



**Green
Development
Advocates**
For a Green Congo Basin

2021 - 2022

Bi-annual report



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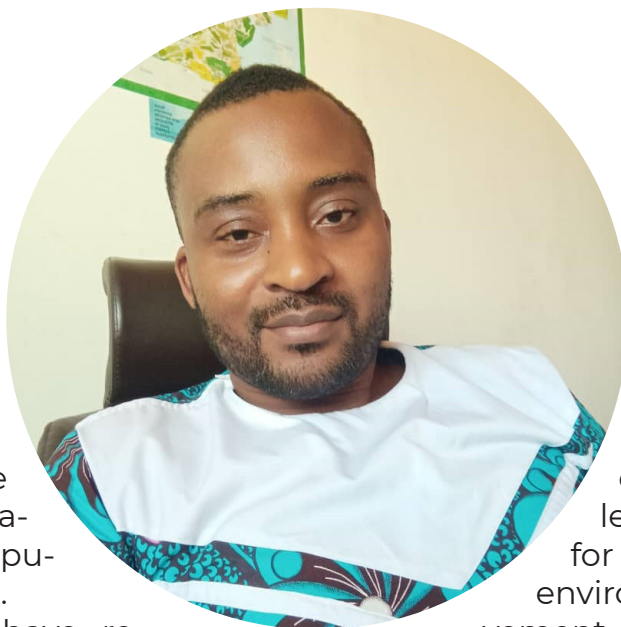
Foreword

GDA's work with its targets have been strengthened and intensified in the last two years (2021-2022). There is no doubt that the organisation has grown in reputation and effectiveness.

Overall, our activities have revolved around securing the customary spaces of populations living near agrobusinesses. The campaign against land conversion in Cameroon thus has gained momentum, while the forestry law, the revision of which was initiated in 2008, is still awaited, as Cameroon has made a number of commitments at the national and international levels to reduce deforestation and forest degradation. We have also worked to ensure that the rights of local communities are better taken into account in the construction of the Nachtigal dam.

At the organizational level, GDA has enriched its operating tools through the development and the adoption of a Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct and a Gender Policy in addition to the existing Administrative and Financial Procedures Manual. Also, in order to improve its communication, a functional website (www.gdacamaroon.org) has been developed.

We express our deep gratitude to all our



technical and financial partners whose contributions/support has helped to make our efforts fruitful. This challenges us to work harder for the protection of the environment and the improvement of the living standards of

the indigenous and local populations. Our gratitude also goes to the populations we work with, for allowing us to share their daily lives, and, finally, to this young, dynamic, committed and devoted team, which has adhere to its vision and struggles on a daily basis for GDA to fulfill the missions it has set for itself.

Aristide Chacgom
Coordinator

ABOUT GDA

Who are we?

Green Development Advocates (GDA) is a nonprofit Cameroonian civil society organization created in 2009 and legalized under the Cameroonian law on 30 June 2011. GDA

was founded by a group of environmental lawyers, community organizers and other fellows concerned about the challenges of fostering global sustainable development.

What is our mission?

To contribute to the sustainable development of African rainforests while respecting the cultures, rights, interests and

needs of African people, with a particular focus on the indigenous people of the forest.

Our goal

- To promote good environmental governance;
- To integrate environmental considerations into local development initiatives and into the policies of modern actors (states, aid agencies, private sector, etc.);
- To provide the population, especially the poor and vulnerable, with alternative justice services, legal assistance, defense and protection of citizens' socio-economic rights;
- To ensure capacity building for civil society actors in the area of environmental protection and the defense of rights;
- To support indigenous people and other threatened populations in self-help in line with their environment and culture;
- To inform, educate and raise awareness on environmental and human rights issues;
- To contribute to the sustainable management of natural resources and the fight against climate change;
- To promote gender and minority mainstreaming in the implementation of development policies and programmes.

MAIN SIGNIFICANT CHANGES ACHIEVED

Significant changes achieved by GDA in implementing its main activities between 2021 and 2022. These changes can be seen in the fight against the conversion of primary forests, informing policies relating to the management of natural resources

and community rights, the promotion of agro-ecology and the strengthening of the capacities and leadership of the Cameroonian civil society, community-based organizations and community leaders.

1- The campaign against the conversion of primary forests in Cameroon

Following Public Notice NO. 0082/AP/MIN-FOF/DF/SDIAF/SC, published on 15 May 2019 and signed by the Minister of Forestry and Wildlife (MINFOF), Mr Jules Doret NDONGO, degazetting part of FMU 09 025 for agricultural production. On 11 November 2019, Prime Minister Joseph DION NGUTE signed Decree NO. 2019/4562 degazetting a 60,000 hectare parcel of forest forming part of FMU 09 025 for agricultural production around the biodiversity rich Campo Ma'an National Park in Campo subdivision, Ocean Division, South Region. Since then, GDA has been involved in the campaign against the conversion of this primary forest to an oil palm plantation.

Our campaign informed the Presidential Decree NO. 2022/112 of 7 March 2022 granting a provisional concession of 39,923 ha to Camvert SA, thus reducing the area of 60,000 ha sought-after by the company. This campaign has so far helped to save 20,077 hectares of forest from deforestation. This change came after a number of cumulative activities, including:

- **Studies and legal Analyses**

Several studies were carried out to support

our arguments, in particular,

- Legal analysis questioning the procedures used in degazetting and attributing the provisional concession granted to CAMVERT SA. The analysis document sets out very clearly the various violations of both the forestry law with regards to the declassification process of this forest and the land law with regards to the attribution of the provisional concession. The document was presented to the media, which brought it to public attention. The analysis was also shared with stakeholders in the forestry and land tenure sectors in Cameroon. This analysis can be downloaded from our website through the following link: <http://gdacameroon.org/download/312/> ;

- Analysis of the negative impact of CAMVERT agro-industrial project on the biodiversity of the Campo Ma'an Technical Operation Unit, showing the actual and potential impacts of the project on wildlife in the Campo area and its surroundings. This analysis can be downloaded from our website through the following link: <http://gdacameroon.org/download/695/>

- GDA-Greenpeace Africa joint publication of the document entitled "CAMVERT, a Recurring Nightmare", which gives a voice to local and indigenous communities expressing their fears about the project, as well as an investigation into the company's owners (<http://gdacameroon.org/download/822/>);
- Legal Analysis of Orders NO. 0011, 0012,

0013, 0014, 0015 of 16 February 2022 granting timber sales as part of the implementation of a development project in the national domain in Campo, where we demonstrate how, in the name of a development project, forests are being plundered. (<http://gdacameroon.org/download/893/>).



• Commitment of Stakeholders

Our publications were shared with various national and international stakeholders to inform them of the risks of deforestation associated with the project. We were subsequently granted audience at the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife (MINFOF) and the Ministry of the Economy, Planning and Regional Development (MINEPAT) to present and explain the grievances concerning the installation of CAMVERT agro-industrial project at Campo Ma'an. In addition, the press carried out several missions which enabled the various media (TV, radio, written and online press) to get to feel the realities on the ground and to hear the opinions

of the communities faced with the arrival of the project and the impacts already visible on the field. Subsequent publications helped to raise the alarm at national and international level about the consequences of such a project on the lives of communities, the environment and biodiversity;

• Mapping of the Territories of Lives of the Neighboring Communities to the Agro-Industrial Plantation

The participatory maps of the resources and habitats of 06 communities (Nkoélon, Akak, Nazareth, Malaba, Mabiogo and Ebo-djé) bordering CAMVERT SA agro-industrial oil palm plantation have been produced.

These maps show that communities access the 60,000 hectare area previously requested by CAMVERT for their subsistence, cultural and religious activities. The communities' space therefore overlaps with Camvert area. The maps produced led to a multi-stakeholder dialog at local level between the communities, MINFOF, represented by the conservation services of the Campo Ma'an National Park, the Manyanje Na Elombo Campo Marine Park, and the local traditional and administrative authorities. The result of this dialogue was a presentation by the communities to the participants of the impact of the installation of the agro-industrial project on their living space and on the marine park.

• **Building Communities' Leadership against forest Conversion in Campo**

The capacities and leadership of local and indigenous communities were strengthened through workshops and community meetings. Following the various training sessions, community leaders and traditional authorities developed an advocacy strategy. They have written to the President of the Republic to condemn the destruc-

tion of their farms and the fear they feel because of the upsurge in human-wildlife conflicts.

To make their voice heard and coordinate their struggle, the women of the 17 communities of Campo have come together under the banner of the Association des Femmes Riveraines un Seul Coeur (AFRISC) - Campo which they established.

In collaboration with SYNAPARCAM, an exchange trips were organized between the communities affected by the SOCAPALM plantation in Dibombari and the communities living alongside CAMVERT plantation currently being set up. The SYNAPARCAM around SOCAPALM travelled to the communities adjacent to share their experience of the negative impacts they are suffering, as well as their fighting strategies to urge SOCAPALM to be more responsible, so that the people living near CAMVERT are better organized, mobilized and take good action to defend their forests which is a source of their livelihood. In addition, a number of community leaders took part in some linking and learning discussions in Nigeria and Ivory Coast to share their experiences and learn from strategies used elsewhere in Africa.



2. Informing of national and international laws/policies/strategies/practices relating to natural resource management and community rights

Over the past two years, our work on influencing policies and practices has focused on:

• **Informing regulations and practices relating to the access, collection and marketing of NTFPs**

GDA has acted to reduce the barriers faced by local and indigenous communities in the access, collection and marketing of non-timber forest products in Cameroon, in particular in collaboration with AAFE-BEN. This has made it possible to initiate dialog with the holders of forest titles in the Boumba-and-Ngoko Division, namely Yokadouma council, logging companies (SIM, STBK, etc.) and National Parks (Lobeke, Boumba Bek), with a view to facilitating community access to their areas of NTFP collection, as NTFPs are becoming increasingly scarce in the communities' traditional collection areas. As a result, most of the title holders, in particular Yokadouma council, have made verbal commitments to facilitate community access for NTFP collection.

In addition, 03 CSO, partners of GDA, in particular FORUDEF, CAD and AAFE-BEN, as well as the cooperatives with which they work, were informed of the procedures for obtaining NTFP collection permits and waybills using a simplified document produced by GDA. (Here is the link to download the information guide on NTFP collection and transportation processes <http://gdacameroon.org/download/886/>).

• **Call for the Publication of the National Palm Oil Strategy**

Over the past two years, GDA at national level has informed the process of developing the national oil palm strategy. As a result, with GDA's coaching, 38 Cameroonian CSOs signed a position paper urging the Government of Cameroon to facilitate the validation and start of implementation of Cameroon's sustainable oil palm strategy whose review started since 2014 (09 years ago), and with no reaction from the Government (<http://gdacameroon.org/download/744/>). GDA, once again mobilized a number of CSOs on 31 August, 2022 to discuss the Government's silence on the issue. 13 CSOs, from the forestry, environment and community rights sectors, decided to send a letter to the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development (MINADER), which they all signed, reiterating their call for the validation of the national oil palm strategy but also stressing the importance of the palm oil sector to the country's economic growth, the major socio-environmental issues generated by the oil palm sector, and the sustainability innovations contained in the current version of the national strategy for the sustainable development of the oil palm value chain, as can be seen via the link <http://gdacameroon.org/download/878/>. The letter was distributed to the media and shared with key stakeholders. As a result, the Director of Professional Agricultural Organizations (DOPA), representing the Minister of Agriculture and Ru-

ral Development, held a meeting with GDA on 11 October, 2022, at the said Ministry, to discuss the obstacles related to the publication of the national strategy for the sustainable development of palm oil, which include: obsolete data, the lack of financial means to recruit a consultant or facilitate the setting up of a multi-stakeholder working group to update the strategy, the divergence of opinion between technical partners and the State on the content of the document, such as partners advocating the regeneration of old plantations while the State advocates the opening up of new forest areas for the creation of oil palm plantations to make up for Cameroon's palm oil deficit.

• **Mobilizing Stakeholders to Strengthen the Implementation of Actions against Climate Change**

In the run-up to the 2021 and 2022 Conferences of the Parties (COPs) on climate change, GDA mobilized CSOs and communities to call for greater inclusion, participatory development and the implementation of climate policies, in particular the revision of Cameroon's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) and National Climate Change Adaptation Plan, and for greater adaptation and implementation of climate change solutions adopted during the COPs. To this end, in 2021, 21 CSOs with GDA coaching, drew up and signed a notice calling for a greater involvement of CSOs and communities in the development and the implementation of climate policies. The final communiqué is available through this link:

<http://gdacameroon.org/download/805/>. This communiqué was shared with representatives of Cameroonian CSOs attending the COP 26 in Glasgow for reading at

the various side events, but also at national level, it was shared with the sectoral ministries concerned and disseminated in the media.

Together with other African organizations in the African Climate Justice Collective (ACJC), we acted at the Counter COP to highlight the real problems communities are facing as a result of climate change, and to denounce false solutions to these problems. GDA has also signed several petitions and position papers calling on the European Union to develop and adopt more ambitious regulations that do not penalize small-scale producers and protect human rights.

Also, GDA, Both ENDS and over 40 environmental justice and academic groups, particularly from the South, have defined the content of the Transformative Water Pact (TWP) through an online round table process that promotes more just and equitable water management worldwide.

3. Promoting respect for the traditional land and forest rights of local and indigenous communities

This advocacy of respect for the land and forest rights of IPLCs focused on:

- **Respecting Community Rights during the Construction of the Nachtigal Dam**

The documentation and popularization of the social and environmental impacts of the Nachtigal Hydro Electric dam on the communities in Batchenga, Mbandjock and Ntui subdivisions affected by its construction was carried out; equally, capacity-building sessions for affected communities were organized on safeguard policies and on donor dispute settlement mechanisms, notably those of the World Bank and the AfDB. With the coaching of GDA and partners, mobilized to file a

complaint with the Compliance Advisor Ombudsman (CAO) of the International Financial Corporation (IFC), the Independent Recourse Mechanism (IRM) of the African Development Bank (ADB) and the Inspection Panel of the World Bank. This complaint was deemed admissible by the three institutions after an assessment mission to the communities on 1 and 2 August, 2022 by the CAO and the MIR, and by the Inspection Panel on 1 and 2 September, 2022. As a result, the affected communities and the company responsible for constructing and operating the Nachtigal hydroelectric dam, Nachtigal Power Hydroelectric Company (NHPC), are currently engaged in a mediation process to reach an agreement to resolve the communities' claims.



• **Securing the Traditional Lands of Neighboring Communities around large-scale Agro-industrial Plantation areas**

One of the options offered by forestry law to communities to secure their traditional land is the creation of a community forest on a 5,000 Ha area, renewable once after 25 years. With the coaching of GDA, the community of Mbana initiated the process of creating a community forest to counter the encroachment of their traditional lands by the agro-industrial company SOCA-PALM. The major results achieved are the creation of a legal entity called Association de Mbana, Bikele et Okokong (ADEMBO) which will manage the forest on behalf of the community, the habitat and resources map of Mbana village, which sparked an inter-community dialogue to clarify boundaries with neighbouring communities. Mbana has reached an agreement with Nseppe Elog-Ngango with they have signed a memorandum stating their limits.

• **Respecting the Rights of Indigenous Communities around Protected Areas**

A memorandum of understanding has been drawn up and signed between the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife (MINFOF) and the Baka neighboring communities grouped under the Association Sanguia Baka Buma'a Kpodé (ASBABUK) concerning access to resource areas in the Lo-béké, Nki and Boumba-Bek National Parks. Three years have passed since the first memorandum of understanding was signed on February 26, 2019, and it's time to renew it.

The RACOPY platform coordinated by INADES FORMATION, of which GDA is a member, is leading the renewal process. GDA leads the drafting committee of the

consortium of civil society organizations for the consultations and engagement of indigenous Baka populations in the revision of the memorandum of understanding between MINFOF and ASBABUK. The renewal process was launched in April 2022 with a preparation phase aimed essentially at developing the methodology, data collection tools, agenda, etc. and producing a budget for the renewal. The methodology adopted enabled phases of consultation and data collection with the main beneficiaries, the indigenous Baka peoples, as well as other relevant stakeholders such as the conservation services of the various national parks concerned, community-based organizations (CBOs) and local CSOs, administrative authorities and traditional rulers. The consortium and ASBABUK are preparing the final draft of the new MoU, which will be presented to MINFOF and other stakeholders for amendment, validation and eventual signing of the agreement between the two parties.

4. Promoting agro ecology

GDA have undertaken a vast program to promote agro ecology. We provided support to communities affected by CAMVERT S.A.'s work. Most of these communities are involved in farming, NTFP collection, fishing and hunting, and their activities have been drastically impacted by large mammals, creating human-wildlife conflicts. These problems of human-wildlife conflict, which today are becoming more widespread within villages, have since 2019 caused the destruction of crops, reducing communities to famine, and insecurity for people and property. Aware of this, we have undertaken to support these communities in the development of farms close to their homes for the implementation of agro ecological practices through capacity-building sessions on good agricultural practices, in particular the intelligent diversification of crops on the farm; training on seed multiplication (cocoyam, plantains, yam) and support with local seeds (corn, peanuts, cocoa, pistachio, okra, etc.); this has enabled these communities to use a total of 21 ha of fallow lands to improve their living conditions, which had been undermined by the Camvert S.A. agro-industrial project.

In addition, in order to curb bush meat consumption and reduce pressure on wildlife biodiversity in and around the Campo Ma'an National Park, we supported 13 households with village chickens, with the aim of providing beneficiaries with an alternative source of animal protein, and have put in place a methodology for the chicks produced to be redistributed to other members of the community so that they in turn can start rearing their own.

GDA shared experiences with partners from Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire, who came to Cameroon as part of a joint Linking and Learning project on agro ecology as a tool for securing customary areas against land grabbing, but also as environment-friendly

agriculture for healthy eating. This enabled the three (3) countries to broaden their knowledge of good agro ecology practices.



5. Capacity-building for civil society and research in natural resource management

In 2021, GDA assessed the institutional and legal obstacles to CSO participation in natural resource management policies and decision-making and formulated proposals for removing these obstacles and making progress towards improving civic space in Cameroon. One of the weaknesses highlighted by the study was the lack of collaboration and group work between CSOs. As a result, the recommendation was made to revive or create a new platform for collaboration between CSOs, as well as the low capacity of CSOs to advocate for changes in policies and practices in the management of natural resources in Cameroon. To this end, GDA trained 30 CSOs, including AAFEBEN, FORUDEF, EGI, CAD and the 10 member organisations of the Coalition of Civil Society Organisations for the Management of Natural Resource, partners in South-West Cameroon, as well as the 10 member organisations of the IFI Synergy Group platform, for which GDA

runs the secretariat, as well as other local and indigenous organisations and communities with which GDA integrated at local and national levels on the development and implementation of an advocacy strategy, as well as the identification and analysis of an investment and supply chain for a major project. Each CSO identified and developed an advocacy strategy on a specific issue, which is now being implemented. GDA signed a partnership agreement as a local partner in the Fairfrontiers project run by the Research Institute for Humanity and Nature (RIHN) based in Kyoto, Japan. This partnership is aimed at selecting students from a variety of backgrounds to carry out research into the dynamics of the frontiers between agriculture and forestry. This approach has the dual advantage of enabling young people to improve their research skills and acquire practical knowledge within GDA.



Honors to our partners



The great GDA team



Chacgom Aristide



Fonge Christaincia



Mba Mbiam Danielle



Mbole Véronique



Mfoulou Bonny Alain Fabrice



Ndichia Priscilia



Nguena Mawamba Carrele



Nkwelle Ekane



Nkwelle Melle



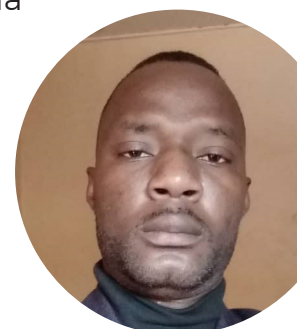
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Samba Karngong Emmanuel



Tchakounte Stéphane



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