

Dr Marco Lambertini
Director General
WWF-International
Avenue du Mont-Blanc
1196 Gland
Switzerland

27 March 2014

Dear Dr. Lambertini,

Abuse of Baka by anti-poaching squads in Cameroon

It has now been over a year since we contacted WWF regarding the anti-poaching squads it funds in Cameroon that are abusing the Baka and their neighbours. This problem has been repeatedly documented and brought to WWF's attention for over 13 years.

As we emphasised before, this is not confined to the Boumba Bek, Nki and Lobeke national parks. Baka have been tortured in the Ngoyla-Mintom-Kom-Mengame landscape, where WWF also funds wildlife officers.

Baka have also been beaten by Congolese wildlife officers, funded by WWF, who have crossed into Cameroon. There is a risk of this type of abuse happening to Baka in Northern Congo, since there are no safeguards in place to prevent it there either.

The investigation by the Cameroonian Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms has still not got off the ground, more than five months after the complaint was lodged. We have been told that it only intends to visit four villages and publish its findings only at the end of the year.

We do not believe it is acceptable for WWF to sit by and allow more of the Baka and their neighbours to be abused, tortured and even killed using WWF's support whilst an investigation drags on. It is still virtually impossible for Baka to inform WWF of any abuse.

What immediate steps is WWF taking to ensure it is not funding human rights violations?

We note that a recent public statement by WWF says that “[t]he communities we work with are not asking us to suspend support for the protection of the forests.” However, Baka from Ndongo (the village in which WWF has its South East Project base¹) did in fact ask WWF in November last year to stop financing anti-poaching squads.

WWF stated recently that it “is reviewing field experience and [its] activities in support of the Baka and forest protection in Cameroon.” This is encouraging, especially since Baka are still complaining that WWF is not applying its principles on conservation and indigenous peoples to its work in Cameroon.

For instance, WWF has vowed not to support the creation of protected areas or the imposition of restrictions on subsistence resource use unless these have received the free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) of affected indigenous communities.

I would be grateful if you answered the following questions:

1. How has WWF determined that the Baka have given their FPIC to the “protected areas” that have been created on their lands?
2. How has WWF determined that the Baka have given their FPIC to the 1994 Forest Code and associated decrees that often class them as criminals when they hunt for subsistence?
3. May we please see copies of the strategic, monitoring and operational plans and workplans that have been produced as part of WWF’s work in Cameroon and Northern Congo?

Yours sincerely,



Stephen Corry
Director

Cc. **Mr Phil Dickie**, Head, Issues Management, WWF
Mr Frederick Kumah, Director, Africa, WWF

¹ Please see http://wwf.panda.org/what_we_do/where_we_work/congo_basin_forests/the_area/ndongo/