IUCN SSC PSG SGA/SSA[1] ARRC Task Force

ARRC Task Force's comments on the chimpanzee surveys conducted as part of the Kong solar project in Côte d'Ivoire

December 18th, 2025

The ARRC Task Force is thankful to the project for sharing the report 'Rapport de l'étude de référence sur le chimpanzé d'Afrique de l'ouest (*Pan troglodytes verus*) et son habitat pour le projet de centrale solaire à Kong, nord Côte d'Ivoire' dated October 27th 2025. The ARRC Task Force panel for this project has reviewed the report and emitted the comments below.

General comments

Overall the panel finds the study too short in duration, and with not enough survey effort, to assuredly state that chimpanzees are not present in the area. We would recommend conducting further surveys taking into consideration the following comments:

- **Survey area:** the survey area should include all areas in the vicinity of the Comoé National Park (also a World Heritage site), not just limited to a circle around the centroid of the project. More focus should be placed in the areas close to and in Comoé National Park.
- **Survey methods:** not all methods used are appropriate at this early stage. We would not recommend using transects which are time-consuming and used to assess abundance, but at this point the project is trying to determine presence/absence. The survey design should also have been stratified as chimpanzees used primarily gallery forests for nesting in these types of environments.
    - *Interview in villages:* only 8 villages were selected. We would advise the project to conduct more interviews, especially in villages close to the Comoé National Park. It would be good to understand what is the perceived cause of disappearance of chimpanzees from the area when interviewees indicate that chimpanzees have disappeared from the area.
    - *Recces:* more than half of the recce tracklogs seem to follow the existing roads thus the effective effort surveying potential chimp habitat seems low. We would

[1] International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Species Survival Commission (SSC) Primate Specialist Group (PSG) Section on Great Apes (SGA) and Section on Small Apes (SSA)

recommend conducting recces along gallery forests, and follow these up to the Comoé National Park. Recce survey effort should be greater in all habitat types potentially used by chimpanzees closer to/or in Comoé National Park. Chimpanzees may also seek refuge in more hilly areas, this was not highlighted on the maps.

    - *Camera-traps:* not enough camera-traps were used and they were not left long enough to increase the chances of capturing animals. The camera-trap effort was only 204 Camera Trap Days (CTD), when the recommended minimum is 1,000 CTD. Several camera-traps seem to have been placed close to the road where we know the hunting and anthropogenic pressure is higher and thus harbor a lower wildlife density. We would recommend using at least 20 camera traps for two months, with their placement in gallery forest or in suitable habitat as indicated by local communities.
- Even if surveys do not record the presence of chimpanzees, the project is located in potential chimpanzee habitat and close to Comoé National Park where chimpanzees are present. Thus precautionary measures should be taken and included in the relevant management plans to ensure a project response is in place in case a chimpanzee is seen in the project area (e.g. female chimpanzees emigrate from their natal community at puberty, and may travel many kilometers to reach another community).

We would therefore recommend to conduct additional surveys to increase the number of villages interviewed, increase recce and camera-trap effort to ensure that chimpanzee's presence has not been missed. We would appreciate receiving the proposal for further surveys at least 3 weeks before the start of surveys so we have enough time to provide comments, and for the project to integrate those in the survey plan.

Best regards,

The ARRC Task Force panel for this project