



CAMEROON

COMMUNITY-BASED REAL TIME MONITORING

NOVEMBER 2021

INTRODUCTION

RFUK in-country partners: FODER and ECODEV

Forest area: 18,790,400 ha¹ (2015)

Forest loss: 201,000 ha² (2020)

Percentage of timber production estimated to be illegal: c. 65%³ (2015)

Principal threats to forests: Industrial logging, palm oil and rubber plantation expansion, infrastructure development

Snapshot: Forests cover an estimated 42% of Cameroon's territory, which serves as a key resource for millions, including many indigenous peoples. These communities face ongoing challenges from the logging industry, as well as emerging threats from the palm oil, rubber and extractive industries, along with the associated infrastructure development needed to serve them. Pervasive corruption has meant that improvement in forest governance has been slow.

Since 2014, Rainforest Foundation UK (RFUK), its partners and local communities have used the **ForestLink Real Time Monitoring system (ForestLink RTM)**, co-created with partner organisation FODER, to combat illegal logging, environmental destruction and human rights abuses in Cameroon. Our ForestLink technology connects communities and law enforcement to carry out real-time monitoring of tropical forests and put power back into the hands of those who call them home.

Communities trained: 43

Regions active: Centre, South, Littoral, East

Alerts sent: Over 1,000

Civil Society Organisations using ForestLink: FODER, ECODEV, PAPEL, CeDLA, SUHE

¹ Chatham House, Forest Governance and Legality – Cameroon

² Global Forest Watch Dashboard – Cameroon

³ Hoare, A (2015) Tackling illegal logging and the related trade: what progress and where next?

HOW FORESTLINK WORKS

With this unique smartphone app, forest communities can report illegal activities via satellite link from even the most remote locations, without telecommunications networks. ForestLink empowers them to use their unique knowledge of the forest to defend their rights and to have a say in how extractive industries operate within their territories.



MONITORING & COLLECTION

Community monitors use a smartphone app (Collectaur) to collect evidence of illegalities and to document their alerts using photos, videos or audio recordings.



REPORTING & DATABASE

The collected evidence, bearing precise GPS coordinates of where incidents were observed, is transmitted to a secure database using a portable satellite transmitter or via SMS or internet.



VERIFICATION

Once the transmitted alerts are received on the online platform (Monitaur), they are analysed and verified by partner organisations.




ENFORCEMENT

Details of the illegal activities are passed on to the appropriate authorities so they can take action, such as sanctioning illegal operators.



ADVOCACY

The data collected using ForestLink helps CSOs to promote accountability of companies and authorities, thus increasing transparency and good governance more broadly.

A photograph of a dense tropical forest. The image shows large, moss-covered tree trunks and thick, hanging vines. Sunlight filters through the green canopy, creating a dappled light effect. The overall scene is lush and verdant.

**RFUK'S IN-COUNTRY PARTNERS, FODER AND
ECODEV, HAVE DRIVEN FORWARD THE WORK
OF THE INDEPENDENT FOREST MONITORING
CIVIL SOCIETY NETWORK, KNOWN AS THE
STANDARDIZED EXTERNAL INDEPENDENT
MONITORING SYSTEM (SNOIE). THEIR WORK
HAS PLAYED A CRUCIAL ROLE IN UPHOLDING
THE RULE OF LAW AND CHALLENGING THE
CULTURE OF IMPUNITY IN THE
FOREST INDUSTRY.**

OUR IMPACT

When communities send alerts, we advocate for these alerts to be investigated. If illegalities are confirmed, we use our collective voice to ensure authorities sanction those responsible. Through this process, ForestLink has improved law enforcement and empowered communities to defend their rights and lands. Civil society has become stronger and has developed deeper links to the forest communities it serves.

In Cameroon, ForestLink RTM is being used by 126 observers to monitor:



LOGGING IN NATURAL FORESTS



ENVIRONMENTAL DESTRUCTION



**FPIC PROCESSES IN RELATION TO
LOGGING AND COMMUNITY BENEFITS**



KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- **Suspension of illicit operations and seizure of illegal timber:** Recent cases include the suspension of the SMK logging company in 2018 following ForestLink alerts and advocacy by ECODEV, as well as the suspension of two more the following year (SBAC and SFB) - along with the seizure of their wood - in response to ForestLink alerts sent from communities in the East of Cameroon.
- **Strengthening civil society as forest watchdog:** FODER has played a central role in professionalising Cameroon's independent forest monitoring system, which is ISO certified. ForestLink alerts are managed by FODER and are distributed amongst the members of the Normalised System of External Independent Monitoring (SNOIE), who go through a process of verifying alerts, validating monitoring reports, and following up with the MINFOF for sufficient enforcement actions to take place.
- **Increasing recognition from the Forest Ministry:** In 2021, FODER signed a Memorandum of Understanding with MINFOF (the forest ministry), which has provided further legitimacy to their work and has ensured swifter follow-up to alerts. Because of this increased responsiveness, a ForestLink alert in the Mbam et Kim department by a government forestry agency in September 2021 led to a significant seizure of illegally cut timber.



"The ForestLink alerts that we send from our localities have helped trigger verification and monitoring missions from ECODEV and the forest administration respectively. The sanctions imposed on loggers have then helped to reduce the illegal logging underway in our lands."

Pany Christiane, Community Monitor, Cameroon

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Whilst we are very proud of the incredible impact that the communities and our partners have every day in Cameroon, our funding means that we can only monitor a fraction of Cameroon’s remaining forest. To learn more about how your support could transform the future of tropical rainforests, please contact us.

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Visit us at www.forestlink.org



FORESTLINK

PROGRAMME PARTNERS:



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