

Judicial Observatory of the Effectiveness of Gabonese Environmental Law (JOEGEL)

Location: Gabon

In-Country Partner Organization/Client: The Gabonese Ministry of the Interior, Justice, Keeper of the Seals (<http://www.justice.gouv.ga/>)

Project Background: Gabon has dense forests, rich in natural resources, and endangered species. Gabon is home to the rarest most wanted tree species in the world and half the Elephant population of the Congo Basin. These species are being poached and removed from Gabon at a rapid rate; in 2018, over 30,000 elephants were illegally killed and exported from the country. Environmental Law is a new concept in the country. Most of law enforcement agencies are not trained to address these issues and are not equipped to properly judge cases that are committed. Ratified international conventions that create environmental law were incorporated into the Gabonese penal code only in June 2019. Theft of wood and natural resources, destruction of forests, and the slaughter of the Elephants deprive Gabon of resources capable of improving the living conditions of the citizens. The consequence of these activities threatens the environment and increases the pace of climate change across the globe. Also, increasing poverty due to the exploitation of resources causes a sense of injustice that becomes a threat to peace and national security. The best solution is to “green” the judiciary in Gabon. If we want peace and life, it is urgent that we must work to make justice strong to fix these challenges.

Project Problem Statement:

Goals of JOEGEL, as an autonomous entity are:

1. Data Collection: work with each of the 9 provinces to collect accurate data on the illegal removal of environmental resources (poaching, deforestation, etc.).
2. Education: utilize media and communication forms to increase public awareness of the environmental crisis, train law enforcement agents such as police officers, lawyers, and judges on not only the consequences of illegal resource removal but train them to properly manage these injustices.
3. Policy Implementation: network with outside governments and organizations to understand current legal policies and their efficacy, use the data collected to understand what policy to implement in each province, reduce the loss of wildlife to eventually increase tourism and bolster the economy.

Project Goals and Objectives:

1. Feasibility Study
 - a. Evaluate the feasibility of the project to develop each part of JOEGEL. When evaluating each part, students should consider the needs of each section (tools, technology, materials, etc.)
 - b. Determine estimate the startup capital needed



2. Conceptual Design
 - a. Conduct prior art research on existing judiciary programs and initiatives
 - b. Work with the client to determine design criteria