



The COMBO Project : Conservation, impact Mitigation and Biodiversity Offsets in Africa *Update from COMBO Guinea - July 2017*

The COMBO Project's overall objective in Guinea is to establish and help implement a national strategy for mitigation and offsetting. Biotope is leading COMBO's work in Guinea, in close collaboration with WCS and with Guinée Ecologie, a Guinean NGO. The project is engaging broadly with government, civil society and industry on developing this strategy. This priority for a national strategy is consistent with concerns expressed by IFC and other lenders and financial institutions that are supporting development projects, as well as the government of Guinea. In June 2016, IFC and COMBO partners held a joint workshop on cumulative impacts of development projects at which we also launched the COMBO project. Below is a brief update on progress since then.

Component 1

Policy gap analysis: a report has been drafted by consultants (INSUCO) which reviews national legislation against a set of criteria established by COMBO to assess whether it is conducive to "no net loss" of biodiversity. The report also identifies where there may be opportunities for improving uptake of the mitigation hierarchy.

Engagement with government: COMBO's Memorandum of understanding with the Ministry of Environment (MEEF) has now been signed with the Minister (see Component 6). In addition, COMBO provided input to the Ministry of mines on environmental, social and governance issues and policies around mining. The mitigation hierarchy is now one of the objective in the Ministry's CSR Action Plan.

National strategy for chimpanzee conservation: Guinea has the largest population of the Critically Endangered West African Chimpanzee and the great majority of development projects in the country are likely to impact this species and its habitats. The Government, industry, lenders and civil society recognise that a national chimpanzee strategy that considers development projects will improve outcomes for chimpanzees and support investment in the country. Biotope is leading the development of this strategy and a workshop will be held in Conakry during the week of 11th September 2017. This work will facilitate COMBO's work as chimpanzees are a flagship species for mitigation and offsetting, and have given a high profile to the topic of "no net loss" in Guinea. The Guinean strategy and action plan will be developed in parallel to a Regional Action Plan. Both involve scientific input from IUCN's specialist group on great apes. COMBO has secured funding from the ARCUS Foundation for this work.

Component 2

Biodiversity data gap analysis: A draft gap analysis of biodiversity data and other relevant data has been prepared by the Biotope team in Guinea. The aim of this study is to provide a publicly accessible (e.g. on-line) meta-database to improve access to biodiversity data in the context of mitigation and offsetting, and land-use planning in general. The Ministry of Environment is fully involved in this work and has provided a lot of information. One of the ministry's department (COSIE) may host the meta-database. A draft meta-data base was presented to stakeholders on July 11th 2017, with close to 25 participants.

Biodiversity mapping: In parallel to the biodiversity data gap analysis, discussions are being held with IGN International, who is working with the Guinean government (with AFD funding) on mapping Guinea's agro-ecological potential. This may provide useful information for spatial planning. Biotope is preparing relevant data layers to feed into upcoming work on specific solutions, methods and tools to be tested in demonstration landscapes. These haven't been selected yet.

Improving access to data: Planners and industry require good data to assess the impacts of projects on fauna and flora species, and find operational solutions for addressing those impacts. Sufficiently detailed data is currently unavailable in the country, except for a few high-profile species. The COMBO Guinea partners have submitted a proposal to Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF) that has been shortlisted. The proposal aims to compile available data from published literature and other sources such as ESAs on amphibians and reptiles of Guinea. The data will also be used to conduct an initial assessment of the national IUCN status of these taxa in Guinea. Data will be collated into a single database that will be available for both national and international users. The process itself will be documented and widely shared, to facilitate replication (e.g. on other species) and to demonstrate how red lists can be used to prioritize biodiversity features in the context of land-use decisions.

Component 3

Potential for a national trust fund: A conservation or offsets trust fund does not yet exist in Guinea, but several stakeholders including the Ministry of environment have expressed interest in a vehicle that can channel long term financing commitments from industry towards the creation and management of protected areas. COMBO partners are looking at models of trust funds that have been launched in other COMBO countries (e.g. Biofund in Mozambique and the Uganda Biodiversity Fund) and in neighbouring countries (Guinea Bissau, Ivory Coast).

Performance based support and community involvement in biodiversity offsets Because of Guinea's conservation and land use characteristics, there is a strong interest in community-based solutions to achieve biodiversity goals. To develop solutions, COMBO will follow and draw lessons from the development of a Community Protected Area on the Touguissoury island close to Conakry, with funding from CEPF.

Component 4

Industry case studies: We have spoken with six major mining companies operating in Guinea, as well as public and private developers from a range other sectors, in particular in hydro-energy. Some projects are interested in sharing with COMBO to improve the biodiversity outcomes of their projects and development plans and we will continue to work with them to ensure that they understand the opportunity better.

Component 5

Training: An initial training session on mitigation hierarchy was held in Conakry in June 2016 for over 100 trainees. Some mining companies have asked COMBO to organize a training for their biodiversity staff. COMBO is looking for additional funding for this.

Component 6

Government MOU: COMBO's MOU with the Ministry of Environment (MEEF) has now been signed with the Minister. This will strengthen COMBO's engagement with national institutions and clarify our objectives to the institutions with which we are engaged.

COMBO partners: Biotope and Guinée Ecologie are developing activities closely and Biotope is now working from GE's offices to reinforce collaboration. In particular, this has facilitated engagement with government and improving access to funding for testing aspects of the mitigation hierarchy under Components 2 and 3.