



Propav Road Project in Guinea

ARRC Task Force's comments on the Dabola-Faranah road upgrade in Guinea

January 14th, 2025

The ARRC Task Force received on the 11th of December 2024 the following documents for review:

- A summary of the Project Description (For information) (*'Faranah Dabola Road - Project Description'*);
- The Biotope's chimpanzee Wet Season survey report (*'01112024_Biotope_Chimpanzee survey_CT'*); and
- The technical proposal outlining the methodology for the following Dry Season survey (*'PROPAV_Biotope Technical offer_dry season'*).

And then on the 10th January 2025:

- The focus group questionnaire aimed at assessing potential chimpanzee presence/absence in villages located within the area of influence (*'Questionnaire chimpanzees_en'*)

The ARRC Task Force panel for this project has emitted the following recommendations and feedback on the initial wet season results and the proposed dry season methodology for chimpanzee surveys and proposed focus group questionnaire:

General comments

- The defined area of influence and study area as described in the project summary description underestimates the extent of project's impacts, especially those on chimpanzees. It is stipulated that any direct or indirect impacts will be contained within a buffer of 1,000m. We know, for example, that a national road can impact chimpanzees up to a distance of c.17 km ([Andrasi et al, 2021](#)). In addition, the upgrade of the main road will increase the traffic on the secondary roads and therefore have further indirect and distant impacts in the eastern region of the Upper Niger National Park (Parc national du Haut Niger-PNHN).

- The consultants plan to conduct interviews in 15 villages, place 30 camera-traps and conduct recces in about 10 days. It is not clear how many teams will be involved as it is quite a large area to cover and, hence, a very short time to complete the work effectively.
- There is in general very little detail provided on the temporary project components and associated infrastructure. There is mention of a construction camp accommodating 472 workers without details on proposed location. No reference is made to the existence or location of borrow pits, storage areas, pumping zones, etc. The technical and geographical constraints associated with these infrastructures must be presented and their locations established in the light of the baseline results. Before implementation, pre-construction surveys will need to be conducted at these locations.
- For the rainy season, we are disappointed to see that the ARRC Task Force panel's recommendations were not followed, so there will certainly be gaps in the baseline data since chimpanzee movements are highly seasonal. We would therefore recommend further studies during the upcoming rainy season once targeted areas have been identified with these surveys. However, we are glad to note that the recommended approach we proposed is now being adopted for the dry season surveys.
- The projects and any reports should acknowledge explicitly the nearby presence of the Upper Niger National Park which is likely to be indirectly impacted by the project due to facilitated access, and potential induced influx of people settling along the road.
- Any habitat used by chimpanzees should be considered critical habitat. Critical habitat can only be defined and mapped out once all the data has been collected.
- Any baseline study, including reports and plans (e.g. Biodiversity Action Plan), should also include consultation with a wider group of relevant stakeholders such as the PNHN authorities, the Chimpanzee Conservation center (CCC) and the Wild Chimpanzee Foundation (WCF) who may have knowledge and understanding of that area, the wider landscape and the potential impacts of the project. It doesn't seem like a full consultation process has been completed to date and we would therefore highly encourage the project to do so asap if this has not been done already.
- It is critical to identify the road crossing points used by chimpanzees as these will act as targets for mitigation measures when it comes to minimizing the risks of injury or mortality associated with the risk of collision and any barrier effects to movement or dispersal that the road upgrade may have on chimpanzees inhabiting the landscape.

Specific comments on dry season survey proposal

- P17: Alongside the common names of species, please add the taxonomic name from the IUCN Red List so it is clear to the reader what species you are referring to, e.g. what is 'limpet', do you mean Patas monkey (*Erythrocebus patas*)? Please also note that the Western Chimpanzee (*Pan troglodytes verus*) is Critically Endangered (CR)-the text mentions chimpanzees as a whole as Endangered but this fails to recognize the critically endangered status of the western chimpanzee subspecies which is present in this area.

- P29: The description of the primatology expert, Noémie CAPPELLE, is incorrect, as it presents Hoël Grenier.

Questionnaire

- In the introduction, we suggest presenting the general objective without specifically mentioning chimpanzees, because you should avoid suggesting that chimpanzees are the only aspect considered in the environmental and social impact study. It is also necessary to ensure that a declaration is made regarding the voluntary and anonymous nature of the questionnaire (need for Free prior informed consent).
- It is generally important to avoid biasing responses, so the interviewer(s) should avoid what we call leading questions, although it may be useful to follow-up on some specifics just in case to make sure that responders did not omit an aspect.
- It is necessary to clarify the way in which the notions of time and distance will be determined. Indeed, from experience, it is always difficult to quantify these aspects. To do this, it may be useful to designate directions by referring to another village or a cardinal direction (e.g. In the direction of Balandou or north-west of the village) and to indicate the time in walking time (e.g. Half a day of walking, one day, two hours or I can't walk there in one day). It is critical to have a standardized methodology that is well defined beforehand so that it can be applied in a homogeneous way across all the villages.
- Relying on focus group is an effective way forward, but it is also important to keep a record of the number of people who attended and gather information on basic socio-demographics of the group by gender, age-class, residency in the village and socio-professional category. It is critical that the group is comprised of people who have the appropriate knowledge such as hunters, elders and the village chief for example. Ideally, the contact information should be taken for those who mention the presence of chimpanzees (or at least a few for each village); this can also be useful for future monitoring if these individuals are indeed happy to share their contact information.
- Before asking about the presence and absence of chimpanzees and the interaction between people and chimpanzees, it would be good to make sure that the interviewees know what a chimpanzee is and have indeed already seen or heard a chimpanzee around their village. To do this, we suggest you ask more general questions about the fauna to get an understanding of the primate species that people know occur in the area. This should be done with the support of images that also include species that are not present in this area to ascertain the interviewee's reliability. Sample question: Please point out the primates that you see around your village? How often do they see each primate species (every day, 1 to 2 per week; 1 to 2 months, a few times a year, etc.).
- If chimpanzees are identified as being present, we recommend that you ask a few more questions about the chimpanzee's behavior (e.g., where do they sleep? Can you describe them physically (people who are familiar with them could note that they don't have a tail)? or how do they vocalize? Or any other behavior that people care about sharing with you that would help confirm that they indeed know what chimpanzees are.

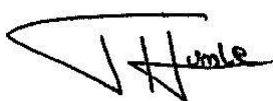
Once there is confidence that people do understand what a chimpanzee is, then the investigator can move on to the other questions regarding human-chimpanzee interactions.

- Question 1: We would suggest not asking whether they have seen juvenile individuals, as this could run the risk of being misinterpreted, especially as there has been some capture of live chimpanzees in and around the PNHN. Hopefully the camera traps will generate images of chimpanzees with young ones, hence confirming a reproducing population.
- There are many elements asked in single questions formulated here, and this risks not securing the answers and the attention desired on specific aspects, e.g., *'Have there been any reports of injured, sick, stressed or angry chimpanzees (abnormal appearance and behavior)?'* We would suggest avoiding asking about 'stressed or angry chimpanzees' as this could be highly subjective. You could ask if people have ever encountered the carcass of a chimpanzee (if so where, when, how often)? And whether they have ever seen an injured or sick chimpanzee (if so where, when, how often)?
- Question 2: would suggest asking people how people generally react when they see chimpanzees before asking more specifically whether they repel them, feed them or hunt them for meat (N.B. hunting may not just be for meat so best not be so specific and say instead 'kill them', as they can kill chimpanzees for witchcraft reasons or as a way to deter them from consuming crops in their fields; instead of 'repel': you could ask whether they tolerate them in the fields or if not what they do when they enter their fields)?
- It is useful to better understand the type of interactions (whether negative or positive) people have with chimpanzees, but then the follow up focuses on crop consumption, might be worth also asking people whether they share water points with chimpanzees? Also, when they encounter them, how do people react and how do chimpanzees respond?
- Question 6 about chimpanzee road crossing, maybe specify which road you are talking about so it is clear to everyone; we would then suggest starting with asking first where, before asking when and how often (same for question 8).

We look forward to receiving the results of the dry season surveys and the full assessment of the project impacts during i) construction and ii) operation, along with proposed mitigation measures, including details as to who will be implementing and monitoring these moving forward.

Should you have any queries, please do not hesitate to reach out to us.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Humle', with a stylized flourish to the left.

Dr Tatyana Humle

On behalf of the ARRC Task Force panel for this project