

Comments from the ARRC Task Force to EACOP-TEPU projects

June 2nd 2023

The ARRC Task Force received three documents for review:

- Technical Action Note: Genomics study for chimpanzees in the Bugoma Landscape, Uganda
- EACOP Chimpanzee Action Plan
- Eastern chimpanzee: EACOP Action Plan Overview and Landscape Approach to Conservation

The panel set up for this project reviewed the documents and had the following comments:

1) **Technical Action Note: Genomics study for chimpanzees in the Bugoma Landscape, Uganda**

We are pleased that the projects are moving forward with this study. However, this document lacks concrete details on the survey plan. Here are specific comments on the document:

- One of the objectives of the study is to assess trend in the chimpanzee population by comparing results to the chimpanzee population assessment from McCarthy *et al.* (2015). Reference to this study and results should be included in the document, and this should be added as one of the objectives.
- The study area should include both Budongo and Bugoma Forest Reserves, and the corridor linking both Forest Reserves. It is not clear from the document that Bugoma Forest Reserve is included. One of the objectives is to 'assess the chimpanzee's population composition in Budongo forest' but this is not mentioned for Bugoma forest Reserve.
- The document should acknowledge the long-term research and monitoring of chimpanzees in both Bugoma and Budongo Forest Reserves, as well as in the corridor through the Bulindi Chimpanzee and Conservation Project, and at the Kasokwa Community Chimpanzee Conservation Project. It should be clarified in the document that the study will be conducted in coordination with these organizations.
- There are two components to the genetic study; the sample collection and laboratory analysis. No timetable and team composition are given for both parts of the study.
- The survey plan for collecting non-invasive chimpanzee faeces samples is important, but this is not specified. The same area needs to be revisited at least twice to resample some individuals which allow to perform capture-recapture analysis to estimate population abundance.
- On page 10 it is written that fieldwork will consist of 'dedicated survey through direct observations, nest counts, use of camera traps and recorders'. The genomics study necessitates the collection of chimpanzee faeces samples, but there is no need to use camera-traps and recorders. Nest locations and other signs of presence of chimpanzees can be collected on recces while looking for fresh faeces, as well as threats (e.g. snares, logging signs) to better understand the current distribution of chimpanzees in relation to threats in the landscape.
- It is written that faeces will be conserved in ethanol, but the sample collection should follow the two-step method which would transfer the samples into a tube with silica gel after being 24h in ethanol. When receiving the proposal from the consultants, details on the method, survey plan and data collection should be included to ensure the proper implementation of the study.

2) EACOP Chimpanzee Action Plan

It would be easier to work from one document, the 'Eastern chimpanzee: EACOP Action Plan Overview and Landscape Approach to Conservation', given significant cumulative impacts to chimpanzees. It is not meaningful to rehabilitate a small corridor if chimpanzees have nowhere to move to and the main forest blocks containing larger viable chimpanzee populations are not protected.

EACOP keeps focusing mainly on its direct impacts, but there are still significant risks of indirect impacts and impacts linked with its associated infrastructures. The construction of the pipeline, as well as the recent paving of the oil road from Hoima to Kabaale (that EACOP is using), will increase fragmentation effect and the difficulty for chimpanzees to move between Bugoma and Wambabya (other locations where chimpanzees have been reported in this corridor can be found in Lamprey *et al.* 2022). Efforts by the project to maintain this chimpanzee corridor should be considered a minimization measure for this impact, not an offset.

The pipeline will create access and it is likely that land will degrade further close to it (e.g. for agriculture). In the document, indirect impacts are downplayed by saying, for example, in section 2.2 it states that the area is already inhabited so induced access will not exacerbate degradation of the areas. We have seen the Bugoma-Budongo corridor continuing to degrade because of improving access and immigration to this area in the last few years, so this impact shouldn't be downplayed.

Two other chimpanzee communities will likely be impacted by the project, but are not mentioned in the documents reviewed, these are the Itohyo (or Munteme) and Mairirwe (or Kyaisamba) chimpanzee communities. The pipeline is expected to pass in between these two communities, which are c.6 km apart with occasional female transfer between the two communities. More information and assessment of impacts to this community should be included in the document.

Given that not the same methods were used, as well as different survey design and effort, it is difficult to assess chimpanzee population trend for Wambabya Forest Reserve. Furthermore, the confidence intervals were quite wide on each population estimate, which indicate poor precision. It would therefore be appropriate to include the confidence interval for each population estimate in table 2.1 to reflect this. No conclusion can't then be made on the population trend for Wambabya at the moment.

The document explains how it is difficult to assess the 'suitability' and the 'quality' of chimpanzee habitat, further supporting the use of number of individuals impacted as a better basis for the residual impact assessment. In the current estimate, the project needs to compensate c. 1 km² of chimpanzee habitat which would be equivalent to a small portion of a chimpanzee territory, when a minimum of three chimpanzee communities will be impacted. Therefore, this doesn't reflect real project impacts to chimpanzees. Furthermore, given the uncertainties in estimating impacts, of the offset success, time lag in getting gains, the slow reproducing nature of chimpanzees, we do not accept the equivalence of a ration of 1:1 for estimating the offset requirement. The average ratio used for other projects has been between 1:10 and 1:20. Even just achieving a Net Gain should go above the 1:1 ratio.

These two studies should not be considered as additional conservation actions:

- 'Genetic studies of Chimpanzees in the Bugoma-Budongo corridor'. This should have been conducted to assess the status of chimpanzees prior to any project impacts occurring.

- 'Monitoring of Chimpanzee presence, density and activity to get a better understand of Chimpanzee behaviour/responses relative to the project and other anthropogenic activities in the landscape'. This should be part of the normal monitoring activity for the project and included in the BMEP, not an additional conservation action that bring additional benefit to chimpanzees.

A restoration offset is not sufficient to compensate project impacts as the success is not guaranteed and may take many years to achieve, or if at all achievable as it would includes many different indigenous plant species that may have not be re-planted yet successfully. How are these corridors going to be protected and maintained? For example, it is mentioned that planting of species used by local inhabitants may occur, which could include chimpanzees-human conflict and also the cutting of trees that will be used by local residents and thus not ensure the long-term persistence of the corridor. Furthermore, local residents have other concerns related to tenure, livelihood and income options which may exacerbate efforts to provide for restoration unless a meaningful participatory process is implemented. Restoration is complicated and needs to involve all relevant stakeholders. In section 3.3.2 we don't see local government responsible for community development as stakeholders, or details on community engagement. As part of the offset, we would expect the project to also consider conservation actions in Bugoma Forest Reserve, which may also be indirectly impacted by the project.

We would like to see the detailed measures for chimpanzees in the 'Bushmeat management plan', the 'disease management plan', and the 'human-wildlife conflict management plan'. At the moment it is difficult to judge the effectiveness of proposed minimisation measures as there are no details on timeline, cost, person responsible for implementing these, etc.

3) Eastern chimpanzee: EACOP Action Plan Overview and Landscape Approach to Conservation

This is a good start to understand and manage impacts to chimpanzees at the landscape level, but the document would benefit further information, including a global map of impacts of the different projects and the oil roads, chimpanzee distribution, existing threats, and analysis of the drivers of those threats. Then all avoidance, minimization and rehabilitation measures can be detailed, as well as other existing conservation projects to see where offsets are needed to complement existing measures and ensure the survival of the chimpanzee populations in Budongo and Bugoma Forest Reserves, as well as the corridor between the two Forest Reserves.

Please let me know if you have any questions or would like to discuss further.

Best regards,



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On behalf of the IUCN SSC PSG SGA ARRC Task Force panel