 tonnes of NTFPs were harvested, and 16.75 million FCFA in revolving funds were distributed. A landmark protocol was signed with SEFECAM granting communities access to UFA 10-038 and 10-054 for NTFP collection. The valorization of wild mango and Djansang has proven a genuine alternative to illegal activities, reducing pressure on forest resources while improving livelihoods. 42.5% of households invested in education, 41.4% in food, and 32.2% in health. The LOUFONO price-regulation mechanism further strengthened community bargaining power and reduced premature below-cost sales.

Component 4 (Ecotourism and Business Development): Preparations for a sustainable ecotourism model have advanced. After years of dedicated monitoring and habituation, the acceptance rate of male gorillas in the Akiba group has increased from 87% to 90% at a 7-to-10-meter distance. This represents a step toward opening the site for responsible gorilla tourism in Campo-Ma'an National Park. To support this, we also trained ecoguards and local patrol members on judicial procedures and human rights, enhancing their capacity for effective and lawful law enforcement.

These successes are not only measured in policies of land habitation, but in the strengthened capacities of our partners and the resilience of communities. We have established more effective monitoring and evaluation frameworks that allow us to learn from our experiences, adapt our strategies, and share critical knowledge. The lessons learned over these four years are invaluable, forming a solid foundation for sustainability that will extend well beyond the project's lifespan.

As we now look towards the fifth year, we are committed to consolidating these gains. The path forward is clear: to build on the solid foundations we have laid together, ensuring that the positive impacts on biodiversity and local livelihoods endure for generations to come.

Project's National Director Mr Adama Saidou

Revised Management Plan Validated in the Océan Division

The revised habitation plan for Campo Ma'an National Park (PNCM) and its peripheral zone was validated at the divisional level during a meeting held in Kribi on May 26, 2026, under the presidency of Mr. Bouba Haman, the Divisional Officer of the Ocean Department.

The 264,064-hectare park, established in 2000 and managed under Cameroon's 2024 forestry and wildlife law, requires periodic revision of its management framework. The current validation follows local consultations in the districts of Campo, Niété, and Akom 2, as part of the participatory revision process launched in 2023 by the Ministry of Forests and Wildlife (MINFOF) with support from the African Wildlife Foundation (AWF) under the GEF 7 project.

The meeting brought together local authorities, traditional chiefs, representatives of indigenous Bagyéli communities, civil society organizations, private sector actors, and security forces to discuss conservation challenges and proposed management programs for 2027-2031.

Key discussions centred on community involvement, ecotourism development, anti-poaching measures, and the illegal circulation of firearms. The validation was granted subject to the integration of all participants' observations and recommendations.

The validated plan now awaits publication and dissemination by MINFOF, with calls for accelerated establishment of municipal tourism offices and a strengthened network of informants to combat illegal activities.



Participants during session

Forging for Justice and Protection of Communities in the Congo Basin



Group photo of participants

A training and monitoring meeting was held in Kribi from May 27th to 29th to enhance the effectiveness of the Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) within the WWF CCO intervention zones, including Tri-National Sangha (TNS), Tri-National Dja-Odzala-Minkebe (TRIDOM), Kudu-Zombo Programme (KZP), and Coastal Forests Programme (CFP).

Organized by the Pygmy Concerted Action Research Network (RACOPY) in collaboration with WWF CCO and supported by GEF7, CANOPE, and Pro Campo projects, the gathering brought together stakeholders to evaluate progress made between 2025 and 2026. The primary objective was to improve the handling of complaints, strengthen human rights understanding, and foster coordination among actors.



Meeting in session

Outcomes

Organizations like PERAD, CEFAID, and BACUDA will collaborate to standardize the content of awareness posters on the GRM, allowing for local adaptation to ensure cultural relevance.

The development of short explanatory videos and audio clips for community dissemination, alongside illustrative visual aids on human rights issues.

The reinforcement of data collection tools and the establishment of secure databases to protect sensitive information on human rights abuses.

A commitment to finalize a comprehensive GRM procedure manual, supported by the Human Rights Commission (CDHC) and WWF.

Clarifying the roles of community relays and providing them with enhanced training on human rights, documentation, and confidentiality.

A significant focus was also placed on human-wildlife conflict management, with a plea for MINAT to engage in the process. The meeting concluded with a strong call for sustainable financing for the GRM and regular quarterly reporting to the CDHC by all RACOPY members. These actions represent a step toward ensuring justice and protection for communities in the Congo Basin landscapes.

A Step Towards Strengthening Law Enforcement and Human Rights



Group photo of participants



Delegate's representative speaking during workshop

A three-day capacity-building workshop on combating wildlife crime while respecting human rights took place in Yokadouma from the 5th of June 2026. The event brought together ecoguards and local community members from the Lobéké National Park, along with representatives from the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife, Ministry of Justice, security forces, civil society organisations, and technical partners from WWF and GEF 7.

The workshop aimed to strengthen field operations against poaching while ensuring human rights are respected in all anti-poaching activities. Participants took part in sessions covering wildlife crime response strategies, law enforcement procedures, and human rights best practices in conservation work.

Key discussions addressed challenges which includes human-wildlife conflict compensation, procedures for managing seized perishable products, and the need for broader community awareness of Cameroon's new 2024 forestry and wildlife law. Participants also emphasized the importance of involving hunting zone representatives and mining administration officials in future workshops.

The workshop concluded with recommendations to the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife, including increased community sensitization on the new forestry law, efficient recovery of damages from wildlife crime convictions, and proper auctioning of seized perishable goods to avoid value loss. Technical partners were urged to support the Ministry in disseminating the new law to local communities.

ROSE Interventions Yields Significant Profit in the TNS



President of GIC RAFASAL and the djansang peeling machine operator (a Baka)

Indigenous People and Local Communities (IPLC) in Cameroon's Congo Basin forest landscape are seeing tangible economic benefits through the sustainable processing of wild mango and other non-timber forest products (NTFPs), GEF 7 project implemented by (Reseaux des ONG Locales du Sud-Est Cameroun) ROSE, GEF 7 implementation partner in the TNS.

In April and May 2026, ROSE organized exchange visits between IPLC groups, bringing together 57 participants from Baka and Bantou communities at Malapa to share expertise on transforming wild mango and processing djansang. The demonstration of oil extraction techniques and improved djansang peeling processes enabled most of these communities to achieve in few minutes what used to take 24 hours by hand.

The LOUFONO mechanism a small grants mechanism where communities receive funds to purchase and resell NTFPs has generated significant returns. Sixteen producer groups received a total subvention of 19,054,000 FCFA, of which 5,958,600 FCFA was invested in stock security. The beneficiary groups have generated 1,318,500 FCFA in revenue from transformed wild mango products alone, with a remaining stock valued for future sales.

Three COVAREF management committees successfully evaluated their 2025 action plans and developed new strategies for 2026, incorporating equitable revenue-sharing mechanisms and focusing on Community-Managed Hunting Interest Zone area development, conservation, and social projects.

Women's participation has been particularly notable, with 16 Baka women and 13 Bantu women participating in the April exchange visit alone. Community members reported improved social cohesion and strengthened local governance structures through the project's participatory approach.

ROSE continues to support and follow up the project's activities of 19 groups across a 180km area in the Moloundou and Salapoumbe communes, balancing conservation objectives with sustainable community development.



Some Djansang displayed by ASDEFEBB in Nguilili

AAFEBEN Impacts Communities in TRIDOM through Workshops



A group photo of a GIC Ngassamonadje followed up by the partner

The organization, *Appui à l'Auto Promotion des Femmes de la Boumbe et Ngoko* (AAFEBEN) continues to meet significant goals in implementing the Integrated Forest Landscape Management project (GEF 7) across the Lomié, Ngoyla, and Mintom communes. The months of April, May and June have been marked by a tangible progress toward the sustainable Non-Timber Forest Product (NTFP) enterprises in the Tri-National Dja-Odzala-Minkebe landscape.

Activities were carried out through meetings with six forestry companies, including CUF, SFE, SIM, FIPCAM, SEFECAM, and DINO ET FILS. These sessions focused on sharing the results of NTFPs mapping studies and addressing challenges faced by Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs) in collecting products like Moabi. Fruitful discussions resulted in clear roadmaps for collaboration and strengthened protocols between communities and forest managers.

Throughout this period, 43 women, 45 men, and 68 indigenous members actively participated in workshops and training sessions. Communities received comprehensive support in developing simplified business plans, with funds management mechanisms being updated and validated in all beneficiary groups. Over 200 participants benefited from the training on financial management and organizational governance.

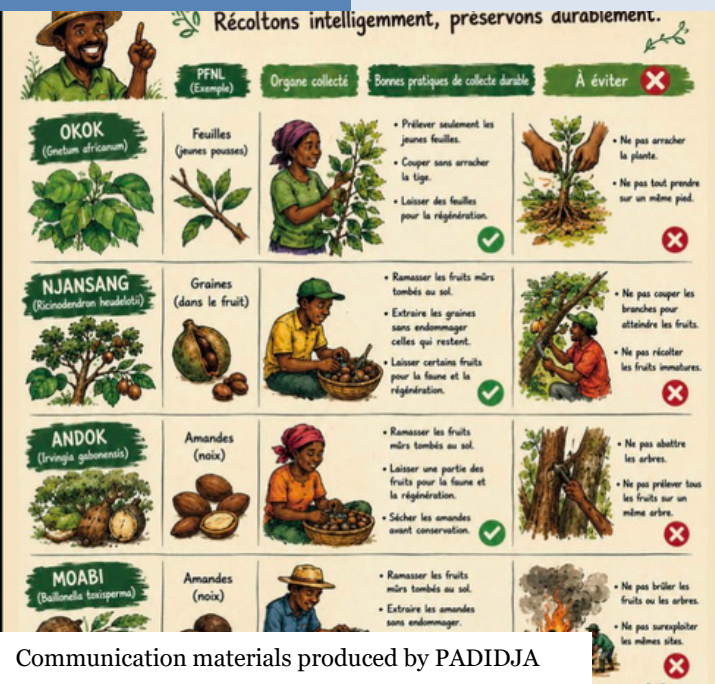
The participatory monitoring system continued to be implemented across 17 villages, ensuring proper stock tracking, financial accountability, and equipment management. Exchange visits organized in Lomié facilitated peer learning and reinforced collective engagement toward shared goals.

As we move into the next quarter, AAFEBEN remains committed to working in strengthening the project goals establishing sustainable partnerships between IPLCs and the private sector, ensuring fair benefit-sharing and the long-term viability of PFNL.

PADIDJA-PNDP Strengthens Land Use Planning in the TRIDOM Landscape



Communication materials produced by PADIDJA



Communication materials produced by PADIDJA

Operating within Tri-National Dja-Odzala-Minkebe landscape (Ngoyla and Mintom) (TRIDOM), the Integrated planning and development program for the Dja mining loop and the adjacent border area (PADIDJA-PNDP) has made significant strides in promoting integrated land-use planning. In year, they were able to achieve a good number of the project's objectives with regards to component 1. These key achievements include the development of communication tools to support local ownership of Land Use Plans (PLADDT), recruitment of an implementing civil society organisation (CSO), and preparation of training manuals for Village Land Management Committees (CATV and CATC).

A major milestone has been the establishment of participatory governance structures, including 40 endogenous facilitators, two communal focal points, and two steering committees. The project through PADIDJA-PNDP, successfully conducted Participatory Rural Appraisals, producing Village Land Use Plans (PATV) for all communities and provisional PLADDT for both municipalities, with special attention to the needs of indigenous Baka populations and gender integration.

Looking ahead to Year 5, they aim to finalise land-use planning processes, strengthen local capacity, and ensure alignment with national and regional frameworks.



Communication materials produced by PADIDJA

Joint PMU and Focal Point Monitoring Mission



Mission team

From June 17 to July 4, 2026, a joint mission of the Program Management Unit (PMU) and ministerial Focal Points was deployed across the TRIDOM, TNS and Campo'o Ma'an landscapes, covering the municipalities of Somalomo, Mintom, Ngoyla, Lomié, and Salapoumbé as part of the project monitoring and evaluation requirements (Component 5).

Focused on evaluation and coordination, the mission aimed to monitor the implementation of activities against annual work plans and the indicator matrix, examine difficulties encountered by partners, and agree on the schedule for next steps. A specific objective also guided the exchanges in Somalomo to analyze the relevance of the number of groups supported by the NGO Tropical Forest and considering a downward adjustment.

The exchanges brought together coordination unit experts, TNS and TRIDOM landscape managers, implementing partners (Tropical Forest, AAFEBEN, ROSE), as well as Focal Points from MINEPDED, MINFOF, and MINAS. This diversity of actors enabled a multidimensional assessment of the program's progress. In the TRIDOM landscape, Somalomo municipality, support from Tropical Forest for 24 groups revealed significant disparities. While some groups like GIC le Cultivateur demonstrate strong performance with a revolving fund increased from 141,700 to 202,300 CFA francs, others struggle to apply the small grants mechanism.

Traceability of non-timber forest products (NTFPs) and record-keeping remain major challenges.

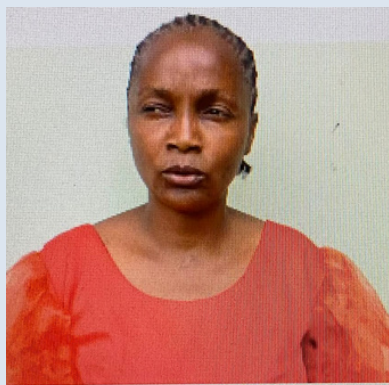
In Mintom and Ngoyla, AAFEBEN supports cooperatives and GICs with contrasting results: the EX-SCOOPS PFNL Cooperative shows a positive balance of 2,057,900 CFA francs, while GICs LEKA and DJAMOAMAS had their revolving funds withdrawn after near-total of allocated amounts.

In the TNS landscape, Salapoumbé municipality, partner ROSE recorded encouraging performances. ASDEFEBB from Malapa-Nguilili II collected 251 combos of Djansang for a total of 1,426,500 CFA francs, with active participation from Baka communities. As members emphasized that the secret lies in collective action since the Bakas and Bantous camp together to collect NTFPs. » Synergy between partners and increased involvement of ministerial Focal Points appear to be essential levers for sustaining program achievements and ensuring truly inclusive and sustainable management of Cameroon's forest landscapes.



Mission team welcomed in Njibot Baka

Feedback from some Communities



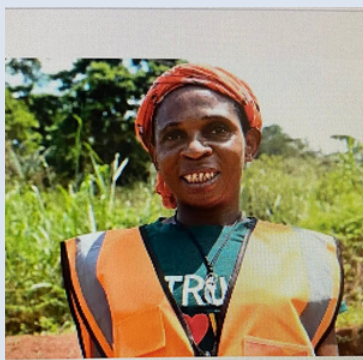
The money i got from what i was able to sell permitted my family and i to pay school fess for two of my children one in form 1 and the other in form 2.

Mrs Ondomo Bernadette epse Afan



Money gotten from the last djansang sales helped some vendors provide for their basic needs, there is report of some buying manual grinding machines. A yound lady also opened a provision store which has helped the entire village.

Representative of the chief of Komba Tinda, Martial



I used the money i got from LOUFONO to recruit workers for my cocoa farm, to take care of my health and to buy some clothing items for myself.

Leonie



With the money i got from selling my djansang, i bought 2 mattresses, sent my son to school and bought some home equipments.

Mr Vincent

A Sneak Peak on The Ebony Project



Flourishing Ebony tree in a farm in Abakoum

Among the flagship initiatives integrated by the Impact Program, the Ebony Project stands out for its innovative approach combining scientific research, community engagement, and forest landscape restoration.

Led by the Congo Basin Institute (CBI) in Cameroon, this long-term project operates in the Dja and TRIDOM landscapes, in partnership with Taylor Guitars, the Franklinia Foundation, the Global Environment Facility (GEF), and the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). Its ambition is threefold: ensure the sustainability of Ebony (*Diospyros crassiflora*), a threatened precious timber species, restore degraded lands, and improve food security and incomes for rural communities.



Group photo with an Ebony project benefactor in his farm in Abakoum

Concrete Results

In 2024, the project reached a significant milestone with the planting of 4,700 ebony trees and 8,100 indigenous fruit trees in 13 partner communities, bringing the total to 65,700 trees planted. Baka and Bantu communities participate in every stage ; building local nurseries, collecting seeds, planting, and maintaining trees. During the first five years, they received annual payments for each surviving tree before independently harvesting fruits and non-timber forest products.

An Inclusive Approach

Since the launch of its first gender strategy in 2023, women now represent nearly 40% of new planters. The project is also exploring the propagation of threatened species such as Moabi (*Baillonella toxisperma*) and Mukulungu (*Autranella congolensis*), while studying the role of forest elephants in dispersing ebony seeds.

The Ebony Project embodies a hybrid agroforestry restoration model that reconciles ecological imperatives with rural development an essential lesson for the sustainable management of the Congo Basin's landscapes.

Empowering Communities through Knowledge Sharing

From April 28 to 29, 2026, a transformative exchange visit in Lomié was organised, bringing together 32 representatives from 16 Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) specializing in Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs). This initiative, part of the GEF-7 project's third component, aimed to foster integrated forest landscape management through strengthened NTFP value chains.

Participants from the councils of Mintom, Ngoyla, and Lomié gathered to create a vital space for dialogue, sharing their failures, successes, and aspirations. The first day was dedicated to CBOs. The interactive working sessions, focused on governance, financial management, and inventory control. These exchanges led to concrete action plans clarifying the mutual expectations between grassroots groups and their cooperative unions.

The second day centered exclusively on the cooperatives COTRAMO, CVL, and EXPFNL. Discussions highlighted the pivotal role these unions play in boosting Non-Timber Forest Products NTFP value chains. The highlight was the series of clear, individual commitments made by each member to enhance their cooperative's management practices. A key takeaway was that strong governance, rooted in cooperative principles, serves as a powerful lever for sustainable development.

This peer-learning event has not only strengthened bonds among communities but also laid a foundation for the upcoming 2026 NTFP campaign. With these shared experiences and renewed commitments, women and Indigenous Peoples are poised to achieve greater autonomy and prosperity, ensuring a successful harvest season that directly contributes to their well-being and economic resilience.



A view of participants paying attention to a session

Safeguard Monitoring Mission generates Key Findings



Work session with CVL cooperative

From April 8 to 17, 2026, the GEF-7 project conducted its first monitoring mission to assess the implementation of environmental, social, and gender mitigation measures by partners in the TRIDOM landscape. Led by Environmental and Social Safeguards Officer Mr Thierry Mvogo, the mission evaluated activities carried out under Year 4 of the Integrated Forest Landscape Management Program in Cameroon.

The mission engaged with sector administrations, implementing partners, and community members through participatory meetings, focus groups, and field visits. Overall, the average mitigation performance for activities led by partner AAFEBEN ranged between 85% and 95%, with notable strengths and critical gaps.

Highlights of Performance:

- **Strong Social Inclusion:** Women and Indigenous Peoples participated at 72%, with over 100% equitable access to opportunities and full compliance with Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) processes.
- **Organizational Discipline:** Planning and governance indicators scored up to 143%, reflecting structured operational practices.

- **Critical Gaps:** The complaints mechanism (MGP) recorded 0% implementation, with no complaints collected or processed. Environmental regeneration of Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs) and health awareness activities also showed 0% realization, posing risks of overexploitation and community vulnerability.

Community Consultations Revealed:

- Consultations with Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities are conducted effectively, with at least one week's notice and translation services provided.
- However, persistent issues include the exploitation of Baka labor ("Kassa"), land appropriation, and weak internal governance within community groups—including the confiscation of foundational documents by outgoing executives in Mintom.

Way Forward:

Urgent recommendations include operationalizing the complaints mechanism, integrating NTFP regeneration into activities, and diversifying stakeholder participation—particularly involving the private sector and local elites. Strengthening partnerships and monitoring systems remains a medium-term priority.

This mission underscores that while inclusion and planning are strong, environmental sustainability and grievance redress require immediate attention to ensure lasting benefits for women, Indigenous Peoples, and forest communities.

Gorilla Necropsy Reveals Gunshot Trauma in Campo Ma'an National Park

On June 18, 2026, a joint forensic mission by WWF's One Health Program and Cameroon's Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife (MINFOF) conducted a necropsy on two gorilla carcasses discovered under suspicious circumstances in Campo Ma'an National Park. The investigation, part of ongoing zoonotic disease surveillance, quickly shifted to a poaching inquiry as evidence mounted.

The first gorilla, an adult female from the habituated Ebotan Group, was found lying prone near fresh night nests. External examination revealed four bullet entry holes on her dorsal shoulder—consistent with shotgun injuries. No signs of disease were observed, and the animal appeared healthy prior to death. The second carcass, located about 500 meters away, consisted only of rotting intestines; the rest of the body had been butchered and removed.

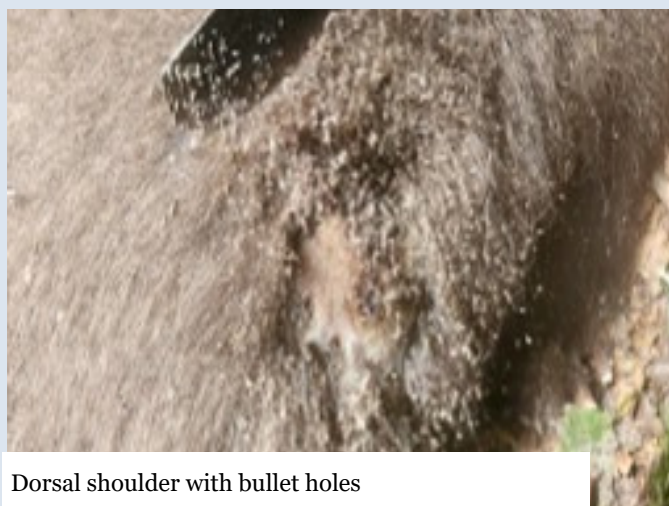
Investigators documented clear evidence of poaching: rubber sandal footprints (size ~42), blood trails leading from the scene, and a visible path used to transport meat. The swift incapacitation and absence of a struggle suggest the gorilla was shot and killed instantly. No bullet casings were found, but the pattern of wounds and processing of the second animal point to organized illegal hunting.

Biological samples (swabs and tissues) were collected under strict biosecurity protocols and preserved for laboratory analysis at CREMER, where they will be tested for anthrax, filoviruses, and other pathogens—critical for both conservation and public health surveillance.

In response, the team recommended immediate reinforcement of anti-poaching patrols in the Camp Poisson area, enhanced law enforcement, and community awareness campaigns. The mission underscores the interconnectedness of wildlife crime, ecosystem health, and human well-being. As laboratory results are pending, this tragic incident reaffirms the urgent need for integrated One Health approaches to protect both endangered great apes and local communities.



Gorilla No. 1 found laying on its belly



Dorsal shoulder with bullet holes



Necropsy being conducted

Pictures from Joint PMU Mission



Mission team embarking on a ferry in Somalomo



Transformed NTFPs



Field visit to an Ebony project farm in Mintom



Touristic lodges in Mintom forests



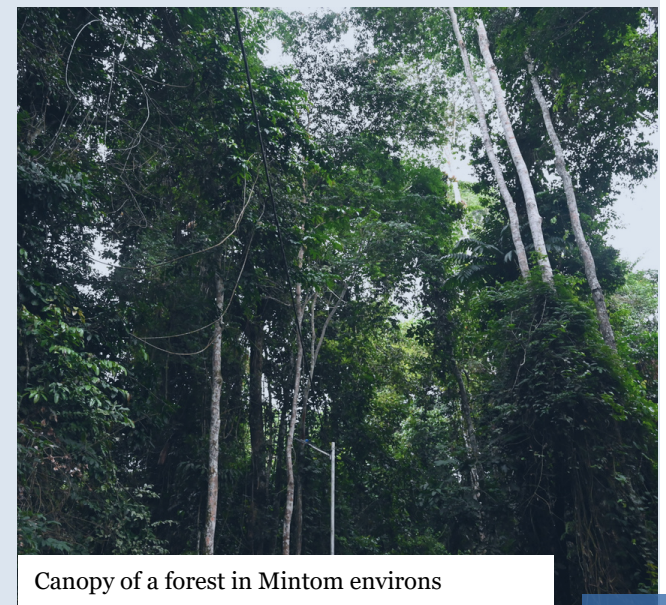
After work recharge



A view of a part of the Dja river



View of the Dja river from the ferry



Canopy of a forest in Mintom environs

