

RESTORATION & REPARATIONS

Reforming the world's
largest rubber company



MIGHTY EARTH

With the help of Appui pour la Protection de
l'Environnement et le Développement

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Any errors or inaccuracies remain the responsibility of Mighty Earth.

ABOUT [MIGHTY EARTH](#)

Mighty Earth is a global campaign organization that works to protect lands, oceans, and the climate. We aspire to be the most effective environmental organization in the world. We have played a leading role in persuading the world's largest food and agriculture companies to adopt policies to eliminate deforestation, land grabbing and human rights abuses from their supply chains, and driven adoption of multi-billion dollar shifts to clean energy. Mighty Earth is a fiscally sponsored project of the Center for International Policy, a 501(c)3 non-profit organization.



MIGHTY EARTH 2019



CONTENTS

An indigenous Bagyeli girl among ancient trees

4 Executive Summary

7 Background

12 Key Environmental Issues

12 Old and new deforestation

16 Loss of biodiversity

20 Degradation and pollution of waterways

23 Key Social Issues

23 Dispossession of community land and forests

27 Water contamination and associated health impacts

30 Destruction of local forest-dependent cultures and discrimination against indigenous people

34 Lack of access to health care, education, and electricity

38 Labor issues

41 Broken promises, lack of transparency, and poor communication

46 Recent Improvements in Company / Community Relations

49 Recommendations

63 Appendix: Methodology

65 Notes and Sources

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Hévécam Rubber plantation

This report documents social and environmental problems found at the Hévécam rubber plantation in southern Cameroon, which is owned by Halcyon Agri, “the world’s leading rubber franchise.”¹

Hévécam, which together with its sister plantation Sudcam makes up the largest rubber concession in the world, was established in Cameroon in 1975 as a state-owned enterprise. At that time, 41,339 hectares (ha) of what was previously rainforest was expropriated from indigenous people and other forest-dependent communities in order to make way for monoculture rubber plantations. Hévécam has since changed hands. The company was controlled by GMG and Sinochem from 1996-2016, and came under control of its current owner, Halcyon/Sinochem, at the end of 2016. In 2012, Hévécam secured an 18,000-hectare extension from the government of Cameroon to convert more forests to rubber, bringing the total size of Hévécam’s area to around 59,000 ha.²

The scale of the Hévécam rubber concession, and its location in historically forested areas populated by indigenous communities, has presented challenges

to the plantation's sustainable management since the company's founding. Environmental concerns include extensive deforestation for rubber cultivation, dramatic declines in wildlife, and pollution of local waterways. Social concerns include land dispossession and loss of community forests with the associated decline in traditional sources of food, medicine, and materials; health impacts arising from water pollution; lack of access to health care or education; labor abuses; social conflicts; loss of sacred sites; and discrimination and destruction of local indigenous cultures. Communities have reported broken promises, miscommunication, and neglect from Hévécam.


Encouragingly, however, communities have reported improvements in Hévécam managers' willingness to engage over the past eighteen months. Furthermore, Hévécam's parent company Halcyon has begun to address sustainability in



Deforestation in Hévécam's concession

its global production and supply chain. Halcyon introduced a sustainable natural rubber policy in October 2018 and, in March 2019, became a founding member of the Global Platform on Sustainable Natural Rubber (GPSNR). In 2019, Halcyon, Mighty Earth, and two Cameroonian NGOs, *Appui pour la Protection de l'Environnement et le Développement* (APED) and the *Centre pour l'Environnement et de Développement* (CED), in consultation with other NGOs and community leaders, negotiated an agreement on reforms and next steps.

These signs are welcome and encouraging, though they are only the beginning of what needs to be done. Halcyon must now undertake **restoration** of degraded forests and waterways and **reparations** for local communities. With these actions, Halcyon could turn the page on a regrettable past and help create a more sustainable and equitable rubber industry in Cameroon. If it does so, Halcyon could be on the cusp of major change, reversing a legacy of bad practices at Hévécam and creating possibilities for a more sustainable and equitable rubber industry in Cameroon.



Halcyon must now undertake restoration of degraded forests and waterways and reparations of social impacts for local communities.



BACKGROUND

Hévécam rubber plantation

Natural rubber is a substance extracted from a tree species called *Hevea brasiliensis*, which grows in tropical climates. The milky latex tapped from the trunk of the tree is processed in factories and used in a wide variety of products from tires and gloves to shoes, condoms, sports gear, medical equipment, toys, and other everyday objects.

Most of the world's rubber production originates on small plots of land cultivated by smallholder farmers who usually sell the raw latex to local traders or processors. In some cases, however, rubber is grown on a much larger scale, on industrial plantations owned and managed by private companies. Such operations often occupy vast tracts of land, covering hundreds of square kilometers. A number of these plantations have their origins in colonial times, when the rubber tree was transposed from its native Brazil to Africa and Asia. Others were established by governments in the years following decolonization and either run as state-owned enterprises or subsequently sold off to large corporations.

This report concerns an example of the latter: the Hévéa Cameroun SA plantation, commonly referred to as Hévécam. Established in 1975 by presidential decree near the town of Kribi, Hévécam was set up with financial assistance from the World Bank in order to help Cameroon increase its foreign export earnings through large-scale rubber production. At the time, 41,339 ha of public land that had been primarily covered in dense tropical forest and inhabited by forest-dwelling communities, including indigenous Bagyeli people, was designated for commercial rubber production. Forests were cleared and the plantation was run as a state-owned enterprise for two decades. In convoluted series of deals, Hévécam was bought in 1996 for €39 million by a Singapore-based company called Golden Millennium Group Global Ltd. (GMG), though the Cameroonian government retained a 10 percent stake.³ GMG's



Rainforest in Cameroon

© Greenpeace / John Novis



Indigenous Bagyeli man building a house

cc Aso Bolo



Red capped mangabeys

© Greenpeace / Filip Verbelen

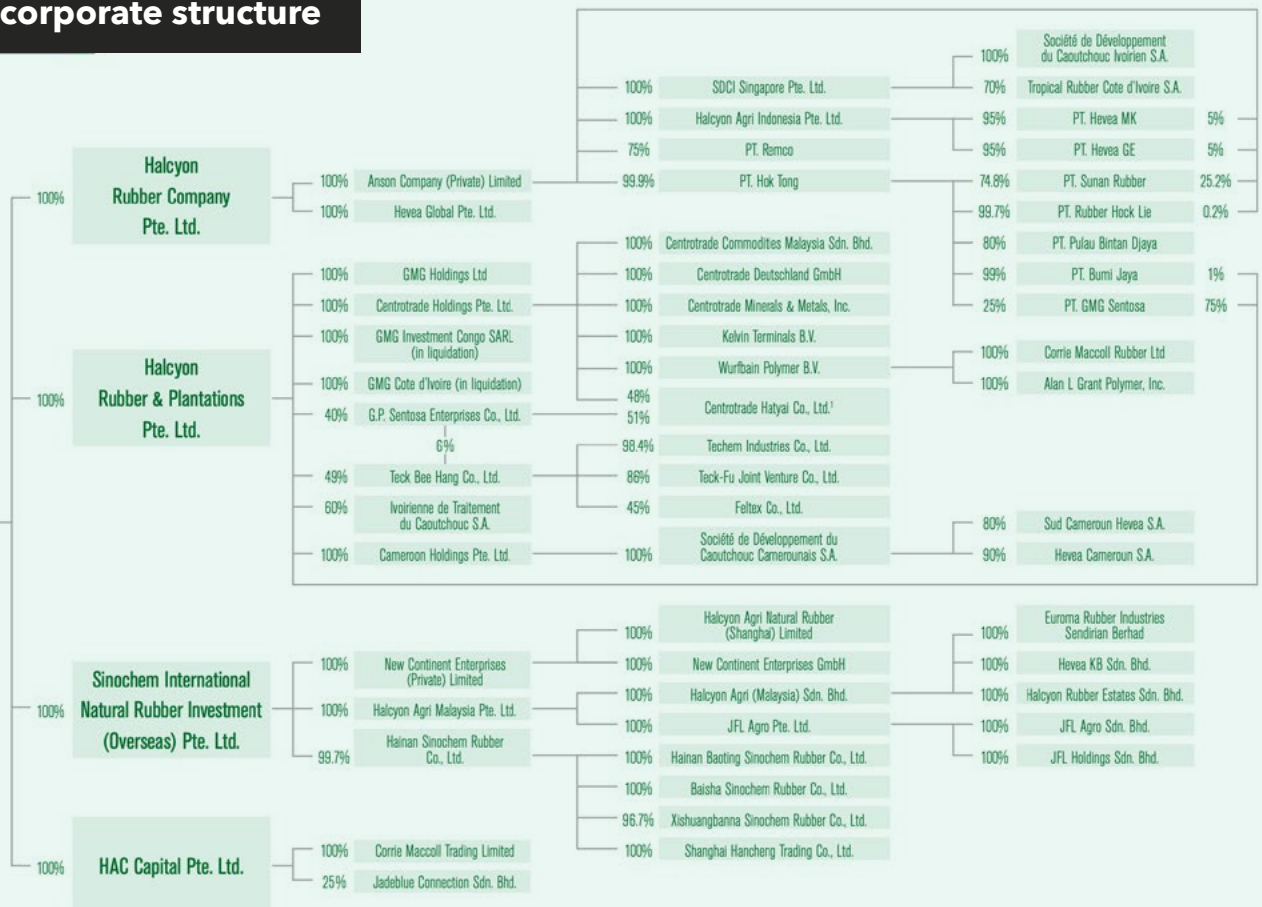


ownership then changed hands. In 2008, the large Chinese state-owned chemical company, Sinochem, purchased a majority of shares of GMG. Eight years later, in 2016, Sinochem purchased a majority of shares (55 percent) of another rubber company called Halcyon Agri Resources. Following these acquisitions, Sinochem injected its global natural rubber business, including GMG, into Halcyon.⁴ Halcyon acquired Sinochem’s 51 percent stake in GMG.

On top of its original 41,339 ha plantation,⁵ in 2012, Hévécam secured a roughly 18,000 ha extension⁶ to its concession from the government of Cameroon,⁷ bringing the total area to around 59,000 hectares.⁸

Today, Hévécam and its sister rubber plantation, Sud Cameroon Hévée S.A. (Sudcam), belong to Halcyon Agri, which describes itself as the “the world’s leading rubber franchise.”⁹ A Halcyon Agri subsidiary called Corrie MacColl Plantations operates these two plantations. On its website, Corrie MacColl states

Halcyon’s corporate structure





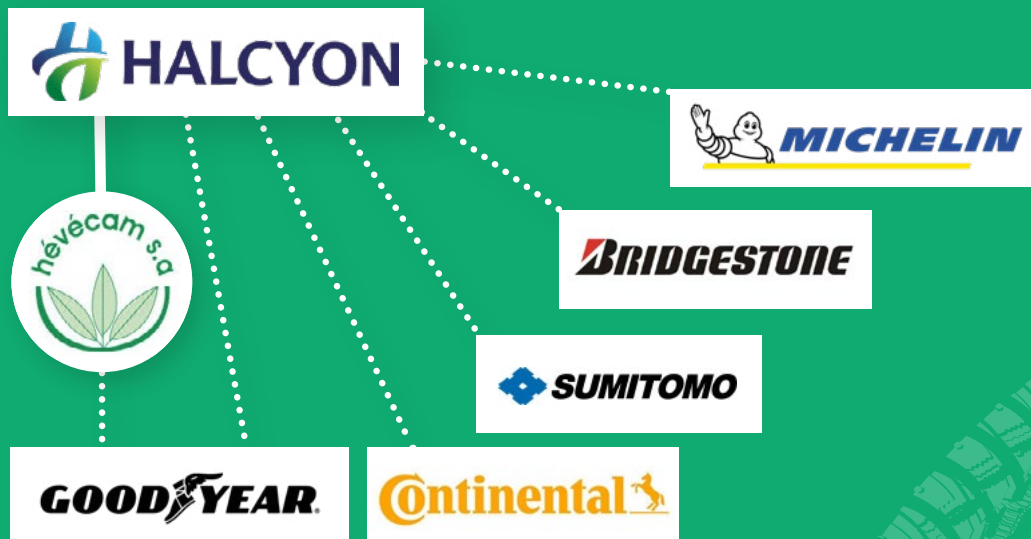
that, taken together, the Hévécam and Sudcam operations represent “the single largest rubber plantation in the world.”¹⁰

Of the total Hévécam plantation area, around 27,500 ha is reportedly suitable for rubber cultivation, of which 19,000 ha is actually planted.¹¹ A large-scale re-planting program commenced at the end of 2017 to increase the productivity of the 19,000 ha to its full capacity over a period of 15 years.¹² The production capacity of the processing plant is estimated at 35,000 metric tonnes (MT) per annum. In 2017, Hévécam produced 16,000 MT of natural rubber, exporting to companies abroad, including Goodyear Tires in the US.¹³

Since 2010, Halcyon Agri has become the world’s largest natural rubber conglomerate. It has a production capacity of 1.63 million metric tonnes per annum.¹⁴ This equals about **12 percent of the world’s total consumption of natural rubber**.¹⁵ Halcyon operates rubber plantations in Malaysia and West Africa and purchases rubber from other sources, including producers in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia.¹⁶

Halcyon Agri owns 38 processing factories around the world, and manufactures

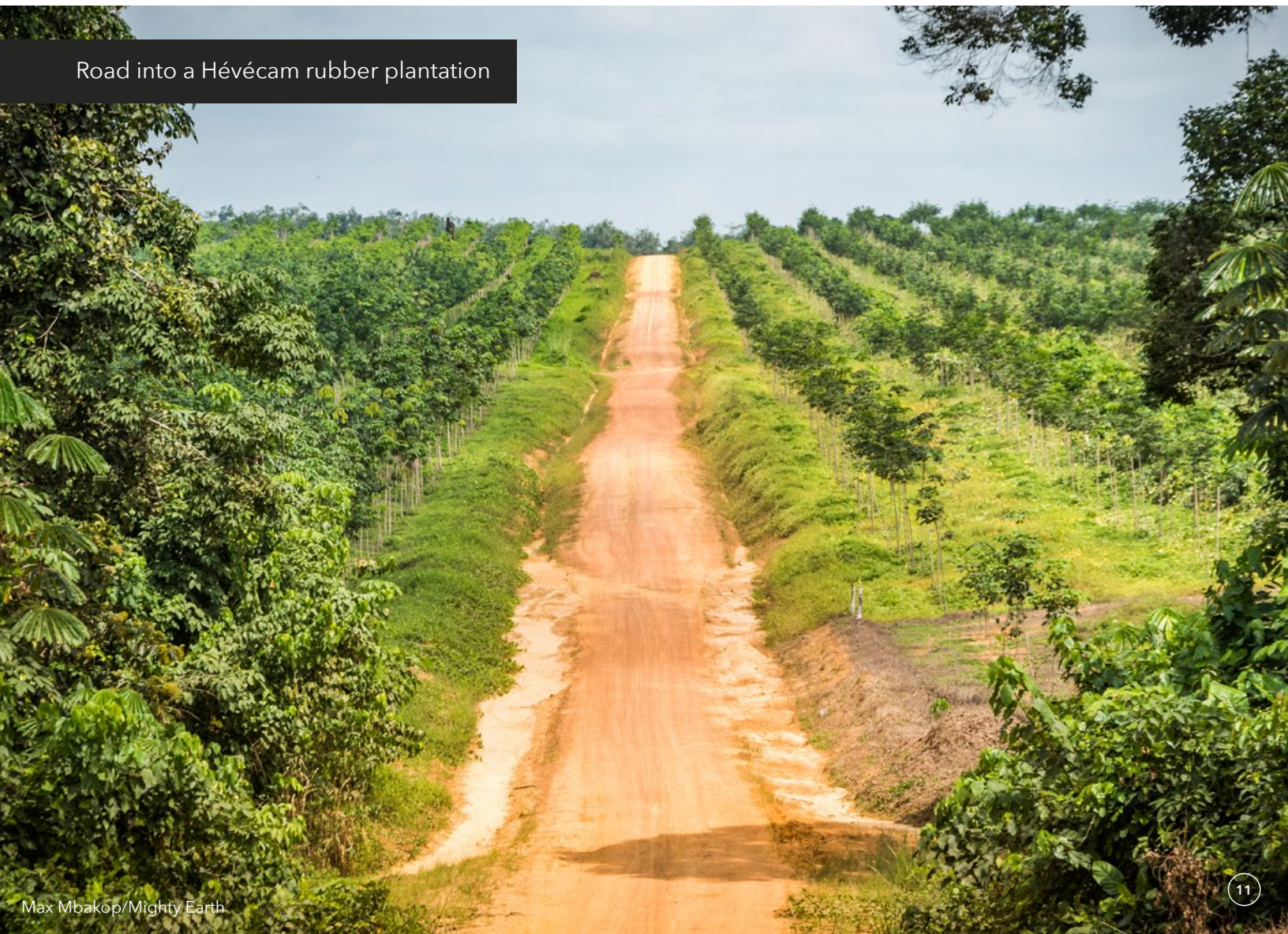
Hévécam’s links to the big tire brands



a range of products for both tire and non-tire industries.¹⁷ Halcyon Agri markets its natural rubber goods under the ‘HEVEAPRO’ brand and supplies a number of the world’s leading tire companies including **Goodyear, Bridgestone, Michelin, Sumitomo, and Continental**.¹⁸ These tire corporations – along with Pirelli – have all recently adopted deforestation-free and socially responsible rubber policies.

On November 19, 2018, Halcyon and its subsidiaries launched a new [Sustainable Natural Rubber Supply Chain Policy \(“SNRSCP”\)](#), which applies to itself and to stakeholders with whom Halcyon trades. In doing so, Halcyon opened the door to remedying many past environmental and social harms. In Cameroon, Halcyon pledged to ensure that the [World Wildlife Fund for Nature’s recommendations for Sudcam](#) were effectively developed and implemented.

Road into a Hévécam rubber plantation





KEY ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Deforestation in Hévécam plantation

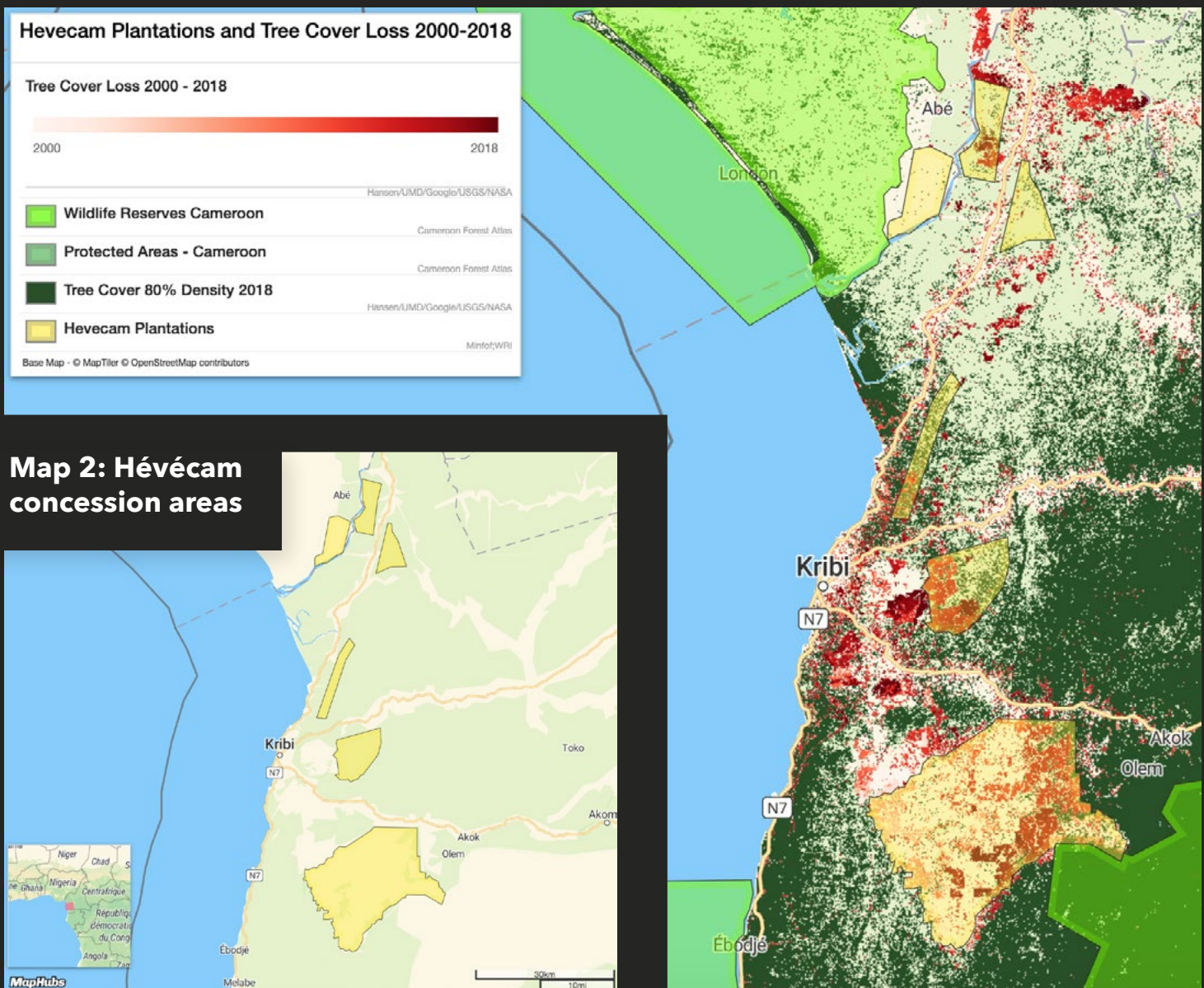
OLD AND NEW DEFORESTATION

Old deforestation, 1975-2008: After Hévécam's establishment in 1975, over 41,000 ha of what was mostly national forest (*Domaine foncier national*) were cut down and replaced with rubber. No proper Environmental Social Impact Assessments (ESIA) or High Conservation Value (HCV) studies were undertaken in the 1970s, but testimonies from the area's former inhabitants indicate that ancient, precious forests were lost. We will never be able to know the full extent of plant and animal loss in the 41,000 ha, but satellite images and testimonies can paint a rough picture of the overall forest loss.

New deforestation, 2008 onward: In 2008, Sinochem purchased a majority share in GMG. In 2012, the government of Cameroon granted Hévécam an 18,365 hectare extension to its concession area. This land was largely covered in lowland tropical forests rich in biodiversity. Since the extension was granted, a total of 3,196 ha of this natural forest have been removed to make way for new rubber trees.¹⁹

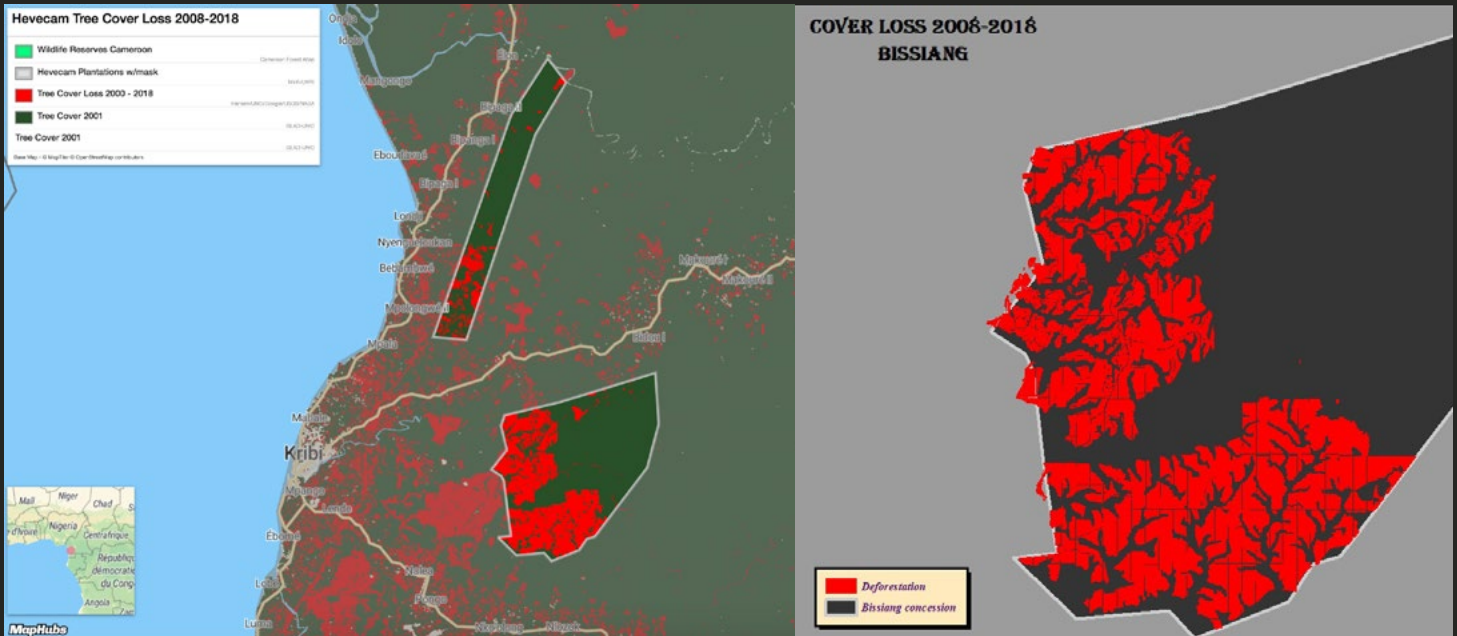
We were able to review deforestation from 2001 onwards with satellite images of the land around Hévécam. The first map shows 2000-2018 tree cover loss in the three Hévécam concession areas – southeast, central, and north. Red shows forest lost and areas where old rubber was cut and replanted with new.

Map 1: Tree cover loss in the Hévécam region from 2000-2018

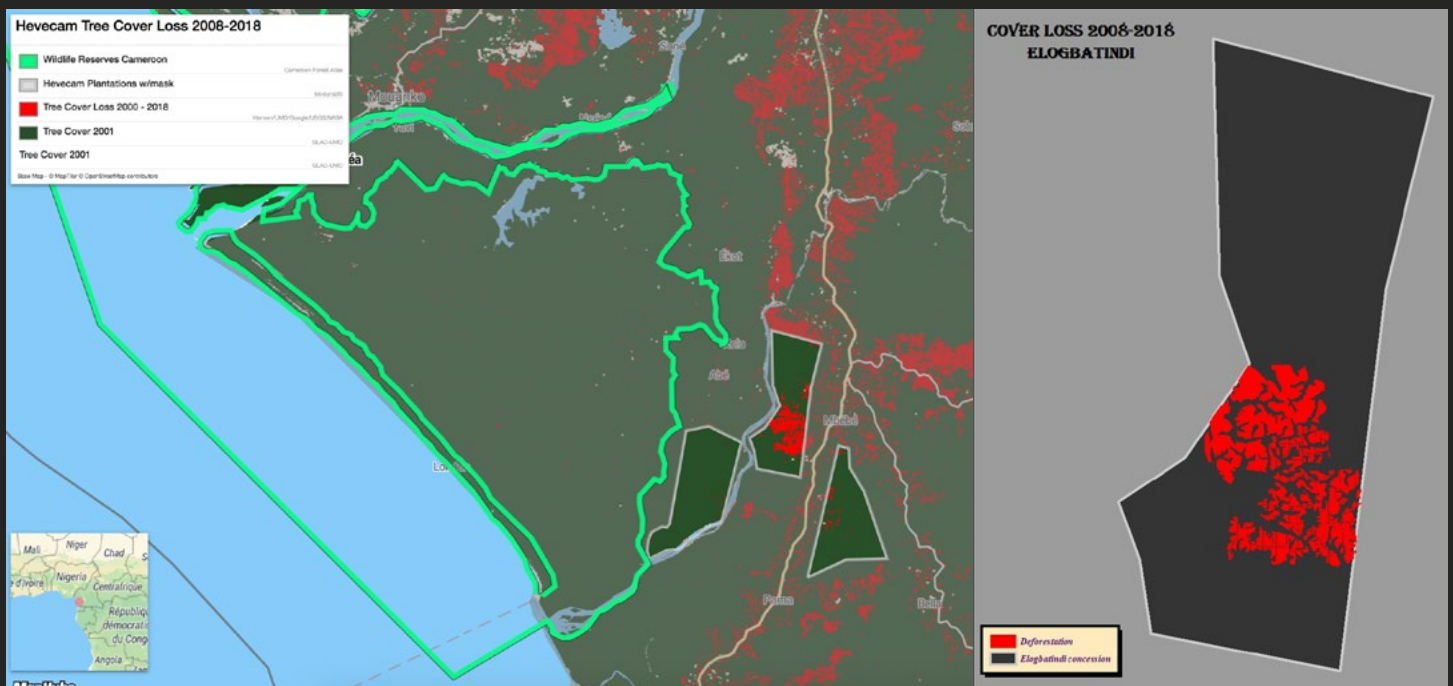


A more detailed breakdown of enlarged satellite images follows in the next maps. These show tree cover decline in each of the different Hévécam concession areas between 2008-2018. 2008 is the year that GMG Global was purchased by Sinochem.

Map 3: Forest cover loss in CENTRAL concession areas from 2008-2018 (Bissiang)

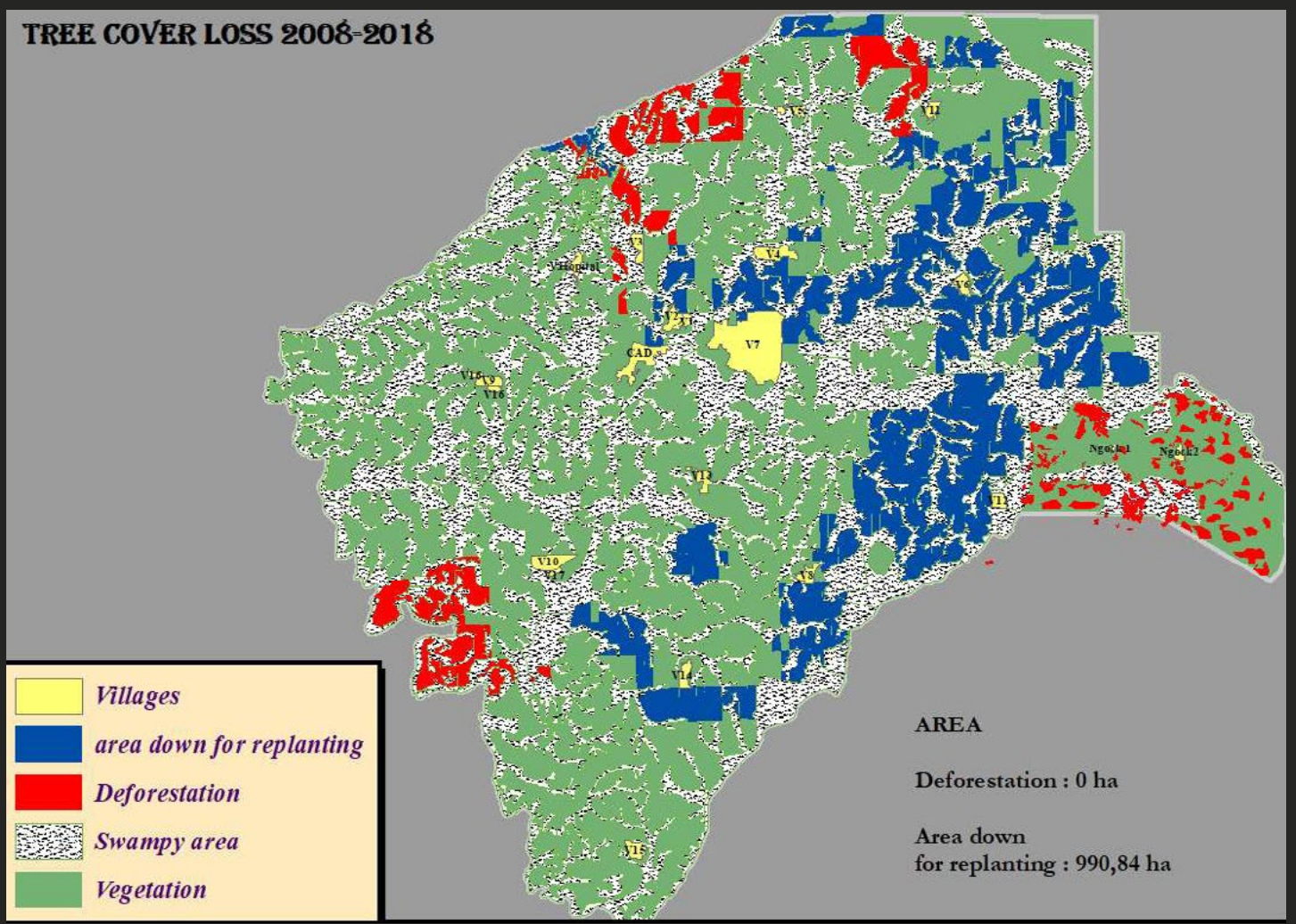


Map 4: Forest cover loss in NORTH concession areas from 2008-2018 (Elogbatindi)





Map 5: Forest cover in the SOUTHEAST concession area 2008 - 2018



Total deforestation for Niete : **1,507,48 ha**
 Total deforestation for Ngock **1,055.35 ha**
 Total deforestation for Bissiang **2,405.24 ha**
 Total deforestation for Elogbatindi **790.64 ha**
Full total: 5,758.71 ha

LOSS OF BIODIVERSITY, TRADITIONAL FOREST FOODS AND MEDICINES

Even in communities that had not abutted the massive clearing of the 1970s, and which were spared much of the new post-2008 clearing, villagers reported that plant and animal populations plummeted as vast monoculture plantations near them replaced what used to be vibrant forests. People in the village of Bidou described changes they had witnessed in their lifetimes:

The forest has changed so much. Before, there were a lot of fish, there was a lot of game. A little bit of everything. Our forests are emptying themselves out. When we were young, we had birds and animals of all kinds; elephants, gorillas, chimpanzees, panthers, buffalo, and antelopes. What there was when we were young, it's not there anymore. Some fruits are also vanishing because of logging, like the wild mangoes. That is what used to feed the village. Most of the fish have disappeared – we think it's because of the deforestation and pollution. All of this started disappearing 60 years ago. There's almost nothing left.²⁰

Left: List of endangered species posted on a wall in a village affected by Hévécam's deforestation; Right: Local activist touching an ancient tree felled in the midst of Hévécam rubber field



In the indigenous community of Mbebe Bagyeli, the impacts of the expansion of Hévécam into the new extension area were described as follows:

The rivers are destroyed by Hévécam. Today, the fish, it's gone. When we go to fish, we find nothing. Hévécam bulldozed, dumped earth and chemicals into the river, killed the trees around the river that kept it cool. We lost many types of fish and animals. The wild honey is completely finished. You don't find it at all anymore. There are just a couple remaining gorillas and chimpanzees, which you can sometimes – rarely – see in the early morning. Maybe once every two months. Before, it was every week at least. ²¹

Indigenous Bagyeli community speaking about the biodiversity loss they have witnessed




When the government granted the new concession area to Hévécam, the company agreed to leave a five kilometer buffer strip of undisturbed forest between the plantation extension and the nearby villages so that the locals could continue hunting, fishing, gathering forest produce and medicines, and performing their traditional rites. However, community members claim that this buffer zone has not been respected. In certain places, the forested strip is less than 800 meters wide.

One Bagyeli community member stated:

The buffer is only around one kilometer wide. It's so close that if we stand here and we talk loudly, Hévécam can hear you. ²²

There has been a dramatic decline in biodiversity in the remaining forests. Large apes and antelope have disappeared. Even mushrooms have become rare.

Hévécam had taken our forests where we did everything. Our traditional rites. Hunting, gathering. We collected our traditional medicines there. You yourself have gone through all these spaces that were wooded and today it is the plantations of Hévécam. Before the arrival of Hévécam in our lands and our forests, our living conditions were good because the rivers were not polluted, the rivers had many fish, the forest was rich, the medicines were taken not far from our houses, hunting we did not go far to do it, there were all the animals. But since the arrival of Hévécam it is almost a desert. ²³



Rubber plantation monoculture has replaced biodiverse rainforest

Indigenous people explained that Hévécam workers supplement their income by poaching on indigenous land. These incursions lead to further decimation of biodiversity and trigger conflicts between indigenous people and the company workers, as described by one Bagyeli villager:

So once settled here, Hévécam continued to press on us with these workers who make fields all around our village and who hunt every day to convert their lean end of the month and we have arguments with them from time to time on the questions of space, land. There are practically 10 people from there hunting over here every day. ²⁴

In the village of Bidou 3, the situation was described in this way:

40,000 hectares, that is all devastated former forest. We had everything. We had our hunting, fishing, everything. Now, to find this, you have to go to the park only. Me, I know the elephant, the gorilla, but my child does not. They destroyed our animals. There is nothing left. ²⁵



DEGRADATION AND POLLUTION OF WATERWAYS

Villagers in every community visited reported that river quality had declined over recent years and that fish had almost vanished.

How can we have a restitution of the quality of our rivers? It comes from deforestation by loggers and also Hévécam. Maybe also polluting practices. When you cut the trees, the temperature is hotter, and the fish can die that way. Before you could drink the water of the rivers, it was clean enough to be good drinking water, but not anymore. We want buffers around our rivers. For our children and our grandchildren even if it takes too much time to rebuild buffers in our lifetime. ²⁶

According to people living in the old concession area, local surface water sources have become poisoned due to activities on the plantation. Pesticide run-off and spills of latex from the plantation have caused a toxic mixture of chemicals to enter local waterways. Community members around the plantation blame this pollution for numerous instances of water-related illnesses and disease, including stomach aches, diarrhea, and even several deaths. In the new extension areas, those interviewed complained that their compensation deals did not account for reduced access to water sources and fishing resources due to the destruction of rivers and waterways during the company's plantation extension works.

Child bathing and playing in waterway in a Hévécam concession, which the village leaders nearby believe is contaminated



*The problems of drinking water are many. We are asking Hévécam to make wells because pesticide pollution poisons water and brings diseases that at the same time brings human deaths. The river we drink, when it's dry, things are even more serious. The water becomes very bad. The fish there is not enough. Many fish have disappeared.*²⁷

*So today, with the pollution of pesticides of Hévécam, he has diarrhea [pointing to one villager]. Many [people]. You have seen the bellies of our children who are swollen because of worms, you even see. Because of the poor quality of the water.*²⁸

According to villagers in the old concession areas, Hévécam has taken a few significant steps, such as the occasional rationed distribution of drinking water to some communities when there is a spill in a river, and the construction of a few boreholes and/or wells in only one Bagyeli V12 community.²⁹ However, issues with contaminated waterways have persisted. It is unclear if the groundwater

Broken down well in indigenous village abutting Hévécam rubber plantation




available for wells is contaminated or not, and at least two boreholes dug by Hévécam for affected communities were not working. One was dry and the other was non-functional.

According to villagers near the new concession areas:

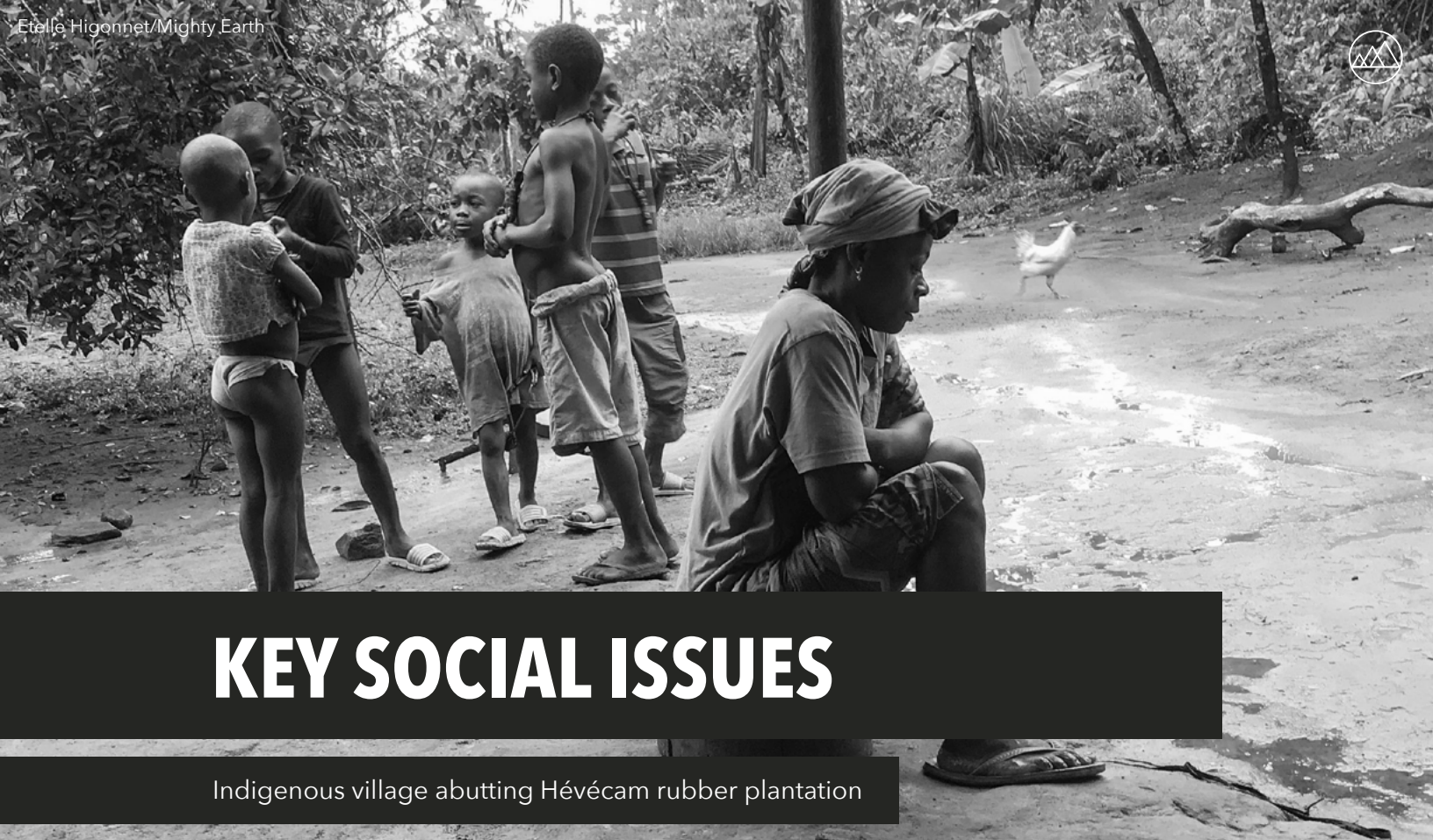
Hévécam planted 400 ha of rubber here – we don't want artificial fertilizers. The plantation water flows down away from us, thank goodness we are higher up. But any new plantation would surround us and ruin our water. We need organic. We want to make local organic fertilizer here and to get training to start small local businesses. ³⁰

The villagers we interviewed who were most affected by the new concession areas in terms of waterway degradation reported skin problems from being in contact with polluted water as well as environmental damage, including:

The rivers have been destroyed by Hévécam. Today, the fish are gone. When we go to fish, we find nothing. Hévécam dumped dirt and chemicals into the river, and killed the trees around the river that kept it cool, so we lost fish. The Nkol, Nzima, Nsolo, Nie, Anyeng, Ewol, Njondi, Daja, and N'simbu rivers are gone...



Villagers trace new skin ailments to pollution from Hévécam rubber concession nearby/upstream



KEY SOCIAL ISSUES

Indigenous village abutting Hévécam rubber plantation

DISPOSSESSION OF COMMUNITY LAND AND FORESTS

When Hévécam was first established in 1975, the government declassified around 41,000 ha of forestland (*Domaine foncier national*) and reclassified it for use as a state investment (*Dans le “domaine public”*).

Studies have shown that this process was carried out in a fashion detrimental to the customary land entitlements of resident groups belonging to local Bulu, Fan, and other communities, as well as the indigenous Bagyeli (historically referred to as “Pygmy”) people.

Bagyeli villagers around the old part of Hévécam, beginning in the 1970s, described being forcibly uprooted repeatedly, until they were left in tiny islands of degraded forests with their culture in tatters:

Before we got to where we are in Nyamande V12, we lived in Zingi. As it is in this village that Hévécam began to cut the forest. We had to move from time to time, three times, to escape the expansion of the plantation as it spread. But it never stopped. Until where we are today. As you see our current village is wedged between Kampoman Park and the Hévécam plantation.³¹

According to research published by Assembe-Mvondo et. al. (2015):

Compensation was not paid that was commensurate with the real value of the inherited lands these communities were forced to abandon. The government did award compensation in the form of foodstuffs and a monetary sum of about €7,600 to one village, but the other communities involved were not compensated at all. This process of dispossession has been considered tantamount to a spoliation of ancestral lands by State authorities, and has over time generated conflicts and a number of legitimate claims for financial compensation.³²

Although this large-scale dispossession stems from actions taken by the government 40 years ago, the legacy of injustice it created persists to this day. People interviewed feel they have lost a tremendous amount of their culture and

Community gathering during consultation with Mighty Earth



livelihoods. They want help going forward, and reparations.

In addition, more recent instances of dispossession and land grabbing have served to aggravate the old underlying grievances, as well as exacerbate longstanding civil rights discriminations against the Bagyeli people.

People in a Bagyeli community living next to the new extension of the Hévécam concession, where large swaths of land were cut down five years ago, reported land grabbing, major violations of the internationally-recognized³³ principles of “Free, Prior and Informed Consent” (FPIC), and associated problems. One elder described it thus:

You know we Bagyelis we have two villages always. Where we are, it's called our big village. After we have a village further in the forest that serves as a hunting camp. In that one, if someone dies while hunting, they bury him there, a lot of people died there while hunting. Aunts, parents, children. This forest that was taken and destroyed by Hévécam, it was all for us. Our supermarket, our pantry, our pharmacy, and today it was destroyed through the waterways that were ravaged, the hunting areas that were completely cleared, the spaces where we gathered these traditional forest products. Everything was stolen. And this without consulting us or informing us. There was no consultation. We learned five days after it happened that Hévécam was in the Bantou village with the chieftain to give food, drink, and money. We were not at this meeting and suddenly we had nothing. No food, no wine, even less money. Even the specifications that exist are made between Hévécam and Mbébé Bantu, but not with us Bagyeli.

We wrote a request to the chief and in the request we ask that Hévécam repair

“We learned five days after it happened that Hévécam was in the Bantou village with the chieftain to give food, drink and money. We were not at this meeting and suddenly we had nothing.”

the harm they caused us via the destroyed hunting grounds, our spaces where we made our rites, our medicines, and everything. For compensation we asked them to build suitable houses, bring electricity to our village, and water. And since we have made this request to this day, it is without result.

And now a barrier has been erected at the entrance of the concession. When we have to cross this concession to find our forest that is far away, in order to harvest the remaining non-timber forest products, we are asked for the national identity card. Since we do not have an identity card, we cannot go.

At our level, two out of 10 people have a national identity card. And suddenly it becomes difficult. The children also do not have birth certificates and they are not even Cameroonians. Hévécam, at our informal meeting, promised to help us with citizenship with birth certificates, identity cards and support for children to go to school with payment for outfits, notebooks, pens, school bags, and school fees. Until today, three years after, nothing has been done.³⁴

When we travelled to the new extended concessions area, community members told us that lessons learned at the “old” concessions had not been applied. When the government negotiated the 18,000 ha extension of the concession area in 2012, we were told, there was no community involvement in the classification process. Indigenous and other affected populations were therefore denied their right to give, or withhold, their FPIC to the deal.

Roadblock where indigenous people without IDs frequently get turned back from their traditional lands




Specifically, community leaders state that FPIC was not observed in the boundary and allocation process for the new concession extension. As a result, cases of overlapping land claims have been observed in the Mpama, Mpolongwe, Bebambwe, and Londji H communities, indicating that some of the land extension concession allocated to Hévécam was in fact private land belonging to community members. Furthermore, in the villages of Mpama, Mpolongwe, Bebambwe, and Londji H, the people claim to have had property deeds for land now claimed by Hévécam. Community members from these villages argue that the entire concession in these places was illegal and should not have been granted. Moreover, communities feel they did not receive fair and just compensation for the destruction of their farm fields.

WATER CONTAMINATION AND ASSOCIATED HEALTH IMPACTS

One of the most pressing concerns facing local communities in the plantation vicinity is the contamination of local drinking water. One Bagyeli community testified:

This river is the only place now where we can get water. We have many skin problems now. We never used to. I will show you. [all start taking off various clothes to show skin problems] it's all the stuff Hévécam throws in the water. Hévécam gave us a well. Unfortunately, Hévécam did not do maintenance of the



Villager showing Mighty Earth how the well in his community is broken

well or train the villagers on how to maintain it. They said it would be done but it was not done. So actually, the well has been broken for one month now. There is no water. We have to go to the river and the quality of the water there is a very bad – it is only acceptable for washing. ³⁵

Communities complained that the change in water quality has caused digestive and skin ailments. Diarrhea and infections from worms are allegedly common, as one man in another Bagyeli community reported:

*Before and after the company came there was a huge change in our health. Now a lot of people have worms and diarrhea. You can see yourself how so many of the children’s bellies are sticking out because of worms. I myself just almost died of diarrhea. We are living in hell.*³⁶

In the village of Bidou 3, one woman explained:

Sometimes, in the past, one of the company trucks would be leaking ammonium, or rubber, or something else. It would pass over the bridge and poison the water. The company would test the water and sometimes take care of us. They would bring us water to drink until the river got a bit cleaner.

Truck filled with rubber



The problem is that transporting their products pollutes as it goes by over the bridges. Once a container fell directly into the water and all the fish died. In Nlozok. We were contaminated downstream. All of our rivers are connected and flow one into the other so if someone is poisoned upstream it affects everyone downstream. The water totally changed color. There were people who got diarrhea.

In general, the plantation has destroyed a lot of the fish. It is not at all like the fish used to be. With all this pollution. The villagers used to depend on fish to eat it, what are we going to do, we cannot go buy fish in town, how would we find the money? So, less fish for us now.

Now our river is also very red. We have to go 15 km to get drinkable water with our motos and containers. It can last you two weeks. It's a huge hassle.³⁷

Local people remain frustrated that, despite multiple complaints to the company about chemical waste from its operations contaminating local water supplies, very little action has been taken. In Nkolbanda village, one elder expressed frustration:

We have many times asked for wells. Still no well. We want one well. Actually, three wells. But nobody is ever given us anything in spite of promises. We spend one hour to go find drinking water.³⁸

Man shows Mighty Earth the red river water



DESTRUCTION OF LOCAL FOREST-DEPENDENT CULTURES AND DISCRIMINATION AGAINST INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

The loss of forests that have been the traditional homes of people living in and around the Hévécam concession has affected more than just their livelihoods and health; it has had a profoundly destructive impact on the social and cultural fabric of local communities.

For example, multiple villages, both indigenous and non-indigenous, complained about their gravesites and cemeteries being razed. A woman in one Bagyeli indigenous community lamented:

The tombs, it's very bad. It's the tombs of our grandparents and ancestors. We have to go do rituals there. If ever you have a problem, you go and consult the tombs and they can help things a bit. But now we don't even know how to find the tombs anymore. It is all razed and covered with rubber.³⁹

Deforestation on Hévécam concession



While one man from a non-indigenous community simply described it thus:

Our grave sites are gone. We are very sad. ⁴⁰

An indigenous community leader explained that Hévécam's actions had exacerbated tensions between themselves and the non-indigenous local neighbors, inflaming local rivalries. Through a group discussion with the indigenous community it became clear that the village is deeply disturbed by land-grabbing by the neighboring Bantus, who take indigenous land and cut the forest to plant their food crops for local use. The indigenous community wanted official rights over their land, participatory mapping, and more information about their situation. The indigenous community added that land tensions existed with their Bantu neighbors before Hévécam, but that the recent 3,196 ha of deforestation in the new Hévécam concession areas had created more competition for remaining land and exacerbated existing tensions. ⁴¹

Some indigenous people interviewed felt they are discriminated against, as they are often denied official status as “villages” and the benefits that come with such a designation:

In Cameroon the [indigenous] Bagyeli people have always been oppressed by the Bantus. We want our territory to be classified as a ‘village’. A proper village. Not just a territory. If we become a village then our chief gets officially recognized and receives 50,000 CFA per month. We started this process three years ago, but it still hasn't gotten sorted out. The sub prefect came and we even designated our chief but officially he has not been recognized and we are not yet a village. We ask Hévécam to help us. We need participatory mapping to mark the edge of our land from our neighbors. The community next-door, V15, has the same problem.

Recent deforestation for Hévécam plantations has created more competition for remaining land and exacerbated existing tensions.

What is needed to fix this is that we have our own village. Now for our village we want to secure with a third degree chieftaincy. We are bordering with village V15 which is also a Bagyeli, Bifa, and Nzingi community and we are interested because NGOs support us to have this village status, and participatory mapping to negotiate boundaries with other villages. Every village has its land. We are asking for help for that.⁴²

Many indigenous people did not have official Cameroonian citizenship. Those interviewed said they felt that this denial was a major problem that they wanted to be remedied:

We asked Hévécam to help us get citizenship with birth certificates and national identification cards. It did not work. Hévécam started but they barely did half of us because allegedly their machine had fallen into disrepair. We think that's a lie. They came several times, but so little is done. Only a very few people got ID cards, and nobody got birth certificates. We want all the birth certificates and ID cards right away. Everybody wants it. We are waiting. And it should not be a one-off thing. We want the process to be permanently renewed for new babies. Babies don't wait to be born. We have to tell the truth, which is that we are not really considered Cameroonians without our papers.⁴³

Two women sit with children in an indigenous village



The connection between jobs and ID cards meant that the indigenous people we interviewed keenly felt their lack of official Cameroonian citizenship papers:

*Hévécam wants to recruit some of us but they can't really unless we have ID cards. Without ID you can work on the black market, but you cannot get official jobs. Basically, it means you can only work with the subcontractors, not directly for Hévécam.*⁴⁴

One local NGO worker spoke about what he considered to be a situation akin to cultural genocide for indigenous people:

*The indigenous people here are confronted with the free market economy and their old way of life has disappeared. The forests are gone and with them the flora, the fauna, the fishing, hunting, their food, gathering of non-timber forest products, their pharmacy... Everything is gone. They lost many sacred sites where the pygmies did initiations and rites. The culture is being wiped out.*⁴⁵

The dwindling animal populations due to Hévécam's plantations has had terrible impacts on the ways of life of local communities. It has served to exacerbate the grievances people have about inadequate compensation and the lack of FPIC. People interviewed argue that the compensation they received bears no relation to this loss of wildlife.

For example, a community that has lost its forest and its traditional pharmacopeia, its pantry, etc., was told that a church or a football ground will be built for them. But this does not compensate for the actual consequences

"The forests are gone and with them the flora, the fauna, the fishing, hunting, their food, gathering of non-timber forest products, their pharmacy... Everything is gone... The culture is being wiped out."

of rubber production: the destruction of sites sacred to the Bagyeli people, the inability to access non-wood forest products, or the loss of hunting grounds. Many people interviewed lamented that there is nothing left to hunt or fish. These impacts were not explained to the villagers.

LACK OF ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE, EDUCATION, AND ELECTRICITY

Communities discussed their lack of access to health care. Many of them felt that they had been promised health care by the company, but that the promises were not kept. Other community members interviewed indicated that since deforestation had destroyed their access to traditional medicines, the company should now provide medicine to affected villages. Nearly all people interviewed on the subject of health confirmed that their access to medical care was very poor.

One community member explained how hard it was to access health services:

*Access to healthcare is very difficult for us. We are 25 km away. The problem of health is primary. Right here is a very sick guy but he does not have any possibility of getting treatment. On the subject of helping with access to health care, they [the company] can do better.*⁴⁶

Sign for local hospital described by villagers during interviews



Communities discussed their lack of access to education and complained about how little the company did for them. One individual interviewed by Mighty Earth stated:

For the most part, with the children we are on our own. Hévécam gives four notebooks to each student per year, and two pens, one blue, one red. It's called "paquet minimum." In the village we have an elementary school, but we need the company to help the school more. Like the way they treat their employees' children. [There,] Hévécam helps the teachers and helps the government to make sure the schools for their employees' children are good. Here we do not have enough teachers. Two from the government and three paid by the community, which makes only five teachers for well over 100 kids. Also, there is no place for the teacher to live so he has to commute in and out of Kribi. For secondary school it is almost 5 km away. That's around two hours walking in each direction. It's hot. Do you think these children will be thriving? I don't think so... It's too far.⁴⁷

Another community complained about promises made by the company around education, which they claimed the company had broken. The promises were made in a cahier de charge, local terminology for agreements signed between a community and the company. These agreements however, do not appear to be binding contracts, but rather roadmap agreements, with promises often going unfulfilled:

We have only three classrooms. In the cahier de charge, Hévécam said they would build three additional classrooms. In 2017, all the teachers abandoned us so school attendance went down to zero. In 2018, four new teachers were sent to us and now the students are coming back. Before the teachers

"Mostly for the children we are on our own. Hévécam gives four notebooks to each student per year, and two pens, one blue, one red... We need the company to help the school more. Like the way they treat their employees' children."

abandoned us, we had around 120 students in school. But there has never been an elementary school or day care. This means that until you're eight years old there's nothing for you – we need to fix this for the small children. We probably also need better conditions for the teachers so that they don't abandon us again. ⁴⁸

An indigenous community boxed in by the Hévécam plantation on one side and a park on the other claimed that there are insurmountable obstacles to most children attending school:

We do have a school, but it is almost 3 km away. Little children are too small to go there. We really need a kindergarten and elementary school here. Only children over seven are big enough to walk all the way. It takes one hour in each direction. Things are free through PNDP (Programme national de développement participatif). But it's not exactly free, because we have to pay



Local children gather for a photo

for school clothes and notebooks. Hévécam pays for half the notebooks and pens but the family has to pay the other half. And a lot of other small cost like that which we cannot really afford very well.⁴⁹

A woman from an indigenous village explained how hard it was to find money to send the children to school since the community's income, which used to come from non-timber forest products, has dwindled:

If you don't fight to send the child to school, no one will help you, the child will not go. But the forest is gone, so how can you hustle? How can you get any money? There are 13 children in this Bagyeli camp but only five of them are in school. The school is 5 km away. It takes the children 2 hours in each direction. There are more children in the other Bagyeli camp nearby, most of them are also not in school, it is too far.⁵⁰

Besides recurring complaints about lack of access to health care or education, nearly all villages expressed frustrations about energy access. One Bagyeli community talked about how they wanted electricity along with housing:

The forest is gone. We used to build our houses with woven mats. Now all the materials have disappeared and so we can't build our traditional houses anymore. So, we asked the company for tin roofs. They only gave it to us for the communal structure, but none of the houses got roofs or light. The workers' community next-door got light. We have been asking for light for years and years, but nothing comes. We would like light... We want a road and electricity.⁵¹

"The forest is gone, so how can you hustle, how can you get any money? There are 13 children in this Bagyeli camp and five in school, eight not. The school is 5 km away. It takes the children 2 hours in each direction."

Another indigenous community expressed a complaint:

Hévécam never brought electricity even though in the plantation next door you can see that they have it. It's so close. Hévécam did nothing for us.⁵²

Communities have been given some access to electricity by Hévécam, but in an inconsistent fashion that has generated local rivalries.

We have some electricity but lots of cuts and it's expensive. The company should give us subsidies. Why does the company help take care of bills for the village next-door, but not us? We are very bothered by all the blackouts. By the way those do not show up in your bill. The bill rate stays the same regardless of whether there is a blackout or not and it is very high. It would probably be better for us to have solar panels and be autonomous.⁵³

One community that has patchy access to electricity asked for more energy autonomy with solar panels:

The company should help pay for our electricity. It's a giant agro-industry that took our lands. After 40 years [of having a plantation] in the region, you cannot say you are doing something great for the community by digging one little well. Our village has some electricity, but there are a lot of blackouts. Sometimes the company cuts out our electricity in order to fix electrical problems in their buildings. We want solar panels so we can be autonomous. Nobody here has solar panels.⁵⁴

LABOR ISSUES


Together, Halcyon's Hévécam and Sudcam are the third largest employer in Cameroon, behind only the government and the Cameroon Development

Together, Halcyon's Hévécam and Sudcam are the third largest employer in Cameroon

Corporation—which also grows rubber. However, people in the villages where the interviews were conducted all complained that Hévécam does very little to support local employment. Villagers interviewed claimed that very few local people have been hired for positions at the plantation beyond roles as manual laborers or casual laborers despite the fact that there are numerous young, trained, and educated people in the area.

Those interviewed stated that the company does not have any real program or effective mechanism to promote the emergence of competent local human resources (e.g. specialized training, priority hiring, adapting certain positions/jobs to the specificities of the indigenous Bagyeli). As such, the villagers believe that the rubber company discriminates against them:

The youth in our community face serious difficulties when they try to get jobs at Hévécam. We have young people who are high ranking in other companies outside of this region. Our young people have to go far away to get jobs, but they get hired in great positions elsewhere. Why not here? People here have industrial and commercial training. We could work here. But we are not well received at Hévécam. No matter what level of the company. It doesn't pay well. The director who is about to leave is the only one at Hévécam who has tried to improve working conditions for the workers. ⁵⁵



Hévécam rubber plantation

The Bagyeli feel they face particularly severe discrimination, as was expressed during one of the village interviews:

Hévécam recruits us for not worthy tasks. They give us tasks like hoeing, clearing the plots, weaving and making the mats for the workers' camps. All these jobs are temporary and they do not pay us as they should. Also, we can only recruit two out of 50 people because not everyone has a national identity card and so cannot be recruited.⁵⁶

Another Bagyeli community reported that Bagyeli people are underpaid compared to their non-indigenous counterparts:

Two of us worked for Hévécam as guards for the night shift. But we quit because the other guards were getting 50,000 CFA per month and we were only paid 15,000 or 20,000 CFA. We worked every night. From 5:00 pm to 7:00 am. It's long and hard. We complained and asked about it but got no answer. Hévécam is discriminating against Bagyeli.⁵⁷

As the principal source of employment in the area, working conditions on the Hévécam rubber plantation are very important to local people. Communities interviewed reported poor working conditions with pay often less than \$1 per day, long hours, and poor living quarters for workers.

During one indigenous village interview, people described how the company had been deducting pay from the salaries of local employees:

The question of whether work with the Hévécam is complicated. At Hévécam you can get a bigger salary but then they deduct all sorts of things like food and electricity from your salary. Whereas the subcontractors just give you

"The protections are not adequate for pesticides. It burns your nose. They give you a nose cover for three months, something that should last for two weeks."

cash without deductions but the salary is very low. You can even end up in debt. They subtract things from your salary all the time and if you're unlucky you can end up with just 450 CFA. That's nothing.⁵⁸

Our investigators were also told that workers have suffered health impacts caused by using pesticides without adequate protections:

The protections are not adequate for pesticides. The chemicals burns your nose so Hévécam gave us nose covers, but the covers are only effective for two weeks and we have to use the same one for three months. You come with normal skin. And after three months it is all weird with lots of skin problems like an elephant.⁵⁹

One local NGO worker reported that plantation workers had also been previously fired for having HIV/AIDS.

This region has some of the highest rates of HIV in the country. Because this is a big industrial area, with the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline, Kribi port and numerous agricultural plantations, it all fed into the AIDS crisis. Many guys coming from far away to work at the plantation. If any of the workers tested positive for HIV/AIDS, they were all fired. It's a violation of the rights of the workers.⁶⁰

In a sign of positive change, we were told that working conditions had been improving over the last two years for workers, including those from the local Bantu and indigenous communities.

BROKEN PROMISES, LACK OF TRANSPARENCY, AND POOR COMMUNICATION

In some cases, promises were made but completely broken – and there is documentation to prove it. In others, promises were mostly broken but a few things were done:

We have a cahier de charge with Hévécam. It was signed in 2012 by Hévécam, the government, and also the representative of the community. There is a list of things that must be undertaken, which Hévécam should have executed. Up till today, 95 percent of it has not been done. We want a borehole, we want a primary school, we want housing for the teachers in the school, we want a health post/dispensary, we want medicine and care in the health post, priority jobs to the local youth from this village, professional trainings, maintenance of village paths, contribution to extension of the electrical grid here which exists a bit but not much. The well is the only thing they started, and it isn't even done yet. The rest of the list, nothing, nothing, nothing.⁶¹

An oft-cited grievance from the village interviews was the lack of adequate information being provided to them by the company. The communities do not have copies of Hévécam concession agreements, including information about *redevances foncières*, best translated as “land royalties,” or about what percentage of the company’s tax revenue the government was meant to give to communities. Therefore, they do not know the specific social projects that were promised. This then makes it impossible for these communities to follow up on their implementation. In certain instances, the company has even refused to share the agreements made between the community, the government, and Hévécam, leaving villagers in the dark about what their rights were, what was promised, and which promises had not been kept:

It exists but we do not see it. Even our leader cannot have it. We cannot.⁶²

Aside from direct employment, local people complain that Hévécam has failed to live up to its commitments to provide social development assistance to communities affected by the plantation operations. One chief explained that his community felt like none of the promises made to them were kept:

In 1975 Hévécam was created. It was very hard to resist. After that there was privatization. We were told Hévécam would have a 99-year lease and pay land royalties [redevances foncières]. We in the abutting riparian communities never benefited from that to this day. Before the company came there were villages, but after their arrival everything was evacuated. The cemeteries were completely razed and they were planted with rubber all over. Until now, this village and the villages all around have received

*no compensation. We were promised 150,000 million per year for all of the “riverain” (riparian) villages, but we have received nothing.*⁶³

Villagers in the indigenous community of V12 Nyamadandé also stated that the company had promised them that it would build and equip a new school, but this has not been done. The nearest school is in Niété, which is far, and the Bagyeli children of Nyamanbandé have no easy way to get to school.

Certainly, the company has made some positive interventions. Hévécam has sponsored the construction of both a school and a health center in Niété that is for Hévécam employees. If a community member or indigenous person dies, they can be put in the morgue or buried for free. The indigenous Bagyeli can be treated for free at the hospital if they fall ill. However, other local communities cannot get treated for free – which effectively bars them from accessing medical care, given their poverty.

Moreover, even though the communities acknowledge that there have been increased dialogue and meetings between the company and community representatives, the minutes of these discussions are not available, once again making it impossible to follow up on any resolutions made. Sometimes *cahiers de charge*, agreements signed between a community and the company, exist but are not shared, and sometimes they do not even exist:

*The Bagyeli here don’t even have a cahier de charge with Hévécam. We want one.*⁶⁴

Over a number of years, the communities have made extensive efforts to raise their issues directly with the management of Hévécam. This has included sending multiple letters, the majority of which were allegedly never responded to by the company. One Bagyeli interviewed said:

*We complain and Hévécam doesn’t even answer.*⁶⁵

“We complain and Hévécam doesn’t even answer.”

GREENPEACE DOCUMENTS PROBLEMS WITH HÉVÉCAM'S SISTER COMPANY: SUDCAM

According to a report by Greenpeace,⁶⁶ between 2008 and 2015, the Cameroonian government awarded Hévécám's "sister" company, Sudcam, the rights to more than 75,000 ha of land.

Sudcam cleared more than 10,000 ha of dense tropical forest (an area the size of Paris) in the south of Cameroon to develop additional monoculture rubber plantations – very close to the UNESCO World Heritage site "Dja Faunal Reserve" – making it by far the most devastating new clearing of forest for industrial agriculture in the Congo Basin. Forests cleared had harbored endangered chimpanzees, western lowland gorillas and forest elephants. In November 2018, Halcyon instructed its Cameroonian operations to immediately desist from any further clearing and felling activities.

The Sudcam plantation led to widespread dispossession of community lands and resources, including those of indigenous Baka people in violation of FPIC, as well as demolition of settlements, graves, and farms. Villagers allege that a Sudcam factory is on what used to be a sacred forest. Dispossessed people claim they had very poor or non-existent consultation and inadequate compensation, and that they are now left with minimum land to grow food to feed their families, while they have no access to alternative employment.

Greenpeace reports that instead of being heard, they are threatened with imprisonment by local authorities.

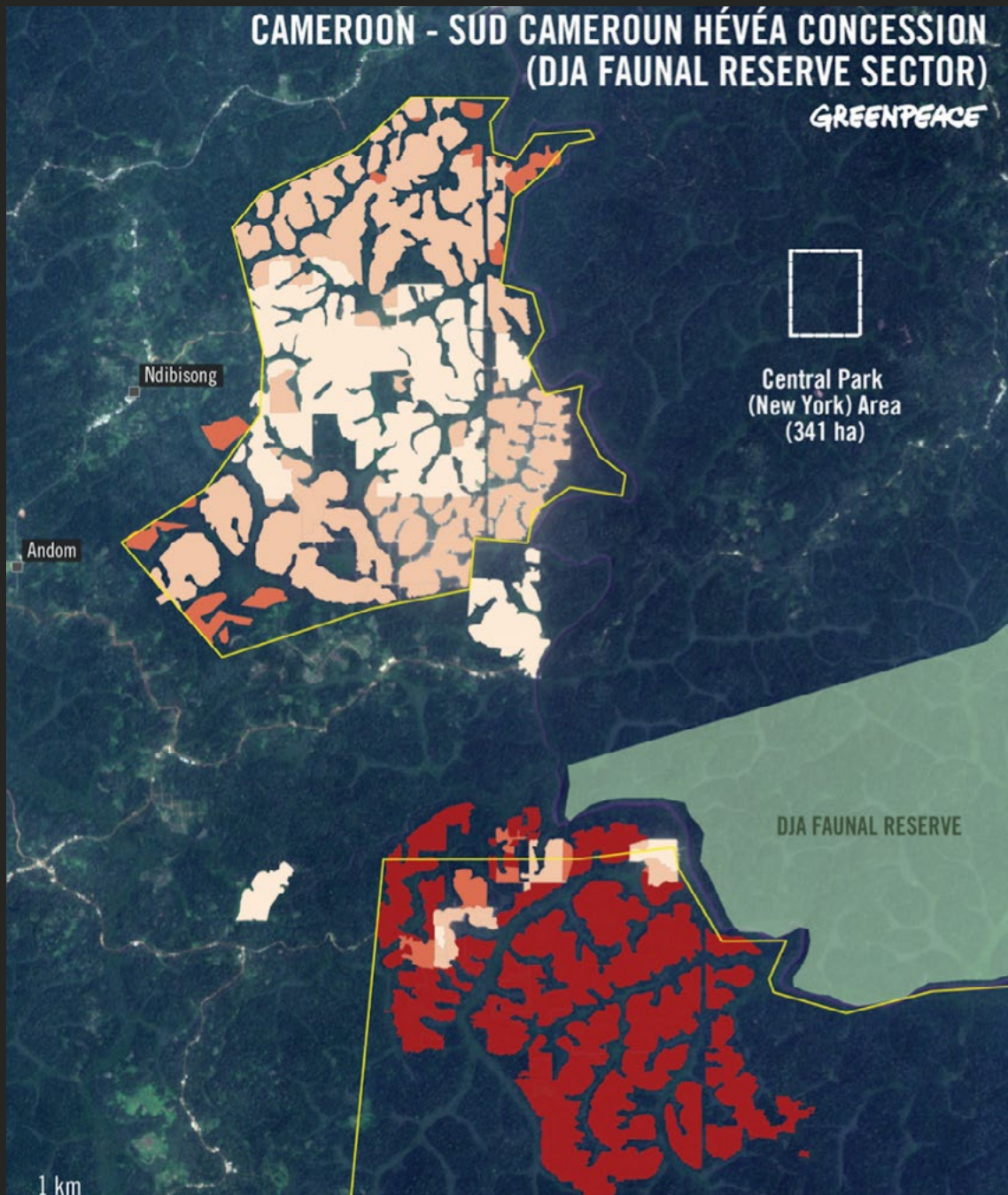
Sudcam states that it has commenced a process for addressing many of these allegations.

Western lowland gorilla habitat was cleared for a Sudcam plantation.



HALCYON AGRI'S SUDCAM PLANTATION

Forest destruction next to a UNESCO World Heritage Site



Source: Greenpeace Africa, July 2018



RECENT IMPROVEMENTS IN COMPANY / COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Indigenous community members gather for photo

Fortunately, there have been a number of positive signs of improvement in both communication and efforts by Hévécam to hear and address local communities' concerns, particularly since Halycon became fully responsible for Hévécam in the last three years.

Halycon produced a Corporate Responsibility Policy in March 2016, which commits it to sustained dialogue with local Bantu and indigenous Bagyeli people, and to contributing to local community development.

Hévécam has since developed external social management procedures to manage grievances, consultations, the involvement of local communities and indigenous peoples, compensation and protection plans, and complaints.

In December 2017, Hévécam signed memoranda of understanding with the Bantu communities of Bulu, Niété, Lobé, and the Bagyeli communities of Nyamabande, Nkongo, and Lobé. Therein, the company pledged to respect land boundaries, and preserve natural resources and Bagyeli camps within the Hévécam Niété plantation. The company has also recently started building a social center on its premises to serve the region.

Since the change in ownership under Halcyon and the subsequent improvements, including new personnel, communities in the two concession areas both stated that Hévécam had recently been paying more attention to local concerns—although some people were concerned at the departure of the managing director they had credited for changing the company’s practices:

Life has changed for the employees thanks to the new director... The new director who came for the last two years, he’s the one who opens the eyes. He at least tried to do a little bit of social work. After he came, they have been giving school supplies. [Subsequent clarification indicated that every student gets four notebooks and two pens per year]. He gave us a well. We are crying because he had opened the doors [but now he’s gone].⁶⁷

The director who’s leaving now did his best for us but to our great surprise we see that he is leaving. What does this mean? We move forward we move back? He made the morgue free. Also caskets [for when people die], transportation, and some food. Now he’s leaving. We are crying.⁶⁸

Hévécam at the beginning did not come often to see us. It’s been two years since they started to visit us. Even if all they promise they do not do but at least they visit us to understand what the problems are.⁶⁹

“Even if all they promise they do not do but at least they visit us to understand what the problems are.”

Hévécam has also developed a multitude of internal planning and management documents, including an Environmental and Social Impact Study (ESIS) for its new plantations, an Environmental and Social Management Plan (ESMP), local socio-economic studies, a study to identify Higher Conservation Values (HCV) in the company concession area, and a study on Free Prior Informed Consent (FPIC), which recommends implementing specific measures relating to the rights and interests of the communities.

One NGO activist reported about these documents like the ESIS:

It was a copy paste job that was not well done, especially for the social side of things. Not a real FPIC. They gathered the people in the subprefecture, the pygmies are afraid of the gendarmes, they accept everything and suddenly it is done. It's biased.⁷⁰

Externally, Hévécam has committed itself to sustainable farm and forest management via certification from the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), and through a partnership with BIOCAM to remove and recycle wood from older farms.

It also holds a certification of ISO 9001: 2015 compliance (quality management system) issued by the certification organization Bureau Veritas.

These changes have also been mirrored at the parent company level. In November 2018, Halcyon Agri launched a [Sustainable Natural Rubber Supply Chain Policy \(“SNRSCP”\)](#) — an important step forward.

The following month, Halcyon sent a letter to stakeholders acknowledging the concerns that have been raised with both its Hévécam and Sudcam operations,⁷¹ and announced plans to establish a multi-stakeholder Cameroon Council for Sustainability. The Council was launched in April 2019. Though at the time of the drafting of this report it has no local community leaders, indigenous leaders or local CSOs participating, it is hoped that the mandate and the composition of this body will positively evolve in order to be inclusive and respectful of local stakeholders. This evolution will be crucial in determining its likely success.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REDRESSING COMMUNITY GRIEVANCES AND REPAIRING ENVIRONMENTAL HARMS

Despite the significant progress in both its internal systems and external willingness to listen and engage, interviews with community members over the past nine months confirmed that a number of problems persist with the Hévécam rubber plantation on both concession areas, which can and must be resolved. Similar solutions must be flagged for Sudcam.

Many of the legacy issues expressed by communities neighboring the original Hévécam concession have still not been resolved. Meanwhile, for communities around the new Hévécam concession extension, similar problems persist. Most importantly, these include dispossession of community land and forests, unfair compensation or reparation agreements, loss of biodiversity, disappearance of animals and medicinal plants, polluted waterways, inadequate access to basic social services like education, health, housing and drinkable water, the lack of citizenship, inadequate FPIC, lack of access to the benefits of Hévécam operations, and lack of equal access to local job opportunities.

Based on statements from the villages interviewed in the field and Mighty Earth's review of Halcyon's policies compared to industry best practices, a number of recommendations to Hévécam, Corrie MacColl, and Halcyon Agri are outlined below.



1 CROSS-CUTTING RECOMMENDATIONS

In undertaking the following specific measures, Hévécam, Halcyon Agri, and the subsidiary Corrie MacColl should:

- Involve entire villages in discussions about how to take correct actions for restoration and reparations, since chiefs in Cameroon are typically not elected in representative processes, but rather politically appointed;
- Ensure the close involvement of representatives from the government of Cameroon, which originally established Hévécam in 1975 and ran it as a state-run enterprise for over twenty years, and bears a historical responsibility for Hévécam's past problems;
- Ensure that any changes that Hévécam implements to its operations are also applied rigorously by its subcontractors;
- Apply reforms in an equal fashion across Hévécam and Sudcam;
- Support civil society requests for a nationwide action plan for sustainable, deforestation-free rubber that protects human rights and the environment.

Below follow a number of specific recommendations.

2 ENSURE THE LEGITIMACY OF THE CAMEROON COUNCIL FOR SUSTAINABILITY

The establishment of a Cameroon Council for Sustainability by Halcyon Agri could help to address multiple ongoing and legacy issues linked to rubber production in the country. Ensuring its mandate is just — and its composition is fair — will be crucial.

It is important to ensure that this council has strong and legitimate representation from the communities affected by rubber, as well as the civil society groups that have been supporting them. Specifically, Halcyon should:



- **Develop and implement a mechanism to allow local communities, including indigenous Bagyeli and Baka communities, to designate their own legitimate representatives** who will speak on their behalf on the Council. This will make it possible to avoid having people who do not have the confidence of the communities to act as representatives, as has been the case with the existing dialogue structures;
- **Ensure the participation of civil society groups** such as the NGOs APED and APIFED, which are active around Hévécam and Sudcam respectively, that have been working with affected communities on the ground for years;
- **Undertake a consultation with civil society networks, particularly the Plateforme Forêts et Communautés;** a network of 50 local NGOs with considerable expertise on forest experience, and which can delegate the members who work on industrial agriculture issues to represent them. Other key expert civil society stakeholders which the Council should seek to involve include, but are not limited to, international NGOs that have worked on deforestation in Cameroon: CIFOR, CIRAD, Earthworm (formerly The Forest Trust), Environmental Investigation Agency, FERN, Forest Peoples' Programme, Greenpeace Africa, Mighty Earth, Proforest, Rainforest Action Network, Rainforest Foundation UK, Tropenbos, and World Wildlife Fund for Nature;
- **Orient the work of the Council to focus on the development of a national action plan for sustainable rubber.** Hévécam/ Corrie MacColl/Halcyon Agri cannot expect civil society stakeholders to dedicate their limited resources to the Council if its sole remit is to help Halcyon Agri to implement its sustainable natural rubber policy. While the Council might start with tackling the issues at the Hévécam and Sudcam plantations, its Terms of Reference should be nationally-oriented, to develop a country-wide framework for sustainable rubber cultivation that properly addresses issues around land rights, indigenous rights, forest and biodiversity protection, clean water, food security, fair employment, livelihoods of smallholders, etc.;
- Ultimately, Halcyon should also look to **link to similar Cameroonian deforestation-free frameworks** being established for other commodity tree crops, namely palm oil and cocoa.

3 ESTABLISH NEUTRAL AND APPROPRIATE DISPUTE RESOLUTION MECHANISMS

In order to properly address the much-needed reforms, the leadership of Hévécam needs to urgently rethink the way it has been engaging with local communities. A new mechanism needs to be established by Hévécam/Sudcam/Halecyon to allow for genuine representatives of the affected communities to voice their general concerns, and for individuals to lodge specific grievances, which should be uploaded onto a transparent dashboard online.

It will be important to establish separate dispute resolution mechanisms for the Hévécam and Sudcam operations in order to address the specific grievances of households impacted, including legacy issues.

Dispute resolution in communities and grievance reporting mechanisms online should be developed in coordination with affected communities and civil society to ensure they are fit for their intended purpose.

Environmental activist speaking with community members in a village affected by Hévécam rubber





Within this process, particular attention must be paid to the grievances of the Bagyeli communities. These communities warrant special attention since they suffer unique difficulties in accessing education, citizenship, and housing, even though there have been verbal promises given in this respect by company representatives. In addition, due to the distance of administrative organizations and other financial constraints, many members of indigenous communities do not have birth certificates or national identity cards. Because the forest that used to provide their housing materials has been destroyed, the Bagyeli's demand for improvement and assistance to housing remains a recurrent demand by the communities. Finally, the Bagyeli communities are victims of having their forest resources and customary land taken over by Hévécam employees seeking to supplement their low monthly incomes.

4 PROVIDE CLEAR AND PUBLICLY ACCESSIBLE INFORMATION ABOUT CONCESSIONS

People living in the villages Bidou 3, Bidou 2, and Nkolbanda, all of which are within the original plantation area, complained that they were unaware of the original terms of the privatization of Hévécam. All concerned or affected villages deserve transparency and clear information about the specifications of the privatization agreement between the government and the company, as well as any concession agreements. They want this information so as to know what the communities can or cannot legitimately ask of Hévécam under the responsibilities set forth in the terms of privatization. **Hévécam should provide the villages in question with all the relevant documentation, translated into the local languages. Hévécam should publish company ownership documents and all project and land-acquisition documentation.**

The company should allow civil society to access communities in and around plantations in order to monitor company compliance with social and environmental policy, and in order to work with those communities for their development and rights.

5 FPIC, CITIZENSHIP, RIGHTS, LIVELIHOODS, AND STRENGTHENED VILLAGE GOVERNANCE FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

Hévécam and Sudcam should work together with local NGOs like CED, APED, and APIFED, which have long term experience defending indigenous rights and working with relevant government authorities to respectfully and urgently engage with indigenous communities as a whole, and with their legitimate representatives, to:

- Expedite the acquisition of official “village” status for indigenous villages;
- Ensure all newborn indigenous babies receive birth certificates on an ongoing basis, starting now;
- Provide birth certificates and national identity cards to those indigenous people who do not yet have them;
- Guarantee equal, non-discriminatory access to government services going forward.

Group interview with indigenous community





Having taken away their traditional activities and means of sustenance, the company must now help indigenous people survive. The government and company should help indigenous people develop income-generating activities, and small local businesses for the Bagyeli. To ensure gender balance and women's empowerment, Hévécam should consult with indigenous women who say that they have mastered many traditional activities that they would like to turn into sources of income, such as gathering non-timber forest products, harvesting honey, creating baskets and other handicrafts.⁷² Indigenous people will require access to credit and other support to get such small businesses off the ground.

In addition, **communities should have access to the graves of their ancestors, or receive apologies and compensation for the destruction of said graves and reparations in accordance with relevant local law.**

6 **RENEGOTIATE BETTER COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS ("CAHIERS DE CHARGES") AND UPHOLD PAST PROMISES**

The Hévécam-community agreements originally made between the government and local peoples in relation to community land and forests lost to the Hévécam rubber plantation, known locally as the *cahiers de charge*, are deemed by villagers interviewed for this study to be deeply unfair, unfulfilled, or in many cases, missing altogether. They ask for past promises to be kept, for these agreements to be published, and for the agreements to be renegotiated under fair conditions, with FPIC.

A central demand of the local communities is that these agreements be transparently opened and renegotiated in order to provide more adequate compensation for the dispossession suffered by local residents due to Hévécam's activities and need to include implementation calendars, a body to oversee implementation and a mechanism for follow up.

Hévécam should work with the communities and relevant public authorities to renegotiate the agreements and provide full and fair compensation immediately based on the specifications of the new agreements. This process should follow FPIC protocols and involve new Environmental and Social Impact Assessments and High



Conservation Value assessments compliant with international standards.

Villagers feel that Hévécam has repeatedly failed to meet its promises to provide social infrastructure services for the communities affected by the plantation operation. Furthermore, land redistribution initiatives such as the one in Ngoock in 1996 have ended up benefiting local and national financial elites and exacerbating local conflicts. Hévécam should therefore address the issues that emerge from the *cahiers de charges* which constitutes the backbone of the villagers' grievances, which are as follows:

Education

Ensure elementary schools are built, equipped, staffed, and operational in all affected communities large enough to warrant it – and arrange transport such as busses for smaller communities so that their children can also have access to education. While providing four notebooks and two pens per year per child is a good beginning, most children come from families too poor to afford the rest of the necessary school supplies, and so providing additional school supplies will be important.

Schools for the indigenous communities must be adapted to local culture and require an adapted calendar for their school year to accommodate traditional rites and practices.

Land for locals, not outsider elites

Where possible, take available land within the concession area and **develop community farms in cooperation with the villages**, with support given to community management organizations. Do not reproduce schemes such as the one in Ngoock that privileged outsiders.

Improved access to healthcare

It is vital for the government to guarantee access to health care and Hévécam must be part of finding health solutions to communities affected by its plantations. Hévécam must provide adequate health care for its workers and the workers of its subcontractors. Where feasible, mobile clinics should rotate around communities for vaccination campaigns and to provide other basic health care. Emergency care services must be developed for women giving birth and medical emergencies.


Improved infrastructure, especially electrification

It will be crucial to engage with the communities that want either the grid to be brought to them, improved, or who want solar panels. Energy access should be addressed in a fair, equitable, and transparent fashion to avoid exacerbating intra-community tensions.

Bagyeli communities' access to traditional housing materials has vanished along with the forest. These communities need particularly urgent assistance in building decent homes.

Negotiate 'land royalties' that were promised to local people

Halcyon can discuss and negotiate land royalties, payments, and compensation alongside community representatives and relevant government officials who



Indigenous leader crossing river next to his village, which he believes is contaminated by Hévécam's rubber plantation nearby

presumably were the ones that should have ensured any promised land royalties were paid. This would be a form of compensation that could help rebuild trust with communities and alleviate their poverty.

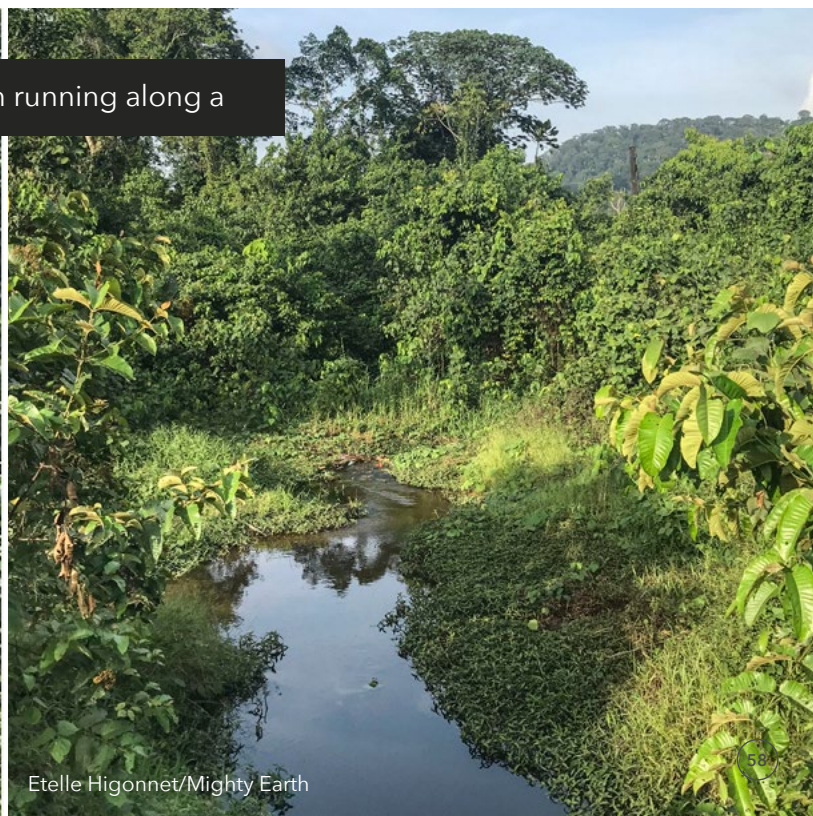
7 PREVENT FURTHER WATER POLLUTION, RESTORE DAMAGED WATERWAYS, AND PROVIDE CLEAN WATER

Every single community interviewed complained bitterly about water, and desperately wanted wells, first and foremost, as well as their rivers cleaned up.

Hévecam must prevent agricultural chemicals and latex from entering local waterways, restore damaged waterways, and work to provide communities affected by pollution with clean water as a matter of urgency. Specifically, Hévecam should:

- **Immediately build at least one borehole in every village** to provide drinking water where needed, making sure that the water table is not contaminated before digging the wells. Hévecam should teach local

Hévecam sign forbidding water contamination; Stream running along a community in a Hévecam concession





members of the communities how best to maintain and repair their wells so that communities are empowered to take care of their own water needs. Wells should be put in front of the school or in the geographic center of the village on neutral land;

- **Develop better agrichemical control systems** and drastically reduce pesticide use to prevent further pollution of local waterways. Eliminate the most toxic pesticides starting with WHO Class 1A or 1B chemicals, glyphosate, paraquat, those defined by the Stockholm Convention and Rotterdam Conventions (Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants and Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade);
- **Demarcate bigger and better protective forested buffer zones** along all the rivers running through the plantation; and
- **Pay to have water sources used by local communities routinely tested** by a neutral party, and publicly disclose the results of those tests. If the water tested is contaminated by chemicals from the plantation, Hévécam should pay to have the waterway decontaminated, as well as for medical care related to the effects of pollution.

8 FAIR ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES, WORKERS' RIGHTS, AND LIVING INCOME

There is a general sense of resentment within the communities in and around the concession area at the perceived discrimination by Hévécam when it comes to providing decent employment opportunities to local people. The company must ensure workers' rights directly and via its subcontractors, as well as ensuring rights for smallholders. The company should therefore:

- **Employ locals wherever possible**, including for the most important positions, with a percentage to be determined by the community and the company;



- **Publish a list of currently employed villagers per village**, with their level/category, and explain what percentage of their total employees this corresponds to;
- **Develop specific training and job placement initiatives** designed to identify and place talented young local people within good jobs at the company;
- **Give affected communities preferential access to smallholder rubber programs**, with training and monitoring to ensure there isn't deforestation by smallholders and that best practices like high yield agroforestry are used with special attention paid to ensuring gender balance and ethnic balance. Local communities have expressed a strong desire for proper village-wide transparent consultations about a possible Hévécam rubber smallholder program;⁷³
- **Guarantee a price for rubber that will ensure smallholders achieve a living income**; and
- **Guarantee all workers a living wage**, including via subcontractors.

9 EMBRACE 'ZERO DEFORESTATION,' NOT 'ZERO NET DEFORESTATION'

Instead of looking towards “zero net deforestation,” which could still allow for further areas of primary forest to be cleared and replanted with lower conservation, carbon, and cultural value tree plantations, Halcyon should state a commitment to permanently end forest clearance. This would honor Halcyon’s stated commitment to “the protection of a priceless ecosystem,” and would align with current best practices and sustainability initiatives across industries. Any proposed smallholder scheme must ensure zero deforestation and the best environmental practices around fertilizer, pesticides, etc. This will require robust training, support, and regular monitoring. Any smallholder scheme neglecting to adopt these practices could push us into a paradigm of “death by a thousand cuts” for the neighboring forests.

10 COMPENSATION AND HABITAT RESTORATION FOR PAST DEFORESTATION

The government of Cameroon and Halcyon must compensate for past deforestation. Compensation for past destruction of forests could take many forms, including the restoration of buffer zones between communities and plantations, particularly for forest-dependent indigenous communities, or through establishing and financing community forests. If community forests are established, ecotourism companies could ensure the long-term financial viability of such community forests; or value chains for non-timber forest products.

Halcyon should not return the parts of its concessions that remain forested to the state, but rather ensure that these areas remain forested and protected, with co-management by communities.

Villages interviewed expressed their desire to have proper consultations with the entire village about the possibility of co-management in an effort to engage in participatory mapping, and to learn more about community forests.⁷⁴

Biodiversity Conservation sign posted by Hévécam; clearing for rubber



11 THE NEED FOR MORE ENVIRONMENTALLY SOUND RUBBER PRACTICES

Halcyon has indicated an openness to make all of its rubber production more ecologically sound in Hévécam and beyond Cameroon. Halcyon should work with experts to explore the best available science around how to limit chemical inputs and how to promote biodiversity through agroforestry techniques and developing buffer zones around rivers to maintain riverine ecosystems. Through an improvement of Hévécam's environmental practices, Halcyon can work to make rubber a force for positive environmental reforms in agriculture and become a force for greener agriculture worldwide.

Community meeting with Mighty Earth and APED





APPENDIX: METHODOLOGY

Consultation and community interview

This report was compiled on the basis of both primary and secondary research conducted over the course of nine months.

The methodology consisted of reviewing relevant documents on Hévécam and its business practices, defining the central survey questions, collecting field data from the neighboring communities and relevant documentation (such as community correspondence with the company), gathering satellite imagery, and finally, compiling and analyzing the data. After the report was compiled, there have been ongoing community and NGO meetings, as well as consultation with Halycon to ensure accuracy of this report.

Collection of field data took place in three phases: July 7-25, 2018, December 1-15, 2018, and March 2-5, 2019. Each set of visits involved prior community mobilization as well as the actual process of collecting responses. The main survey questions for the communities dealt with their knowledge of Hévécam's practices, their appraisal of the relations between themselves and the company,

and the specific demands and expectations of these communities. The collection method was generally that of a focus group, or village meeting, in the form of a semi-structured interview where the central open questions helped to glean the maximum amount of information. Meetings were held in local languages and in French. In the end, about a dozen focus groups were held in the villages neighboring the original concession, including Nyamabandé V12-Bagyeli, Bidou I, Bidou II, Bidou III, and Nkolbanda, and villages in the new extension zones, including Bissiang, Mbébé Bantu, Mbébé-Bagyeli, Elogbatindi, Bipaga, Mpama, Mpolongwe, Bebambwe, Bivouba, Londji I, and Londji II.

Mighty Earth conducted community interviews



Max Mbakop/Mighty Earth

Etelle Higonnet/Mighty Earth



Etelle Higonnet/Mighty Earth



Max Mbakop/Mighty Earth

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