



Press Release
For Immediate Release

Interactive forest mapping system a success in Cameroon

Helveta's CI World Technology enables local forest communities to map their forest use and resources as well as monitor logging activities in their local area

Oxford, United Kingdom, September 8th 2009: Helveta Ltd, the provider of the timber tracking application CI World, has celebrated the first anniversary of a scheme in Cameroon created to map key assets and sensitive resources in the forest. Helveta's technology has been used since January 2008 by local communities in Cameroon to record data which, has helped curb illegal logging as well as safe guarding the interests of the indigenous people.

The scheme is funded by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office of the British Government via its Global Opportunities Fund, and brings together Helveta, the Forest Peoples Programme (FPP), University College (UCL) and Centre pour L'Environnement et Le Developpement (CED).

The logging industry is one of the least regulated in Cameroon. A particular focus of this project has been in supporting the Forest Law Enforcement Governance and Trade (FLEGT) and AFLEG (African Forest Law Enforcement Governance and Trade (AFLEG) processes, to provide a platform to aid in forest monitoring and remote verification of forest management activities in over 15 sites across Cameroon.

As well as playing a significant role in religious and ritual life of the indigenous pygmies, the forests are an especially important source of livelihood, providing food, medicine and craft materials. Local communities have used Helveta's CI World technology to map forest environments using ruggedized touch screen handheld units. To combat the issue of low literacy rates specific icons were developed to represent the data that communities wanted to collect. This allowed data to be recorded, not only to identify incidences of illegal logging in their local areas but also to record community usage of forest lands.

As a result of this project illegal logging has been detected in Eastern Cameroon inside and out of the communal forest areas. This includes instances where stumps were found to be below 50cm in diameter (an indicator of young trees logged before reaching their prime) and bulldozer tracks have been recorded near illegally felled trees located outside the commercial logging area. Data has been collected by local communities that captures evidence of logging that overlaps with communities sacred spaces, along with their hunting and gathering areas. Using this data enables logging companies to ensure that their activities do not damage key forest resources on which local people's livelihoods depend.

Patrick Newton, CEO of Helveta said "It was initially thought there was no overlap into forests used by local and indigenous communities, but data collected by those using the forest monitoring system has shown that the forest concession did indeed overlap local forest communities' traditional lands. This technology is helping local communities protect their traditional lands and livelihoods that may have been badly affected by illegal logging. In doing so they are also helping the Cameroon government meet their obligations under the EU – FLEGT Voluntary Partnership Agreement to monitor logging activity. This project will help ensure a sustainable timber industry for future generations."

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About Helveta

Helveta was incorporated in 2004 and is the developer of the CI World™ software platform. CI World is a unique technology providing fully auditable traceability and chain of custody control for extended supply chains in the Timber and Food production sectors. CI World and its components have won a number of awards as innovative technologies for the timber sector. Helveta is privately held.

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