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Système Normalisé
Observation Indépendante Externe



SNOIE, FIRST OI SYSTEM CERTIFIED IN CAMEROON

The Standardized External Independent Monitoring System (SNOIE) is now certified ISO 9001. Developed by the association Forests and Rural Development (FODER) in collaboration with other civil society organisations, the administration and other stakeholders of the forest sector, SNOIE officially obtained its Certificate of Conformity to the ISO 9001 2015 Standard on April 17, 2018. With this certificate, the Standardized External Independent Monitoring System therefore becomes the first monitoring approach of natural resources by the civil society, certified in Cameroon. This certification was granted by the certification body Interface NRM Ltd¹.

To obtain this SNOIE ISO 9001 certification, FODER benefited from the financial and technical support of the Centre for International Development and Training (CIDT) and the University of Wolverhampton, in the framework of the project Citizens' Voices for Change (CV4C). This certification covers a three-year period. «Obtaining this certificate marks a watershed in the global history of independent monitoring of natural resources and opens a new era we are privileged to be the pioneers. It's also a greater responsibilities and a heavy duty that we have to fulfil, which consists in maintaining our system at the level of quality standards, and this goes through the good functioning and continuous improvement of the system» Rodrigue NGONZO, the President of Board of Trustees, is delighted.

The Standardized External Independent Monitoring System (SNOIE) developed in



2015, is a set of monitoring processes for the exploitation of natural resources (NR) based on the ISO 9001 2015 international standard. This system was developed to make the External Independent Observation (OIE) activities more effective, by increasing the credibility of denunciations that emerge from it and, above all, to better orientate these denunciations towards the appropriate destinations (competent authorities, technical and financial partners, operators of the sector etc). The audit of this system, which led to the ISO 9001 2015 certification, enabled to demonstrate the performance of the system, to appraise the indicators of these processes and the satisfaction of stakeholders with the system. Indeed, in 15 months of implementation of the SNOIE as an FAO-funded project, 88% of the OIE reports produced in the framework

1. Organisme national d'accréditation du Royaume-Uni, chargé de déterminer, dans l'intérêt public, la compétence technique et l'intégrité des organisations telles que celles qui offrent des services de test, d'étalonnage et de certification. <https://www.ukas.com/>

of the SNOIE and transmitted to the competent authority i.e the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife (MINFOF) caused their reactions. Thus, missions of control of the National Control Brigade (BNC) and the Regional Control Brigades (BRC) were organized following the denunciations made through the SNOIE. These missions enabled to notice that the denunciations were relevant and the response letters from the Minister of Forestry were received for this purpose.

These positive impacts of the deployment of the SNOIE were obtained in partnership with organizations such as PAPEL (Support Program for Breeding and Preservation of Biodiversity) and CeDLA (Centre for Local and Alternative Development) which respectively intervene in the East and South regions of Cameroon. SUHE, a community-based CSO, based in the Sanaga Maritime Division, also contributed to the denunciations made available for the MINFOF through the Community-based Real-Time Forest Monitoring (RTM). Transparency International-Cameroon (TI-C), the lobbying organization of the SNOIE, also played its part by ensuring that actions are taken by MINFOF following the reported denunciations.

Modeled on the ISO 9001 2015 standard to develop the SNOIE, the coordination of this system has made it become today for Cameroon «a real mechanism to have reliable information on external independent monitoring in Cameroon », said Dr. Jordan Gavin Director, Interface NRM Ltd. Moreover, at the level of the administration in charge of forests, the SNOIE is now part of the network of informants of the administration. «The illegal logger is a robber who has to be hunted down and receiving reliable information is crucial.



And the SNOIE, which is part of the networks of informants, is a system for having these denunciations,» said the Head of the National Control Brigade at MINFOF, Rodrigue Ella, who welcomed the initiative to set up the SNOIE.

With SNOIE now certified ISO 9001-2015, Cameroonian and even Congo Basin civil society have standardized OIE procedures for more efficiency and credibility.

2. <https://interface-nrm.co.uk/>

« THE CERTIFIED SNOIE CAN BE REPLICATED ALL OVER THE WORLD »



Rodrigue NGONZO
PBT of FODER

Why and how have you thought about the development of the Standardized External Independent Monitoring System by modeling following the requirements of the ISO 9001 standard?

We thought of setting up the Standardized External Independent Monitoring System (SNOIE) in the beginning of 2014, after noticing difficulties faced by independent monitoring (OI) carried out by the civil society and communities. Particularly, this OI was less credible and highly contested by competent authorities namely the administrations -the ministry of forestry in this case-; but also companies from the private sector; complaining that they did not understand how OI is carried out the civil society. All these actors from the forest sector believed that they did not know the procedures

followed by civil society's independent observers during their activities. They also complained that they did not understand the objectives of this OI and doubted the neutrality of the organizations in charge of OI. It was therefore important to reassure the administration of the good faith of OI and the private sector of its neutrality and its independence. As the quality of denunciations that are resulting from OI, was questioned, we therefore scrutinized all the standards existing to ensure this quality and the credibility of works of OI. While searching, we realized that firstly, there are norms and standards for the certification, but there are none for OI. So by going through all standards and norms, we found the ISO 9001:2008 standard in vigor at that time as the one to which OI could be more logically submitted, as it's a general quality standard applicable to all processes and applicable to companies as well as to various systems without precision or particularity but to be adapted and match with its requirements. By following the requirements of the ISO 9001:2008 standard, an international standard in terms of quality management, we reorganized the monitoring. This involved listening, identifying and mapping processes, documentation, description and definition of procedures to comply with by observers and by the various stakeholders in the monitoring process. All this work was done with stakeholders of the forest sector and FAO and European Union's funders. We went through this long way leading towards the certification through the design of the system, its validation and its deployment.

Today the SNOIE is certified ISO 9001 2015, what are the opportunities offered by this certification for external independent monitoring in the Congo Basin in particular and in the forest sector in the world in general?

The long road to the development and the implementation of the Standardized External Independent Monitoring System led in April 2018, to the grant of a certificate of conformity to the requirements of the ISO 9001 2015 standard. To clarify in 2017, the SNOIE was upgraded to the requirements of the new standard version, that of 2015. And in April 2018, after an external audit process, pre-certification audit, certification audit and training of auditors, the system was submitted to the International Certification Committee, which validated the system's compliance with the requirements of the quality standard. The benefits provided by certification are: assurance of the credibility on the results delivered by the Standardized independent monitoring system; internal quality control of the works and processes that are implemented, the performance on the independent monitoring procedures but also an assurance for a period of three years that the system will be monitored from the outside as inside by qualified auditors. Both internal auditors who have been trained and certified for this, and external auditors accredited by certification bodies to verify annually that the system continues to comply with the requirements of the standard.

The certificate granted to the SNOIE is not limited to a particular type of OI. This certificate covers all monitoring processes independent of the management of natural resources and the environment. This means that any organization other than FODER and the organizations currently associated to the standardized system can benefit from this certificate by aligning their independent monitoring practice with the requirements of the SNOIE, which are nothing other than the requirements of ISO quality

management. 9001: 2015. The certificate does not have a specific geographical area, that is to say that it is open to other countries because it does not certify a particular organization or origin, it certifies a set of processes, it certifies a system that can be replicated everywhere, that can be developed anywhere in the world and apply to the management of natural resources and even beyond other processes. I would like to thank the funders for their support to FODER during the two long years of development of the SNOIE; thank you for the technical and financial support given in the implementation of this system which continues today.

What are the perspectives now that SNOIE is certified ?

Our will is to extend this standardized OI approach by broadening its scope not only to other sectors as; it is already the case in the mining sector; but also broadening it from a geographical view by covering all the forest regions of Cameroon and spread it in other countries where there are budgetary constraints to the design and implementation of a standardized OI system. A great advantage today is that the SNOIE has already been developed, all design and development efforts have already been made, the certificate has been obtained, it is much easier to deploy and replicate it in another country and in another context using the same procedures, applying the same processes and using the same unique certificate. So a great advantage in terms of cost efficiency and development of setting up such a system in another country. A great advantage in terms of deadlines of implementation that can be changed from two years to one year or less than six months from the deployment of resources and skills.

WHAT DOES ISO 9001 BRING TO THE STANDARDIZED EXTERNAL INDEPENDENT MONITORING SYSTEM (SNOIE)?

Although not compulsory, The ISO 9001 certification used around the world ensures an effective quality management system and emphasizes on the importance of the concept of continuous improvement. This result is an increase in the internal efficiency of the organization and a better customer satisfaction. The revision, published in 2015, makes the standard applicable to all types of organizations according to their own objectives. From customer satisfaction to the stability of the internal organization and risk management, The ISO 9001 certification has many advantages that improve the profitability of the organization.

Customer satisfaction at the centre of operations

The priority of the ISO 9001 standard is the conformity to the goods and services offered with the requirements of the customers. Thus, by being certified ISO 9001: 2015, the SNOIE ensures a certain quality with its main clients (administrations, funders, private sector, CSOs and local and indigenous communities), requiring an attentive ear to respond to their solicitations. Recognized internationally, the ISO 9001 standard also allows us to expand our customer base. Let's keep in mind that in certain industries, compliance with standards is essential and therefore allows certification holders to conquer new markets or expand into the Congo Basin in the SNOIE case.

Enhanced work discipline

Based on an initial diagnosis of our situation required by the ISO 9001 certification process,

we will define quantified objectives for continuous improvement, supported by a system of indicators measuring the performance of our actions, which will allow you to save time and efficacy. The ISO 9001 guidelines therefore set a consolidated framework, which optimizes the internal organization and governance of our organization, and requires us to continually look for ways to improve our image.

Stakeholders' valorisation

One of the requirements of the ISO 9001 standard is the valorisation of the work of each actor in the achievement of established objectives. Being certified makes it possible, on one hand, to assure our funders of the transparency and profitability of our organization, and, on the other hand, to certify to our suppliers (local CSOs and local and indigenous communities ...) of our good practices and professionalism. The impact of our change management will allow our partners to benefit from greater added value.

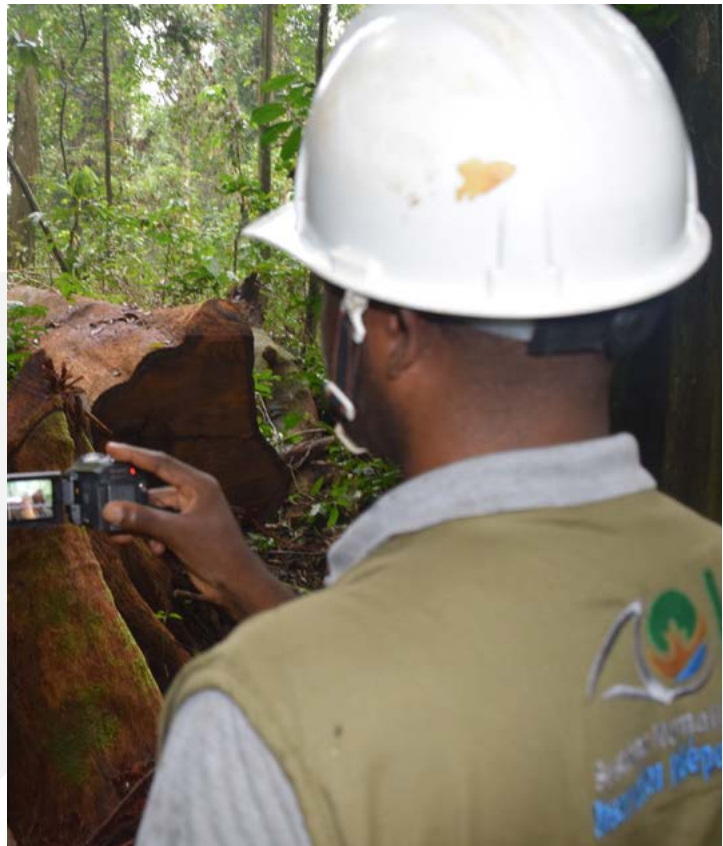
Reducing the risk of hazards

In addition to meeting legal and regulatory requirements, the ISO 9001 guidelines involve in identifying risks and dealing with malfunctions, after considering the order of priorities according to the frequency of occurrence and the degree of criticality. The reduction of these malfunctions, attributable to the efficiency of a quality management system, moderates the costs. For instance, SNOIE by launching itself in the certification procedure, had noticed a drastic reduction of its costs generated by the

quality defects (unsuccessful mission, deterioration of the image of Independent monitoring, ...). The requirements of the standard teach us to take a more proactive and reactive approach to risk management. We now have all the cards in hand to strive for excellence, thanks to the competitive advantage of ISO 9001: 2015 certification, and to be in perfect conformity with the requirements of our customers, while being legitimized by the supervision of a competent external body.

Collaborators empowerment

The quality management, on which the SNOIE relies, promotes the process approach as a strategy that can easily achieve the objectives of the system. The process approach would require civil society organizations to be specialized in one segment of the external independent monitoring chain namely: monitoring, verification, communication and lobbying, with clear roles and responsibilities. When the process approach is used in the quality management system, it enables: to understand and satisfy requirements, to consider processes in



terms of added value, to measure the performance and efficiency of processes, to continuously improve processes on the basis of frequency and objectivity.

INFORMATION ON THE ISO 9001: 2015 STANDARD

The latest version of ISO 9001 was published in September 2015, replacing the ISO 9001 2008 standard version which now enables to take into account internal and external stakes of an organization and the associated risks.

The evolutions to the 2015 version compared to the 2008 version are mostly in order to be able to propose a framework adapted to the current economic context.

The following topics have been added or changed extensively compared to the previous version:

- Background and interested parties: an organization must identify external and internal stakes that may have consequences on product compliance and customer satisfaction. The needs and expectations of interested parties must also be taken into account.

- A notion of authority and responsibility has been induced at the process level (see §4.4.1 v2015) to strengthen the deconcentrated steering of each process
- The risk approach.
- The terms «quality manual», «quality plan», «documented procedures», «records» and «documents» are replaced by the generic term «documented information». The

documented information is defined in the standard, and must be controlled and kept to prove that the processes are working properly. However, the level of detail depends on the needs of the organization.

- Continuous improvement: measurement requirements and recording of performance at all relevant levels as well as commitment to effective progress actions

SOME RECENT RESULTS OF THE DENUNCIATIONS MADE THROUGH THE SNOIE

The Ministry of Forestry punishes by a fine the company Oye pinned for illegal logging in a denunciation report of the SNOIE

The forest company Oye et Compagnie will have to pay a fine of 7.500.000 FCFA to the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife for being found guilty of the facts. This sanction taken by the administration in charge of forests and published in the summary of offenses of March 2018, was taken following a denunciation report produced by the organization PAPEL, through the procedures of the Standardized External Independent Monitoring System. (SNOIE), and sent to the administration in December 2016.

According to the summary of offences, Oye et Compagnie is found guilty of «exploitation beyond the limits of VC 1002219» and «unauthorized logging in the community forest». Theophile Elendi has already paid the ministry an advance of 3 million FCFA.

The denunciation report produced by the CSO PAPEL on Oye et Compagnie is available on the OIE Coordination website (<http://oie-cameroun.org>). The mission of investigation which led to the production of this report was carried out from the 01st to the 05th of December 2016 in Mboumo village and its surroundings located in Messamena Subdivision. At the end of the investigations carried out by PAPEL on the site where OYE et Compagnie carried out illegal activities, it was observed that the company was exploiting inside Messamena Community Forest and did not have a valid Annual Certificate of Exploitation (CAE).

A logging activity contrary to the provisions of the Forest Law of 1994 in its section 54 which states that: «The exploitation of a community

forest is made (...) with a license according to the management plan approved by the forest administration» and repressed by Article 156 (3) of the same Law according to which «unauthorized logging in a national or Community forest Estate, in violation of sections 52, 53 and 54, without prejudice to damages and interests on the timber exploited as provided for in section 159». PAPEL had also in its report alerted the administration on facts of timber laundering cut fraudulently in the FC that would have been evacuated with secured documents of valid titles of the VC attributed to Oye et Compagnie.

As a result of this denunciation, the Regional Control Brigade of the East Region carried out a verification mission. This verification mission at Mboumo village, thus enabled MINFOF to notice illegality facts denounced in the OI report produced by PAPEL.

It should be noted that this is not the first time Oye et Compagnie is sanctioned by the administration in charge of forests. Indeed, through a letter sent to the SNOIE coordination in 2017, the Ministry of Forestry notified the coordina-

tion of the opening of a dispute against this company. Oye et Compagnie was at that time found guilty of unauthorized logging in a national forest estate in Oboul1 village, and a communal forest. In addition to this dispute opened against this company, a formal notice was sent to the managers of the Messamena-Mindourou communal forest, in order to initiate corrective measures, particularly the effective end of illegal logging and implementation of the management plan.

This other reaction of the MINFOF after denunciation reports produced through the SNOIE procedures, brings to about 79% the reaction rate obtained from the administration following the denunciations, i.e. a total of 12 reactions of the Ministry on the 14 OI reports transmitted between the end of 2016 and the end of 2017

Link of PAPEL's denunciation report

https://oiecameroun.org/images/rapports/Rapport_de_mission_cas_presumes_d_activites_d_exploitation_et_de_gestion_forestiere_illegale_dans_le_village_Mboumo_et_ses_environs.pdf

Opening of a dispute against a forest company for exploitation beyond the limits

The Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife, recently opened a dispute against the company VERA Forestière holding the logging sale n°0801238. This open dispute, following a denunciation made by the association Forest and Rural Development (FODER) after an external independent monitoring mission, was carried out according to the procedures of the Standardized External Independent Monitoring System (SNOIE). The denunciation report submitted to MINFOF in April 2018 led the administration to trigger a mission of control in the company's logging stand. According to MINFOF's letter of information sent to the SNOIE Coordination on May 16, 2018, the company VERA Forestière was guilty of operating beyond

the limits of the logging stand granted, and consequently proceed to illegal logging in the localities of Bidi and Ngoume, Gambe-Tikar Subdivision. During FODER's OI mission, from the 11th to 14th of April 2018, the monitoring team was able to pick up unmarked logs and an unnamed watercourse obstructed by «illegal» forest logging damages perpetrated by the company, facts constituting evidence of illegal logging. The dispute opened by the administration against this company, therefore confirm the «charges» mentioned in the denunciation report. In this report, other facts of illegality were also observed in the national forest estate (NFE) in the village Bidi (Ngambe-Tikar Subdivision). These include:

1. Twenty-nine (29) stumps of Ayous and one (01) stump of Dibetou without any operator's mark ;
2. Two (02) logs of red Padouk amongst which one (01) with the marks «seized» of the forest hammer ;
3. A yard containing eight (08) logs of Ayous with a total volume of 32,4207m³ as well as about twenty (20) coursons of Ayous bearing the marks «seized» of the forest hammer a log of Ayous bearing the marks «seized» of the forest hammer
4. One (1) unnamed stream blocked by logging damages
5. Two (02) other emptied yards presenting some coursons of Ayous also with the marks «seized» of the forest hammer

These facts of exploitation beyond the limits of the logging stand VERA forestière is found guilty of, are repressed by the Law n°94/01 of January 20, 1994 on forestry, wildlife and fishery in its section 157 which states that *«A fine of from 3,000,000 to 10,000,000 CFA francs or imprisonment for from six months to one year, or one of these two sentences shall be imposed on whoever commits any of the*



following offences: unauthorized exploitation in a National Forest Estate ...»

Link of FODER's denunciation report

https://oiecameroun.org/images/documents/rapports/Rapport_Mission-SNOIE_FODER_Bidi_et_environs_11-14_Avril_2018.pdf

Logging titles suspended

The logging companies named Etablissements Mgbatou Pierre (EMP) and Société du Mbam and Kim (SMK), have now a dispute opened against them by the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife. This dispute follows the denunciation reports produced with the Standardized External Independent Monitoring System (SNOIE)'s approach and sent to MINFOF. These reports led to a mission of control of the National Control Brigade (BNC), which found that «the facts denounced in the reports are proven,» said the Minister of Forestry in a letter sent to SNOIE Coordination in June 2018.

In addition to the dispute against EMP and SMK, the MINFOF announces in its letter that «several logging titles have been suspended» from companies incriminated in denunciations reports of cases of illegality that were observed in the valid titles in Ina, Wassaba, Oué and Manjan, villages located in the Centre region of Cameroon. Even if the Minister does not specify that the companies EMP and SMK are the ones whose titles have been suspended, there is every reason to believe that it concerns them because the acts of illegality by these



companies were perpetrated in the villages mentioned above.

The companies, EMP owning the logging sale (VC) 0804321 and SMK owning the UFA 08003 in the villages, have been pinned in the denunciations reports as being guilty of facts of non-compliance with standards of exploitation repressed by section 125 of the Law of November 27, 1981, as well as a fraud on logging document repressed by section 158 (7) of the Law No. 94/01 of January 20, 1994 governing Forestry, wildlife and fisheries. In addition to these offenses, the company EMP was found guilty of exploitation by logging sale in a national forest estate beyond the limits of the logging stand in violation of sections 52, 53 and 54 of the law N ° 94/01 and repressed by section 156 of this same law; unauthorized exploitation in the national forest estates by the company SMK in violation of section 53 (1) of the law N ° 94/01 and repressed by section 158 (2) of this law. It's the marks of these two


companies found on some logs in the yard during the CSO's mission of investigation, which made to believe that these two companies would be primarily responsible of these fraudulent forest activities.

The data supporting the facts described in these denunciations reports against EMP and SMK, were collected and processed by three civil society organizations (FODER[1], PAPEL[2] et CeDLA[3]) within the framework of the (SNOIE) [4]. Necessary resources were mobilized in the framework of the projects "Citizens' voices for change: forest monitoring in the Congo Basin" (CV4C project), implemented with the financial support of the European Union (EU).

Link of PAPEL's denunciation report

https://oiecameroun.org/images/documents/rapports/Rapport-Final_mission-OIE-Ngamb-Tikar_Yoko_.pdf

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