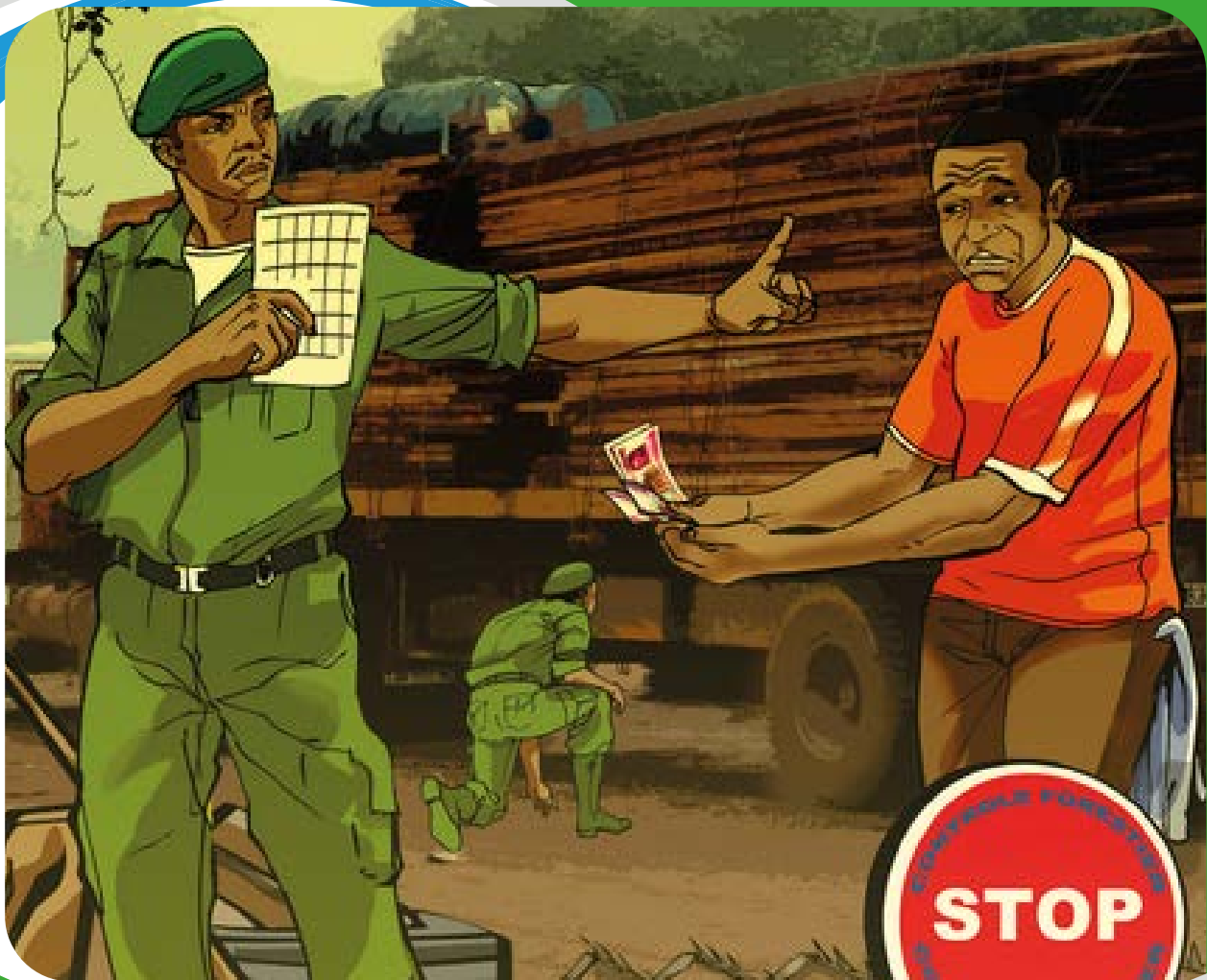




Forêts et Développement Rural
Pour un Monde meilleur

INCREASE IN THE RATE OF PERCEIVED INTENSITY OF **CORRUPTION** IN THE FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE SECTOR

FAILURE OF **ANTI-CORRUPTION** INITIATIVES OR LAXITY OF MINFOF IN THE
FIGHT **AGAINST CORRUPTION** ?



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List of abbreviations

- ACU** Anti-Corruption Unit
- NACC** National Anti-Corruption Commission of Cameroon
- CTD** Decentralized Authorities
- GESP**.....Growth and Employment Strategy Paper
- EICP**..... Evaluation of the intensity of Corruption Perception
- FLE** Forces of Law Enforcement
- FODER** Forests and Rural development
- GIZ** German Cooperation
- RRI** Rapid Results Initiative
- FC** Fight against Corruption
- MINFOF** Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife
- NGO** Non-Governmental Organization
- CIO**..... Criminal Investigation Officer
- GCIO**..... General Criminal Investigation Officer
- CSO**..... Civil Society Organization
- IACP**..... Integrated Anti-Corruption Project
- TFP** Technical and Financial Partners
- NACS** National Anti-Corruption Strategy
- SYNABOIS** National Union of timber operators of Cameroon

The corruption perception intensity rating is one of the means by which the perception of forest and wildlife sector stakeholders on Corruption is received. The higher the (close to 10), the more actors feel that the sector is plagued by the phenomenon of corruption and vice versa (the lower the rating, that is, close to 0, the more actors believe that corruption is low in the sector). It is this rating that reflects the views of stakeholders on the degree of corruption in the sector, which is generally called Corruption Perceptions Index. It goes from 0 to 10.

Introduction

After the development of the National Anti-Corruption Strategy (SNFC) in 2010, the Forestry and Environmental sector appeared for the Government as a priority area in which urgent and targeted actions should be conducted. This government decision was justified by the many manifestations of corruption that were observed there, with consequences being real threats on forest, wildlife and environmental heritage of Cameroon. These multiple manifestations of corruption that reflected the significance of the phenomenon in the industry have resulted in a perception of the intensity of corruption, estimated in 2010 at 7.27/10. Analysts had then concluded that the forest and wildlife sector was one of the most affected by the scourge¹.

This led MINFOF officials supported by NACC to take a set of measures to fight against corruption and to minimize the effects on the functioning of the activities. The first of these measures was to refine the diagnosis of corruption in the forest and wildlife sector by a study on the condition of

corrupt practices in the said sector

The second measure was institutional, as the Minister of Forestry and Wildlife renewed the members of the ACU and appointed a civil society actor as President of this unit². Also at the institutional level, the Minister of Forestry and Wildlife has provided the ACU with executives in charge of FC only.

The other measure was operational in nature. Indeed, with technical and financial support of GIZ, MINFOF has launched a set of Rapid Results Initiatives (RRI) with the aim of reducing the racketeering of trucks carrying logs from community forests to checkpoints managed by its agents on the Bertoua Ngaoundere-axis. With the encouraging results obtained by this experience that allowed a reduction of racketeering on this axis by over 60% in 100 days, the initiative was widespread in 8 regions and also focused on reducing trucks NTFPs.

This other series of RRI has been implemented within the overall framework of an Integrated

Anti-Corruption Project (IACP). This project incorporated the best practices to be implemented in MINFOF checkpoints, the MINFOF Probe Agent Guide accompanied by a Solemn Declaration of Commitment of probity of MINFOF personnel, the Integrity Pacts signed between MINFOF and its Co-contractors (operators, sellers, buyers, etc.) who undertook to comply with regulation in force. The implementation of this project was supported by the policy to process denunciations and complaints of corruption that included witness, victims and whistle-blowers protection mechanisms.

The implementation of all these actions have led to a considerable reduction of corruption perception intensity rating in MINFOF, which dropped from 7.27/10 in 2010 to 6.44/10 in 2013 and to 5.13/10 in 2014, according to an assessment of the corruption perceptions index in MINFOF

conducted annually by the NGO Forests and Rural Development (FODER).³

PFor 2015, the study evaluating the Corruption Perceptions Index of MINFOF shows that the intensity of corruption in the sector rose to the rate of 5.78/10. The problems of questioning the corruption perception rating in 2015 reflects the causes of this increase. Otherwise, why did the rate of corruption perceived intensity increase meanwhile, the ACU of MINFOF conducts anti-corruption activities in the forestry and wildlife sector?

Analysis of MINFOF FC initiatives since 2012 shows that the deterioration in the rating of perceived corruption intensity in the forestry and wildlife sector is both due to the relative effectiveness of these actions implemented and limitation of these efforts on the periphery.

1. 1. Increase in the rating of corruption perception intensity in the Forest and Wildlife sector: Consequences of low effectiveness of FC actions implemented

After validating the NACS on 8 February 2011 by the Government, MINFOF invested in its implementation. Several activities have been conducted, but the analysis of the results of the survey conducted as part of EICP allows to make several observations which show that the effectiveness of MINFOF anti-corruption measures is below the expectations of industry stakeholders.

1.1. The margin of the sector actors victims of corruption is still high

Four years after the launch of its anti-corruption

crusade through the implementation of NACS, the margin of the industry actors, direct or indirect victims of the phenomenon is still high. Indeed, it appears from the results of the analysis report of investigation conducted under the EICP in 2015 that about one stakeholder in the forestry and wildlife sector out of two was a victim of corruption or has knowledge of someone who was a victim of corruption.

This represents half of the actors questioned as indicated by data provided in the table below:

3 2013 and 2014 EICP Reports.

1 TALLA Marius, Calagues Romain, Enhancing Forest Sustainability in Central Africa by Fighting Corruption, Lessons learnt from the implementation of Rapid Results Initiatives in Cameroun, January 2014, 30p.

2 An unprecedented event since the creation of MINFOF, this decision took the fight against corruption off the shoulders of the Inspector General.

	Victim of corruption			Average degree of exposure
	Yes	No	Did not answer	
CTD	100%	0%	0%	
private sector of forestry and wildlife	66%	32%	2%	63%
Locales and indigenous communities	60%	40%	0%	
TFPs	50%	50%	0%	45%
Civil Society (CSO, media)	46%	50%	4%	
MINFOF	37%	62%	2%	
Administrative authorities	33%	33%	33%	27%
CIO other than MINFOF	33%	67%	0%	
Local officials (MPs or Senators)	13%	88%	0%	
Judicial system (magistrates, GCIO)	0%	100%	0%	
Total	52%	46%	2%	

Table 1: Victims of corrupt practices

Source: FODER, EICP 2015, April 2016

The most vulnerable to the risk of corruption in the sector are those from the private sector (chainsaw millers, managers of community forests, transporters of products from the community forests, planks vendors in towns in Cameroon⁴, etc.) and indigenous communities. In addition, the more the activity is illegal, the more pressure from MINFOF agents in terms of corruption is

high⁵. This is the case with chainsaw millers who in the absence of authorizations required by the regulations in force are forced to pay bribes for their equipment not to be confiscated by forest guards or other MINFOF agents. It is the same with timber traders, dealing illegally⁶, are more exposed to the racketeering of waters and forestry agents.

⁴ Their vulnerability is exacerbated by the fact that most of them operate in the informal.

⁵ In this case, water and forestry agents do not enforce the law by confiscating the equipment that was used in committing offenses but they bargain with the offender who, aware of the illegality of the act does not preclude a greater resistance to pay the amount requested by the MINFOF agent

⁶ The MIB is not sufficiently organized in Cameroon and the consequence is that it makes illegal most of the wood sold on the Cameroon markets, except for the one purchased in the legally established sawmills.

1.2. The appropriation of FC activities by actors not dependent on MINFOF is still low

The appropriation of MINFOF FC initiatives from other categories of actors, that is, those that do not depend on the forest and wildlife sector remains one of the main causes of failure of the said initiatives. The situation of road checks illustrates this reality quite well.

agents and some court authorities (in the Centre region) also control timber and forest products generally.

This situation persists after MINFOF, supported by NACC has conducted several pleas so that forest control is done in accordance with standards and regulatory provisions that make MINFOF agents the only authorized for this activity. In 2013, a signed note from the Secretary General of the Presidency of the Republic instructed the Minister Delegate at



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The road checks understood as control of forest and wildlife products which in principle depends on forestry and wildlife administration is still largely conducted by FLE (gendarmes, police and military). Those interviewed as part of the investigation of the EICP have argued that added to these actors, others, namely traditional authorities (especially in areas of the north), council

the Presidency in charge of Defence to take steps to end these practices by gendarmes. Since then, the situation on the ground has not improved on the contrary.

The table of identified perpetrators of corruption is eloquent on the involvement of actors other than MINFOF in the commission of acts of corruption observed in the forestry and wildlife sector:

	Victim of corruption, Author of act			
	MINFOF	Police men/ Gendarmes	Other adm.	Other actors
Local and indigenous communities	100%	100%	100%	100%
CTD	100%	100%	0%	100%
TFPs	100%	0%	0%	0%
Administrative authorities	100%	0%	0%	0%
Civil society (OSC, media)	91%	67%	70%	44%
Forestry and wildlife private sector	73%	73%	18%	23%
CIOther than MINFOF	50%	20%	43%	64%
MINFOF	18%	28%	18%	70%
Local officials (MP or Senator)	0%	100%	0%	0%
Total	70%	64%	27%	37%

Table 5: Authors of acts of corruption identified

Source: FODER, EICP2015, April 2015

1.3 The margin of actors who think FC is effective in the forest industry and wildlife is low

However, best practices from these anti-corruption initiatives have not consistently been institutionalized. Indeed, with the exception of good practice constituted by the attitudes to adopt during forestry and wildlife control that have been generalization through a Decision of the Minister of Forestry and Wildlife, the other positive points obtained as part of the fight against corruption were not devoted or appropriated through legal acts. Meanwhile, institutionalization being the main guarantee of lasting change, confidence gradually and laboriously built by MINFOF among industry actors has gradually eroded. Signs of this decline in confidence in MINFOF

bodies are many and can be cited without being exhaustive:

- Drop in denunciations of corruption: With the launch of the RRI in 2012, obtaining concrete results on the Bertoua-Ngaoundere Axis and especially the widespread use of RRI in 08 regions of Cameroon, denunciations and corruption complaints have increased considerably. MINFOF had also reorganized its ACU to effectively respond to these solicitations. But since 2015, the number of denunciations dropped because of increasing difficulties by MINFOF to provide concrete solutions to corruption problems posed by industry stakeholders.

- The use of media channels (and not the ACU) to denounce corrupt practices experienced or observed in the forestry and wildlife sector : the daily Le Jour in its issue of Monday, 28 December 2015 relays the denunciations of corruption by the National Union of timber operators of Cameroon (SYNABOIS) against regional control brigades of the East and Adamawa. It should be noted that SYNBOIS was MINFOF partner in the implementation of the RRI and had welcomed the improved situation on the Bertoua-Ngaoundere Axis when presenting the results of the first RRI.

The fact that the union uses the path of the media to the detriment of MINFOF services to expose corruption is also a proof of the drop in confidence in the structures of the competent authority to know the problems of corruption.

- Reduction of cooperation between the ACU and its major partners regarding FC: Between 2012 and 2014, GIZ supported MINFOF in its ACU reorganization efforts. It financed the building process of the ACU on the organizational, strategic and operational level. But since 2015, this support was no longer achieved despite existing needs at the ACU.



7 Lamissia Adolarc, une mafia dans le bois, Le Jour N° 2090, 28 décembre 2015, p.7. [Lamissia Adolarc: Mafia in the timber sector, Le Jour No.2090, 28 December 2015,p.7.]

2. Increase in corruption intensity perception rates in the Forest and Wildlife sector: laxity in the implementation of actions against corruption



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Increase perception score of the corruption intensity in the forestry and wildlife sector is also the result of laxity in the implementation of FC actions insofar as the FC initiatives in the sector are limited to the periphery, these initiatives are not well known by the main victims of corruption and because the will to combat corruption is not strong enough with power-holders in the sector.

2.1 FC initiatives in the sector are limited to the periphery

Most MINFOF FC activities since 2012 were

limited to the transport link of wood and NTFP on the roads, and therefore on the outskirts of the forest administration.

Indeed, it turns out that all the RRI launched by MINFOF so far have had the objective of reducing corrupt practices observed during road checks, and reduce the extent of informal and illegal practices in community forests, hence, targeting staff of forestry and wildlife administration in the periphery. It was the same for the investigation tasks following denunciations of corruption that have been executed so far in MINFOF decentralized services.

The gradual approach to change management is taken into account in the RRI process which in its approach towards the realization of the ARR has three parts:

1. (1) tackle the corruption issue strongly denounced on roads;
2. (2) continue on the problem of illegal logging in the forests of the permanent forest estate (PFE) and DFNP (community forests, communal forests, forest reserves, protected areas, UFA, etc.), and;
3. (3) address the problem of relatively harder and more vicious denounced corruption in the central services of MINFOF.

The approach also provides for the consolidation of assets. The problem at the moment is the very slow evolution of this process which allows the reconstruction of corruption networks and leaves room for the return of bad practices. With the exception of an initiative to challenge MINFOF officials on “the negative character of welcoming bosses during field missions⁸”, no initiative has directly affected them.

By reducing anti-corruption efforts to the periphery, the results can neither be sustainable nor supported because the corruption networks are sponsored from the

top⁹.

2.2 The MINFOF anti-corruption initiatives are not known by the key actors in FC

The analysis of the results of the survey on which the EICP is based reveals that the FC initiatives undertaken by MINFOF are not sufficiently known key actors of the FC which are made by administrative authorities and regional and local authorities. This justifies the low level of ownership of such initiatives by the latter.

Administrative and decentralized local government authorities play an important role in the administrative organization in Cameroon. The importance of the administrative authorities in Cameroon is derived from the very nature of the State in Cameroon which is inspired from Jacobinism¹⁰. Their powers stem from the provisions of Decree No. 78/485 of 9 November 1978. This normative provision enshrines the role of coordinating the decentralized administration at the region, division and the sub-division. This implies that they must take ownership and facilitate actions by governments including those on FC. They can play this role through awareness.

⁸ During discussions with some MINFOF stakeholders, they stressed that the racketeering practices were often justified because the staff of the decentralized services had to accommodate officials who arrived in their areas of competence. To achieve this, the staff went round the actors to make a «fund raising». At a workshop organized by GIZ in Meyomesala, the attention of officials had been drawn on the ethical implications of this situation and especially their impact on FC efforts. The workshop was chaired by MINFOF Secretary of State.

⁹ This is what appears in the different diagnoses conducted in the forest and wildlife sector.

¹⁰ Initially, Jacobinism was a political doctrine born in France which defended popular sovereignty and indivisibility of the French Republic. Currently, the concept has evolved to adapt to changes of the State and its practices, to designate a doctrine that tends to organize power on an administrative basis and highly centralized on one hand and to have it exercised by a technocrat elite which extends its skills on the territory and in all areas of social life (Ferret: 1988).

It is the same for regional and local authorities which are regarded as the closest administration to the citizens. To this effect, they must serve as last relay of initiatives against corruption and more generally to

promote good governance. This is far from it when you consider the data from the table on the knowledge by the actors of the forest and wildlife sector of FC initiatives brought by MINFOF:

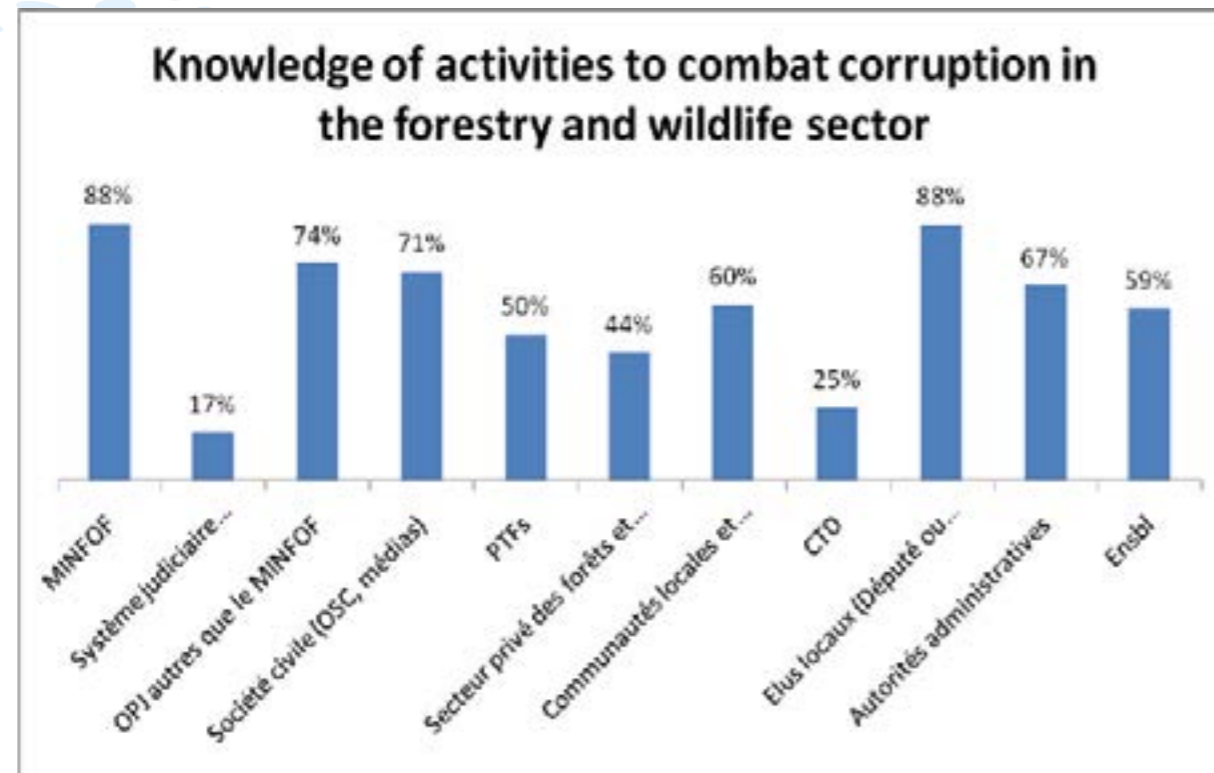


Figure 3: Knowledge of initiatives against corruption and implemented

Source : FODER, EIPC2015, April 2016

2.3 The will to combat corruption by those with power and authority in the area is low

One of the realities of forestry and wildlife that justifies the laxity in the FC sector is the relative willingness of the leading industry actors in the fight against corruption. The leading actors who are the main holders of power and authority in the forestry and wildlife sector no longer, according to stakeholders questioned on this subject, have the slightest desire to support efforts against corruption.

According to stakeholders of the forestry and wildlife sector MINFOF is the industry leader with the largest capacity of influence in that sector with a degree of power estimated at an average of **7.02** on a scale of 0 to 10. Next is the judiciary, NACC and the TFP whose average degree of influence is estimated at respectively **6.06**; **5.68**; and **5.29** on a scale of 0 to 10. CTDs (4.14/10), indigenous and local communities (**4.38/10**) and CSOs (**4.47/10**) are the weakest in the sector as they are the least able to influence the course of the fight against corruption.

Meanwhile, in most cases it is the least influential actors who express the strongest will to fight against corruption in the sector. This may be justified because they are the ones

who suffer most from corruption in the sector and could then be the main beneficiaries of the potential changes.



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Conclusion

Ultimately, it was found that the rating of perceived corruption intensity which had improved steadily between 2011 and 2014 has suddenly known a small increase in 2015. Several factors justify this state of affairs: low efficiency of anti-corruption initiatives and the laxity of MINFOF in the fight against this scourge. To remedy this situation, measures for all industry stakeholders must urgently be adopted. These measures include:

- Strengthening cooperation among all institutional and non-institutional actors in FC in the sector (MINFOF);
- The institutionalization of best practices observed throughout the implementation of MINFOF FC initiatives (since 2012 until now). This must be done in all central and decentralized services of MINFOF;
- The implementation of FC initiatives in the central services of MINFOF (Minister of Forestry and Wildlife with the support of the President of the ACU and the General Inspector);
- Awareness and involvement of the administrative authorities on MINFOF FC actions (MINFOF, civil society and TFPs);

- Improving working conditions of MINFOF agents and adoption of measures to reduce their vulnerability to other FLE.

Diversification of FC approaches and techniques focusing on consolidation of assets as:

- Pilot projects for integrity, and in this case service standards;
- The islands of integrity to promote emulation of best practices;
- The continued advocacy with competent authorities for road checks of forest and wildlife products is the sole responsibility of MINFOF;
- Strengthening actions to sanction the behaviour of rogue industry actors like unscrupulous employees of the Minister of Forestry and Wildlife.

The challenges of implementing these provisions are improving forest and wildlife sector governance as well as creating an environment of trust between the different actors involved in the said sector. This is a necessary condition for the forest and wildlife industry to effectively and sustainably contribute to the achievement of national objectives in the GESF.

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