



**ENHANCING FOREST DOMAIN AWARENESS IN CENTRAL AFRICA
BREAKOUT GROUP EXERCISES**

Background

Illegal Logging and Associated Trade (ILAT) is a prominent part of the transnational organized crime landscape in Central Africa. African countries are estimated to lose [\\$17 billion yearly to ILAT](#). Despite promising advances in national and regional legal and policy frameworks to combat ILAT, the majority of timber exports from the region are reportedly illegal.¹ Alumni from past Africa Center for Strategic Studies (ACSS) programs on countering ILAT have expressed interest in addressing these challenges by leveraging the information and intelligence sharing tools and resources that military, police, justice, forestry, and civil society actors have to enhance forest domain awareness across countries. Doing so in Central Africa – with its center of gravity around the forests of the Congo Basin, the world’s second largest carbon sink – will involve enhancing reliable mechanisms to share information about ILAT and about actions that state and civil society actors take to counter and prevent it.

Between different countries’ national police, forest services, international and regional organizations like Interpol and the Central African Forest Commission (COMIFAC), national timber traceability platforms, and commercial satellite imagery, there already exists considerable data and analysis about the state of Africa’s forests and illegal logging. Furthermore, civil society and non-governmental organizations have developed data tracking, analysis, and information sharing platforms that help Central African states inform their work to counter trafficking. Within the region, there are also innovative examples of mixed brigades designed to enhance information-sharing and coordination to counter TOC (including ILAT); the development of mobile forestry oversight units that combine military, civilian, and civil society knowledge of current trends and patterns in timber trafficking; and multi-actor working groups that generate forest domain awareness through their audit of foreign-owned concessions and the inclusion of forest community leaders in information sharing and oversight.

While all these types of data, analysis, and joint actions are needed to counter illegal logging, the current challenge is that the knowledge from these different sources is not comprehensively shared or combined for use by all of the region’s strategic leaders across each sector that is involved in responding to ILAT. This affects key stakeholders’ ability to make decisions about how to coordinate across agencies and across national borders to address timber trafficking.

¹ Enact, “Africa Organised Crime Index 2023: Increasing criminality, growing vulnerabilities,” ENACT (2023), pg. 54

Objectives

This exercise provides experts at the roundtable an opportunity to discuss and design actionable plans to progress in the implementation of tools and techniques to enhance the sharing of data, analysis, and information about transnational criminal activities in the Central African forest domain. The exercise will occur during a set of three small breakout group sessions. On the program schedule, they are entitled: 1) Developing Solution Frameworks, 2) Integrating New Data into Solution Frameworks, and 3) Refining Solution Frameworks. During the sessions, experts will focus on producing a deliverable document and 15-minute presentation that:

- Develops the ACSS alumni group's theory of change for enhancing information and intelligence sharing to counter illegal logging and associated trade.
- Advances a solution framework to expand and enhance the sharing of information, data, and analysis about illegal logging.
- Identifies opportunities for integrating disparate forms of existing data, information, and intelligence about the forest domain into the ACSS alumni group's solution framework for countering illegal logging.

Importantly, these discussions are a continuation of a concept drafted on the sidelines of a prior program that ACSS held, entitled "Coordinating Security Sector Responses to Counter Illegal Logging," in Libreville, Gabon, from 10-14 July 2023. The full text of the draft strategic plan that participants developed at the past program is enclosed as a separate document that we encourage you to read prior to the experts' roundtable, in addition to the current instructions.

Deliverable

After the three small breakout group meetings, your group will make a presentation on Thursday, November 21. It will:

- Summarize the theory of change they have developed for enhancing the sharing of information, data, and analysis about ILAT in Central Africa;
- Identify the ways that the theory of change addresses current sources of resilience and current challenges to enhancing information sharing to counter ILAT; and
- Indicate steps that the group of experts can each take individually, in their current professional contexts, to implement the group's theory of change.

Each group will have **15 minutes** to present.

It is therefore advisable that, early in the discussions, each group elect a chairperson, a rapporteur, and a timekeeper to organize the discussions and track progress. The chairperson will ensure that the group interacts in an inclusive and efficient way and oversees the tenor of the conversations and the structure of the group's interactions. The rapporteur takes the official notes on the content that the group produces

through its interactions and will deliver the presentation on behalf of the group, with help from his or her peers to prepare it. The timekeeper ensures that the limited time allotted to each group meeting is used efficiently and as the group envisions is necessary to produce the deliverable.

Small Group Breakout Session 1: Developing Solution Frameworks

Tuesday, November 19 (1530-1700)

The objectives of this session are to:

- Review the main challenges and/or risks involved with coordinating responses to combat illegal logging and associated trade (ILAT) in the region, as well as the most promising sources of resilience in the region.
- Identify the different means (i.e., tools and resources) that military, police, justice, forestry, and civil society actors have to enhance “forest domain awareness” in their countries and the region.
- Using your assessment of challenges and sources of resilience, as well as the tools and resources you have identified, begin drafting a theory of change for enhancing information sharing in Central Africa to counter ILAT.

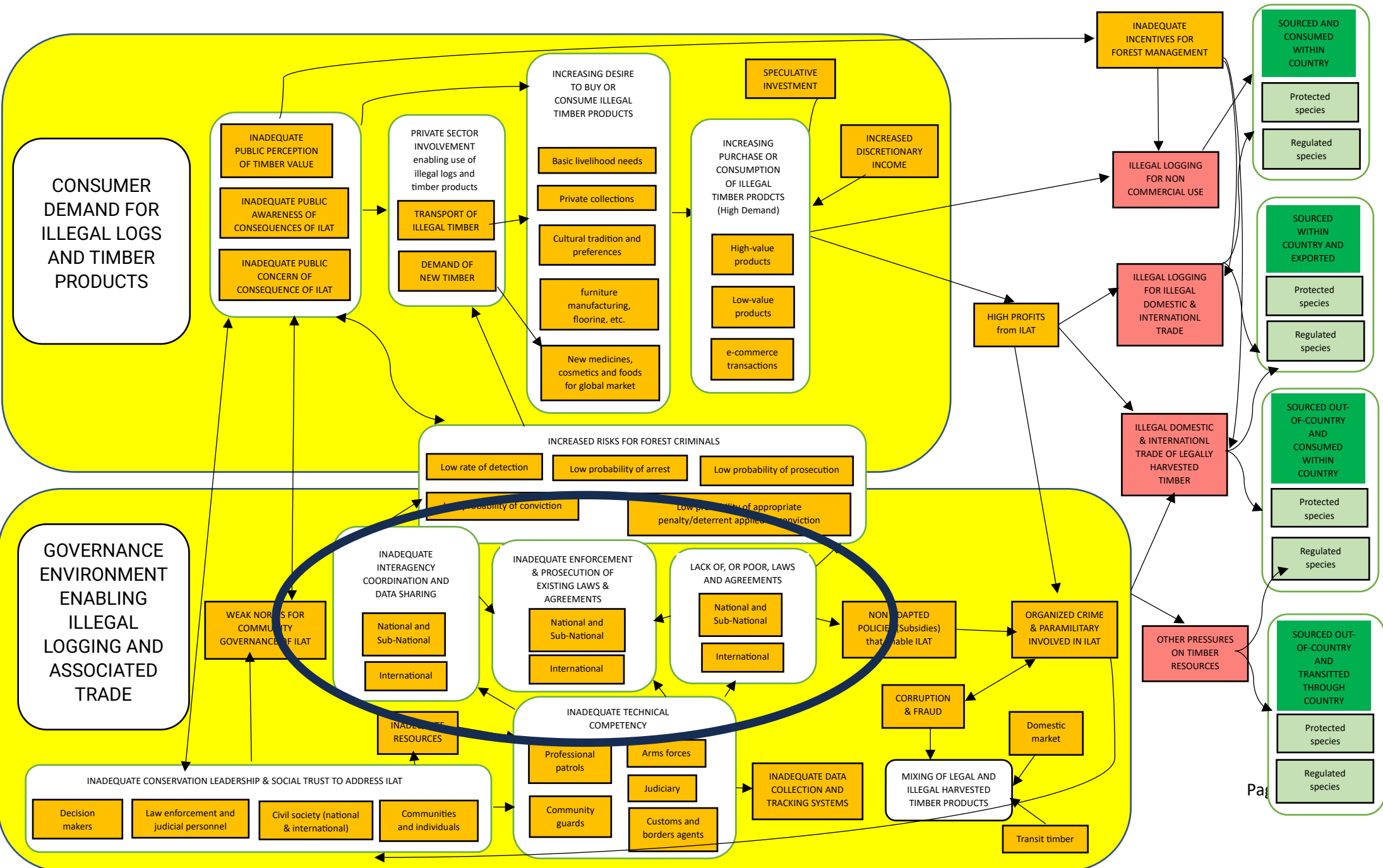
Background

In this exercise, your group is tasked with developing a Theory of Change about one aspect of a larger strategic plan that ACSS alumni have designed to counter ILAT. The strategic plan that was drafted by ACSS alumni at the 2023 Libreville program was focused on a broad goal of facilitating inter-agency and cross-border coordination across a wide range of military and civilian leaders to counter ILAT.

The present roundtable is focused on developing a theory of change and action plan for one essential prerequisite of this larger goal: improving information sharing across military, police, forestry, justice, customs, and civil society actors to counter illegal logging and associated trades (ILAT). This theory of change will help to catalyze further action by experts and their governments or regional organizations in this specialty domain. It is a common strategic planning tool that senior leaders use to guide their actions and ensure that they are tailored to the nature of the policy problems they are facing.²

On the following page, you will find a mapping that ACSS alumni have previously done to visualize the ILAT problem set and its possible policy solutions. The portion of the problem set for which you are developing a theory of change and an action plan is located within the black circle on the diagram.

² For a useful example, please see “The IOM Counter-Trafficking Theory of Change,” *International Organization for Migration, UN Migration* (2023).
https://migrantprotection.iom.int/system/files/resources/99e3d5e0-1e6e-4b53-b1a2-e90944830bcb/document/IOM%20CT%20Theory%20of%20Change_PUBLIC%20VERSION.pdf?type=node&id=5681&lang=en



Instructions

Please use this small group breakout session to develop a first draft of a theory of change for the strategic goal of *enhancing information sharing across military, police, forestry, justice, customs, and civil society to more effectively monitor, counter, and prevent illegal logging and associated trades (ILAT) in the Central African region.*

To become a useful tool for implementing a comprehensive action plan, the theory of change needs to have four components:

1. PROBLEM STATEMENT: In one to three sentences, please state “the main challenge or opportunity to be addressed by the intervention to meet the needs of the intended beneficiaries” and “describes why an intervention is needed and the areas on which it will focus.” This is an opportunity for you to specify what your group finds to be *the key challenges hampering effective coordination and information sharing to counter ILAT in the region.*

In one or two additional sentences, the problem statement may also highlight what the region has to build upon to address this problem: i.e., *the current strengths that the region already has in the domain of information sharing to counter ILAT, and the sources of resilience that the region is currently leveraging in the domain of information sharing to counter ILAT.*

2. INPUTS: These are the specific set of activities your group identifies as critical to undertake to enhance information sharing to monitor, counter, and prevent ILAT in the region. As you consider which activities are most important to prioritize in an action plan, please consider the following question: *What specific initiatives (for example, dialogues, technical assistance, legal or policy reforms, memoranda of understanding, information sharing committee formation, etc.) would need to take place to improve information sharing to monitor, prevent, and counter ILAT?*




Please identify a minimum of TWO and a maximum of THREE well specified inputs. When identifying the activities, be sure to specify which state and societal actors need to be involved for them to successfully advance the strategic goal that the theory of change is supposed to address.

3. OUTPUTS: These are the immediate results or short-term effects that you are highly certain that the INPUTS will achieve. For **each** of the INPUTS you identified, describe the immediate, short-term results that those activities will have. *What are we relatively certain these activities will yield as a contribution to efforts to improve information sharing to monitor, counter, and prevent ILAT, as soon as these activities are completed?*

4. OUTCOMES: These are the medium to longer term results that you believe, or hope, will arise as a consequence of achieving your OUTPUTS. OUTCOMES cannot be guaranteed to transpire as a result of an activity designed to counter ILAT. This is because OUTCOMES depend on many different institutional, political, economic, and social factors that are independent of any specific activity to align in a way that enables the achievement of a medium or long term change in ILAT. For **each** of the

OUTPUTS that you articulated, *what are medium or long term changes that you hope that those outputs will cause?*

For each outcome, please also list several factors external to the intervention that are likely to affect its success at enhancing information sharing to monitor, counter, and prevent ILAT. These can be considered the “external risks” to the realization of the strategic objective of the theory of change. The diagram below should assist you in your formulations.

STRATEGIC GOAL:	Enhance information sharing across military, police, forestry, justice, customs, and civil society to more effectively monitor, counter, and prevent illegal logging and associated trades in the Central African region.					
PROBLEM STATEMENT		INPUTS		OUTPUTS		OUTCOMES
		1.		1.		1.
		2.		2.		2.
		3.		3.		3.

Small Group Breakout Session 2: Integrating New Data into Solution Frameworks

Thursday, November 21 (0900-1015)

The objectives of this session are to:

- Continue drafting your group's existing theory of change for countering ILAT, as begun in breakout session 1.
- Identify opportunities for integrating information, data, and analysis from the databases discussed in the plenary sessions into the plans you have developed in your group's theory of change for countering ILAT.

Instructions

Please use this session to further examine the inputs, outputs, and desired outcomes that your group has proposed within the theory of change framework. Review these three components in relation to the problem statement and strategic goal of the theory of change. Please consider where the document could be further improved or adapted.

By this time, you will have seen presentations and demonstrations of four different types of databases that foster data generation, sharing, and analysis that are designed to enhance "forest domain awareness." While reviewing your draft theory of change, please list one or two ways that the information that these databases contain could be used to enrich the strategic approach and the activities that your group has proposed in its theory of change. The group might ask itself:

- What aspects of the information contained in the Africa-TWIX, OFAC, Interpol, and national timber traceability platforms could be used in the activities (or INPUTS) that you have proposed to improve their likelihood of countering ILAT?
- How could integrating the usage of these databases and the analysis that they facilitate into the activities in your theory of change affect the kinds of medium and long term effects (or OUTCOMES) that you expect your plans to have?
- Are there any additional inputs that you want to add to your theory of change as a result of what you have learned about the content, coverage, and possible applications of the data in these platforms?

This list and its justification should be included in the content of the presentation that your group will deliver in the briefbacks at the end of the roundtable.

Small Group Breakout Session 3: Refining Solution Frameworks

Thursday, November 21 (1300-1430)

The objectives of this session are to:

- Consider how your group's existing theory of change for countering ILAT may require adaptation or refinement to accommodate relevant considerations about closed-source intelligence sharing.
- Once the group's final theory of change is drafted, discuss what actions you can take in your current professional context to implement the theory of change after the roundtable is complete.

Instructions

Please use this session to refine your group's draft theory of change, if necessary, based on the prior roundtable discussion about intelligence sharing.

Then, please review the draft theory of change again, this time listing the following:

- The actors who will be involved in implementing each INPUT that you have identified.
- The roles and responsibilities of each actor, including the chain of command that they will follow, if necessary to note because of how it affects the realization of the theory of change's strategic objectives.
- The feasibility of the theory of change to achieve its strategic goal, i.e., whether the existing successes and sources of resilience that the region exhibits for countering ILAT (which were identified in the problem statement) are sufficient or insufficient to mitigate the external factors or risks (which were identified when you articulated each OUTCOME).
- Efforts that the experts in your group can take within their own ministries, departments, and agencies to support the realization of the OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES identified in the theory of change.