

Kinguele aval hydropower Project

Answers of the Project to the second round of comments from IUCN SSC ARRC Task Force

Document prepared by Réналd BOULNOIS / BIOTOPE and validated by ASONHA ENERGIE

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Source

Document based on the document provided by the Task Force:

Additional comments by the IUCN SSC ARRC Task Force on the Kinguelé Aval Project (BAP version 5). 26/02/2021.

Received by the Project's sponsors by e-mail from Genevieve CAMPBELL on March, 11th 2021.

Project's answers

As suggested, the answers from the Project are provided in this separate document.

They are developed below as per the structure of the Task Force's comments.

General comments

The Project's sponsors also appreciate to have on-going constructive discussions with the Task Force regarding the integration of the Project in a landscape where Great Apes occur.

The Project's sponsors confirm the following key facts:

- At a regional scale, the Project is located in an 'exceptional landscape' for Great Apes;
- The presence of both Gorilla and Chimpanzee is confirmed in the Project's surrounding area;
- Additional surveys have been done (2020) and are planned (2021) to better understand their use of the local landscape (please see details in next section).

Regarding the development of common mitigation measures targeting Great Apes with other projects at the wider landscape scale, this is beyond the lone responsibility of this Project. This would be part of a joint strategy between Gabonese authorities, IUCN and all relevant stakeholders (including other projects and operators).

Nevertheless, as a pilot in its kind for Gabon, the Project currently contributes to the development of national mechanisms helping to operationalize such approaches.

Regarding the timeline of the process, the Project will do its best to associate as early as possible the Task Force in its decisions regarding Great Apes additional surveys and any additional mitigation actions.

Specific comments

Baseline surveys

As discussed with the Task Force, the additional baseline surveys for Great Apes is based on both camera-trapping and additional recces.

In 2021, two rounds of survey targeting Great Apes around the Project's footprint are planned before constructions begins, and one during the very beginning of the construction phase. At the end of the surveys the Project will have reached more than 6250 camera.days¹ and a 4-weeks cumulated time of recces².

Based on results available to date, the Project's sponsors agree with the wording proposed by the Task Force:

“Sur la base des résultats qui précèdent, le paysage du projet constitue une zone à faible densité de grands singes [en comparaison avec] d'autres zones du Parc National des Monts de Cristal. Néanmoins, selon les lignes directrices de la Norme de Performance 6, le projet se situant dans l'habitat des grands singes, la présence de ces espèces déclenche l'habitat critique”.

Mitigation measures and compensation plan

The Project's sponsor would like to reassure the Task Force that all mitigation measures will be implemented on the ground as a mandatory part of the contract of the constructor, and will carefully controlled by Project's sponsors in the framework of the Biodiversity Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (BMEP).

Some clarifications to the specific Task Force comments are provided below:

- Regarding the clearings, those will be allowed only within the construction activity area, formerly validated by the Project's sponsors. The permanent compliance with that key requirement will be controlled directly on the field by both the constructor and the Project's sponsors. In addition, no social influx will be facilitated nor permitted in the Project's area of influence (no recruitment office on site, no family authorized in the base camp, monitoring of the compliance with regulation related to new installations through a vigilance committee, opening of a commissary within the base camp....; see Social Influx Management Plan '*Plan de gestion des afflux sociaux*').
- Regarding bushmeat hunting and poaching control, the Project has developed a close partnership with National Park Agency to implement patrols within the whole Project's landscape and not only along roads or at random checkpoints. This includes construction activities areas,, the Project's offset area and the southern part of the National Park. This comes in addition to the internal control of the constructor, under the direct supervision and own controls of the sponsors. This support is based on one complete patrol team financing with required equipment.
- Regarding the vaccination of employees, the Project will clarify in the next version of its Biodiversity Management Plan that up to date vaccination records for other diseases including polio and measles are required..

¹ 1400 (wet season #2 in 2020, 48 traps, survey at the scale of Project's landscape) + 1008 (dry season #1 in 2021, 28 traps, survey at the scale of Project's footprint and surroundings) + 1008 (wet season #1 in 2021, same) + 2835 (TEAM protocol in dry season #2 in 2021, 63 traps at the scale of Project's landscape) = 6251 camera.days.

² 3 recces sessions in 2021 : end of dry season #1 + end of wet season #1 on a one-week period each at the scale of Project's footprint and surroundings, and dry season #2 on a two-week period at the scale of Project's landscape.

- All actions and requirements that apply to the constructor also apply to its subcontractors. As part of this commitment, training/sensitization sessions will be organized each time a new team arrives on-site.
- Based on the results available to date, the Project's sponsors agree on a provisional conclusion of 'low impact' on Great Apes, to be confirmed based on additional survey results.
- The Project's sponsors are willing to implement a compensation / offset (i) that is commensurate with the Project's impacts, (ii) that would provide real, additional and long-term protection through effective daily management and official gazettal (iii) that is financially sustainable, at least at the timescale of the Project's concession and, based on a continuous stakeholder engagement, beyond.

Additional comments

The Project will provide to the Task Force, as soon as they are available:

- The results of the on-going surveys, as inputs for the development of a long-term monitoring plan for Great Apes in the Project area;
- and its draft Biodiversity Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (BMEP).

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