

Comments from the ARRC Task Force on the 'GAC protocole de surveillance des chimpanzés de l'Ouest' dated May 2023

September 21st 2023

Thank you for sending the protocol for implementing the chimpanzee monitoring plan that was developed in 2020. Given that GAC has been operating since 2014, it is becoming urgent that its monitoring plan is implemented, and that adaptive management is taking place based on these results.

Something that was not included in the original plan but that seems increasingly problematic for the area are chimpanzee-human conflicts. We heard that in early 2023 a chimpanzee killed a local villager within GAC's concession. This seems likely due to the loss of chimpanzee habitat to mining activities which has brought chimpanzees in closer proximity with the local population, and in competition for natural resources. It would therefore be important to include an indicator on this topic in the monitoring plan, and to collect data as well with the local communities.

General comments

- The protocol is well detailed; however what is also essential is the regular training of staff. A more intensive training should take place when first implementing the plan, but this needs to also take place on a regular basis, especially if staff changes regularly. External review and support should also be made more available at the beginning of activities and continue over the long-term.
- The database should be checked and reviewed regularly to correct mistakes, again especially in the beginning.
- The protocol is focussed on assessing the 'state' of the chimpanzee population, however we would like to know how threats to their population are going to be monitored.
- The ARRC Task Force would appreciate receiving a yearly monitoring report to be able to assess progress and see how adaptive management is being implemented.

Specific comments

Genetic study

- It is good to ensure there is enough survey effort spread out throughout the concession, however the movement of chimpanzees is biased, and it would be helpful if the team was constituted from people living within the concession as they know where chimpanzees are. They can also get an information network in the villages within the concession to more easily identified where chimpanzees are. The biodiversity team should work with key people in the villages to inform them of chimpanzee movement to help collect samples.
- In section 3.1 it is stated that "Les cellules qui ne contiennent pas d'habitat approprié ou dans lesquelles on sait qu'aucun chimpanzé n'est présent doivent être exclues de l'étude." This needs to be clarified because chimps can use areas transiently, and could also change the areas they used based on habitat loss and other threats coming from within and around the concession.
- In section 3.1 it is written that "l'équipe chargée de la biodiversité doit s'assurer que chacune de ces cellules est visitée au moins une fois tous les six mois." In the following paragraphs, it is written that they will attempt to visit multiple cells in a day. This may be possible for certain

cells but may depend on the habitat type and accessibility. The team should ensure they have enough time to search each cell, especially if there are reports of chimpanzee presence.

- On p.10 it is written that the data collected, and cells visited should be noted once back in camp, but the data collected on recess should be collected on datasheets and all observations recorded with a GPS in the field. Then these datasheets should be entered in the computer once back in the office (p.11).
- In section 3.2.1 “Bien fermer le tube, et étiqueter avec la date, et le point GPS (garder à l'esprit que ce tube sera jeté plus tard). Here they should also put an ID on the tube that they should also write down on their data collection sheet. It is written later in the text “et identifiant unique (ex GAC_001 ; GAC_002 ; GAC_003)”, but this should be indicated when labelling the tube.
- On p.10, it should be stated that the FIRST step is always to wear gloves. They should put on the gloves before opening and manipulating the tubes. Furthermore, this also applies when preparing the tubes and filling them with alcohol, they always need to first put on gloves before touching anything. On p.11, when transferring samples, they need to wear gloves. Gloves are really important to avoid contamination of the samples!
- On p.11, they should have another empty Ziploc bag that they can use for garbage, not to mix used gloves with unused gloves. It should be specified that they should use one pair of gloves for each sample they collect.
- The team can also collect food wadges.
- In section 3.3., the samples should be stored not directly under the light. If the beads change color after a few weeks because the environment is too humid, then they can transfer the samples into a new tube with silica gel.

Camera trapping

- It should be specified which type of batteries to use. Batteries bought on the local markets won't last and should not be used.
- In Table 3, the person conducting the distance test should be indicated, as well as the name of the file as reference in case there is a need to review it or return to it later.
- In section 4.6, it is indicated '.jpg' which refers to images, although videos are supposed to be collected according to section 4.2?
- In section 4.10, this method requires multiple people to identify chimpanzees and to cross check identification.
- On p.24 you could include pictures as example as individuals may be thin due to old age or because of a disease. Whenever the team have doubts or find pictures they think indicate chimpanzees have a disease, these should then be sent to experts for review.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you need further information or clarification.

Best regards,



Dr Genevieve Campbell

On behalf of the IUCN SSC PSG SGA ARRC Task Force's panel for this project