

VALIDATION REPORT CHINKO CONSERVATION AREA REDD+ PROJECT, CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC



AENOR INTERNACIONAL S.A.U.

Document Prepared By: AENOR

Contact Information: 6 Génova. 28004 Madrid – Spain

Project Title	Chinko Conservation Area REDD+ Project, Central African Republic
Version	10
Project Location	Central African Republic in the prefectures of Mbomou, Haute-Kotto and Haut-Mbomou.
Report ID	VCS CCB_Chinko_Validation Report_v10_20112023

Report Title	VALIDATION REPORT CHINKO CONSERVATION AREA REDD+ PROJECT, CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC
Client	African Parks CAR
Pages	134
Date of Issue	20-November-2023
Prepared By	AENOR INTERNACIONAL S.A.U.
Contact	Génova 6. 28004 Madrid- Spain. Telephone +34 914326000 jfuentes@aenor.com ; jcocera@aenor.com www.aenor.com
Approved By	Jose Luis Fuentes

**Work Carried
Out By**

Lead Auditor: Javier Cócera
Auditor: Carlos Jiménez
Auditor: Elena Llorente
CCB expert: Daniel Masika
Technical reviewer: José Luis Fuentes

Summary:

AENOR has carried out the validation of the Chinko Conservation Area REDD+ Project under the VCS and CCB Programs. The project is a conservation project (REDD+) implemented in the Chinko Conservation Area, in Central African Republic. Eastern Central African Republic (CAR) is a unique area where savannah and tropical forest meet; the diversity of habitats, such as humid Congolian lowland forests, Sudanian woodland savannas, dry edaphic grasslands and swampy floodplains, creates a complex ecosystem with an extraordinary diversity of wildlife and sustains an abundance of natural resources. The Chinko conservation area REDD+ project is an initiative held by African Parks CAR (AAPP CAR) to protect this zone. The project is intended as a grouped one, in which the long-term vision is to sustainably manage multiple sectors of eastern CAR in the prefectures of Mbomou, Haute-Kotto and Haut-Mbomou.

The project start date is 15 September 2016 and the crediting period runs from 15 September 2016 to 14 April 2045. The project began with hunting zones 39, 40, 41 and 48; and on April 15, 2020 the hunting zone 36 was incorporated; in both cases as a public-private partnership agreement of African Parks CAR with the Ministry of Water, Forest, Hunting and Fishing in representation of the Government of the Central African Republic. The length of the crediting period is 28 years and 7 months.

The purpose of the validation was to determine the conformance of the project with respect to the VCS Standard v4.1 and the CCB Standards v3.1. The process was performed through a combination of desk review, interviews, and communications with relevant personnel. The scope was defined as follows: project design process; its baseline scenarios and additionality; the project area; the physical infrastructure, activities, technologies, and processes of the project; the GHG sources, sinks and/or reservoirs those are applicable to the project; the types of GHGs applicable to the project; the project crediting period; and the climate, community, and biodiversity benefits, including gold distinctions.

In order to confirm that the project description as documented meets the stated requirements and identified criteria, the validation consisted of the following three phases: i) a desk review of the project description document and complementary documentation; ii) follow-up interviews with project stakeholders with an on-site visit as well as review of project activities; iii) the resolution of outstanding issues and internal technical review followed by the issuance of the final validation report and opinion. During the validation 3 CARs (corrective action request) and 2 CLs (clarification) were raised. All these issues were appropriately closed by means of corrections, clearer explanations, and other supporting documents.

Hence, the audit team concludes that the project complies with all the requirements set by the VCS Standard v4.1 and the CCB Standards v3.1. The project expects to generate an estimated annual

average of net emissions reduction of 442,839 tCO₂e and a total of 4,558,205 tCO₂e for the 2016-2026 period. According to the Non-Permanence Risk assessment, the buffer discount obtained was 10%, therefore, after applying the buffer the average amount of tradable VCUs per year in the period is 398,553 and a total of 4,102,366 for this period, quantified in accordance with VCS v4.1 rules. AENOR confirms that the project has been validated for the Climate Gold, and Biodiversity Gold distinctions in accordance with the CCB Standard v3.1.

The purpose of the visit field assessment was to determine the conformance of the project with respect to the VCS Version 4 Standard; the Third Edition of the CCB Standard; The field visit took place from 16 November 2022 to 22 November 2022 in which the audit team visited the project area, interviewed key stakeholders, staff and other related experts, and also reviewed the CCB-VCS-PDD and supporting documents as well as activities assessment. The scope of the validation was to assess the conformance of information in the project design document with the VCS and CCB standards.

Hence, once all issues detected were appropriately solved, AENOR carried out a final validation report and deems with a reasonable level of assurance that the project complies with all of the validation criteria for VCS and CCB. The assessment team has no restrictions or uncertainties with respect to the compliance of the project with the validation criteria, hence, the audit team concludes that the net GHG emissions reductions or removals, for the project boundary at validation stage has been quantified in accordance with VCS rules.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction	5
1.1 Objective	5
1.2 Scope and Criteria	5
1.3 Summary Description of the Project	6
2. Validation Process	7
2.1 Audit Team Composition (<i>Rules 4.3.1</i>)	7
2.2 Method and Criteria	8
2.3 Document Review	9
2.4 Interviews	16
2.5 Site Inspections	20
2.6 Public Comments (<i>Rules 4.6</i>)	23
2.7 Resolution of Findings	23
3. Validation Findings	24
3.1 Summary of Project Benefits	24
3.2 General	24
3.3 Climate	54
3.4 Community	111
3.5 Biodiversity	117
4 Validation Conclusion	125
Appendix 1: Corrective Actions and Clarifications Requests	127
Appendix 2: Attendance lists of the onsite audit	133

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Objective

The purpose of the validation audit activity was to conduct an independent assessment of the project in order to determine whether the project complies with the validation criteria as set out in the guidance documents listed in Section 1.2 of this report, including the monitoring procedures and the climate, community, and biodiversity benefits; and that the GHG emission reductions and removals estimated ex-ante in the Project Description (PDD) are materially accurate.

1.2 Scope and Criteria

The scope of the validation audit is to validate the design and emissions reductions of the proposed project activity in Central African Republic against the Verified Carbon Standard (VCS), the identified methodology and associated tools as well as to validate the climate, community, and biodiversity benefits in accordance with the criteria of the Climate, Community and Biodiversity Standards (CCB).

The scope was defined as follows:

- The project's design process.
 - The project area.
 - The project's baseline scenarios and additionality.
 - The physical infrastructure, activities, technologies, and processes of the project.
 - The GHG sources, sinks and/or reservoirs those are applicable to the project.
 - The project applicable GHGs.
 - The project crediting period.
 - The climate, community, and biodiversity benefits, including gold distinctions.
- Standard criteria: Criteria from the following documents were used to assess this project:

- VCS Standard v4.1 issued 22 April 2021
- VCS Program Guide v4.0 issued 19 September 2019
- Program Definitions v4.0 issued 19 September 2019
- AFOLU Non-Permanence Risk Tool v4.0 issued 19 September 2019
- CCB Program Rules v3.1 issued 21 June 2017
- CCB Standard v3.1 issued 21 June 2017
- CCB Program Definitions v3.0 issued 21 June 2017

Unless otherwise indicated, the assessment was performed against the most recent version of the relevant VCS and CCB guidance documents.

1.3 Summary Description of the Project

Eastern Central African Republic (CAR) is a unique area where savannah and tropical forest meet; the diversity of habitats, such as humid Congolian lowland forests, Sudanian woodland savannas, dry edaphic grasslands and swampy floodplains, creates a complex ecosystem with an extraordinary diversity of wildlife and sustains an abundance of natural resources. The Chinko Conservation Area REDD+ Project (CCA) is an initiative held by African Parks CAR through a public-private partnership agreement with the Ministry of Water, Forest, Hunting and Fishing. The project is intended as a grouped one, in which the long-term vision is to sustainably manage multiple sectors of eastern CAR in the prefectures of Mbomou, Haute-Kotto and Haut-Mbomou. The project began with hunting zones 39, 40, 41 and 48; and on April 15, 2020 the hunting zone 36 was incorporated.

The conditions prior to the implementation of the project had several factors that impacted the well-being of communities and community groups living on the periphery of the project area. These include insecurity in the region, persistent conflict between transhumant pastoralists and local agricultural communities, lack of education and employment opportunities, and poor healthcare. These factors had an impact on the biodiversity of the region as well, where practices like unsustainable hunting and an economy of illegal wildlife trade, transhumant pastoralism, unsustainable agricultural practices, illegal gold mining and logging are present.

The overall objective of the project is to secure a core protected area in eastern CAR and to actively engage in the land use planning and sustainable management of the surrounding areas in order to restore and improve ecosystem functions and habitat, through community engagement, law enforcement and restoration and conservation activities. The project will also bring opportunities for community development and for nature conservation and continue to strengthen the African Parks (AAPP) management team. A comprehensive land use plan will ensure that positive benefits are maximized, guaranteeing that the area is protected in the future and that critical ecosystem services are maintained.

The measures to be implemented by the project are focused on reducing the impact of the main agents and drivers of deforestation and conversion, by creating new and more sustainable opportunities for those agents in the wider landscape. These activities include sensitisation of the local communities and transhumance pastoralists, the establishment of pastoralism corridors and more sustainable natural resource use. Moreover, the project will increase employment opportunities, continuation of biodiversity monitoring and restoration of natural areas among others. The success in the implementation of these activities is expected to generate greenhouse gases (GHG) emissions reductions. Additionally, by preserving the natural ecosystems in Chinko, the biodiversity in the protected area is impacted positively due to a reduction in anthropogenic disturbance.

The project start date is 15 September 2016 and the crediting period runs from 15 September 2016 to 14 April 2045. Upon the implementation of the project activities described above, the project is expected to generate an estimated annual average of net emissions reduction of 442,839 tCO₂e and a total of 4,558,205 tCO₂e for the 15 September 2016 – 15 December 2026 period. According to the Non-Permanence Risk assessment the buffer discount obtained was 6.5% but the minimum assumed is 10%, therefore, after applying the buffer the average amount of tradable VCUs per year in the period is 398,553 and a total of 4,102,366 for the period.

2. VALIDATION PROCESS

2.1 Audit Team Composition (*Rules 4.3.1*)

Name	Position in the team
Javier Cócera	Team leader
Carlos Jiménez	Auditor
Elena Llorente	Auditor
Daniel Masika	CCB Expert
José Luis Fuentes	Technical Reviewer

Javier Cócera is a forest engineer with a Master in forest management. He has developed his career focused to the forest management. Mainly he has been working through sustainability in two ways: the main one as forestry consultancy, developing forest management plans, working with GIS and LiDAR both in the field and the office and getting experience of the forest resources. The second one was developing environmental footprint projects and sustainability reports. Currently Javier is working in AENOR as auditor focused in AFOLU projects. Javier participated in courses about ISO lead auditing and have performed audits in projects in Europe, LATAM, Africa and Asia.

Carlos Jimenez is a Forestry Engineer and holds Master in Rural Development. He has 10 years of experience in natural resources management and sustainable development. His experience covers working with public and private sector, as well as civil society organizations; with focus in forest risk commodities, community-based development projects, and consultancy on ecosystem services. Since 2016 he works as an auditor of sustainable forest management (FSC) and forest carbon certification schemes (VCS, CCB) in Latin America and Asia.

Elena Llorente has a degree in Environmental Sciences, she has more than 15 years of experience in Sustainable development projects having worked as lead validator/verifier in CDM and other voluntary schemes. She is expert in Climate, Community and Biodiversity aspects.

Daniel Masika is a Kenyan-based expert with experience in Climate Change, food security, and livelihood programs. His background studies in the bachelorette were in Agriculture and soil Sciences with modeling of cropping and agroforestry systems at the Master of philosophy level. Daniel has worked extensively in the NGO world to provide technical expertise and support food security, livelihood programs, agroforestry, disaster risk reduction, and natural resources management, and climate-smart agriculture technologies. In the past three years, Daniel has supported many REDD+ and forest restoration project audits under VCS and the CCBs protocols. Daniel can speak Swahili and has a deep knowledge of the social and cultural livelihoods of Africa.

José Luis Fuentes is the manager of the Climate Change Unit of AENOR. He is a Forestry Engineer and has a Master in Business Administration and a Post-Graduate in Environmental Management. He has more than 15 years of experience in auditing, consulting and training activities related to environmental and carbon management projects. Jose Luis has actively participated in the audit of international sustainable development projects in several carbon schemes, such as the Clean Development Mechanisms (CDM), Verified Carbon Standard (VCS), Climate, Community and Biodiversity Standards (CCB), Gold Standard (GS) and carbon footprints (ISO 14067 and ISO 14064). Jose Luis has extensive

technical knowledge about the regulatory framework, policies and technical provisions emanating from the Paris Agreement, the Kyoto Protocol and the Conferences of the Parties.

2.2 Method and Criteria

The validation was performed through a combination of document review and interviews with relevant personnel, as discussed in Sections 2.3 through 2.5 of this report. At all times, the project was assessed for conformance to the criteria described in Section 1.2 of this report. As discussed in Section 2.7, findings were issued to ensure that the project was in full conformance to all requirements.

A project specific Validation and Sampling Plan was developed to guide the validation auditing process to ensure efficiency and effectiveness. The purpose of the Validation and Sampling Plan was to present a risk assessment for determining the nature and extent of validation procedures necessary to ensure the risk of auditing error was reduced to a reasonable level. The Validation & Sampling Plan methodology was derived from all items in our validation process stated above. Specifically, the sampling plan utilized the VCS guidance documents and ISO 14064-3. Any modifications applied to the Validation and Sampling plan were made based upon the conditions observed for monitoring in order to detect the processes with highest risk of material discrepancy.

The validation activities in which risks were assessed were the evaluations of the monitoring system (data flow, data control procedures, etc.) but mainly the quality of raw data as well as sources and the spreadsheet calculations. AENOR reproduced and verified 100% of sheets in the spreadsheets /115/ in the project area. The project boundaries for the monitoring period were 100% checked using the GIS data /51-71/ and some points and tracks were gathered from the visit to crosscheck with the final coordinates. The carbon stock changes were also verified and crosschecked with values reported on the PDD.

AENOR carried out a deep and meticulous review of the spreadsheet in order to verify the correct application of the methodology (formulae, equations) and checked that data required calculating the GHG emissions reduction were appropriately provided. Based on the assessment carried out, AENOR confirms with a reasonable level of assurance that the claimed ex-ante emission reductions are free from material errors, omissions, or misstatements.

AENOR confirms that sufficient evidence was presented for the ex-ante estimated net anthropogenic GHG emission reductions and that there is a clear audit trail that contains the evidence and records that validate the stated figure in this validation report since:

- Sufficient evidence available: The project participant has provided 100% of data used in the calculations to achieve the final estimated amount of GHG emission reductions.
- Nature of evidence: The raw data were collected from reliable sources. They are detailed in the project documents and have been provided to the validation team are appropriately detailed in section 2.3.
- Cross-checked evidence: AENOR cross-checked the collected information through interviews with stakeholders and reproducing calculations.

Hence, AENOR confirms that the stated figures in the PDD are correct and confirms that it is able to certify the ex-ante net anthropogenic GHG reductions based on verifiable and reliable evidence.

2.3 Document Review

A detailed review of all project documentation was conducted to ensure consistency with, and identify any deviation from VCS program requirements, CCB program requirements and the methodology (VCS Methodology VM0009 for avoided Ecosystem Conversion, v3.0). Initial review focused on the PDD /1-3/ and included an examination of the project details, implementation design, stakeholder engagement, baseline scenario, additionality, community and biodiversity objectives, data and parameters, and estimation of GHG emission reductions. Documents reviewed included monitoring SOPs, carbon rights contracts /72-73/, economic analysis and documents, tree monitoring data /116-117/, biomass and carbon calculation spreadsheets /115/, and responses to Corrective Action Requests (CARs) and Clarifications (CLs).

The validation included a review of the PDD onsite and remotely as well, to increase the accuracy of the review. The field visit took place in November 2022, where several interviews were carried out, and many activities and information were crosschecked with the stated on the PDD.

The VCS AFOLU Non-Permanence Risk Tool v4.0 was used by the Project Proponent to assess overall project risk. The VVB reviewed the Non-Permanence Risk Report /173/ provided with the validation supporting documentation and confirmed that the Project adheres to the requirements set out in the VCS AFOLU Non-Permanence Risk Tool. Each risk factor was thoroughly assessed for conformance. The final score was calculated to be 10%.

The list of all documents reviewed from the client for this validation is the following. Note that within this validation report, supporting evidences (documents, interviews) are referred by its number in first column of the lists in sections 2.3 and 2.4, as well as the onsite visit activities carried out and reported in section 2.5. Nevertheless, the audit team has used external sources to assess and demonstrate certain statements and activities. Such sources have been linked into the footnote of the corresponding paragraph in each section.

N°	Name of the document
PDD	
1	231115_PDD_Chinko_REDD_CAR_2R_clean.docx
2	231115_PDD_Chinko_REDD_CAR_2R_clean.pdf
3	231115_PDD_Chinko_REDD_CAR_2R_track.docx
Supports	
4	Profil socio-économique du Mbomou.pdf
5	Profil socio-écq HKoto.pdf
Audit communication	
6	Invitation capep local 2022.pdf
7	Termes de référence CAPEP_local_2022.pdf
8	ToRs CAPEP_local_2022 vf EN.pdf
9	Image about informative meeting with representatives in Kocho.jpg
10	Image about informative meeting with representatives in Kocho.jpg
11	Image about informative meeting with representatives in Kocho.jpg
12	Image about informative meeting with representatives in Kocho.jpg
13	Image about informative meeting with representatives in Kocho.jpg

14	Image about informative meeting with representatives in Kocho.jpg
15	Image about informative meeting with representatives in Kocho.jpg
16	Image about informative meeting with representatives in Kocho.jpg
17	Image about informative meeting with representatives in Kocho.jpg
18	Image about informative meeting with representatives in Kocho.jpg
19	Image about informative meeting with representatives in Kocho.jpg
20	Image about informative meeting with representatives in Kocho.jpg
21	Image about informative meeting with representatives in Kocho.jpg
22	Image about informative meeting with representatives in Kocho.jpg
23	Image about informative meeting with representatives in Kocho.jpg
24	Image about informative meeting with representatives in Kocho.jpg
25	Image about informative meeting with representatives in Kocho.jpg
26	Image about informative meeting with representatives in Kocho.jpg
27	Image about informative meeting with representatives in Kocho.jpg
28	Image about informative meeting with representatives in Kocho.jpg
29	TdR_Guy-Siguindo_mobiliser-12-représentants-communautaires_REDD-audit.pdf
30	17- 2022-11-03 Audit information in Kocho.jpeg
31	221013_Preaudit_Chinko.pptx
32	VERRA-AENOR_audit_Nov-2022_AP_CHINKO_dépliants.pdf
33	Agroforestrie et foresterie APN small.pdf
34	Pastoralism_APN-Chinko_Aire-de-Conservation-de-Chinko_Aebischer-Thierry.pdf
35	17 - 2022.11.09 - Sensibilisation des travailleurs de Bangui.pdf
36	17 - 2022.11.09_Audit information in Bangui office.jpg
37	Image about informative meeting with representatives in Bangui.jpg
38	Image about informative meeting with representatives in Bangui.jpg
39	Image about informative meeting with representatives in Bangui.jpg
40	Image about informative meeting with representatives in Bangui.jpg
41	Image about informative meeting with representatives in Bangui.jpg
42	Image about informative meeting with representatives in Bangui.jpg
43	Image about informative meeting with representatives in Bangui.jpg
44	Image about informative meeting with representatives in Bangui.jpg
45	Février 2020_Fiches de sensibilisation.pdf
46	Fevrier 2020_sensibilisation faites par les chasseurs formés..pdf
47	Janvier 2020.pdf
48	Juillet 2020_Fiche de présence pour les réunion et sensibilisation.pdf
49	Lettre de demande de création du groupement envoyée par la communauté..pdf
50	Stakeholder engagement.pdf
Location and GIS figures	
51	Instance 1.kml
52	Instance 2.kml
53	Project Area.kml

54	Reference Area.kml
55	01_General_Location\André Félix National Park.shp
56	01_General_Location\Country limit .shp
57	01_General_Location\Hunting_Zones.shp
58	01_General_Location\Project Area.shp
59	01_General_Location\Reference Area.shp
60	01_General_Location\Villages.shp
61	01_General_Location\Yata Ngaya Wildlife Reserve.shp
62	01_General_Location\Zémongo Wildlife Reserve.shp
63	02_Land_cover_2015_2016\Country limit.shp
64	02_Land_cover_2015_2016\Instance1.shp
65	02_Land_cover_2015_2016\Instance2.shp
66	02_Land_cover_2015_2016\Project Area.shp
67	02_Land_cover_2015_2016\Reference Area.shp
68	02_Land_cover_2015_2016\Villages.shp
69	08_Leakage\20221214_Leakbelt_Chinko.shp
70	RASTER\Land_cover_2015_2016.tif
71	RASTER\LC_eligible_sa_amend.tif
215	PAA1_Eligible.kmz PAA2_Eligible.kmz PAA3_Eligible.kmz Leakage_Eligible.kmz Project Area.kmz Reference Area.kmz Proxy Area.kmz Instance Area.kmz
216	Converted_Perimeter.shp Threatened_Perimeter.shp
218	Parameters of Conversion Forest RA2 Chinko 2001-2023. Southpole, GIS Team. 12/07/2023.
219	Land Cover maps 2001-2002 and 2015-2016.
220	Matthew C. Hansen, Peter V. Potapov, Scott J. Goetz, Svetlana Turubanova, Alexandra Tyukavina, Alexander Krylov, Anil Kommareddy, Alexey Egorov. Mapping tree height distributions in Sub-Saharan Africa using Landsat 7 and 8 data. Remote Sensing of Environment, Volume 185, 2016. (https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0034425716300530)
221	Peter Potapov, Xinyuan Li, Andres Hernandez-Serna, Alexandra Tyukavina, Matthew C. Hansen, Anil Kommareddy, Amy Pickens, Svetlana Turubanova, Hao Tang, Carlos Edibaldo Silva, John Armston, Ralph Dubayah, J. Bryan Blair, Michelle Hofton. Mapping global forest canopy height through integration of GEDI and Landsat data. Remote Sensing of Environment. Volume 253, 2021, (https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0034425720305381)
Ownership	
72	2014_Chinko 50year agreement.pdf
73	2020_Chinko 25year agreement.pdf
74	Journal Officiel.pdf
75	0 - Introduction.docx

76	01 - CHINKO - Chinko 50 year agreement signed.pdf
77	1 - Dec 2018 - Participatory workshop to review the draft of PPP-Chinko.pdf
78	02 - MOU APN-CP signed.pdf
79	2 - Jan 2019 - Meeting to review articles of the draft PPP-Chinko.pdf
80	3 - May 2019 - Communication to the Council of Ministers regarding the PPP agreement to be signed with APN.pdf
81	4 - July 3 2019 - Interministerial committee to review & approve the PPP agreement.pdf
82	5 - July 9-10 2019 - Fifth interministerial committee workshop to review & approve the PPP between CAR and APN.pdf
83	6 - July 17-18 2019 - Briefing note for the Council of Ministers regarding the PPP between APN & CAR gvt.pdf
84	7 - July 29 2019 - Notification of approval from the Council of Ministers to have the Chinko PPP signed by the Minister of W&F.pdf
85	8 - July 31 2019 - Request to the CAR Assembly from the Ministry of Water and Forest to get the approval to sign the Chinko PPP with APN.pdf
86	9 - Jan 15 2020 - Audition of the Ministry of W&F by the Assembly Office regarding the Chinko PPP to be signed.pdf
87	10 - Apr 2 2020 - Decision of the Assembly notified by its President to authorize the Minister of W&F to signed the Chinko PPP.pdf
88	11 - 2019.01.08 - Atelier de relecture des articles du PPP 2020.pdf
89	A. Letter from the President of the Economic & Social Council of the Assembly to the President of the Assembly regarding the PPP Chinko.pdf
Start date	
90	APN_AnnualReport_2014_English.pdf
91	APN_AnnualReport_2015_English.pdf
92	APN_AnnualReport_2016_English.pdf
93	201601_January Monthly Report.docx
94	201602_February Monthly Report.docx
95	201603_March Monthly Report.docx
96	201604_April Monthly Report.docx
97	201605_May Monthly Report.docx
98	201606_June Monthly Report.docx
99	201607_July Monthly Report.docx
100	201608_August Monthly Report.docx
101	201609_September Monthly Report.docx
102	201610_October Monthly Report.docx
103	201611_November Monthly Report.docx
SOPs and Policies	
104	APN Human Rights Statement of Principles.pdf
105	APN Law Enforcement SOP Manual.pdf
106	Human Resources Manual.pdf
107	AP Procédure_Missions_Réunions.pdf
108	APN Health and Safety SOP.pdf
109	APN Medical Emergency SOP Manual.pdf
110	Procédure MEDEVAC CHINKO PROJECT.pdf

111	APN Grievance Mechanism.pdf
112	Blom, Yamindou, Prins, 2004.pdf
113	Chinko - Mécanisme de feedbacks, plaintes et réponses.pdf
114	Human Rights Training Curriculum.pdf
Carbon calculations	
115	231115_Ex ante ER summary.xlsx 231115_Summary_areas.xlsx 231115_VM0009_FU3_Ex ante ER_PAA1.xlsx 231115_VM0009_FU3_Ex ante ER_PAA2.xlsx 231115_VM0009_FU3_Ex ante ER_PAA3.xlsx
118	PDR 38_Proxy.pptx
Biodiversity	
119	Chinko Species List - mammals over 100g - Aebischer Thierry - PhD - 2019 1.JPG
120	Chinko Species List - mammals over 100g - Aebischer Thierry - PhD - 2019 2.JPG
121	Chinko Species List - mammals over 100g - Aebischer Thierry - PhD - 2019 3.JPG
122	2004_BlomPrins_StatusOfTheProtectedAreasOfTheCentralAfricanRepublic.pdf
123	2013_An Update on African Elephant Loxodonta Africana in the ChinkoMbari Drainage Basin, CAR.pdf
124	2013_Chinko - Evidence of African wild dogs in the Central African Republic.pdf
125	2013_Poulsenetal.pdf
126	2017_Chinko - Pan troglodytes schweinfurthii - Aebischer et al Supplement.pdf
127	2017_Chinko - Pan troglodytes schweinfurthii.pdf
128	2017_Luizza_TranshumantPastoralismIssue.pdf
129	2017_TRAFFIC_Garamba-Bili-Chinko.pdfOther information
130	Aebischer T, 2017.pdf
131	Aebischer T, 2020.pdf
132	Ondoua Ondoua G, 2017.pdf
133	South Sudan Ministry of Environment, 2011.pdf
Other information	
134	PDD_Summary_Chinko_REDD_CAR_EN.docx
135	PDD_Summary_Chinko_REDD_CAR_FR.docx
136	Annex 1_Chinko REDD+ Theory of Change.xlsx
137	Annex 4_Baseline definition.pdf
138	Annex 5_Grid classification.pdf RegularGrid_classification_2001_2023_Chinko_intepretation_RA1.pdf RegularGrid_classification_2001_2023_Chinko_intepretation_RA2.pdf
139	Annex 6_Climate monitoring plan.pdf
140	Annex 7_QA&QC procedure for GIS products.pdf
141	Annex 8_Deforestation and conversion parameters calculations.pdf
142	Annex 1 Project development.pptx
143	Annex 2 Safeguards Materials.pptx
144	Annex 3 List of intended stakeholders and tracking spreadsheet.xlsx
145	Annex 4 Example - Consultation Agenda.pdf
146	Annex 5 Key project information.docx

147	Annex 6 Invitation Letter LSC example.docx
148	Annex 7 List of participants or attendees.xlsx
149	Annex 8 Comment register_grievance mechanism.xlsx
150	African Parks LSC supplementary material Posters\1-climate_components.pdf
151	African Parks LSC supplementary material Posters\1-global_mean_temperature_and_sea_level.pdf
152	African Parks LSC supplementary material Posters\1-impacts_of_climate_change.pdf
153	African Parks LSC supplementary material Posters\1-sea_level_rise.pdf
154	African Parks LSC supplementary material Posters\1-the_main_parts_of_the_earth.pdf
155	African Parks LSC supplementary material Posters\2-Human Impacts on the Greenhouse Effect .pdf
156	African Parks LSC supplementary material Posters\2-human_impacts_on_the_carbon_cycle.pdf
157	African Parks LSC supplementary material Posters\2-natural_carbon_cycle.pdf
158	African Parks LSC supplementary material Posters\2-the_carbon_cycle.pdf
159	African Parks LSC supplementary material Posters\2-what_is_CO2_.pdf
160	African Parks LSC supplementary material Posters\3-combined_timeline.pdf
161	African Parks LSC supplementary material Posters\4-PES_agreement_between_neighbors.pdf
162	African Parks LSC supplementary material Posters\4-PES_agreement_between_tp_and_fo.pdf
163	African Parks LSC supplementary material Posters\5-carbon_calculation.pdf
164	African Parks LSC supplementary material Posters\5-carbon_credit_transaction.pdf
165	African Parks LSC supplementary material Posters\5-REDD+_activity.pdf
166	African Parks LSC supplementary material Posters\Copy of How to Use (posters).pdf
167	African Parks LSC supplementary materials PowerPoints\Session 1. Understanding the basics of climate and climate change.pdf
168	African Parks LSC supplementary materials PowerPoints\Session 2. Understanding the Causes of Climate change-the carbon cycle.pdf
169	African Parks LSC supplementary materials PowerPoints\Session 3. Climate Change Policies and Action.pdf
170	African Parks LSC supplementary materials PowerPoints\Session 4. Introduction to Payments for Ecosystem Services.pdf
171	African Parks LSC supplementary materials PowerPoints\Session 5. ToT Intro to REDD+.pdf
172	Local Stakeholders Consultation guidelines and considerations.pdf
214	Etude socioéconomique de Chinko et sa Périphérie. African Park Network. 2020.
215	230810_Deforestation distance.xlsx
216	230926_Summary_areas.xlsx
217	Special Report on the status of the former Hunting Area 17
NPRR-Non Permanence Risk Report	
173	221209_Chinko-Non-Permanence-Risk-Report PDD.docx
174	221209_Chinko-Risk-Report-Calculation-Tool.xls
175	1. Internal Risks\210818_CashFlow_2017_2030.xlsx
176	1. Internal Risks\Conservation agreements\2014_Chinko 50 year agreement signed.pdf
177	1. Internal Risks\Conservation agreements\2020_Chinko 25 year agreement signed.pdf
178	1. Internal Risks\Conservation agreements\Journal Officiel.pdf

179	1. Internal Risks\CVs\Operations manager - Loren Lungren\CV LUNGREN Loren 2020 English.docx
180	1. Internal Risks\CVs\5. Research Manager Thierry Aebischer\Aebischer_Thierry_CV.pdf
181	1. Internal Risks\CVs\2. Head of Finance Christian Makaya\CV - Christian Makaya.doc
182	1. Internal Risks\CVs\4. HR & Admin Manager Henry Dunia\CV henry Engv20191128@1213.ok.pdf
183	1. Internal Risks\CVs\6. SPM Alizath Minoti\CV Lisa Minotti 2020.pdf
184	1. Internal Risks\CVs\3. Health Manager Dr Arsene\Dr Arsène WETESHE_CV.pdf
185	1. Internal Risks\CVs\Park manager - Olivier Blaise\Career Summary BLAISE 1 page summary (1).pdf
186	1. Internal Risks\CVs\1. ECOFAC Cordin Armand Serge\CURRICULUM VITAE-Armand Program-112020.docx
187	1. Internal Risks\Project Longevity\Institutional path PPP 2020\0 - Introduction.docx
188	1. Internal Risks\Project Longevity\Institutional path PPP 2020\01 - CHINKO - Chinko 50 year agreement signed.pdf
189	1. Internal Risks\Project Longevity\Institutional path PPP 2020\1 - Dec 2018 - Participatory workshop to review the draft of PPP-Chinko.pdf
190	1. Internal Risks\Project Longevity\Institutional path PPP 2020\02 - MOU APN-CP signed.pdf
191	1. Internal Risks\Project Longevity\Institutional path PPP 2020\2 - Jav 2019 - Meeting to review articles of the draft PPP-Chinko.pdf
192	1. Internal Risks\Project Longevity\Institutional path PPP 2020\3 - May 2019 - Communication to the Council of Ministers regarding the PPP agreement to be signed with APN.pdf
193	1. Internal Risks\Project Longevity\Institutional path PPP 2020\4 - July 3 2019 - Interministerial committee to review & approve the PPP agreement.pdf
194	1. Internal Risks\Project Longevity\Institutional path PPP 2020\5 - July 9-10 2019 - Fifth interministerial committee workshop to review & approve the PPP between CAR and APN.pdf
195	1. Internal Risks\Project Longevity\Institutional path PPP 2020\6 - July 17-18 2019 - Briefing note for the Council of Ministers regarding the PPP between APN & CAR gvt.pdf
196	1. Internal Risks\Project Longevity\Institutional path PPP 2020\7 - July 29 2019 - Notification of approval from the Council of Ministers to have the Chinko PPP signed by the Minister of W&F.pdf
197	1. Internal Risks\Project Longevity\Institutional path PPP 2020\8 - July 31 2019 - Request to the CAR Assembly from the Ministry of Water and Forest to get the approval to sign the Chinko PPP with APN.pdf
198	1. Internal Risks\Project Longevity\Institutional path PPP 2020\9 - Jan 15 2020 - Audition of the Ministry of W&F by the Assembly Office regarding the Chinko PPP to be signed.pdf
199	1. Internal Risks\Project Longevity\Institutional path PPP 2020\10 - Apr 2 2020 - Decision of the Assembly notified by its President to authorize the Minister of W&F to signed the Chinko PPP.pdf
200	1. Internal Risks\Project Longevity\Institutional path PPP 2020\A. Letter from the President of the Economic & Social Council of the Assembly to the President of the Assembly tegarding the PPP Chinko.pdf
201	2. External Risks\Political Risk\wgidataset.xlsx
202	2. External Risks\Community Engagement\SDAT 2019-2020.pdf
203	3. Natural Risks\Fire analysis\Burned_areas_dNBR.xlsx
204	3. Natural Risks\Fire analysis\Fire management plan Eastern CAR.pdf
205	3. Natural Risks\Extreme Weather\Flood Risk_CAR.pdf
206	3. Natural Risks\Extreme Weather\Droughts\2014_Koerner et al.pdf
207	3. Natural Risks\Extreme Weather\Droughts\2015_Ruppert et al.pdf
208	3. Natural Risks\Extreme Weather\Droughts\2015_Zeppel et al.pdf

209	3. Natural Risks\Extreme Weather\Droughts\2019_Sankaran.pdf
210	3. Natural Risks\Pest and Disease\1999_Knops et al.pdf
211	3. Natural Risks\Pest and Disease\2008_Heong.pdf
212	3. Natural Risks\Pest and Disease\2015_Pfaffle et al.pdf
Carbon stock changes	
213	CSV files and images: - Instance 1_burned_areas_with_reburns_2001_2020_xx.csv - Instance 1_burned_areas_without_reburns_2001_2020_xx.csv - Instance 2_burned_areas_with_reburns_2001_2020_xx.csv - Instance 2_burned_areas_without_reburns_2001_2020_xx.csv - LcLu_Descriptions

2.4 Interviews

Interviews were performed as part of the validation process in order to confirm and verify the information provided in the documents (see section 2.3). The AENOR audit team met with individuals with various roles in the project. This included a series of interviews with in-country staff that support the mission of the project. In addition, interview discussions were conducted with different stakeholders of the project such as: management team, employees, local communities, transhumant pastoralists and governmental institutions. The following table summarizes the interviews carried out during the process. The AENOR's audit team conducted interviews with stakeholders mentioned above, in order to confirm selected information and to resolve issues identified in the document review. AENOR was responsible for selecting people to interview after the PP provided the full list of employees, the organizational chart or the roles of different people among the communities. AENOR decided which ones from the lists were selected to be interviewed, individually or in a group. The interviews were carried out in different rooms in which the audit team had the opportunity to ask about everything related to the project, engagement, grievances or whatever else without their declarations being affected. In the places out of Kocho, for example in Bangassou, where AENOR interviewed community people, the VVB used two school rooms to perform the interviews.

The field visit took place from 16/11/2022 to 21/11/2022 in which the audit team visited the project area, interviewed key stakeholders, staff and other related experts, and also reviewed the monitoring report and supporting documents. The people interviewed were those directly affected or involved in the project activity and in some cases were just indirectly affected. Finally, some activities stated within the PDD were also reviewed during the on-site visit and verified with the information provided.

In addition to the field visit, some meetings via teleconferences were carried out during the year 2022 in order to additionally review the calculation and verify the processing data from satellite images. Another remote interview was the one carried out with Dr. Leif Brottem, who is an expert in pastoralism in Africa as explained in sections below. The scope of the validation was to assess the conformance of information in the PDD with the onsite information.

The following table shows the interviews carried out during the process. Note that within this validation report, supporting evidences (documents, interviews) are referred by its number in first column of the lists in sections 2.3, 2.4 or the onsite visit activity.

	Name	Role/Relation to the Project	Date Physical	of
--	------	------------------------------	------------------	----

			interview
1	Cathrine Hoffman Jensen	AP CAR Special Projects Manager	16/11/2022
2	Ellie Lamare	AP CAR – Funding & Reporting Manager in Chinko	16/11/2022
3	Matthias De Beenhouwer	Nature based Solutions Manager	16/11/2022
4	Davor Basanic	Law Enforcement Mentor	16/11/2022
5	Pierre-Etienne Martineau	Financial Controller	16/11/2022
6	Arsene Weteshe	Doctor	16/11/2022
7	Thierry Aebischer	Conservation Manager AP CAR	16/11/2022
8	Adama Bourba	Community Representative Damaye	17/11/2022
9	Ramabu Adamou	Community Representative Hauda	17/11/2022
10	Alima Bourba	Community Representative damaye	17/11/2022
11	Awa Oussman	Community Representative Orda	17/11/2022
12	Naruam Tilne	Community Representative Damaye	17/11/2022
13	Manon Labourer	Transhumance coordinator AP CAR	17/11/2022
14	Adam Bilal	Responsable De la FNEC - Fédération Nationale des Eleveurs Centrafricains National Fédération of Central African Herders	17/11/2022
15	Hamza Mahamat	Rakaja tribesman merchant	17/11/2022
16	Ibrahim Suleiman	Livestock Merchant	17/11/2022
17	Mahamat Ibrahim	Livestock Merchant	17/11/2022
18	Hiszome Bello	Livestock Merchant	17/11/2022
19	Ali Osman	Livestock Merchant	17/11/2022
20	Amadai Oumon	Livestock Merchant	17/11/2022
21	Mahamat Dazi	Livestock Merchant	17/11/2022
22	Mahamat Abdalla Oussman	Livestock Merchant	17/11/2022
23	Amadou mahamat	Livestock Merchant	17/11/2022
24	Paul Nestor Nodji	Technicien SUP Chief Sector	17/11/2022
25	Joshua Jackman	Pilot AP CAR	17/11/2022
26	Alfaya Aroune	Transhumance pastoralist	17/11/2022
27	Hamza Amat	Transhumance pastoralist	17/11/2022
28	Oussman Soudami	Transhumance pastoralist	17/11/2022
29	Nora Idriss	Transhumance pastoralist	17/11/2022
30	Amat Adulaya	Transhumance pastoralist	17/11/2022
31	Aladji Siroma	Transhumance pastoralist	17/11/2022
32	Tignassi loeis Armard	AP CAR worker Welding	18/11/2022
33	Mamadou Aroun	AP CAR worker Mechanic	18/11/2022
34	Balinga Privat	AP CAR worker Cook/chef	18/11/2022
35	Mohamed Hady Oumazo	AP CAR Assistant Director Transhumance	18/11/2022
36	Boukar Ghislain	AP CAR Responsible for ECHO team	18/11/2022
37	Mahamat Adoun	AP CAR Responsible for TANGO team	18/11/2022
38	Kpemalema Edjand	AP CAR instructor	18/11/2022
39	Moundougou	AP CAR Ranger (woman)	18/11/2022

	Erica		
40	Nandanest Cyrc	AP CAR Responsible for the laboratory	18/11/2022
41	Kikili Saint	AP CAR Assistant Supretendant control room	18/11/2022
42	Bassoumba Justin	AP CAR Controller (Control room)	18/11/2022
43	Saad Zakaria	AP CAR Chef Dop	18/11/2022
44	Florine Kolobo	AP CAR Responsible for logistics	18/11/2022
45	Siguindo Guy	AP CAR SDAT	18/11/2022
46	Kabba Dalui Sonzo	AP CAR Admin Human resources	18/11/2022
47	Bazenko Urbain	Community President Hunting Association Bakouma	18/11/2022
48	Babili Armand	Community President Hunting Association Ouanda	18/11/2022
49	Foulou Samson	Community President youth Association Nzako	18/11/2022
50	Baka Grace Odieu	Community President youth Association Ndéguirou	18/11/2022
51	Yangolimi Peguy	Community President OFCA women group Kitika	18/11/2022
52	Dagbouda Odile	Community President OFCA women group Vougba Balifondo	18/11/2022
53	Lafandeya Peter A	Community President of farmers group Bakouma	18/11/2022
54	Manzaya Lorista	Community President of youth Vougba	18/11/2022
55	Dadagba Jean	Community representative Ndéguirou	18/11/2022
56	Nasrou Ruffin	Community President Miners Fode community	18/11/2022
57	Boka Ambroise	Cultivator fisherman Lengo community	18/11/2022
58	Magazin Roger	Chief of Gbolo Village	18/11/2022
59	Mbolifouefele Gabin	Depute Bakouma	19/11/2022
60	Maleyad A cyrice	Sous Prefect Bangassou	19/11/2022
61	Guekpou Armand	President Federal Peche Bangassou	19/11/2022
62	Ali Theophile	Directeur régional d'elevage et de la santé animale du Mbomou	19/11/2022
63	Ngbassayo Jean	AP CAR Point Focal Djemah	19/11/2022
64	Bengeure Pionette	Prefect Mbomou	19/11/2022
65	Adam Idris Sende	Depute Bakouma Ouanda-Djallé	19/11/2022
66	Bendot-Gueguet Yacka	Sous Prefect Yalinga	19/11/2022
67	Jean M. Zepio	Sultan Rafai	19/11/2022
68	Masango Iréné	President De La Jeunesse Nzacko	19/11/2022
69	Bolongo Daniel	Animateur Groupe de Concertation pour le Développement Local Local Committee of Concertation and Development - (GCDL) Dembia	19/11/2022
70	NHI-Lecket Geoffrey	Representative of artisanal Miners Fodé	19/11/2022
71	Presley Koyaweda	AP CAR Community development manager	19/11/2022
72	Jean Baptiste Mamang Kanga	Park Manager Chinko	20/11/2022
73	Binza Bongo Joseph	Sultan of Rafai representative	20/11/2022
74	Akoumbayo	Counsellor of Rafai	20/11/2022

	Simon		
75	Rafaï Marcel	Representant Pecheur in Rafaï	20/11/2022
76	Ngama Germain	Representative of Agriculture in Rafaï	20/11/2022
77	Makadounga Christoph	Representant Chasseur	20/11/2022
78	Kitipou Junior	English teacher in Rafaï	20/11/2022
79	Abdamane Ndjaiga	Head of herders group	20/11/2022
80	Salle Bamy	Herder Rafaï	20/11/2022
81	Aladji Amadou Dingi	Herder Rafaï	20/11/2022
82	Aladji Oumarou	Imam Rafaï	20/11/2022
83	Manoum Amadou	Herder Rafaï	20/11/2022
84	Doubairou Ndjaiga	Herder Rafaï	20/11/2022
85	Salli Issa	Chef Village in Arolo	20/11/2022
86	Adamou Salle	President Jeunesse	20/11/2022
87	Seni Amadjoda	Herder Rafaï	20/11/2022
88	Nounou Labi	Herder Rafaï	20/11/2022
89	Issa Anadjoda	Herder Rafaï	20/11/2022
90	Arouna Labi	Herder Rafaï	20/11/2022
91	Ismael Oumarou	Herder Rafaï	20/11/2022
92	Mamoud Issa	Conveilleur	20/11/2022
93	Amadou Laby	Cultivateur Eleveur	20/11/2022
94	Kangamago Arubeni	Herder Rafaï	20/11/2022
95	Molinabarani Fulbert	Herder Rafaï	20/11/2022
96	Kindo Meshin	Echo-monitor AP CAR Chinko	20/11/2022
97	Lifaky Reny	Echo-monitor AP CAR Chinko	20/11/2022
98	Padio Wilfrid	Echo-monitor AP CAR Chinko	20/11/2022
99	Saraka Nanasse	Echo-monitor AP CAR Chinko	20/11/2022
100	Jounoussa Alihou	Herder Rafaï	20/11/2022
101	Hadhamou Issa	Herder Rafaï	20/11/2022
102	Oumarou Aridou	Herder Rafaï	20/11/2022
103	Jahouba Sali	Herder Rafaï	20/11/2022
104	Hanadou Adamou	Herder Rafaï	20/11/2022
105	Alison Anadjoda	Herder Rafaï	20/11/2022
106	Abdoukarine Labi	Herder Rafaï	20/11/2022
107	Boubakari Sali	Herder Rafaï	20/11/2022
108	Soule GILdas	Chief of Staff in the General Ministry of Environment CAR	21/11/2022
109	Mageot Serge	In Charge of the Mission of the Ministry of Environment	21/11/2022
110	Ndedti Celestin	Director of cabinet Ministry of Environment	21/11/2022
111	Yatolimepale Achille	Director Police de Environment	21/11/2022
112	Ndjiki Master	In Charge of the Mission of the Ministry of Environment	21/11/2022
113	Leif Brottem	Grinnel College - Expert in transhumance and pastoralism in protected areas in Western and Central Africa	26/10/2022
114	Simon Rico	Senior Project Coordinator at South Pole	Throughout

	Correa		the audit
115	Jonathan Konz	Technical Advisor at South Pole	30/07/2021
116	William Martinez	GIS Expert at South Pole	Throughout the audit
117	Sofía Lozano	GIS expert at South Pole	Throughout the audit

The original lists of interviewees are found in Appendix 2.

2.5 Site Inspections

The objectives of the on-site inspections performed were mainly to cross check the description provided in the PDD, related to the VCS and CCB requirement implemented by the proponent, including:

- Ensure that the geographic area of the project as reported in the PDD and the supporting KML is in accordance with the VCS standard 4.1
- Perform a risk-based review of the project area to ensure that the project conforms to all other requirements of the VCS rules and the methodology.
- Observe the Project Proponent's evidence and collect and record data in order to assess whether data collection techniques conform to the monitoring plan and related documentation and to evaluate data quality control systems.
- Select samples of data and information for verification in order to meet a reasonable level of assurance and to meet the materiality requirements of the project, as required by Section 4.1.8 of the VCS Standard;
- Perform a risk-based review of the project area to ensure that the project is in conformance the eligibility requirements of the VCS rules and the applicability conditions of the methodology; and
- Interview local authorities to confirm that the project operates in accordance with current permits and authorizations and its relationship with local actors and communities.
- Interview the key personnel involved in the mentoring and observe monitoring practices
- Review activities such as patrolling, monitoring or trainings.

The schedule that the audit team followed during the visit was similar to the following:

Activities	Location	Date	Duration (hours estimated)	Day
Arrival Bangui	Bangui	15/11/2022	Not applicable	0
Stay in Bangui	Bangui	15/11/2022	Not applicable	
Flight from Bangui to Kocho	Bangui	16/11/2022	Not applicable	1
Initial meeting				
Presentation of the audit team. Confirmation of the audit plan	Kocho	16/11/2022	2h	

Working with Chinko management team day 1 - The audit team will dedicate to Interview and perform meetings with stakeholders such as: - Project proponent - African Parks' workers - Verification of the implementation schedule - Review of the installations - Verification of tourism implementation	Kocho	16/11/2022	6h	
Trip to International Herders Area	Kocho – Sam-Ouandja	17/11/2022	1h	
Meetings with International Herders - Interviews and meetings with stakeholders: Transhumant pastoralists - Observation of herder's area delimitation - Activities implemented to control damages from pastoralists.	Sam-Ouandja	17/11/2022	6h	2
Trip to Kocho	Sam-Ouandja – Kocho	17/11/2022	1h	
Working with Chinko management team day 2 - Continue with verification of implementation activities of previous day. - Stakeholder engagement: - Access and dissemination of documentation - Informational meetings and information about costs, risks and benefits as well as the verification visit. - Stakeholder participation in decision. - Policies of the project	Kocho	18/11/2022	8h	3
Equal opportunities and rights laws				
Flight from Kocho to Bangassou	Kocho – Bangassou	19/11/2022	1,5h	
Discuss with the communities' representatives. Group meetings. - Interviews and meetings with stakeholders: - Local communities - Land-use and economic activities (slash-burn agriculture, Livestock, Hunting, Fishing, Harvesting of NTFPs, Artisanal mining, Trade...)	Bangassou	19/11/2022	5 h	4

Flight from Bangassou to Kocho	Bangassou - Kocho	19/11/2022	1,5h	
Working with Chinko management team day 3 - The audit team checked the implementation of activities in the project area related to training, patrolling, monitoring, reporting, etc. - Other activities would be regarding climate impacts but also to Community and Biodiversity such as inventories, reports of monitoring. Definitely the assessment of evidence physical, documental and testimonial for pending issues and others. - Wrap up in Kocho and pending issues	Kocho / Rafaï	20/11/2022	8h	5
Flight to Bangui	Kocho - Bangui	21/11/2022	1,5	
Final day /pending issues/ - Project ownership - Climate and carbon calculation - Ministry of environment (representatives) - Other topics depending on logistic - Final meeting and closure of the audit	Kocho	21/11/2022	6,5h	6

Specifically, day 1 was dedicated to arriving at the HQ of AP CAR (Kocho), where the management team and the employees are working in the CCA project. The initial meeting was conducted and a brief presentation about Chinko, benefits and problems was carried out by Thierry Aebischer. After that, the management team was presented, and some interviews were carried out. The review of the facilities was the last task of the day.

Day 2 was dedicated in the morning to fly to the transhumant pastoralists area. It was a two-hour flight in which the VVB had the chance to view the Chinko and CAR landscape, analyzing the different ecosystems mentioned in the PDD while discussing with the pilots of each aircraft. The pilots also explained their roles in the daily task of patrolling and surveillance from the air as well as the way in which the data and parameters they gathered from the air were shared with the rest of the team. On arrival at Sam-Ouandja (Sam-Ouandja is a town located in the Central African Republic prefecture of Haute-Kotto near the border with Sudan. It has historically served as important arms trafficking hub for armed groups in Central African Republic), several interviews were performed with merchants, women, and the important group of transhumant pastoralists. The whole day was dedicated to interview these relevant groups and during the return to Kocho, more explanations about the project were provided by the pilots. The aerial view of Kocho from the aircraft was the last task of the day.

Day 3 was fully dedicated to interviewing staff from Chinko such as employees and other community members that were invited to Kocho. In these cases, the interviews were carried out individually or in groups of 2-3 people together with the audit team. The interviews were focused on assessing the risks,

costs and benefits; the documents and information sharing; the participation in the process; their rights about employees; the outside effects of the projects; the conditions in the area pre and post project implementation, etc.

Day 4, the audit team moved to Bangassou, where the CAPEP was being carried out. There, several interviews were performed with local communities, and within this group, there were people from various roles and sectors, such as hunters, fishermen, miners, leaders, or chiefs, etc. At the end, AENOR was introduced into all the CAPEP participants and asked about comments, doubts, or suggestions about the auditing process or comments about the project. Nothing relevant was mentioned.

Day 5, the audit team was divided in two groups: the first one stayed in Kocho, viewing the infrastructure such as the garage, the storage, the houses, or the chapel, and later, following the echo-monitoring team and the conservation manager in the BD monitoring activities. The installation of trap cameras was explained and showed by the echo team, as well as the track identification activity. The group followed a transect until arriving close to a waterhole. During these tracks, several animals were seen such as warthogs, waterbuck, giant forest hogs and mongoose among others. Finally, the echo-monitoring team created some early preventing fires as explained in the fire management plan to mitigate the fire risk. The second group flew to Rafai (is a town and sub-prefecture on the Chinko River, in the Central African Republic prefecture of Mbomou) and performed interviews with other community members, including local pastoralists and stakeholders from this area. At the end of the day, both groups went to see the groups of Giant Eland that AP CAR had in captivity for future monitoring and social experiments.

The last day, in the morning, the VVB reviewed policies, cashflow, trainings, medical kits and other topics. The final meeting was carried out in Kocho with all the management team. After that, the VVB flew to Bangui for a final meeting with representatives of the Ministry of Environment. Finally, a review of the calculations was performed between the VVB and the PP (30/07/2021, 15/12/2022 and other communications along the process).

2.6 Public Comments (*Rules 4.6*)

The PDD was listed on the Verra webpage for its public comments period as required by the standard, however, no comments were received during the 30-day period (22 June 2021 - 22 July 2021), therefore, there was no need to attend any inquiry.

2.7 Resolution of Findings

All documentation provided by the PP was assessed against the applicable version of the relevant VCS and CCB guidance document listed in section 1.2 of this report. Several clarification requests (CL) and corrective action requests (CAR) were raised and submitted to the PP, which addressed them either by providing the audit team with the requested information or by making the appropriate corrections. Updated versions of the documentation were submitted by the PP and the audit team reassessed them against the guidance documentation. This process was repeated iteratively until all CL and CAR were fully closed. Specifically, 3 CAR and 2 CL were raised and properly closed.

All findings issued by the AENOR audit team during the validation process have been closed. In accordance with Section 4.1.13 of the VCS Standard, all findings issued during the validation process and the inputs for their closure are described in Appendix 1 of this report.

2.7.1 Forward Action Requests

No Forward Action Requests were raised to the PP during this process.

3. VALIDATION FINDINGS

3.1 Summary of Project Benefits

Section 1 of the PDD provides information about the project benefits. The project includes the following four unique project benefits: to have a restored, well-functioning and sustainably managed protected area that serves as anchor area and contributes to the security of the larger landscape and the planning, execution and long-term management of natural resource use around the protected area; improved transhumance management and conflict mitigation with a better land use; promotion of sustainable and controlled natural resource use through ownership, training and monitoring of co-management zones with communities and increase the natural capital through the restoration of resilient and productive ecosystems.

In addition to these unique benefits, the project expects standardized benefits as: i) GHG emission reductions, ii) training of community members, iii) employment creation, iv) improvement of livelihoods, v) health services improvement, vi) education improvements, vii) improvement in access to water, viii) well-being improvement, and ix) biodiversity conservation.

In opinion of AENOR, the expected benefits are credible and well defined based on the project nature, the designed project activities and on the supporting documents provided by PP and evidence and information gathered from the onsite visit in CAR in November 2022. All the estimated benefits are monitorable considering the monitoring plan developed by the PP and all the benefits that will not be monitored are appropriately labeled as N/A (not applicable). The audit team deems that the estimated benefits by the end of the project lifetime reported on the PDD are credible, since are based on the current participants and achievements of the project from the project start date to the date of issue of the PDD.

3.2 General

3.2.1 Summary Description of the Project (G1.2)

The Chinko Conservation Area REDD+ Project is an initiative held by African Parks CAR, as Project Proponent, through a public-private partnership agreement with the Ministry of Forest Economy, Environment and Tourism. The project is planned as a grouped one, in which the long-term vision is to sustainably manage multiple sectors of eastern CAR in the prefectures of Mbomou, Haute-Kotto and Haut-Mbomou.

Other entities involved in the Project are African Parks Network (APN), that oversees the management of the project, and South Pole Carbon Asset Management Ltd, as technical support for the structuring, development and monitoring of the project in line with VCS and CCB guidelines.

The conditions prior to the implementation of the project had several factors that impacted the well-being of communities and community groups living on the periphery of the project area. These include insecurity in the region, persistent conflict between transhumant pastoralists and local agricultural

communities, lack of education and employment opportunities, and poor healthcare. These factors had an impact on the biodiversity of the region as well, where practices like unsustainable hunting and an economy of illegal wildlife trade, transhumant pastoralism, unsustainable agricultural practices, illegal and artisanal mining (both gold and diamonds) and logging are present.

Thus, the objectives of the project are:

- **Climate:** enhance the restoration of natural ecosystems, leading to increasing the CO₂ storage and avoiding the emissions resulting from disturbance and conversion.
- **Community:** Improve local communities' livelihoods through access to sustainable resources such as meat, fish, fruits, honey and medicinal plants, increasing well-being of the habitat that supports the ecosystem services they need. These include permanent access to high-quality freshwater even during the peak of dry season, protection of land from erosion and reduction of air pollution amongst others. Improved understanding of the benefits of wildlife and habitat conservation and the creation of a local constituency for conservation amongst local communities.
- **Biodiversity:** Increased natural capital through the restoration of resilient and productive ecosystems. The project aims to restore species rich and productive woodland and grassland savannas, tropical forests and productive freshwater systems. This will result in higher wildlife densities, expansion of species distribution and reintroduction of lost species.

The measures to be implemented are focused on targeting the main agents and drivers of deforestation and conversion, in order to give new opportunities that create change in the agents' behavior. These activities include: sensitization of the local communities and transhumance pastoralists, the establishment of sustainable practices, increase of employment opportunities, and continuation of biodiversity monitoring and protection of forest and grassland areas from human intervention among others. A comprehensive land use plan, which is being finalised, will ensure that positive benefits are maximized, guaranteeing that the area is protected in the future and that critical ecosystem services are maintained.

The project start date was 15 September 2016. In such month Chinko started the first campaign with sensitisation officers in the field informing the transhumance pastoralists of the importance of the project area and the necessity to avoid using the area as a route. This activity led to successful management of the cattle inside the project area during the 2016–2017 dry season. On the other hand, the crediting period runs from 15 September 2016 to 14 April 2045.

Upon the implementation of the project activities described above, the project is expected to generate an estimated annual average of net emissions reduction of 442,839 tCO₂e and a total of 4,558,205 tCO₂e for Sep 2016 – Dec 2026 period, according to the Non-Permanence Risk assessment the buffer discount obtained was 6.5% but the minimum assumed is 10%, therefore, after applying the buffer the average amount of tradable VCUs per year during this period is 398,553 and totaling 4,102,366 for Sep 2016 – Dec 2026 period. AENOR has reviewed all carbon calculation spreadsheets to determine the achieved emissions reductions.

Based on the documents reviewed and the information gathered through onsite direct interviews with a variety of stakeholders, AENOR deems that the description in the PDD is accurate, complete, and provides an understanding of the nature of the project.

It is the opinion of AENOR that African Parks has the requisite skills and capacity to implement activities related to the project. This opinion is based on feedback received during the many interviews (testimonials) done in the auditing process, but it has been confirmed, as well, through the evaluation of many reports submitted to AENOR that were developed for donors such as USAID, the EU and the US Embassy in CAR.

On the other hand, the study and research done by the PP to determine the agents and drivers of deforestation conclude that the main deforestation agents identified in the region are local communities (in areas with predominance of **Closed Canopy Forest –CCF-** cover) and transhumant pastoralists (in areas with predominance of **Open Woodland Savanna –OWS-** cover). Accordingly, and with the intention to reduce the impact of the transhumance, the project proposed activities that have been implemented and monitored. To reach the conclusion that Pastoralists are the main driver of deforestation in the woodland savanna, AENOR has performed several interviews with very different stakeholders, including Representatives of the Ministry of Environment, and all of them recognized that this group (pastoralists) are the main driver of deforestation in this forest type. Complementary, AENOR has consulted independent literature and performed an online interview with professor Leif Brottem, who is an expert in Pastoralism in this region of Africa and the conflict that this activity is performing in the Country and the natural areas.

On the other hand, to get the conclusion that local communities are the main driver of deforestation in the closed canopy forest, AENOR has also interviewed representatives from local communities, including representatives with different roles such as hunters, fishermen, women association or young association among others. AENOR also attended the CAPEP meeting (*Comite National Des Aires Protegees*) during the onsite visit, there, AENOR was able to understand different point of view for many agents and interviewed several deputies or high officials of different places (see chart in section 2.4.). During these interviews the VVB understood that the forest is constantly exploited by local communities and many times it entails the deforestation of the Closed Canopy Forest Cover areas. After several meetings and presentations with the African Parks team AENOR had a better understanding of the situation about how these community's activities were becoming illegal and the methods to avoid them. AENOR has clearly identified and verified the different types of deforestation according to different places and activities, and considers that the project proponent has also a clear understanding of the situation and they are on the right track to avoid both, deforestation and illegal activities. Complementary to the interviews carried out to different roles from local communities, AENOR has deeply reviewed a lot of information. Some of this information was included as evidence to the PDD, while another was sought by AENOR. All the sources were reviewed and crosschecked with the information gathered during the visit and the information from the PDD. AENOR considers that the information stated within the PDD about pastoralists and local communities is reliable and correct.

Multiple activities have been implemented in the project area by African Parks. These activities are clearly described and detailed in those reports but also in others such as the annual reports by AP. These annual reports are published on the AP website, then, they are available to the general public which it is deemed by AENOR as a proof of absolutely transparency and seriousness about their contents. Many of these activities related to transhumance are based on sensitisation, training, involvement in participation processes, the creation of an integrated strategy for this group, among others. AENOR personally reviewed the activities onsite, and the VVB was able to follow different field teams in their daily routines to comply with the stated activities. Some of the activities viewed were sensitization, monitoring, patrolling, trainings etc.

Another relevant activity designed and implemented by the Chinko project was the creation of the TANGO teams formed with many agents to interact with multiple groups of pastoralists. The work of these TANGO teams is essential to carry out meetings with pastoralists, to do monitoring of nomadic people found in the project doing transhumance, and to report pastoralist activity. AENOR has interviewed some of the staff of TANGO and deems that their tasks match with the reported in the PDD.

African Parks is definitely carrying out activities related to restoration, monitoring and evaluation of landscapes, related to engagement with all local stakeholders (including herder transhumance as a key group), education and strengthening of enterprises to accelerate economic development through income generating opportunities, many activities related to secure and protect the national parks and reserves, related to the development of infrastructures and governance frameworks.

Hence, it is clear for AENOR that AP has the capacity and skills to implement activities and that activities are being implemented to achieve the targets of the project. This is confirmed through testimonial evidence gathered during the auditing process from the local stakeholders but also from documents provided remotely such as the periodic reports done by AP to its donors, pictures and/or mappings also provided and above all, the information gathered from the onsite visit.

Thus, AENOR deems that the implementation plan is on progress based on such evidence. The project was designed for the long term thus, some activities such as sensitization of local communities, training activities, governance of the area with a better coordination of local governments and communities, will need to be continued over the years.

The information described in the PDD is in the opinion of AENOR accurate and reliable based on evidence provided. Sources of data and information are well tracked with a clear identification of authors and dates. Evidence is conclusive regarding the assessments done, and allow AENOR to conclude that an implementation plan is defined for the project, and it is being implemented with success by AP which evidence capacities, skills and means to do it.

3.2.2 Physical Parameters (G1.3)

Section 2.1.5 of the PDD provides summary information on the climate, soils, watersheds, topography and ecosystems in the project area.

The audit team was able to assess the physical description of the project during the onsite visit. One of the activities carried out during the audit was the flight over the CCA and surroundings, in which the audit team was able to compare the different ecosystems (tropical forest, forest and grassland). Also, the vast hydrology network was seen from the air as well as the numerous valleys, rocks and rifts. The audit team crosschecked the information viewed and those provided with the original sources, cited also in the PDD. AENOR considers that the information is correctly reported and deemed as credible by the audit team since it has been retrieved from reliable sources, such as FAO, UNHCR, Environment Ministry, Academia, etc.

3.2.3 Social Parameters (G1.3)

The two main stakeholders as well as agents of deforestation of the project are: the Transhumant pastoralists and local communities. Within the last group, the area falls mainly within three local administrative areas within the Mbomou prefecture. These three sub-prefectures are Bakouma,

Bangassou and Rafaï as well as Yalinga in the Haute-Kotto prefecture. The project started with an area consisting of four former hunting zones, Bas Chinko, Chinko, Mbari and Vovodo Chinko, which were created in 1972. Later, the hunting zone Trois Riviere was Added as PAA3.

CCA is uninhabited and only has limited road access and minor infrastructure development. The headquarters of the project are located 256 km from Bakouma (the nearest local authority with a population of between 800 and 1,200 inhabitants) and 370 km from Bangassou, the regional capital.

The following villages are located around the periphery of the project area: Nzako-Bac (Yakossi), Oua (Lavougba), Fodé, Kitika, Ouanda, Dénguïro, Agoumar, Sélime, Madabazouma, Banga, Yongofondo, Bangassou, Ouango, Yongossaba, Vougba, Balifondo, Rafaï, Mogba, Meskiné, Katembour, Guérékindo, Dembia, Baroua, Derbissaka, Djéma, Lengo, Bakouma, Nzako, Yalinga, Bria, Bani, Bangana, Sam-Ouandjia, Ouanda-Djallé, Ouadda, Birao, AmDafok, Karamadar, Banima and Daradou. Isolated communities make their living through small-scale slash and burn agriculture, livestock rearing, hunting (both legal and illegal), fishing, harvesting of non-timber forest products (NTFPs), artisanal mining, small trade, temporary employment and handicrafts. Further information about the community's economy is described in section 2.1.6 of the PDD.

Regarding to the transhumance pastoralism, although this activity and its transhumance has a long history in Darfur (Western Sudan), it has only recently become relevant in CAR⁵⁶. Fulani presence in Darfur dates to the 17th century and trade was primarily conducted within Sudan and with neighbouring Chad, and herds rarely ventured further south than northern Vakaga in CAR. However, their pattern of movement was fundamentally disrupted by the Darfur War (2003-present) and South Sudanese Independence (2011).

The Darfur War had a devastating effect on pastoralism. Violence caused massive displacement, and whole communities were razed. Also, with South Sudanese independence in 2011, many feared persecutions by the newly independent regime, and this resulted in a massive shift into CAR⁴⁴.

AENOR has reviewed all the information provided in the PDD about the social parameters of the project as well as different stakeholders and their way of life. By the onsite visit, the audit team was able to interview people from all the stakeholders' groups: pastoralists, Chinko workers, people from the communities. The information gathered has been compared with the PDD and external sources. Therefore, AENOR considers that the information is reliable and correct.

3.2.4 Project Zone Map (G1.4-7, G1.13, CM1.2, B1.2)

The project area is bordered along most of its east and west area by the Chinko and Mbari Rivers. Central African Republic is located in an ecological transition zone. In the southernmost part, the closed canopy forest, mostly dense and humid, covers about 15% of Central African territory, this forest corresponds to the northern part of the closed forest in the Congo basin. The extreme north of the CAR is made up of Sahelian shrubland while the central part of east CAR is made up of East Sudanian savanna and North Congolian forest-savanna mosaic and the south dominated by Northeastern Congolian lowland forests.

The PDD provided by the PP includes, among other data, the area of different forest types within the project area. The information included in this document and supporting evidence was crosschecked with

the *kml* and shapefile /51-62/ of the project area and other project boundaries provided by the PP and the information captured on the African Parks webpage.

AENOR verified the total area of the project and that there is no overlapping with any other project in the country. AENOR has visited places outside of CCA such as Bangassou in the southwest of the project area, Rafaï in the south of the project area and Sam-Ouandja in the North (Sam-Ouandja could also be referred as Ouandja-Kotto), and during those trips AENOR was able to identify the different parameters of the project according to the PDD description. AENOR recorded the track of those trips and afterwards it was compared with the SHP files /51-62/ to confirm the correct location of the communities and zone map.

It is the opinion of AENOR that the project zone map is accurate and complies with the requirements of the CCB Standard.

3.2.5 Stakeholder Identification (G1.5)

According to section 2.1.8 of the PDD, to develop the project in a specific area, although the Chinko Conservation Area (CCA) is uninhabited, it was important to consider any local communities and other stakeholders in the larger region. A process of stakeholder identification and analysis was therefore essential.

For the identification of stakeholders, the influence area of the project was established, as well as the communities and other stakeholders that will be directly or indirectly impacted by the project. The stakeholder identification also considered the main drivers and agents of deforestation and degradation in the project area.

The main stakeholders that were identified that could be directly or indirectly impacted by the project were the local communities that live on the periphery of the Chinko Conservation Area and the transhumant pastoralists, including local herders with their livestock, that are nomads or do local transhumance, and international pastoralists, that enter the country from the north. Other stakeholders identified are AP employees, Governmental institutions and Private institutions.

The corresponding section of the PDD provides deep information about each stakeholder group, and also the rights, interest and main relevance to the project.

All informational meetings with local communities and other stakeholders were conducted by local staff that benefit from existing relationships and trust within local community structures. All stakeholders were proactively invited to the informational meetings. Due to the lack of communications infrastructure and high rates of illiteracy around the project area, invitations were hand delivered to all stakeholders with an explanation of the purpose of the informational meetings and consultations. Reminders were also played over the radio the day before the meetings to ensure maximum participation. During the informational meetings, nature conservation and sustainable use of natural resources was discussed, including a section focused on deforestation and degradation. The project objectives were also discussed, and possible impacts were identified. The communities' perceptions of the project were encouraged during these meetings.

Meetings in Bria and Rafaï were also held for the transhumant pastoralists. These meetings were used to inform the herders about deforestation and the REDD program as well as the project objectives.

Hundreds of herders have also been personally contacted by the unarmed transhumance officers and been informed about the project objectives and boundaries. These interactions allowed for the herders to have the project goals and objectives explained first-hand in the field. A new transhumance regional focal point is currently working with the projects transhumant officers to further improve the quality of information shared with the herders as well as the types of data collected from them.

AENOR, based on the nature and location of project and the conditions prior to its implementation, evaluated the possible effects of the project on institutions (governmental and non-governmental), civil society and private companies. Considering the evidence provided by the PP and the information gathered during the interviews carried out in CAR in November 2022, the audit team believes that the approach of the PP to identify the stakeholders was accurate and that the rationale supporting it was appropriate to the local context of the project. Therefore, AENOR deems that process has identified all stakeholders who might be impacted by the project activities.

3.2.6 Stakeholder Descriptions (G1.6, G1.13)

The PDD describes the following stakeholders:

- African Parks, as the project proponent is the responsible for the coordination and has the legal right to implement the project in the project area.
- African Parks employees, are a key element in successfully implementing the project activities and ensuring that the project's objectives are met.
- Local communities, without legal rights of tenure within the project area considering that is an area categorized as hunting zone by the government, but they are a relevant stakeholder for the success in the implementation of the project activities.
- Transhumant pastoralists are one of the main agents of deforestation and degradation in the CCA, they do not have legal rights of tenure in the Project Area, and they are relevant in the implementation of the project since the success of the activities depends on the engagement and agreements with them and the joint solution that is needed for a holistic and long-term protection of the project area.
- Governmental institutions are who have the right to oversee the proper management of the Area. These institutions must ensure that interventions in the project area are compliant with national regulations and provide support when needed.
- Private institutions are for example the financial donors of some of the project activities.

The audit team interviewed representatives or relatives of all the stakeholder groups described in the PDD and was able to check the correctness and accuracy of the description of their relevance to the project and their interests. The audit team considers that the description of this stakeholder groups is correct and accurate as well.

3.2.7 Sectoral Scope and Project Type

The project falls under scope 14 'Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use' (AFOLU) in the category of REDD Avoided Unplanned Deforestation and Degradation (AUDD). It is a grouped project that aims to protect areas covered with natural vegetation in the eastern part of the country which are expected to be converted, degraded and deforested in the absence of the project. Therefore, AENOR confirms that the project is eligible in accordance with Appendix 1 of the VCS Standard v4.1.

3.2.8 Project Activities and Theory of Change (G1.8)

The PDD provides in its section 2.1.11 the key pillars from the development of project activities and main components and their expected outputs and their contribution to achieving the general climate, community, and biodiversity goals of the project. The key pillars described are:

- Biodiversity conservation
- Community development
- Tourism and enterprise
- Law enforcement
- Management and infrastructure

To explain how the project intends to achieve its climate, community and biodiversity (CCB) objectives, the theory of change developed by the project proponent considers activities that are expected to generate benefits for CCB. In the long-term African Parks is looking forward to the outcome of creating sustainability for the protected area.

For the REDD project an identification of the agents and drivers of deforestation, an intervention matrix and a theory of change were developed considering the five key pillars of the organization and the most recent 5-Year-business plan (5YBP) for the park.

The project proponent has divided the community development in different activities. For example, for sustainable agriculture the initial activities planned are to identify small business development opportunities and to promote sustainable farming techniques in 3 Mbomou sub-prefectures. Once funding has been secured from carbon credits, African Parks will support 2 farming components: Scale-up the vegetable gardening in the above-mentioned sub-prefectures and multiplication plots of cassava cuttings, and groundnuts / maize seeds. Other positive impact is the support of schools and salary payment of parent-teachers as well as the participation in different activities around education in the larger landscape.

AENOR has validated, this section of the PDD, through the different onsite interviews to the African Park Managers, desk review of documents such as Annex 1 of the PDD, the stakeholder engagement summary, African Parks business plan, APN law Enforcement SOP Manual /105/, 2014 Chinko 50-year agreement, 2020 Chinko 25-year agreement /72-73// and regarding the biodiversity and community also the APN Annual Reports from 2016 to 2020 /90-103/ were reviewed. All this documentary evidence can be found listed in section 2.3 of this report. Complementary, AENOR has identified these activities as

priority scope for the PP under the project, and during the visit the VVB had the chance to interview staff related to these activities as well as the verification of activities related to the key pillars mentioned above.

Based on the nature of the activities described in the PDD, the documents provided by the PP and the information gathered by the audit team through the interviews to the stakeholders on the impacts and results of the project activities, it is the opinion of AENOR that the theory of change developed by the PDD is accurate, complete, and provides an understanding of the nature of the project and how it will achieve its climate, community, and biodiversity goals.

3.2.9 Sustainable Development

According to the PDD, the project is contributing to the benefits summarized in section 3.1 of this report. Thus, the PP claims to contribute to goals SDG 1 No poverty, SDG 8 Decent work and economic growth, SDG 10 Reduced inequalities, SDG 13 Climate action, and SDG 15 Life on land of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.

AENOR assessed these contribution claims to sustainable development through the review of the project design document, as well as the stakeholder's consultation, and confirms their credibility. AENOR deems that the monitoring description of each SDG is correct and will allow the proper follow-up of each indicator. Finally, it is clear that through the activities and the benefits expected by the projects, the CCA will allow the compliance with the mentioned SDGs. AENOR has reviewed the way in which the PP plans to monitor SDGs such as employment, biodiversity or emissions, which are the goals mentioned above.

3.2.10 Implementation Schedule (G1.9)

The project start date is September 15th, 2016, and it is scheduled to extend 28 years and 7 months. Section 2.1.13 of the PDD provides information about activities and steps carried out during the actual life of the project.

Considering the nature of the project activities and the experience of the PP in the development of similar projects, it is the opinion of AENOR that the implementation schedule presented in the PDD is appropriate and feasible for the project. AENOR has reviewed some dates by the provision of the Annual Reports /90-103/ and complementary, with further information obtained by direct interviews with AP personnel

3.2.11 Benefits Assessment and Crediting Period (G1.9)

The crediting period is from 15 September 2016 to 14 April 2045. The length of the crediting period is 28 years and 7 months.

According to Section 3.8.3 of the VCS Standard, the crediting period of AFOLU projects will have a minimum of 20 years and a maximum of 100 years. Therefore, the project activity is in line with the length of the crediting period, and it has the option to renew more times.

3.2.12 Risks to the Project (G1.10)

According to the information provided by the PP, the main risks to the project's benefits are various: weak governance ratings, political instability and conflict in neighboring countries proximity of the project area to

the territories of known rebel groups, reliance on natural resources and fire. A full description of the risks could be found in section 2.1.18 of the PDD.

In addition to these risks, the PP has developed a Non-Permanence Risk Report to estimate the risks on Climate benefits in accordance with the VCS AFOLU Non-Permanence Risk Tool v 4.0.

AENOR has reviewed the evidence provided, such as the World Bank governance indicators /201/, the agreements with the government /176-177/, the information provided in the PDD, the fire management plan /204/, satellite imagery from NASA about fires in this African Belt, fire prevention activities and direct interviews with Government members or local communities to crosscheck the information with the stated on the PDD. AENOR has also used external sources to check the situation in the Central African Republic and compare with the stated in the PDD and the information gathered from the visit in November 2022.

AENOR deems that the PP correctly identified the risks to the project benefits but the most important is that they have designed and is implementing actions to reduce or diminish the negative impacts of these risks in the benefits on the climate, community, and biodiversity.

3.2.13 Benefit Permanence (G1.11)

The PDD states in section 2.1.19 Benefit Permanence that the land use plan aims to achieve a more sustainable use of the land considering the important biodiversity of the area. The Land use plan includes all required pastoralist corridors and exclusion zones, is agreed upon and communicated to communities. The purpose for a plan and strategy for Greater Chinko is contributing to regional stability and ensuring long term sustainable use of natural resources for the communities. Further implementation of the Land Use Plan will create the proper conditions for stability in the region using the conservation and protection of ecosystems for community benefits. The activities will have a positive impact on the community well-being and also in the biodiversity conservation.

AENOR verified through onsite interviews that African Parks members, as well as local communities, are aware that the permanence of the project's benefits has a direct positive impact on their well-being. All of the interviewees were very grateful that the project improved the ecosystems, brought security and employment to the area and basically, improved their livelihoods. Thus, AENOR considers that the activities planned and implemented by the PP are appropriate to ensure project benefits permanence beyond the project lifetime. One of the interviews was carried out with personnel from the Ministry of Environment, who recognized the well doing of AP in CAR, specifically in Chinko, which is a positive aspect to maintain the permanence of the project and all the benefits.

3.2.14 Financial Sustainability (G1.12)

The project has been designed to be funded properly due to the financial factor and the project autonomy to get its own resources are the most significant challenges for the project's development.

For the 2017-2030 period the project has secured around 27% of the funds required, without the projected revenues from selling Verified Carbon Units (VCU). It is expected that the carbon credits would provide significant resources to continue developing project activities, which would not have been possible without them. No evidence of any form of corruption or illegality was found during the review of

the provided evidence and the interviews by the audit team. AENOR has reviewed the cashflow /175/ and financial analysis to confirm that the information is reliable and correct.

3.2.15 Grouped Projects

This is a grouped project.

1) Eligibility Criteria for Grouped Projects (G1.14)

- The PP has determined in the PDD the following eligibility criteria for new instances to comply with in order to be added to the project in the future.
- General eligibility criteria for instances:
- Instances subject to the same community and biodiversity without-project scenario described in sections 2.2, 4.1 and 5.1 of the PDD.
- Same baseline scenario and additionality described in sections 3.1.4 and 3.1.5 of the PDD.
- Same stakeholder engagement as the one described in section 2.3 of the PDD.
- Instances where the same project activities and similar monitoring elements as described in the PDD may be implemented.
- Instances where the project ownership is held by the project proponent from the joining date.
- Conditions regarding applicability of the same methodology:
- The drivers and agents of conversion in the baseline scenario must be consistent with those described in section 6 of the methodology VM0009, and the end land use in the baseline scenario is non-forest (in the case of REDD project activities) or converted native grassland (in the case of ACoGS project activities). Accordingly, the project activity must be APD or AUDD for forested project accounting areas and APC or AUC for grassland project accounting areas.
- All project accounting areas must have been in an unconverted state (i.e. forest or native grassland) for at least 10 years prior to the project start date
- For project accounting areas with an unplanned baseline type, a conversion threat must exist for each project accounting area.
- In the case of baseline type F-U1, at least 25% of the project area boundary is within 120 meters of deforestation and at least 25% of the project area boundary is adjacent to the reference area.
- In the case of baseline type G-U1, at least 25% of the project area boundary is adjacent to the reference area.
- The project accounting area(s) must not contain peat soil.

- For each project accounting area, a reference area can be delineated for each baseline type in the baseline scenario that meets the requirements, including the minimum size requirement.
- As of the project start date, historic imagery of the reference area(s) exists with sufficient coverage to meet the requirements.
- Project activities are planned or implemented to mitigate ecosystem conversion by addressing the agents and drivers of conversion.
- The project proponent has access to the activity-shifting leakage area(s) and proxy area(s) to implement monitoring or has access to monitoring data from these areas for every monitoring event.
- If logging is included in the baseline scenario and a market leakage area is required as per section 8.3, then the project proponent has access to (or monitoring data from) the market leakage area if measurement is needed
- If livestock is being grazed within the project area in the project scenario, there must be no manure management taking place, as emissions from N₂O as a result of manure management are not quantified or addressed in this methodology.
- For ACoGS project types, project activities must not result in significant GHG emissions. All GHG emissions from project activities must be shown to be de minimis.
- The audit team cross-checked the eligibility criteria set by the PP for the project with the requirements defined in section 3.5.15 of the VCS Standard v4.1 and section G1.14 of the CCB Standard v3.1 and verified that all are fully met.

2) Scalability Limits for the Grouped Projects (G1.15)

The threshold for the project expansion is defined as the prefectures of Mbomou, Haute-Kotto and Haut-Mbomou. This is the area in which the long-term plan related to the optimum land use management will be applied, in order to achieve the benefits of the project. AENOR has reviewed the scalability limits for the project and deems that such limits meet the requirement for the CCB and VCS standard, and they are appropriate according to the capacity limits, the economic situation and other topics.

3) Risk Mitigation Approach for Grouped Projects (G1.15)

Considering that each PAA within the geographical boundaries of expansion will be added once a new agreement with the government is signed and consultation with the local population is made, any new risk to climate, community and biodiversity benefits are not anticipated. On the contrary, the benefits of the project would expand its coverage.

All the related risks should be the same as the ones identified in section 2.1.18 of the PDD as well as in the AFOLU non-permanence risk tool.

3.2.16 Land-Use Scenarios without the Project (G2.1)

The tool T0001 for Demonstration and Assessment of Additionality in VCS Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use (AFOLU) project activities v3.0 was used. Below are the steps that were followed to assess the additionality and determine the baseline of the project:

- Step 1. Identification of alternative land-use scenarios to the proposed VCS AFOLU project activity
 - Step 2. Investment analysis.
 - Step 3. Barrier analysis.
 - Step 4. Common practice analysis.
- Different scenarios were identified as described in sections 3.1.4 and 3.1.5 of the PDD:

- Subsistence agriculture
- Transhumance and pastoralism
- Hunting and poaching activities

AENOR confirms that land use scenarios without the project were correctly identified. They are described deeper in section 3.1.4. and 3.1.5. of the PDD. The way in which these activities or scenarios have been identified has been done properly and does match with all the PDD information and further evidence to demonstrate the without project scenario situation.

3.2.17 Most-Likely Scenario Justification (G2.1)

The most likely land use scenario in the absence of the project is a continuation and increase of the extensive transhumance pastoralism activities implemented without a proper analysis of carrying capacity of the land considering its limitations and the impact on the ecosystems and associated biodiversity as well as the other activities performed in the region by local communities like unsustainable mining and shifting agriculture practices.

AENOR has reviewed the information in sections 3.1.4 and 3.1.5 of the PDD, in which there is a deep explanation about the most likely scenario, the baseline and the conditions prior and post project. The PP provided a deep analysis of the situation, and all the references were assessed by AENOR.

In the opinion of AENOR, according to the evidence provided, the most-likely land-use scenario is the continuation of the pre-project activities, as defined by the PP in the PDD.

The *FAO* webpage is one of the main resources to get information about the country. AENOR crosschecked that the population and main activities of the country are well described according to the *FAO* information. For example, under the agriculture practices, was important to analyze the type of agriculture in CAR: *FAO* estimates that about 2,020,000 hectares (around 3.2% of the total land area) are arable or under permanent agricultural use, with an additional 3,000,000 hectares (4.8% of total land area) being in permanent pasture. Subsistence farmers grow cassava, millet, corn, and plantain for their consumption and sale in domestic markets. Individual small-scale farmers use traditional agricultural

methods to produce these crops. Subsistence agriculture is a key activity in the country and in a post-civil-war scenario, without the project development, the project area, which has been uninhabited, will be a key location to perform these activities by communities who have been searching for new opportunities and available land areas, primarily focusing on closed canopy forest for slash and burn agriculture.

Complementary to the information of the PDD and further evidence, AENOR during the onsite visit was able to observe the relevance of agriculture in the CAR population and within the communities close to Chinko. With many interviews, the VVB obtained information about the type of crops the families used to grow.

Pastoralism and transhumance are other scenarios, and this one is characterized by moving different types of livestock from one grazing ground to another in search of water and food, and is characterized by regular seasonal movements. Crisis and wars in CAR and surroundings, increased the movements of these pastoralists into Chinko. The article of *Christian Seignobos* is a good explanation about the situation and conflicts these pastoralist groups have nowadays, in spite of the reference is more related to Cameroon and Mbororo communities, the context is very similar. Fulani livestock breeders have traditionally dominated pastoralism and are still important players today, being the pioneers of CAR's herder populations. In the 1970s, these pioneer herders were joined by breeders from other minority ethnic groups, particularly Arab (and other Fulani) groups from Chad and Sudan, as well as Hausa and Borno pastoralists in eastern CAR. Whilst Fulani breeders continue to make up the majority of Central African cattle herders, their ownership of cattle has been reduced by insecurity over the few last years. AENOR crosschecked the information of the PDD with the reference provided in the PDD and external sources such as the communication with the Professor Leif Brottem, expert in pastoralism in Africa. Finally, during the onsite visit, AENOR had the chance to interview different transhumant pastoralists, understanding their situation and what were the reasons for the conflict. This information was also contrasted with other interviews with local communities, who also had their opinion about pastoralism and how they were affected by transhumance.

Regarding hunting and poaching, there are different types according to the PDD, but all of them are not allowed in the project area. However, hunting is legal, while poaching is illegal. Also, according to the *Aebischer et al.*, the greatest threat to the CCA comes from transhumance livestock farming between December and May each year: the seasonal movements of transhumant herders in and around the CCA. Fulani cattle herders from Darfur pose a serious poaching threat since many carry weapons. They also poison predators such as lions. This information was contrasted with testimony of lot of people interviewed, who recognized the damage of these groups to the biodiversity. Other information was gathered from the Assessment of Poaching and Wildlife Trafficking in the Garamba-Bili-Chinko Transboundary Landscape. It is stated in this evidence that hunting and poaching were considered at three levels: a) small-scale legal hunting by local people, b) small-scale illegal hunting by relatively local individuals, and c) large-scale illegal hunting by armed non-State and State actors. Economic poverty is prevalent in the rural environment and there are few economic opportunities, thus local people are greatly dependent on natural resources. During the visit, the VVB was able to receive information from interviewees, some of the information was that after the emergence of pastoralists, the number of animals decreased enormously. Also, it was clear that hunting and bush meat produced more money for people than agriculture or livestock.

The artisanal gold and diamond mining is another problem of the CCA. Mining was a recurrent activity inside the project area prior to the establishment of the project, and since 2014, there have been three main regions within the area where illegal gold and diamond mines have been established. As mining is

illegal in the project area under the CAR law, two out of the three mines were closed between 2015–2016. The last illegal mine in the project area was peacefully closed on the 26th November 2020. This reveals that without the project activity, illegal mining would continue and likely expand.

During the visit, the PP shows pictures of the closed mines, and also mentioned some problems they had during the closure due to the entrenchments of the people to this illegal activity.

The last scenario is the registration without VCS. According to the PDD, it is difficult for private companies to invest in CAR, with large scale foreign investment being perceived as a risky activity. The long-term financing of the project intervention is therefore at risk which could lead to unsustainability and instability in a without VCS registered project scenario. One of the interviews the VVB performed in the visit was with the representatives of the cabinet of the Ministry of Environment, which confirmed the situation of the agreements and what could be the situation in case of AP not managing the CCA (the no-project scenario).

Therefore, with all the information of the PDD, the complementary evidence, external sources and evidence gathered from the visit, AENOR confirms that the most-likely scenario is totally justified, and such information is clear and reliable.

3.2.18 Community and Biodiversity Additionality (G2.2)

According to the information provided in the PDD, although the project has activities that generate biodiversity and community benefits, these also face the same barriers as the other project activities and without funding from the sale of GHG credits it is unlikely that the project activities would be able to be implemented or continue in the future.

Taking into account the fact that the population is characterized by high levels of poverty, as a result, the local communities are greatly dependent on natural resources, which in a without-project scenario will mean continuous deterioration of the biodiversity resources of the area, non-sustainable use of the forest resources and the loss of habitat for animal species of great eco-systemic importance.

Without the project, the persistent conflict between transhumance herders and local agricultural communities is also likely to continue. It is likely that conflict over land between local community members and cattle herders in the CAR will, in fact, increase in the future. This would be as a result of the increased cross-border migration from Chad, Sudan and South Sudan to find new pasture as a result of the desertification in the areas north of Chinko.

Unsustainable hunting and poaching will continue to take an enormous toll on populations of tropical mammals, birds, reptiles and fish species in the project area. It is widely recognized that losses of vertebrate populations can disrupt plant-animal interactions, threatening the integrity of natural ecosystems. According to Terborgh et al. 2016, elephants increase carbon stock of tropical humid forests by shifting tree communities to less but larger stems per ha.

According to the country risk assessment map of COFACE, CAR is classified as “D”, Very High according to risks. The lack of formal economic opportunities also intensifies the exploitation of wildlife and forest resources for commercial purposes. Therefore, instead of consuming meat from domestic animals, local people depend heavily on bushmeat. Complementary, according to the World Bank Report, the CAR is ranked at 144 out of 190 economies for “getting credit”.

Technology is another problem in the surroundings, Bakouma and Rafaï have a phone network, however, there are still some issues with the network from time to time, meaning it might not work for several weeks. A small local radio station exists in Rafaï but struggles with energy issues, and currently only uses solar panels since the battery is damaged, therefore, the radio station only broadcasts during the day when people are at work and not in the evening when people would be at home and could listen to the radio. The towns of Bakouma and Rafaï are linked by a deteriorated dirt road. Few people in this region own a vehicle, therefore, traffic mainly consists of 4x4 vehicles that belong to international NGOs and heavy goods trucks. Motorcycles are a more common means of transport, but fuel costs are high. Most local inhabitants walk or use a bicycle to get to their fields or visit neighboring villages. AENOR personally verified that the communication is very difficult in the area, from Chinko (Kocho) to Bangassou, is necessary to take a plane and fly two hours, since by car or motorbike it could mean two weeks due to the poor infrastructure and difficult conditions. The road network in CCA and the surroundings is very poor, and it was shown that the “main” road that connect Chinko with Bangui is a small path with less than 2 meters width.

According to the legislation, in the PDD there are explained all the Laws that affect each activity and how they are regulated under these rules and codes.

Based on this evidence of the PDD, and complementary evidence stated in the section above it is the opinion of AENOR that the climate, community, and biodiversity benefits described in the PDD would not have occurred in the absence of the project. AENOR has also performed interviews with different beneficiaries of the project: pastoralists, communities, leaders and chiefs of different groups such as hunters, fishermen or youth, who recognized the above problems throughout the communities and biodiversity of the area.

3.2.19 Stakeholder Access to Project Documents (G3.1)

The distribution of the project documents differs from type of stakeholders according to the PDD. For the employees, physical copies of the final documents are available at the parks’ offices. AENOR has been in Kocho, which is the place where all people within CCA is living. In this place are the offices and the houses of the employees among other buildings. AENOR asked the employees interviewed and confirmed that they were able to get the documentation from the offices.

Other group are the local communities. Normally, they speak French, so the way to share documents with them is to share the documentation in French to their representatives and local government structures. In the case that people are not able to read or understand, this documentation is explained by the liaisons and sensitization team. AENOR performed interviews with local community members, in Kocho and Bangassou, and confirms that the information on the PDD is correct, and both situations are possible in these communities depending on the type of people.

Transhumant pastoralists are another group. These ones receive the documentation by liaisons and sensitization team, through presentation of materials and some workshops. AENOR has reviewed the workshops evidence and crosschecked the information with the data gathered from the interviews.

Finally, other stakeholders with more background such as governmental institutions and private and philanthropic financial donors, African Parks is providing them access to project documentation and delivering frequent reports of the project activities. In the interview with representatives of the Ministry of Environment, AENOR was able to verify the documentation was shared in advance.

AENOR has also reviewed the VERRA webpage where requested by the standard, information should be uploaded and deems that the information uploaded is right.

Therefore, with all the information above, it is clear that the sharing of documentation to different stakeholders have been done correctly according to the requirement G.3.1 of the CCB standard.

3.2.20 Community Costs, Risks and Benefits (G3.2)

African Parks have a strict policy that ensures that the following decision-making processes are taken into account during the development of a project. The information provided should be in a language easily understood by the affected people, delivered in a culturally appropriate way, and available from independent sources. Communities and pastoralists may also require capacity building on unfamiliar issues to be truly informed. During the local consultation with the community, project activities, risks and benefits were clearly explained.

It was also explained to the participants how the project supports and promotes the following safeguards:

- actions complement or are consistent with the objectives of national forest programs and relevant international conventions and agreements
- respect for the knowledge and rights of indigenous peoples and members of local communities by taking into account relevant international obligations, national circumstances and laws
- the full and effective participation of relevant stakeholders, in particular indigenous peoples and local communities
- actions are consistent with the conservation of natural forests and biological diversity, ensuring that the REDD+ actions are not used for the conversion of natural forests, but are instead used to incentivize the protection and conservation of natural forests and their ecosystem services, and to enhance other social and environmental benefits.

Finally, African Parks also used the opportunity to express its commitment to the principles of “*doing good and do not harm*”.

For the employees, the procedure is different, when a new employee is hired, they are communicated of the costs and risks they may face in their daily job and the actions needed for mitigating the risk. Trainings are performed to mitigate possible risks. Also, benefits are mentioned in this info-sharing: employees understand that African is providing decent work and contributing to economic growth in the region (The project proponent is the largest employer in the region and that has a positive impact in the surrounding communities).

AENOR, during the interviews asked to all the employees and most of the stakeholders if they were aware of the costs, risks and benefits of the project. All of them recognized that during hiring process, or technical sessions they were informed about the project costs, risks and benefits. Specially, for the risks they were informed about the risks depending on their job, and the risks are not the same those for a TANGO team than those risks of a welder or an aircraft pilot. To mitigate the risks, AP provided trainings, which were explained by both, the PP and the interviewees depending on their function.

The benefits of the project were also very clear, all the employees and communities recognized the good possibilities that Chinko brings to the CAR. Working in Chinko is equivalent to security according to the statements of the interviewees.

Finally, they also mentioned during the onsite interviews that the costs are also mentioned from AP to staff when they are hired.

To conclude, AENOR has reviewed the HR policy /106/ which covers all the topics about hiring process and safety guides of the employees.

Thus, AENOR deems that the PP has provided the relevant and adequate information about potential costs, risks and benefits of the project to the local stakeholders in a form they understand and in a timely manner prior to any decision they may be asked to make with respect to participation in the project.

3.2.21 Information to Stakeholders on Validation and Verification Process (G3.3)

AENOR has reviewed the information about workshops and local consultation meetings /150-172/, in which the PP is sharing information about the Validation and Verification process. Complementary, all the stakeholders interviewed were aware of the purpose of the validation process and demonstrated to have at least basic knowledge of the VCS and CCB programs. The PP provided also educational power point presentations for the understanding of the process by everyone.

3.2.22 Site Visit Information and Opportunities to Communicate with Auditor (G3.3)

African Parks workers, pastoralists, community representatives and government officials were informed in advance of the visit from the auditor through the following measures and communication methods:

- Inform the workers in Bangui office and in Kocho (Chinko's headquarters), via group meetings and discussions, of the auditors site visit and their opportunity to interact with them in an independent and freely manner during the auditors' stay in Chinko office and headquarters. In addition, the dates of the audit were added in the bulletin board in Chinko headquarters so all employees could see it.
- Inform the participants of the 2022 Comité de pilotage des Aires protégées et ses périphéries (CAPEP – Stakeholder Council) workshop, through the terms of reference of the workshop, of the auditors site visit and their opportunity to interact with them in an independent and freely manner during one day of the workshop.
- Engage with transhumant pastoralists in the northern part of the country and inform them, via direct interaction with African Parks workers and representatives, of the auditors site visit and their opportunity to interact with them in an independent and freely manner during the auditors' visit to Sam-Ouandja.
- Engage with local herders in Rafaiï and inform them, via direct interaction with African Parks workers and representatives, of the auditors site visit and their opportunity to interact with them in an independent and freely manner during the auditors' visit to Rafaiï.
- Invite representatives from nearby communities to go to Kocho and brief them, via direct interaction with African Parks workers and representatives, of the auditors site visit and their opportunity to interact with them in an independent and freely manner during the auditors' stay in Kocho.

AENOR checked personally that these methods were right. Asked to all the interviewees if they were informed about the VVB visit, and the they stated so. AENOR also had the opportunity to see the bulletin board, in which the information about the visit was notified.

One of the days of the visit, AENOR went to the CAPEP (stakeholder council) in Bangassou, and also asked some of the participants interviewed about their knowledge of the VVB visit, and they stated that

they were informed by AP. Complementary, some of these interviewees had questions for AENOR so it was clear that they were informed about our visit.

Specifically for the pastoralists, AENOR went to Sam-Ouandja to interview some groups such as herders, merchants or transhumant pastoralists, and all of them indicated they previously were informed about our visit. The same for Rafaï communities.

Finally, representative from different communities were interviewed in Kocho during the audit, and also informed to be aware of the visit and they were informed previously.

AENOR complementary has reviewed the evidence provided by the PP such as the notifications sent to the communities about the VERRA and AENOR visit /32/, the power point explaining the objectives of the visit /31/, the terms of references of the people invited to Kocho /30/ or the information and attendance lists /29/ of the representatives in Bangui.

Therefore, AENOR considers that the communication about the VVB visit was performed properly to all the stakeholders groups involved in the CCA project.

3.2.23 Stakeholder Consultations (G3.4)

According to the PDD, consultations took place with local communities living on the periphery of the project area, as well as with other stakeholders. A comprehensive guidance document /172/ was developed, and training sessions were conducted via phone/Skype calls with staff and project managers on the ground to clarify any questions they had before the consultations started. In areas where not all community members were able to attend consultation meetings, community representatives were invited to ensure widespread representation. Several consultations also took place with transhumant pastoralists in the region.

In each meeting, participants were given a brief description of the project and the agenda for the day. The agenda was kept as clear as possible, focusing on the explanation of the project. The following agenda points were covered during the informational meetings with stakeholders:

- Explanation of the project
- Discussion on safeguards in REDD+
- Presentation of the project activities
- Identifying the project's environmental and social impacts
- Discussion on feedback and grievance redress procedure
- Discussion on monitoring
- Worker's relations

The aim of the project was explained to the stakeholders in detail. This included the project's location, information about African Parks and their motivations, who else is involved, and the project phases and timelines. It was clear from the consultation process that local communities and other stakeholders are supportive of the project, its activities, and goals. For example, the consultation process allowed all stakeholders to agree on where the most suitable corridors for transhumant pastoralists will be

established. The location for these corridors was discussed in depth during meetings with pastoralists, government, and ex-rebel leaders familiar with the project area.

At the meeting, the complaint procedures and protocols (Feedback and Grievance Redress Procedure) were also explained and discussed to ensure that stakeholders agree that the selected methods are the most appropriate.

AENOR has reviewed the evidence provided by the PP, such as the LSC guidelines /172/ which explains all the processes of identification and participation. Also, the informative posters and power points /150-171/ that explain the process and the project to the involved people and facilitate the participation process due to the better understanding. Complementary, AENOR asked during the interviews if they were taken into consideration to establish measures, limits or conditions, and all of the interviewees recognized that they were asked in different meetings and they share their opinion with the PP. Nowadays, the project is made of the point of view of different people.

These project staff members, after receiving the required training, are in regular contact with local communities and transhumant pastoralists to ensure they are updated on the project activities and their impacts. These staff members are also the main point of contact for local communities and transhumant pastoralists to notify AP on any potential conflicts, grievances, or negative impacts the project may have on them.

AENOR deems that the stakeholder consultation practices carried out by the PP ensures the participation of all community groups and other stakeholders in the design and implementation of the project, respecting their values, customs, and institution, as well as optimizing community benefits. Based on the evidence provided and the testimonies of community members and representatives directly consulted by the audit team, AENOR considers that effective consultation has been conducted by the PP to fulfill the requirements of G3.4 from the CCB Standard v3.1, directly with communities and other stakeholders or through their legitimate representatives, and that this consultation has been effective in allowing stakeholders to influence the project implementation. The stakeholder input has been properly documented and it is appropriately reflected in the project's documents.

3.2.24 Stakeholder Consultation Channels (G3.5)

At each meeting, the contact numbers of the project proponent were shared so that people interested in the project could be involved and engaged throughout the life of the project. The project area is also well known by local communities and has several eco-monitors and sensitization agents that are in regular contact with local communities and the transhumant pastoralists. This provides an effective communication channel that allows efficient and constant communication between stakeholders and the project team. These channels were confirmed by AENOR through the onsite visit and considers that the way in which information is shared has been done properly according to the stakeholder and considering the difficulties of information-sharing in the CAR and CCA.

3.2.25 Stakeholder Participation in Decision-Making and Implementation (G3.6)

The stakeholder involvement in project design as well as the stakeholder communication system and measure implemented by the PP to enable effective participation of all community members are described section 2.3.10 of the PDD. The audit team was able to verify the stakeholder's involvement through the different interviews and meetings conducted and through evidence of different meetings and

workshops /79-89/. Community members demonstrated awareness and consent of the project's activities. In the opinion of AENOR the communication and consultation plan are being implemented as described in the project design document and that it enables effective participation in culturally appropriate and gender sensitive manner with all communities.

3.2.26 Anti-Discrimination Assurance (G3.7)

The PP has developed and is implementing a sexual harassment policy and non-discrimination policy (APN Human Rights Statement of Principles) /104/ in order to ensure compliance with CCB Standards and to avoid discrimination or harassment based on gender, race, religion, and sexual orientation. This policy is enforced through grievance system in place that provides all project employees, members, and any other stakeholders with a quick-response system in the event that any discriminatory actions or sexual harassment does occur.

During the validation process, the audit team did not find any evidence that the project is engaging in any form of discrimination. AENOR checked and confirms that the PP has developed specific measures to prevent discrimination and to guarantee equal opportunities for community members, including women and vulnerable and/or marginalized people. Through the onsite visit, AENOR had the opportunity to interview people from all genders and ages, and also asked if they had any issue of discrimination. None of the interviewees recognized to be aware of discrimination problems.

3.2.27 Feedback and Grievance Redress Procedure (G3.8)

The PP has developed a grievance mechanism /111/. This mechanism is designed to:

- Address potential breaches or violations of African Parks' Human Rights policies and procedures, including all law enforcement activities;
- Ensure compliance with the African Parks Human Rights standards as set forth in the Code of Conduct and Statement of Principles document;
- Be accessible to all stakeholders;
- Keep complainants well-informed of progress of cases brought forward; and
- Maintain records on all cases and issues brought forward for review.

Any complaint can be communicated by different means, such as WhatsApp, email or letterbox in Kocho. According to the information of section 2.3.12 of the PDD, the procedure for handling the complains is as follows:

1. Admissibility of the complaint: When a complaint is received the admissibility is examined and it is differentiated between sensitive and non-sensitive complaints. In the case the complaint is non-sensitive, the complaint is forwarded to the head of the relevant department for processing. Normally, these complaints are mostly received orally and addressed on site. On the other hand, if the complaint is sensitive, the human rights focal points are the responsible for processing it. The difference between both, sensitive and non-sensitive is that the first one concerns violations of the African Parks code of conduct, operational procedures, national laws and/or international human rights standards meanwhile non-sensitive may concern activities directly or indirectly implemented by Chinko personnel, and may relate to misunderstandings, lack of information, dissatisfaction or conflicts between community members or between the community and African Parks staff.

2. Referral of complaints: Upon receiving the complainant or his/her representative will be acknowledge of the within 10 working days from the date of the receipt.
3. Internal survey: In the event of allegations of human rights violations an investigation will be open within 5 days of the acknowledgement of receipt.
4. Assessment and Resolution of Sensitive Complaints: In the event of a sensitive complaint there will be a committee, the members of such committee are responsible for implementing measures within a maximum of 4 to 6 weeks.
5. Monitoring of internal measures for sensitive complaints: Follow-up of the proper implementation of the measures
6. Closure and notification to the complainant: Throughout the process someone will be in communication with the complainant for sensitive complaints. If the complainant is not satisfied the grievance redress procedure described above. No evidence of existing grievances raised was found. AENOR held interviews with African Parks members and project staff and confirmed their knowledge of the grievance redress procedure described above. AENOR also reviewed the Human Rights Grievance Mechanism /111/ where deeper information about GRM is found. Through this document, together with the information gathered in the onsite visit AENOR is able to confirm that the grievance procedure described in the PDD complies with the requirements of G3.8 of CCB Standard v3.1. AENOR was able to assess the difference between sensitive and non-sensitive complaints and the mechanism to provide feedback and considers that the information provided on the PDD is reliable and accurate, and through this grievance mechanism, the PP could address all complaints received by anyone.

3.2.28 Worker Training (G3.9)

African Parks has extensive experience in conservation and community development projects. Many of the project activities have been designed to transfer knowledge to local communities through workshops and the direct activities. The CCA is also the largest employer in the region and aims to protect labor rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers.

The project has, and will continue to, employ people from the surrounding communities. These roles include rangers, eco-monitors, transhumance monitors, and control room operators, among others. African Parks has a Training and Development Policy /114/ which aims to develop workers' competencies and build institutional capacity to levels that foster achievement of high-performance standards, and fulfillment of the project objectives.

African Parks has a comprehensive manual detailing the Standard Operating Procedures and Best Practice Guidelines /113/ that are followed for training of staff that are involved in law enforcement activities. These guidelines were developed together with subject matter experts and industry professionals both within the African Parks Network, and the wider community.

In regard to staff turnover, the leaving employee has a handover session with the new one taking the role. This ensures that the capacity and flow of the activities are not lost during staff turnover. It is important for them to review the status of the activities that the leaving employee was performing, the location of documents, if applicable, and the expected/planned next steps for continuing the activities with the minimum impact because of the person change.

AENOR has reviewed the evidence mentioned above, the policies /104-114/ and the information about those trainings. AENOR audit team verified with the provided meetings records and the interviews to project staff and AP, that the trainings are being delivered in an effective way, building locally useful skills and knowledge to increase local participation in project implementation, and that there is no discrimination towards women and vulnerable and marginalized people. Through direct interviews, the different employees of the project recognized to have attend some trainings according to their function. They also explained the process of training which was crosschecked with the PDD information and complementary policies.

3.2.29 Community Employment Opportunities (G3.10)

Section 2.3.15 of the PDD describes the policy for employment opportunities. The project ensures that all individuals are given an equal opportunity to fill any employment positions (including management) if the job requirements are met, and that benefits reach women and the most vulnerable and/or marginalized people in the community, without any discrimination of age, sex, marital status, ethnicity, social status, religious convictions, political ideas, and/or sexual orientation. It was also crosschecked with the Human Resources Manual /106/

All candidates for positions will be selected for appointment based on merit according to their abilities, qualifications and competencies, with the aim of selecting the best person possible for the job.

All project staff and employees interviewed by the audit team were asked about how they reach their current position. All the interviewees confirmed the hiring process and criteria followed by the PP and described in the PDD. AENOR did not find any sign of discrimination regarding employment and considers that the PP provides equal opportunities to all community members to fill work positions. Within the people interviewed AENOR met people from all the genders, positions and different communities.

It is very important to note that these communities, previous to the CCA implementation, probably would have relied on other activities, such as agriculture, transhumance or illegal activities as described in the PDD. Thanks to the opportunities, the hired people from the communities have better conditions related to health, salary and security, and all the interviewees recognized this statement.

3.2.30 Relevant Laws and Regulations Related to Worker's Rights (G3.11)

The main regulations protecting workers rights in the CAR are as follows:

- Law no. 09 004 of January 29, 2009 establishing the Labour Code of the Central African Republic
- Law no. 06.035 of December 28, 2006 on the Social Security Code
- Decree no. 09-116 of April 27, 2009 fixing the methods of application of law no. 06-035 on the Social Security Code.
- Order no. 005 / MFPTSSFP / CAF / DGTEFP of July 11, 1994, establishing and functioning of the Health and Safety Committees in the e Central African Republic.

The project also has an onboarding procedure that is used to inform works about their rights. Once a new hire has been selected this will be followed by on-boarding and induction programs that will be completed

during a probationary period prior to him/her joining the organization full time, after a final probation review.

AENOR did not detect incompliances checking the documents provided and interviewing the workers. Then, the audit team deems that the project fulfills with CCB requirements related to labor rights.

3.2.31 Occupational Safety Assessment (G3.12)

The PP has developed a strict HR policy that covers workers' safety and meets international best standards. African Parks also recognizes that many of its employees work in challenging and often dangerous conditions and is committed to mitigating these risks. African Parks provides adequate relief using insurance in the event of an incident, and furthermore all project employees are required to receive training before they take up their roles in the project. Employees qualify for these benefits, based on their employment contract types.

AENOR has reviewed SOPS /104-113/ used to minimize risks as well as the trainings and equipment for those activities that require specific protection. Among these equipment's, the VVB saw the camel bags, boots, Personal Protection Equipment or medical kits.

Complementary, all members of African Parks and their project management units are covered with Group Life Insurance, irrespective of any local insurance policy cover, for up to a maximum of six times their annual earnings for death or total permanent disability in the event of an accident or from natural causes, subject to the conditions of the policy. This was verified by interviews with the employees.

Specifically, for the encounters with armed groups, complementary to the general training and equipment provided by African Parks, there is an extra mitigation activity which is the "tiered Deterrence Approach". During the onsite visit, the PP and the members of the different ranger's teams explained the likelihood of these encounters as well as the way to work according to this approach. AENOR reviewed the information of the PDD and confirmed that there is enough information about the mitigation activities for armed groups encounters.

It is the opinion of AENOR that occupational risks related to the project have been properly identified and assessed by the PP, that risks have been minimized by the development of mitigation measures, and that workers are properly informed regarding both risks and preventing actions.

3.2.32 Project Governance Structures (G4.1)

African Parks is a non-profit conservation organization that takes on the complete responsibility for the rehabilitation and long-term management of national parks in partnership with governments and local communities. African Parks is the project proponent and will be in charge of implementing the project activities. Organigram of the organization structure is provided in section 2.4.1 of the PDD.

Based on the reviewed documents provided by the PP and the statements made by the different project stakeholders during the interviews, it is the opinion of AENOR that the description of project governance structures presented in the PDD is factually realistic and that the roles and responsibilities described are accurate. Also, AENOR had the organizational chart as a basis to choose people for the interviews and was able to select the personal required for each interview and ask about the organization of Chinko.

3.2.33 Required Technical Skills (G4.2)

The PP has identified 3 key technical skills required to implement the project successfully: i) carbon accounting, ii) community and biodiversity, iii) project management.

Based on the specific nature of the project and its activities, it is the opinion of AENOR that the PP has properly documented the key technical skills required to implement the project successfully. The statement in the PDD clearly explains the skills of AP according to the 3 previous indicators. Also, during the visit the auditor was able to see the good structure of AP as well as knowledge in sectors such as Biodiversity or community engagement.

3.2.34 Management Team Experience (G4.2)

African Parks pioneered the public-private partnership model for protected area management, whereby African Parks maintains the full responsibility and execution of all management functions. This is achieved through three approaches: long-term agreements; putting in place funding solutions; and establishing good governance and management by creating separate legal entities registered in the country, with a Board representing key stakeholders.

South Pole Carbon Asset Management Ltd has a long and successful track record working on forestry-based carbon projects, including the first forestry VCS project that issued credits in Latin America, and the largest REDD+ project in extension in Zimbabwe.

South Pole contributed throughout to the PDD and will support the monitoring and verification processes of the climate, community, and biodiversity benefits, and will document any complaints and claims through the mechanism defined by the project participants. In addition, South Pole supports validation and verification under the VCS/CCB standard by meeting with the auditor, responding to corrective actions, and performing project registration and any clarifications requested by controls.

It is the opinion of the audit team, based on the review of the evidence provided, including the CVs of the management staff, the interviews during the onsite visit and documentation of other VCS and CCB registered projects developed by the PP, that the management team has the appropriate expertise and prior experience implementing land management and carbon projects at the scale of this project.

The above management team experience was confirmed by AENOR during the interviews and through the evidence provided, such as CVs, project portfolio, AP and SP webpages, etc.

3.2.35 Project Management Partnerships/Team Development (G4.2)

The project is managed and operated from the project headquarters, which have been given the mandate by the project proponent (African Parks) to administer carbon proceeds and develop management strategies, collaborate with the operation partners on the ground and oversee general implementation of project activities and project operations on behalf of the project partners.

It is the opinion of AENOR, by the information of the PDD and the onsite visit, that the management team can ensure that land management and carbon activities are implemented.

3.2.36 Financial Health of Implementing Organization(s) (G4.3)

African Parks has adopted financial mechanisms to provide an adequate actual and projected cash flow for the project implementation, to achieve the objectives, as confirmed by validation team.

During the first years of the project lifetime, Chinko covered around 70% of its expenditures using the revenue from the activities and funds obtained from donor Organizations and granted unrestricted funds from private donors by AP Head Office. For the next years, in the short- and medium-term (2021-2030 period) the project has secured around 27% of the funds required without the projected revenues from selling verified carbon units (VCUs). It is expected that the carbon credits would provide significant resources to continue the development of the project activities.

AENOR has reviewed the Cash flow document /175/ and considers that the information stated in the PDD is correct. Therefore, AENOR does not have any evidence to demonstrate that the information is wrong.

3.2.37 Avoidance of Corruption and Other Unethical Behavior (G4.3)

African Parks has a strict Code of Conduct that the organization and its employees are obliged to follow. The Code of Conduct forms part of African Parks' Human Resources Policy /106/ and Standard Operating Procedures. All employees must comply with all applicable laws and regulations which relate to activities for and on behalf of African Parks and not seek to gain advantage through illegal or unethical business practices. On the other hand, South Pole, as the supporting organization, is also committed against these practices. The company has several policies in place such as an anti-corruption policy, an ethics policy, a code of conduct (also for third parties), amongst others.

AENOR asked to the interviews of the onsite audit if they knew or had news about any unethical behavior or signs of corruption and nobody of the interviews were aware of that. Also, AENOR asked about these topics during the meeting with representatives of the Environment Ministry, and none of them had negative information about AP and CCA.

Therefore, the VVB considers that the project is not involved in any type of corruption.

3.2.38 Commercially Sensitive Information (Rules 3.5.13 – 3.5.14)

No commercially sensitive information has been excluded from the public version of the PDD.

3.2.39 Statutory and Customary Property Rights (G5.1)

The 2004 Constitution of the Central African Republic states that all persons have a right to property, and the state and citizens have an obligation to protect those rights. CAR's Law No. 63 of 1964 is the primary formal law governing land rights in CAR. Law No. 63 recognizes customary law but limits customary land tenure to use-rights.

The following tenure types exist in CAR:

- Private ownership. Under CAR's formal law, an individual or entity can obtain ownership rights to land through registration of their interest as private property. Occupants of land can apply for ownership rights under the principle of *mise en valeur*, which awards ownership rights to those

who develop their land intensively (e.g., employing intensive or permanent agriculture) over a prescribed long period. Ownership rights may be transferred by purchase, inheritance and lease. Less than 0.1% of land in CAR is registered (Tetra Tech 2007a, Furth 1998, World Bank 2008, World Bank 1998).

- Leaseholds (private and state land). Individuals, groups, and entities can lease land from the state or private parties under formal law and customary law. Leases of land within the state's public domain are granted for definite periods, generally not exceeding 20 years; no lease can extend beyond 50 years (Tetra Tech 2007a, Furth 1998).
- Concessions/private ownership option. The state can grant concessions of land in its private domain to individuals and entities as concessions. The concessionaire must develop the land or extract mineral resources per the terms of the concession within two years for urban land, and within five years for rural land. Concessionaires who have developed the land per the agreement and obtained the approval of the local government may apply for private ownership rights to the land (Tetra Tech 2007a).
- Right of habitation (state land). The state's recognition of occupancy rights to certain land has continued despite the absence of formal law providing for rights of habitation. Upon application, the state issues a habitation permit that allows the applicant to occupy the land and erect any nonpermanent structure, including huts of organic materials. In some areas, the permits are free and easily obtained. In peri-urban areas, permits are difficult to obtain and often require large payments and the permission of multiple officials. The length of time for which habitation permits are granted is unknown (Furth 1998, Tetra Tech 2007a). Transhumant pastoralists are accorded rights to graze on state and private lands with livestock migration routes a central feature of the Pastoralist Code, but these provisions are now outdated and very much in need of substantial revision (International Crisis Group 2014). While conflict between pastoralists, agricultural peoples, and artisanal gold and diamond miners is pronounced in the southwest, policy initiatives to address complex resource access are not yet in place and, for this reason, local peace and reconciliation committees address as best they can the symptoms of the problems.

The project areas are controlled by the State, which held the rights of the lands in any of the forms described above. African Parks and the government of CAR have a contract for the management of the area and in there is clear that environmental finance, including carbon credits, are a way to finance the area management. AENOR has reviewed the land tenure map of the CAR and considers that it is correct and does match with the rest of PDD information, corresponding Laws, and information gathered from interviews with high offices. Therefore, based on the information provided, AENOR deems that the PP has properly mapped the tenure, use, access and management rights to lands in the project zone.

3.2.40 Recognition of Property Rights (G5.1)

The project is developed on public-private partnership of the lands, property of the Government but managed by AAPP. The project participation is voluntary and does not take any lands or encroach on any lands.

The project area is uninhabited and only has limited road access. There are, however, local communities living in the surrounding area which rely on the natural resources within the protected area for their livelihoods

The PDD provided the contracts of the land property /72-73/ which has been assigned from the Government to African Parks. AENOR has reviewed such agreements and deems that all property rights are recognized, respected, and supported by the project.

3.2.41 Free, Prior and Informed Consent (G5.2)

Considering that the area covered by the current PAAs is uninhabited and African Parks has an agreement with the government /72-73/ for the management of such area, no free, prior and informed consent was required, there were no stakeholders whose property rights were affected by the project, however, the project proponent has conducted stakeholder engagements with local communities living on the periphery of the project to inform them about the project and explain that the project will in no way encroach on private or community property.

African Parks subscribes to the guiding principles for Free, Prior and Informed Consent. They have a strict policy /104/ that ensures that the following decision-making processes are taken into account during the development of a project:

- Free from coercion, intimidation or manipulation.
- Prior to allocation of land for particular uses or approval of specific projects. Lead time should reflect respect for time requirements of indigenous consultation/consensus processes.
- Informed at a minimum, and based on full available information, about the nature and scope of any proposed project or activity, including:
 - areas that will be affected
 - potential economic, social, cultural and environmental risks and benefits
 - type of law enforcement work and possible impact, and
 - timeframe of the proposed project and organizations/actors likely to be involved

AENOR has reviewed such policy and deems that the information is correct and complies with the requirement G5.2 of the CCB standard.

3.2.42 Property Rights Protection (G5.3)

Project activities will not at any time lead to the involuntary removal or relocation of land ownership rights and do not oblige communities associated with the project area to relocate activities important to their culture or livelihood. AENOR asked to the communities if they had any type of problem according to relocation and property rights, and nobody declared anything about that, so the audit team does not have evidence to demonstrate that the information of the PDD is incorrect.

3.2.43 Illegal Activity Identification (G5.4)

The region in which the project area is located is characterized by insecurity, often perpetuated by the activities of foreign and local armed groups. The impacts of the activities of these armed groups, as well as illicit cross-border movements, have resulted in instability in the region. The main illegal activities that have been recognized, and could affect the project's activities, are illegal grazing, poaching and illegal wildlife trade. Hunting is an important source of income for all communities living around the reserve. The use of destructive hunting methods and a lack of education and knowledge about legal frameworks and good practices lead most local hunters to hunt illegally, which is defined as poaching under current law. Transhumance pastoralists have also been identified as posing a serious risk to the area with high incidences of overgrazing, illegal human-induced fires and poaching all recorded as regular and realistic threats to the area. The transhumant pastoralists are also actively involved in trafficking of wildlife, and of ivory and leopard skins in particular. As well as bushmeat, traders sell ivory, and big cat skins, fat, teeth and claws. In CAR, the first points of sale for illegally procured wildlife products are the towns of Rafai and Zemio.

Relevant to these groups, AENOR has reviewed the information of the PDD and crosschecked with evidence such as the Assessment of Poaching and Wildlife Trafficking in the Garamba-Bili-Chinko Transboundary Landscape from *Gervais Ondoua Ondoua*. AENOR by the onsite visit, asked both the communities and Representatives of the Ministry of Environment about these illegal activities, and all of them recognized that these illegal activities were the main driver of deforestation in the CCA surroundings and directly affected the conservancy of Chinko and its biodiversity.

The project has a number of law enforcement initiatives that are designed to prevent illegal activities in the project area, as well as steps for reducing the reliance of local populations on illegal activities, such as the identification and implementation of alternative income-generating activities. There are also activities for reducing the reliance of local populations on illegal activities, such as the creation of sustainably managed buffer zones and the identification and implementation of alternative income-generating activities and sustainable management of natural resources in long-term like selective hunting/fishing and size-selective logging in combination with no-take reserves, low impact grazing, efficient agroforestry, responsible mining with minimal negative effects on human health, local biodiversity, ecosystem functions

AENOR confirms that the illegal activities were correctly identified, and that the PP has measures to reduce these activities so that project benefits are not derived from illegal activities. For example, the transhumant pastoralists interviewed recognized that they are contacted many times by the Chinko team, TANGO or ECHO, when they are close to the border. Pastoralists also mentioned the measures that TANGO performs when they repeat illegal grazing in several occasions, and also that they were informed about the borders of the conservation area by the implementation of signals and providing posters in the areas (normally inaccessible by car) by plane to inform about the border. Patrolling activities are performed everyday by air and land, and daily, the Chinko staff meet together to discuss the daily findings and look for any solution if needed.

AENOR deems that the illegal activities are well reported and the measures implemented by the PP are correct according to each situation.

3.2.44 Ongoing Disputes (G5.5)

A number of disputes have been identified that have been resolved or are in the process of being resolved. African Parks is transparent with regards to all disputes that have been raised and has measures in place to ensure all disputes are resolved in a manner that benefits all parties.

The most recent dispute resolved was related to the closure of illegal mines in the southwestern part of the project area. Since 2014, there have been three main regions where illegal gold and diamond mines have been established. Because mining is illegal in the project area under the CAR law, two out of the three were closed between 2015 and 2016. The process was successful, and the last illegal mine in the project area was peacefully closed on 26 November 2020.

AENOR confirms that no evidence of disputes was found that have not been resolved. This was assessed by asking authorities and local communities for their understanding of the situation. All of them recognized to be aware of the previous disputes and how Chinko solved such problems.

3.2.45 National and Local Laws (G5.6)

The PDD lists all the relevant national and local laws and regulations in section 2.5.7. Evidence of its fulfillment is considered complete. AENOR did not detect during the validation process any incompliance related to laws and regulations. AENOR has reviewed the possible expiration of all the laws, however, all of them are valid currently.

3.2.46 Approvals (G5.7)

The current project accounting areas are established in uninhabited hunting zones granted by CAR government on a recently signed 25-year partnership. AENOR has reviewed the agreements /72-73/ and deems that the information is correct.

3.2.47 Project Ownership (G5.8)

Based on the VCS Standard v4.1 Section 3.6.1, the project demonstrates that the PP has ownership and the legal right to control and operate project or program activities under subsection 4: Project ownership arising by virtue of a statutory, property or contractual right in the land, vegetation or conservational or management process that generates GHG emission reductions and/or removals.

In June of 2014 Chinko signed a 50-year agreement with the Ministry of Forest Economy, Environment and Tourism in representation of the Government of the Central African Republic for the management of the hunting zones N° 39, 40, 41 and 48 (which is the area of the first inclusion of the project). This agreement was later superseded by a 25-year agreement, signed in April of 2020, for the management of the initially included hunting zones as well as N° 17, 32, 34, 35, 36, 38 and 49, of which, for the moment, only 36 has been included as part of the project. African Parks possess control of the current project accounting areas and the legal right to control and operate the project activities although the land belongs to the government.

The audit team reviewed these two agreements /72-73/ and based on the evidence provided, AENOR finds that the PP project ownership is unconditional, undisputed and unencumbered, in accordance with VCS requirements. Complementary, AENOR had meetings with Representatives of the Ministry of

Environment and did not find any evidence to demonstrate that the project ownership is different as the one stated in section 2.5.9 of the PDD.

3.2.48 Management of Double Counting Risk (G5.9)

The emissions reduction as a result of this project are not intended to be used under any other trading program or mechanism. The current project is entirely independent of any other carbon project or program scheme being developed in the country; therefore, no double counting has occurred, and it is not intended to occur. AENOR does not find any type of evidence to demonstrate that the stated in section 2.5.10 is wrong.

3.2.49 Emissions Trading Programs and Other Binding Limits

The project does not and will not participate in any emission trading or other binding limit program or mechanism. AENOR does not find any type of evidence to demonstrate that the stated in section 2.5.10 is wrong.

3.2.50 Other Forms of Environmental Credit

The project has not and does not seek receiving another form of GHG-related environmental credit, including renewable energy certificates. AENOR does not find any type of evidence to demonstrate that the stated in section 2.5.10 is wrong.

3.2.51 Participation under Other GHG Programs

The project has not and will not seek registration in any other GHG program.

3.2.52 Projects Rejected by Other GHG Programs

The project has not been rejected from any other GHG programs.

3.2.53 Double Counting (G5.9)

Any credit issued by Verra will have a unique identifier to avoid double counting.

3.3 Climate

3.3.1 Title and Reference

The methodology applied is VM0009 Methodology for Avoided Ecosystem Conversion, v3.0. The project also applies VT0001 Tool for the Demonstration and Assessment of Additionality in VCS AFOLU Project Activities v3.0; and VCS AFOLU Non-permanence Risk Tool, v4.0.

AENOR confirms that the specific versions of the methodology and tools are current at the time of validation.

3.3.2 Applicability

The PDD states all evidence used to demonstrate each condition of the applicable methodology and the tools used. The assessment was carried out for each applicability criterion and included, amongst others, the review of evidence and sources provided in the PDD, and the compliance check of the local project setting with the applicability conditions:

- Applicability conditions of the methodology VM0009 v3.0:

Applicability condition	Justification of compliance
1) The drivers and agents of conversion in the baseline scenario must be consistent with those described in section 6 of the methodology VM0009, and the end land use in the baseline scenario is non-forest (in the case of REDD project activities) or converted native grassland (in the case of ACoGS project activities). Accordingly, the project activity must be APD or AUDD for forested project accounting areas and APC or AUC for grassland project accounting areas.	The methodology is applicable because the drivers and agents of conversion in the baseline scenario are consistent with those described in section 6 of the methodology and the end land use in the baseline scenario is a non-forest state. The project activity is an AUDD.
2) All project accounting areas must have been in an unconverted state (i.e. forest or native grassland) for at least 10 years prior to the project start date, according to the following: a) land in all forested project accounting areas has qualified as forest, on average, across the project accounting areas, as defined by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) 2010 or by the residing designated national authority for the project country for a minimum of 10 years prior to the project start date; and b) land in all grassland project accounting areas has qualified as native grassland or shrubland for a minimum of 10 years prior to the project start date.	All land in the Project Accounting Areas (PAA) has been in an unconverted state for at least 10 years prior to the project start date, as demonstrated in section Delineating Project Accounting Areas of the PDD. Land in all forested PAAs has qualified as forest as defined by the national report of the forest resources assessment of the CAR in 2015: Land occupying an area of more than 0.5 hectares with trees reaching a height of more than five metres and tree cover of more than 10% (See PAA delineation in section 3.3.3 of this report).
3) For project accounting areas with an unplanned baseline type, a conversion threat must exist for each project accounting area as demonstrated by one of the following two options: a) imminent conversion (see definition) must be predicted by a survey, where more than 60% of respondents predict the end land use identified in the baseline scenario. The survey must meet the requirements of Appendix E of the Methodology VM0009; or b) as of the project start date, some point within 2 kilometres of the perimeter of the project accounting area has been converted to the end land use identified in the baseline	All the PAAs in the project belong to the unplanned baseline type category and there is a conversion threat for each of them demonstrated by: b) As of the project start date, some point within 2 kilometres of the perimeter of the relevant PAA has been converted to the end land use identified in the baseline scenario, a demonstrated in Annex 4 Baseline definition.

Applicability condition	Justification of compliance
scenario.	
4) In the case of baseline type F-U1, at least 25% of the project area boundary is within 120 meters of deforestation and at least 25% of the project area boundary is adjacent to the reference area (see section 6.3 of the methodology VM0009).	Not applicable: the project does not have any PAA with a baseline type F-U1.
5) In the case of baseline type G-U1, at least 25% of the project area boundary is adjacent to the reference area (see section 6.3 of the methodology VM0009).	Not applicable: the project does not have any PAA with a baseline type G-U1.
6) In the case of baseline type F-U2, at least 25% of the project area boundary is within 120 meters of deforestation (see section 6.3 of the methodology VM0009).	Not applicable: the project does not have any PAA with a baseline type F-U2.
7) The project accounting area(s) must not contain peat soil.	As shown in reliable source (Dargie et al., 2017) CAR, and in consequence the PAA contain any peat soil.
8) For each project accounting area, a reference area can be delineated for each baseline type in the baseline scenario that meets the requirements, including the minimum size requirement, of section 6.8.1 of this methodology.	A reference area was delineated following the requirements detailed in section 6.8.1 of the methodology, as demonstrated in section Delineating Reference Areas of the PDD.
9) As of the project start date, historic imagery of the reference area(s) exists with sufficient coverage to meet the requirements of section 6.8.4 of the methodology.	As of the project start date, historic imagery of the reference areas exists with sufficient coverage to meet the requirement of section 6.8.4 of the methodology, as demonstrated in section Selecting Historical Imagery of the PDD.
10) Project activities are planned or implemented to mitigate ecosystem conversion by addressing the agents and drivers of conversion as described in section 8.3.1 of the methodology.	Several project activities are planned and implemented to mitigate ecosystem conversion by addressing the agents and drivers of conversion as described in section 8.3.1 of the methodology, as demonstrated in sections 2.1.11 and Leakage Mitigation Strategies of the PDD
11) The project proponent has access to the activity-shifting leakage area(s) and proxy area(s) to implement monitoring (see sections 8.3.2.1 and 6.4) or has access to monitoring data from these areas for every monitoring event.	The project proponent has access to activity-shifting leakage areas and proxy areas, as demonstrated in section Spatial boundaries of the PDD.
12) If logging is included in the baseline scenario and a market leakage area is required as per section 8.3, then the project proponent has access to (or monitoring data from) the market leakage area if measurement is needed (see section 8.3.3 of the methodology VM0009).	Not applicable, logging not included.
13) This methodology is applicable to all geographies. However, if Soil organic carbon (SOC) is a selected carbon pool and the default	Although initially SOC is not selected, the project is located in different tropical ecosystems of CAR and therefore the default value from section

Applicability condition	Justification of compliance
value from section 6.19.2 is selected, then the project must be located in a tropical ecosystem.	6.19.2 of the methodology could be used once SOC is added as a pool.
14) If livestock is being grazed within the project area in the project scenario, there must be no manure management taking place, as emissions from N ₂ O as a result of manure management are not quantified or addressed in this methodology.	There will be no manure management in the project area as part of the project activities.
15) For ACoGS project types, project activities must not result in significant GHG emissions. All GHG emissions from project activities must be shown to be <i>de minimis</i> (see section 8.3.1 of the methodology).	Not applicable.

Applicability conditions	Justification
a) AFOLU activities the same or similar to the proposed project activity on the land within the proposed project boundary performed with or without being registered as the VCS AFOLU project shall not lead to violation of any applicable law even if the law is not enforced.	The project activities on the land within the project boundary will not lead to violation of any applicable law. As explained in section 3.1.5 of the PDD, the activity is consistent with enforced mandatory applicable laws and regulations.
b) The use of this tool to determine additionality requires the baseline methodology to provide for a stepwise approach justifying the determination of the most plausible baseline scenario ³ . Project proponent(s) proposing new baseline methodologies shall ensure consistency between the determination of a baseline scenario and the determination of additionality of a project activity.	The baseline methodology followed for this project has a stepwise approach justifying the determination of the most plausible baseline scenario, as demonstrated in section 3.1.4 of the PDD.

VCS AFOLU Non-permanence Risk Tool, v4.0 has no applicability conditions whether it is an AFOLU project.

AENOR, based on records provided (PDD, supporting evidence, calculation spreadsheets, etc.), verified the applicability conditions of the methodology and tools. In conclusion, the project activity complies with the applicability conditions of the methodology and tool selected by the PP. The PP has selected the appropriate tools, determined by the methodology VM0009.

3.3.3 Project Boundary

The PP presented the project boundaries in kml. and in shape files. Below is a description of the spatial boundaries of the project considering the types of areas used in the methodology:

Spatial boundary	Description
Geographical area of the	These are the boundaries of expansion of the grouped project: prefectures of Mbomou, Haute-Kotto and Haut-Mbomou. Since currently African Parks does not have land tenure

Spatial boundary	Description
grouped project	agreements and/or has not secured financial sustainability to manage all the area within the expansion boundaries, the project is proposed as a grouped project. In the future instances will be added in subsequent verifications – once agreements with the government take place.
Project area	The project area is encompassed by the following hunting zones (Zone d'Intérêt Cynégétique - ZIC), whose shape was provided by PP and matches the boundaries in the agreements: - 39: Mbari - 40: Chinko - 41: Vovodo Chinko - 48: Bas Chinko - 36: Trois rivières
Instances	Considering the current agreements with the government, the two separate baseline scenarios and the activities carried out by African Parks in the area, the project at the moment of the validation consist of the following instances: - CCF dominated areas instances: there is only one instance for CCF dominated areas at validation, which is PAA1. - OWS dominated instances: there are two instances for OWS dominated areas at validation, which are PAAs 2 and 3.
Project accounting areas (PAA)	The PAA are defined in the methodology (section 6.2) as an area within the project area that meets the definition of forest and is subject to conversion in the baseline scenario. In the Project were delimited based on the predominant land cover and agent of deforestation as follows: 1) Considering, local communities are the main agent of deforestation in CCF mainly due to slash and burn agriculture and mining: • PAA1: CCF-dominated areas, of ZIC 41. 2) Considering transhumant pastoralists as main deforestation agent in OWS, due to overgrazing • PAA2: OWS-dominated areas of ZICs 41 and 48 and the entirety of ZICs 39 and 40 • PAA3: ZIC 36, with a predominance of OWS. The steps for the delineation were the following: 1. An initial delineation of the accounting areas was done based on the national definition of forest at least during 10 years prior to the project start date (according to PDR.22). National forest definition was confirmed by AENOR in 'Evaluation des Ressources Forestières Mondiales 2015. République Centrafricaine' (FAO, 2015)¹. The predominance of land cover and other scientific studies done in the area by external universities (Tidjani, 2015, Aebischer et al. 2019, Ondoua Ondoua, G et al. 2017) as well as expert knowledge from the PP itself. AENOR reviewed these sources, including the interview to one of the authors (Thierry Aebischer) and considered that they are the most applicable, reliable and independent according to the case. The separation between PAA1 and PAA2 (that contain CCF and OWS in hunting zones 39, 40, 41, 48) was done following the drainage basins of major rivers: PAA1 represents the predominance of CCF land cover and is located in the south and southeastern section while PAA2 has predominantly OWS land cover and is located in the central and northern section. The area composed only of hunting zone 36 (containing predominantly OWS),

¹ Evaluation des Ressources Forestières Mondiales 2015. République Centrafricaine (FAO, 2015). [Find it here.](#)

Spatial boundary	Description
	which started being managed by African Parks in 2020 (later than ZIC 39, 40, 41, 48) was selected as a single PAA (PAA3). The eligible area of PAA1 only includes CCF cover for the BEM (the OWS cover within PAA1 is an area with minor interest from local communities and, therefore, it was conservatively excluded). PAA2 and PAA3 eligible area covers OWS. Within PAA2 and PAA3 there is also the presence of CCF (mostly riparian forest), however, during the analysis done for determining the historical conversion no major conversion was found in those areas. Besides that, it was determined that the risk of conversion of CCF within PAA2 and PAA3 was low considering that the agents of CCF conversion observed in the RA2 are in the northernmost areas (more than 100 km away from the Project Area border). Although the agents show extremely high mobility (and flexibility) when it comes to livestock herding, they show lower mobility when it comes to CCF conversion. Therefore, considering the historical low conversion during the periods analyzed and the low deforestation risk during this monitoring period, the PP took the decision to be conservative and rather remove the CCF cover from the eligible areas in PAA2 and PAA3 of the baseline scenario and in the Biomass Emissions Model (BEM). Note that despite the eligible land cover of PAA2 and PAA3, the PP will continue to manage the entire CCA, including all areas within the Instance 2 (OWS dominated) that are not categorized as OWS. A detailed description of the land-cover maps generation was included by the PP in Appendix 5 – Land-cover assessment. The annex and external evidence outline the key statistics and peer-reviewed literature used to evaluate the appropriateness of the land cover maps created for the project, as well as to include more details of intermediate steps taken by the PP during the development of the land cover maps. Specifically, it was clarified that the stable forest layer comes from the intersection of the forest class layers of the 2001-2002 (Landsat 7) and 2015-2016 LULC maps (Landsat 8): a mask containing the non-forest areas in both periods was extracted from the intersection obtaining a stable forest area for the period 2001-2016 to ensure that only areas classified as “forest” in both maps is considered stable forest in the project area (applicability condition nº 2 of VM0009 v3.0). Later, to determine the land cover category of the stable forest class, the 2015 - 2016 map was considered as the final output as the statistical estimators showed a better fit. The accuracy assessment included the confusion matrix and Cohen's kappa as measurements of accuracy and reliability of the LC maps. On the other hand, to further improve the PAA forest categories delineation and ensure the PP was not overestimating the CCF cover class in the project area, a post classification process using the Global Forest Canopy Height (2019) dataset from GLAD was implemented. The stable forest areas classified as CCF from the previous step were overlaid with all forest areas with a height greater than 10m from the GLAD data. It was ensured LC maps matched the minimum mapping unit specifications from the methodology: six pixels (0.5 ha) for forest classes (OWS and CCF) and 70 (6.25 ha) pixels for grassland classes (wet edaphic grassland –WEG-, dry edaphic grassland –DEG-). Only areas that were previously classified as both stable CCF and had a canopy height greater than 10m across a 30x30m pixel remained as CCF across all PAAs, while all areas that were previously considered stable CCF but did not meet the canopy height criteria were reclassified as OWS as the previous step showed that they are still considered stable forest. This is based in relevant academic sources (220, 221) that establish this threshold to better delineate the boundaries amongst CCF and OWS, and additionally, the datasets accuracy metrics demonstrate higher overall accuracy when classifying forests with a height greater than 10 m. Thus, in opinion of AENOR, the LULC map is deemed reliable and does not overestimate the extension of the eligible forest classes in the PAAs, according the following validation activities carried out based on a risk-based approach:

Spatial boundary	Description
	1- The design of the procedures followed by the PP to carry out the GIS database (described in Annex 5 of the PDD, and evidence 218, 219) is accurate, and follows the best practices in the sector. 2. Through numerous meetings with the PP' GIS team since July 2021, they have shown that they are trained, and reproduced in front of the VVB a reasonable sample of the processes carried out. 3- The inputs used correspond to appropriate, reliable and applicable sources, such as Landsat 7-8 (for satellite imagery), GLAD (forest canopy height data for post classification process), and Shuttle Radar Topography Mission (for the digital elevation model). 4- The inputs were processed with reliable tools such as Google Earth Engine, ArcGIS/QGIS, and other spatial data analysis tools. 5- The assumptions related to the delimitation of CCF and OWS in relation to height, are supported by the most specific and related peer-reviewed literature (220, 221), in addition to compliance with the definition of "forest" for the country . 6- The assumption about the low risk of CCF conversion within PAA2 and PAA3, above mentioned, is aligned with the observations of the VVB auditor and local field expert in the field mission, who interviewed relevant stakeholders and inspected the project area (described in section 2.4 and 2.5 of this report). 7- To sample the maps, the VVB manually crosschecked 5% of seeds from the shapefile with the ground truth and sampled seeds collected for the Land Cover assessment of the geodatabase provided against GE. 8- For classification control, the VVB confirmed the appropriateness of the land cover map produced by the South Pole by overlapping GFW as external data for a reasonable number of points. Furthermore, AENOR verified that the GLAD layer for forest canopy height was exactly the same as that used by the PP. 9- Measurements of accuracy and reliability of the land cover map show that it is accurate: the confusion matrix (which indicates proportion of correctly classified instances) showed percentages larger than 85% per classes OWS and CCF, and Cohen's kappa showed values >0.85, which means 'almost perfect agreement' or 'very good degree of agreement' according to common classification of the statistical parameter. 10- Finally, both the process and the result of the land cover map comply with what is requested in VM0009 v3.0 section 6.8. 2. Second, according to PDR.23, the PAAs were defined based on the constraints associated with the identified agents and drivers of deforestation (topography, roads, rivers or perennial streams and land use/vegetation type classification, etc.). Regarding PAA1, considering the land cover, agents and drivers mentioned, the constraints to mobility were considered: PP provided documentary and expert-based evidence that that the local communities do not generally have major constraints to mobility for mining and/or implement slash and burn agriculture, regardless of the existence of access roads. AENOR reviewed these sources and considered that they are the most applicable, reliable and independent according to the case, and support the hypothesis. On the other hand, in order to delimit a reasonable range, the PP determined that 95% of the conversion occurred within 23 km of the nearest road and 32 km to the

Spatial boundary	Description
	nearest settlement in reference area 1 (RA1), based on objective evidence from Global Forest Watch (230810_Deforestation distance.xlsx). AENOR checked during the onsite visit that the roads in Chinko are limited, and the movements are done mainly on foot. When AENOR interviewed local communities, they described the long distances they normally need to travel to move across countries and within the boundaries of Chinko and confirmed the deforestation-driving activities they implemented and the constraint only limited by distance, but not by access itself. The final delineation of PAA1 included only the CCF land cover that fell within the 23 km and 32 km buffers, while any forested area inside the initial delineation of PAA1 beyond that distance is under no major risk of deforestation by the agents. Note that despite the final shape of PAA1, the PP will continue to manage the entire CCA, including all areas within the Instance 1 that are not categorized as PAA1 or OWS. Regarding PAA 2 and PAA 3, considering the land cover, agents and drivers mentioned, the PP provided reliable and independent documentary evidence to prove that pastoralism is an activity occurring in a widespread manner inside the PAAs prior to the start of the conservation activities, which was also widely confirmed during the audit onsite visit. It was also confirmed during the onsite inspection that the pastoralists' mobility is not subject to any spatial constraint across the PAAs: there are no topographic barriers (slopes), geographic barriers (rivers, ravines), distance, or access roads that prevent reaching the pasture areas (determined as CAA), which subsequently drag other activities that promote deforestation. AENOR checked that the pastoralists do not travel by routes but pursue the needs of the livestock. In addition to the documentary sources mentioned above, AENOR confirmed the veracity of this assumption through interviews, including the author of one of the articles (Thierry Aebischer), and an independent expert (Leif Brottem) in transhumance and pastoralism in protected areas in Western and Central Africa. Also, through interviews with transhumant pastoralists (six interviews), livestock merchants (eight interviews), community representatives (five interviews), among a wide variety of other stakeholders up to 113 respondents, from rangers to representatives to the Ministry of Environment, evidenced the consistency of the assumption, that the main driver of deforestation in Open Woodland Savannah was the transhumance pastoralism. On the other hand, through the field trip to the PAA and the aerial flight through several transects of the same, AENOR was able to verify that there are no barriers to the movement of transhumant pastoralists within the CCA, beyond the existence or not of adequate vegetation for cattle feed. Further information can be found in section 3.3.4 about the analysis that AENOR did for the assessment of the main driver of deforestation in areas dominated by Open Woodland Savanna cover. Finally, the PP provided an explanation on the reason of the delimitation by each segment of each PAA (e.g. river, basin limits, prefecture boundaries, etc.). Complementary, tables per PAA have been included with vertex coordinates for guidance and the total area of each PAA and cover. AENOR reviewed the information from the PD and crosschecked the information with the shapefiles provided by the PP to support this information. On the other hand, during the onsite visit, AENOR checked a sample of the boundaries with GPS by overflying the Project Area and also these limits were explained by the proponent of the PP and match the reason explained in the document. AENOR considered that the geographic and physical boundaries of the PAA are clear and accurate. AENOR confirmed that PAAs were delineated following the methodology, and evidences that show its relationship to the identified agents and drivers of conversion, relevant attributes and absence of constraints to conversion were provided, according to section 6.2 of VM0009, to support that the PAAs would be subject to the effects of local communities slash-and-burn and mining practices in PAA1 and over-grazing due to pastoralism (PAA2 and PAA3) in the absence of the project implementation, as was

Spatial boundary	Description						
	already happening inside the PAAs in years prior to implementation.						
Proxy areas	The proxy areas were selected considering three post deforestation scenarios, as demonstrated in section Delineating Proxy Areas of the PDD: - Agricultural areas and mining sites for PAA1. The closest active agricultural site and exploited mines of the CCA in the southwest; given that this area is accessible in times of difficult conditions like broken roads and insecurity, it was selected. These areas have similar vegetation, soil and climatic conditions and are very close to the actual reference sites of the vegetation diversity and biomass inventory (4-33 km from the CCA borders and 36-78 km from reference plots on the same geographical altitude). - Overgrazed areas for PAA2 and PAA3. Overgrazed areas within the CCA to have a comparison of natural vegetation with modified landscape were used, since thousands of livestock crossed the area of the CCA from 2010 to 2017 on a path from east to the west that is locally known as "Marche-Bangu". The PP provided a map of the proxy areas per scenario (PDR.35), description regarding the similarity of proxy areas regarding the PAA conditions (PDR.36) and the rationale of their boundaries (PDR.37). Last, in the three scenarios it was demonstrated to AENOR that these areas were all classified as non-eligible (converted) for the 2015-2016 period (PDR.38).						
Reference area (RA)	The agents of deforestation acting in eastern CAR have different preferences of land cover and dynamics leading to deforestation. For these reasons there was a need to have two baseline scenarios in the project: - RA1: for the CCF dominated areas under the influence of local communities (related to PAA1), with slash and burn agriculture and mining as main deforestation drivers. - RA2: for the OWS dominated areas under the influence of transhumant pastoralists, with overgrazing as main driver (related to PAA2 and PAA3). AENOR validated that the two reference areas addressed the criteria included in VM0009 to ensure that 1) the agents and drivers of conversion are similar to those relevant of the PAAs, 2) that those agents performed similarly in the two reference areas to the way they would have performed in the PAAs under the baseline scenario, and 3) that both reference areas are adjacent to the corresponding PAAs, according to section 6.8.1.1 of the methodology requests. The following table summarizes the two reference areas delimitation assessment regarding each requirement, as well as the independent sources crosschecked when it proceeds. 1. The location and size of the reference area relative to the project accounting area <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Requirement</th><th>AENOR assessment and conclusion</th></tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>a. A pair of maps showing the boundaries and size of the reference area and the project accounting area, including an indication of their locations relative to each other.</td><td>The PP provided maps (in pdf and shapefile as Annex, and in 3.1.3 Spatial boundaries Figure 12 of the PDD) showing the boundaries and size of the two reference areas, as well as other project boundaries (Geographical area of the grouped project, Project area, instances, PAAs, proxy area, activity-shifting leakage area) and their location to each other which were validated by AENOR using GIS software.</td></tr> <tr> <td>b. Written justification for the selection of the location of the reference area.</td><td>Section 3.1.4 subsection "Delineating Reference Areas", present the justification for the selection of the location of the two reference areas. The description of the process followed to delineate the two reference areas is included in 3.1.4 Delineating Reference Areas of the PDD, which describes the compliance with the</td></tr> </tbody> </table>	Requirement	AENOR assessment and conclusion	a. A pair of maps showing the boundaries and size of the reference area and the project accounting area, including an indication of their locations relative to each other.	The PP provided maps (in pdf and shapefile as Annex, and in 3.1.3 Spatial boundaries Figure 12 of the PDD) showing the boundaries and size of the two reference areas, as well as other project boundaries (Geographical area of the grouped project, Project area, instances, PAAs, proxy area, activity-shifting leakage area) and their location to each other which were validated by AENOR using GIS software.	b. Written justification for the selection of the location of the reference area.	Section 3.1.4 subsection "Delineating Reference Areas", present the justification for the selection of the location of the two reference areas. The description of the process followed to delineate the two reference areas is included in 3.1.4 Delineating Reference Areas of the PDD, which describes the compliance with the
Requirement	AENOR assessment and conclusion						
a. A pair of maps showing the boundaries and size of the reference area and the project accounting area, including an indication of their locations relative to each other.	The PP provided maps (in pdf and shapefile as Annex, and in 3.1.3 Spatial boundaries Figure 12 of the PDD) showing the boundaries and size of the two reference areas, as well as other project boundaries (Geographical area of the grouped project, Project area, instances, PAAs, proxy area, activity-shifting leakage area) and their location to each other which were validated by AENOR using GIS software.						
b. Written justification for the selection of the location of the reference area.	Section 3.1.4 subsection "Delineating Reference Areas", present the justification for the selection of the location of the two reference areas. The description of the process followed to delineate the two reference areas is included in 3.1.4 Delineating Reference Areas of the PDD, which describes the compliance with the						

Spatial boundary	Description				
	requirement specified below.				
	<table> <tr> <th>Requirement</th><th>AENOR assessment and conclusion</th></tr> <tr> <td> 2 a. Written description of the socio-economic conditions in the reference area and project driver accounting area including the following data were available: i. Census data depicting relevant demographics and socioeconomic conditions ii. PRA data iii. Economic studies iv. Maps depicting demographic data and socio-economic conditions b. Written description of the cultural conditions, such as historical events, cultural shifts, migration patterns, tribal traits and characteristics, and current cultural patterns including the following data were available: i. PRA data ii. Publications relevant to the cultural conditions in the area iii. Maps depicting cultural data </td><td> The PP provided written description of the socioeconomic and cultural conditions of the project including the sections relative to Social parameters, 3.1.4 Identification of agents and drivers of conversion, and 4.1.1 Descriptions of Communities at Project Start, of the PD. AENOR validated the description that fulfills these two clauses based on the accuracy, applicability and reliability of the provided sources used, which were aligned with other independent sources consulted by AENOR. Documentary sources included Academia, as well as NGOs or supranational organizations with a proven reputation. Additionally, during the onsite visit, it was confirmed the similarity amongst the two reference area and the PAAs in terms of 1) mobility of the deforestation drivers, 2) cultural and socioeconomic conditions of the population. Thanks to a wide range of different level interviews (see section 2.3 in this report), the validation team confirmed that deforestation agents may potentially affect the project area in the same way it actually occurs in each reference region in the absence of the project activities implemented by the PP. Sources reviewed by AENOR: Provided by PP (amongst others listed in section References of the PDD): 1. Demography, socio economic conditions, cultural groups, deforestation drivers, transboundary context²; socio economic indicators³. Independent sources crosschecked by AENOR: 2. Socio economic conditions^{4, 5, 6}; pastoralism and deforestation drivers⁷; transboundary context, </td></tr> </table>	Requirement	AENOR assessment and conclusion	2 a. Written description of the socio-economic conditions in the reference area and project driver accounting area including the following data were available: i. Census data depicting relevant demographics and socioeconomic conditions ii. PRA data iii. Economic studies iv. Maps depicting demographic data and socio-economic conditions b. Written description of the cultural conditions, such as historical events, cultural shifts, migration patterns, tribal traits and characteristics, and current cultural patterns including the following data were available: i. PRA data ii. Publications relevant to the cultural conditions in the area iii. Maps depicting cultural data	The PP provided written description of the socioeconomic and cultural conditions of the project including the sections relative to Social parameters, 3.1.4 Identification of agents and drivers of conversion, and 4.1.1 Descriptions of Communities at Project Start, of the PD. AENOR validated the description that fulfills these two clauses based on the accuracy, applicability and reliability of the provided sources used, which were aligned with other independent sources consulted by AENOR. Documentary sources included Academia, as well as NGOs or supranational organizations with a proven reputation. Additionally, during the onsite visit, it was confirmed the similarity amongst the two reference area and the PAAs in terms of 1) mobility of the deforestation drivers, 2) cultural and socioeconomic conditions of the population. Thanks to a wide range of different level interviews (see section 2.3 in this report), the validation team confirmed that deforestation agents may potentially affect the project area in the same way it actually occurs in each reference region in the absence of the project activities implemented by the PP. Sources reviewed by AENOR: Provided by PP (amongst others listed in section References of the PDD): 1. Demography, socio economic conditions, cultural groups, deforestation drivers, transboundary context²; socio economic indicators³. Independent sources crosschecked by AENOR: 2. Socio economic conditions^{4, 5, 6}; pastoralism and deforestation drivers⁷; transboundary context,
Requirement	AENOR assessment and conclusion				
2 a. Written description of the socio-economic conditions in the reference area and project driver accounting area including the following data were available: i. Census data depicting relevant demographics and socioeconomic conditions ii. PRA data iii. Economic studies iv. Maps depicting demographic data and socio-economic conditions b. Written description of the cultural conditions, such as historical events, cultural shifts, migration patterns, tribal traits and characteristics, and current cultural patterns including the following data were available: i. PRA data ii. Publications relevant to the cultural conditions in the area iii. Maps depicting cultural data	The PP provided written description of the socioeconomic and cultural conditions of the project including the sections relative to Social parameters, 3.1.4 Identification of agents and drivers of conversion, and 4.1.1 Descriptions of Communities at Project Start, of the PD. AENOR validated the description that fulfills these two clauses based on the accuracy, applicability and reliability of the provided sources used, which were aligned with other independent sources consulted by AENOR. Documentary sources included Academia, as well as NGOs or supranational organizations with a proven reputation. Additionally, during the onsite visit, it was confirmed the similarity amongst the two reference area and the PAAs in terms of 1) mobility of the deforestation drivers, 2) cultural and socioeconomic conditions of the population. Thanks to a wide range of different level interviews (see section 2.3 in this report), the validation team confirmed that deforestation agents may potentially affect the project area in the same way it actually occurs in each reference region in the absence of the project activities implemented by the PP. Sources reviewed by AENOR: Provided by PP (amongst others listed in section References of the PDD): 1. Demography, socio economic conditions, cultural groups, deforestation drivers, transboundary context²; socio economic indicators³. Independent sources crosschecked by AENOR: 2. Socio economic conditions^{4, 5, 6}; pastoralism and deforestation drivers⁷; transboundary context,				

² Ondoua Ondoua, G., Beodo Moundjim, E., Mambo Marindo, J.C., Jiagho, R., Usongo, L. & Williamson, E. A. (2017). An Assessment of Poaching and Wildlife Trafficking in the Garamba-Bili-Chinko Transboundary Landscape. [Find it here.](#)

³ UNDP. Human Development Report 2014 [Find it here.](#)

⁴ Agger, K. (2014). Behind the Headlines. Drivers of Violence in the Central African Republic. Enough Project, Washington, D.C. [Find it here.](#)

⁵ The Global Economy. Central African Republic Economic Indicators. [Find it here](#)

⁶ United Nations Population Fund. [Find it here.](#)

⁷ ICG (2014a). The Central African Republic's Hidden Conflict. Africa Briefing 105. International Crisis Group, Brussels, Belgium. [Find it here.](#)

Spatial boundary	Description				
	pastoralism and socioeconomic conditions⁸, demography and socio economic conditions⁹, tribal context and minorities¹⁰, pastoralism and deforestation drivers in transboundary context¹¹, historical events¹². 3. A wide range of interviews held by the audit team, that covered: transhumant pastoralists (six interviews), livestock merchants (eight interviews), community representatives (five interviews), among a wide variety of other stakeholders up to 113 respondents, from rangers to representatives to the Ministry of Environment.				
3	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Requirement</th><th>AENOR assessment and conclusion</th></tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>The Applicant's comparison of maps of the reference area and project following accounting area, including locations of settlements or other population centers. For subsequent use in determining the mobilities of the agents of conversion.</td><td> Figure 28 in the PD indicates the RA, PAAs, RAs and the permanent settlements in the region. The information was also provided in shape (GIS database) which was crosschecked by AENOR with Google Earth Pro to confirm the settlements. Regarding the pastoralism corridors in the country (Figure 38 in the PD), no other maps were found as independent source, however, AENOR checked the positive reliability of the source used by the PP¹³ and also it matches the information described in other independent documentary sources^{1,3,6,7,10}. On the other hand, during the on-site visit the audit team visited different communities, such as Sam-Ouandja, Rafaï and Bangassou. Complementary, the audit team, interviewed several people from other communities different than those above. AENOR assessed the location of the places and communities by using a GPS (Garmin eTrex Summit HC). AENOR overlapped the GIS files provided by the PP, the track created with the VVB GPS and aerial images to verify the proper location and identification of such places. During all the interviews in previous places, AENOR asked to different stakeholders, including pastoralists, about the corridors and communities about their slash-and-burn agriculture and mining practices. AENOR can confirm that the assessment is reliable and correct. AENOR also can confirm that through aerial flights </td></tr> </tbody> </table>	Requirement	AENOR assessment and conclusion	The Applicant's comparison of maps of the reference area and project following accounting area, including locations of settlements or other population centers. For subsequent use in determining the mobilities of the agents of conversion.	Figure 28 in the PD indicates the RA, PAAs, RAs and the permanent settlements in the region. The information was also provided in shape (GIS database) which was crosschecked by AENOR with Google Earth Pro to confirm the settlements. Regarding the pastoralism corridors in the country (Figure 38 in the PD), no other maps were found as independent source, however, AENOR checked the positive reliability of the source used by the PP¹³ and also it matches the information described in other independent documentary sources^{1,3,6,7,10}. On the other hand, during the on-site visit the audit team visited different communities, such as Sam-Ouandja, Rafaï and Bangassou. Complementary, the audit team, interviewed several people from other communities different than those above. AENOR assessed the location of the places and communities by using a GPS (Garmin eTrex Summit HC). AENOR overlapped the GIS files provided by the PP, the track created with the VVB GPS and aerial images to verify the proper location and identification of such places. During all the interviews in previous places, AENOR asked to different stakeholders, including pastoralists, about the corridors and communities about their slash-and-burn agriculture and mining practices. AENOR can confirm that the assessment is reliable and correct. AENOR also can confirm that through aerial flights
Requirement	AENOR assessment and conclusion				
The Applicant's comparison of maps of the reference area and project following accounting area, including locations of settlements or other population centers. For subsequent use in determining the mobilities of the agents of conversion.	Figure 28 in the PD indicates the RA, PAAs, RAs and the permanent settlements in the region. The information was also provided in shape (GIS database) which was crosschecked by AENOR with Google Earth Pro to confirm the settlements. Regarding the pastoralism corridors in the country (Figure 38 in the PD), no other maps were found as independent source, however, AENOR checked the positive reliability of the source used by the PP¹³ and also it matches the information described in other independent documentary sources^{1,3,6,7,10}. On the other hand, during the on-site visit the audit team visited different communities, such as Sam-Ouandja, Rafaï and Bangassou. Complementary, the audit team, interviewed several people from other communities different than those above. AENOR assessed the location of the places and communities by using a GPS (Garmin eTrex Summit HC). AENOR overlapped the GIS files provided by the PP, the track created with the VVB GPS and aerial images to verify the proper location and identification of such places. During all the interviews in previous places, AENOR asked to different stakeholders, including pastoralists, about the corridors and communities about their slash-and-burn agriculture and mining practices. AENOR can confirm that the assessment is reliable and correct. AENOR also can confirm that through aerial flights				

⁸ IOM (2014). Migration Dimensions of the Crisis in the Central African Republic. Department of Operations and Emergencies, International Organization for Migration, Geneva, Switzerland. [Find it here.](#)

⁹ World Bank data base. [Find it here.](#)

¹⁰ MRG (2016). State of the World's Minorities and Indigenous Peoples. Minority Rights Group International, London, UK. [Find it here.](#)

¹¹ Luizza, Matthew. (2017). Transhumant Pastoralism in Central Africa: Emerging Impacts on Conservation and Security. American Association for the Advancement of Science, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. [Find it here.](#)

¹² Giles-Vernick, Tamara Lynn, O'Toole, Thomas E. and Hoogstraten, Jan S.F. van. "Central African Republic". Encyclopedia Britannica, 8 Feb. 2022. [Find it here.](#)

¹³ Alexandre Jaillon, Milan Nublat. Project: Conflict Mapping in the Central African Republic. Pastoralism corridors in Central African Republic (2017). [Find it here.](#) [Map.](#)

Spatial boundary	Description				
	to move from Bangui to Kocho; Kocho to Sam-ouandja; Kocho to Bangassou; Kocho to Rafaï, that the communities are well located and can the existence of more deforested areas as we moved out of the borders of the PAAs, for example to the north of Chinko and the south in Rafaï, which were the frequent places for transhumance.				
	<table> <tr> <th>Requirement</th><th>AENOR assessment and conclusion</th></tr> <tr> <td> 4 a. Written description of the mobility of all primary and secondary agents in the project accounting area and reference area. Acceptable data sources should be used to demonstrate mobility, including geographic and/or anthropogenic factors that may influence their movement or access. </td><td> The location of the agents of conversion relative to the project accounting area and the two reference areas as well as the mobilities of these agents relative to the PAAs is described in PDD 3.1.4 Identification of Agents and Drivers of Deforestation. Sources reviewed by AENOR: 1. Provided by PP (amongst others listed in section References of the PDD): - Related to deforestation drivers and its mobility^{14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20}, 2. Independent sources crosschecked by AENOR: - Socio economic conditions²¹; deforestation drivers^{22, 23}; transboundary context, pastoralism and socioeconomic conditions²⁴, pastoralism and deforestation drivers in </td></tr> </table>	Requirement	AENOR assessment and conclusion	4 a. Written description of the mobility of all primary and secondary agents in the project accounting area and reference area. Acceptable data sources should be used to demonstrate mobility, including geographic and/or anthropogenic factors that may influence their movement or access.	The location of the agents of conversion relative to the project accounting area and the two reference areas as well as the mobilities of these agents relative to the PAAs is described in PDD 3.1.4 Identification of Agents and Drivers of Deforestation. Sources reviewed by AENOR: 1. Provided by PP (amongst others listed in section References of the PDD): - Related to deforestation drivers and its mobility^{14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20}, 2. Independent sources crosschecked by AENOR: - Socio economic conditions²¹; deforestation drivers^{22, 23}; transboundary context, pastoralism and socioeconomic conditions²⁴, pastoralism and deforestation drivers in
Requirement	AENOR assessment and conclusion				
4 a. Written description of the mobility of all primary and secondary agents in the project accounting area and reference area. Acceptable data sources should be used to demonstrate mobility, including geographic and/or anthropogenic factors that may influence their movement or access.	The location of the agents of conversion relative to the project accounting area and the two reference areas as well as the mobilities of these agents relative to the PAAs is described in PDD 3.1.4 Identification of Agents and Drivers of Deforestation. Sources reviewed by AENOR: 1. Provided by PP (amongst others listed in section References of the PDD): - Related to deforestation drivers and its mobility^{14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20}, 2. Independent sources crosschecked by AENOR: - Socio economic conditions²¹; deforestation drivers^{22, 23}; transboundary context, pastoralism and socioeconomic conditions²⁴, pastoralism and deforestation drivers in				

¹⁴ Ondoua Ondoua, G., Beodo Moundjim, E., Mambo Marindo, J.C., Jiagho, R., Usongo, L. & Williamson, E. A. (2017). An Assessment of Poaching and Wildlife Trafficking in the Garamba-Bili-Chinko Transboundary Landscape. [Find it here.](#)

¹⁵ Francis, D., Martine, T., Robert, M., Missili, S., Chericia, F., & Christian, D. (2016). Forest Management and Deforestation in central African Republic DIMA Francis Auguste Fleury Junior 1, Prof Yi Jing Wu 吴进 American Journal of Engineering Research (AJER). [Find it here.](#)

¹⁶ Aebischer, T., Ibrahim, T., Hickisch, R., Furrer, R. D., Leuenberger, C., & Wegmann, D. (2020). Apex predators decline after an influx of pastoralists in former Central African Republic hunting zones. Biological Conservation, 241, 108326. [Find it here.](#)

¹⁷ Alidou, S. M. (2016). Cross-border transhumance corridors in West Africa. CapEx in Supporting Pastoral Development, (February). [Find it here.](#)

¹⁸ The World Bank Group. (2010). Central African Republic Country Environmental Analysis: Environmental Management for Sustainable Growth. [Find it here.](#)

¹⁹ Megevand, Carole. 2013. Deforestation Trends in the Congo Basin : Reconciling Economic Growth and Forest Protection. Directions in Development, Environment and Sustainable Development;. Washington, DC: World Bank. [Find it here.](#)

²⁰ Ministère De L'environnement Et Du Développement Durable. Rapport d'Avancement à mi-parcours: République Centrafricaine Date de soumission: 26 juin 2020. Fonds de Préparation du FCPF. [Find it here.](#)

²¹ Agger, K. (2014). Behind the Headlines. Drivers of Violence in the Central African Republic. Enough Project, Washington, D.C. [Find it here.](#)

²² ICG (2014a). The Central African Republic's Hidden Conflict. Africa Briefing 105. International Crisis Group, Brussels, Belgium. [Find it here.](#)

²³ Tchatchou B, Sonwa DJ, Ifo S and Tiani AM. 2015. Deforestation and forest degradation in the Congo Basin: State of knowledge, current causes and perspectives. Occasional Paper 144. Bogor, Indonesia: CIFOR. [Find it here.](#)

²⁴ IOM (2014). Migration Dimensions of the Crisis in the Central African Republic. Department of Operations and Emergencies, International Organization for Migration, Geneva, Switzerland. [Find it here.](#)

Spatial boundary	Description	
		transboundary context²⁵. 3. A wide range of interviews held by the audit team, that covered: transhumant pastoralists (six interviews), livestock merchants (eight interviews), community representatives (five interviews), among a wide variety of other stakeholders up to 113 respondents, from rangers to representatives to the Ministry of Environment. AENOR validated that the identification of conversion agents, their location and mobilities are justified based on the accuracy, applicability and reliability of the provided sources used, which were aligned with other independent sources cross-checked by AENOR, as well as the onsite visit. Documentary sources include Academia and international organizations and NGOs of accredited prestige. In section below 3.3.4, AENOR has detailed the process to assess the main drivers of deforestation.
5	Requirement a. A paired comparison of maps of the reference area and project accounting area, which must include the following criteria: i. Topographic constraints to conversion (slope, aspect, elevation); ii. Land use and/or land cover; iii. Soil map (if available) or other soil information; iv. Applicable infrastructure (eg, water ways, roads, railroad, airports, provision of electricity, and other access points); v. Distance to important markets; and vi. Ownership/tenure boundaries that influence conversion (e.g., government holdings, private holdings and reserves).	AENOR assessment and conclusion The PP provided description of the landscape configuration of the two reference areas, justifying its similarity to the PAAs. At this regard, the methodology, in its sections 6.8.1.1 and 6.8.1.3 proposes a set of factors to be taken into account for the delineation when are relevant to the project case. That said, 3.1.4 Delineating Reference Areas of the PD describes the factors finally considered: i) Topographic constraints to conversion. In Figures 29, 39, 40 it is showed the areas with the same elevation range. In the image is clear that the PAAs and the RA (RA1 regarding PAA1 and RA2 regarding PAA2 and PAA3) have similar characteristics in terms of elevation. This was cross checked with an independent source²⁶. ii) Land use and/or land cover in Figures 31 and 41, which show similar land cover present in the PAAs and reference areas (RA1 regarding PAA1 and RA2 regarding PAA2 and PAA3). This was cross checked with an independent source²⁷. iii) Soil data sources in CAR are very scarce. The African Soil Atlas, 2013 was used as the most reliable (Figure 32 and 43 in PD). However, its scale is very wide. The absence of detailed-scale data makes it difficult to establish their relationship with the deforestation that occurs in small patches, based only on regional-scale map data. iv) Applicable infrastructure in (Figures 35 and 42: Main roads in the region), crosschecked by AENOR with Google Earth Pro. v) It was considered that each prefecture and subprefecture capital has relevant markets therefore, those capitals were considered as part of the two reference areas. Figure 36 and 48

²⁵ Luizza, Matthew. (2017). Transhumant Pastoralism in Central Africa: Emerging Impacts on Conservation and Security. American Association for the Advancement of Science, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. [Find it here](#).

²⁶ Interactive Forest Atlas of the Central African Republic. [Find it here](#).

²⁷ Interactive Forest Atlas of the Central African Republic. [Find it here](#).

Spatial boundary	Description								
	in PD presents the important markets in the region, which was also confirmed during the onsite visit. vi) According to the constitution of the Central African Republic, all the land in the country belongs to the state and it can be used by its people in a customary way, which in the Eastern CAR has been claimed either as hunting area, national park, wildlife reserve and “zone banale”, open land able to be claimed by communities. In the RAs and in the PAAs these tenures are present (RAs are categorized as either hunting areas or “zone banale” and PAAs are categorized entirely as hunting areas). The ownership/tenure is presented in Figures 37 and 50 of the PD, and was also crosschecked during the onsite visit and documentary sources^{28, 29}. The country limits were an extra variable considered for the final RAs delimitation, considering in the east with Sudan, South Sudan and in the south with Democratic Republic of the Congo.								
	b. Written justification of similarities between the project and reference area using acceptable data sources. Section 3.1.4 of the PD contains, for each of the items above listed, an explanation of its relevancy for the delineation of the two RAs and the source used for the comparison. The reliability of the sources was checked by AENOR and crosschecked with the independent sources listed above.								
	In addition, according to the requirements set in section 6.8.1.3, for baseline type F-U3 the following criteria were also verified by AENOR: <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Requirement</th><th>AENOR assessment and conclusion</th></tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>The reference area must be in the same general region as the project area, but not necessarily adjacent to the project area.</td><td>AENOR validated, through the GIS data base provided, that the two reference areas are adjacent to their respective PAAs, within the country limits, and do not include the project area in it.</td></tr> <tr> <td>At some point in time during the historic reference period, the reference area must contain as much forested area as the project accounting area.</td><td>It was confirmed by AENOR that at the beginning of the historic reference period the two reference areas contained as much forested area as the project area. The historic reference period for the project is 3 January 2001 to 9 March, 2016. The period was selected to cover at least 10 years of analysis, and to take into account important events related to the agents and drivers of conversion. These include the Bush War (covering the period from 2004 to 2007), the start of the pastoralist activities in the eastern CAR (started in 2010 and intensified from 2013), and the current civil war in the country (began in 2012). This was validated through the historic imagery for the two reference areas provided in Annex 5 Grid analysis by the PP, while the historic events were crosschecked with independent sources^{30, 31}.</td></tr> <tr> <td>The reference area must not</td><td>The two reference areas do not include the project area. It</td></tr> </tbody> </table>	Requirement	AENOR assessment and conclusion	The reference area must be in the same general region as the project area, but not necessarily adjacent to the project area.	AENOR validated, through the GIS data base provided, that the two reference areas are adjacent to their respective PAAs, within the country limits, and do not include the project area in it.	At some point in time during the historic reference period, the reference area must contain as much forested area as the project accounting area.	It was confirmed by AENOR that at the beginning of the historic reference period the two reference areas contained as much forested area as the project area. The historic reference period for the project is 3 January 2001 to 9 March, 2016. The period was selected to cover at least 10 years of analysis, and to take into account important events related to the agents and drivers of conversion. These include the Bush War (covering the period from 2004 to 2007), the start of the pastoralist activities in the eastern CAR (started in 2010 and intensified from 2013), and the current civil war in the country (began in 2012). This was validated through the historic imagery for the two reference areas provided in Annex 5 Grid analysis by the PP, while the historic events were crosschecked with independent sources ^{30, 31} .	The reference area must not	The two reference areas do not include the project area. It
Requirement	AENOR assessment and conclusion								
The reference area must be in the same general region as the project area, but not necessarily adjacent to the project area.	AENOR validated, through the GIS data base provided, that the two reference areas are adjacent to their respective PAAs, within the country limits, and do not include the project area in it.								
At some point in time during the historic reference period, the reference area must contain as much forested area as the project accounting area.	It was confirmed by AENOR that at the beginning of the historic reference period the two reference areas contained as much forested area as the project area. The historic reference period for the project is 3 January 2001 to 9 March, 2016. The period was selected to cover at least 10 years of analysis, and to take into account important events related to the agents and drivers of conversion. These include the Bush War (covering the period from 2004 to 2007), the start of the pastoralist activities in the eastern CAR (started in 2010 and intensified from 2013), and the current civil war in the country (began in 2012). This was validated through the historic imagery for the two reference areas provided in Annex 5 Grid analysis by the PP, while the historic events were crosschecked with independent sources ^{30, 31} .								
The reference area must not	The two reference areas do not include the project area. It								

²⁸ UNDP. Human Development Report 2014 [Find it here](#).

²⁹ The Global Economy. Central African Republic Economic Indicators. [Find it here](#)

³⁰ Giles-Vernick, Tamara Lynn, O'Toole, Thomas E. and Hoogstraten, Jan S.F. van. "Central African Republic". Encyclopedia Britannica, 8 Feb. 2022. [Find it here](#).

³¹ Luizza, Matthew. (2017). Transhumant Pastoralism in Central Africa: Emerging Impacts on Conservation and Security. American Association for the Advancement of Science, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. [Find it here](#).

Spatial boundary	Description				
	include the project area and must not be altered during the historic reference period. was confirmed by AENOR that the two reference areas delineation were not altered during the reference period through the available historic imagery (provided in Annex 5 Grid analysis by the PP) and in shapes files (GIS database). The PP knows that any alteration to the two reference areas that occur in the future could be only to comply with any new methodological or standard requirements. The boundaries of the reference area must include one or more of the following: i. Environmental, natural or political boundaries. ii. Major transportation infrastructure such as highways or railroads. iii. Land ownership/tenure boundaries. iv. Latitudinal or longitudinal degree boundaries. As stated above regarding requirement 5.a of the section 6.8.1.3 of the methodology, the boundaries of the two reference areas were delineated including the following: i. Land cover, elevation range and slopes, and country limits (for RA1 and RA2) ii. Roads (not used, as it has no influence on the mobility) iii. Land ownership and tenure (RA1 and RA2). Also administrative boundaries (second administrative level). iv. Latitudinal or longitudinal degree boundaries (not used, as no relevant for the agent of deforestation, which was demonstrated to AENOR during the technical sessions) Considering the limitations in the delineation of the two reference areas (e.g. being on the national border, or the absence of similar natural protected areas nearby), AENOR validated that the two chosen reference areas are the most reasonable model of similarity with the PAAs (CCF/RA1 to PAA1, OWSRA2 to PAA2 and PAA3), considering the elements above (conversion agents, mobility of agents, socioeconomic conditions, most significant factors of landscape configuration, minimum area of forest, etc.) and confirmed that the management practices of the baseline agents in the two reference areas are similar to those that would have been applied to the PAAs in the baseline. AENOR assessed the sources provided by the PP and considered them consistent, reliable and applicable, and were cross checked with additional independent sources when available, including Academia, NGOs, international institutions, onsite inspection interviews, etc. Thus, the delineation of the two reference areas meets the requirements in sections 5 and 6 of VM0009 and PDR 40-44.				
Activity-shifting leakage area (ASLA)	Considering the different baseline scenarios and agents of deforestation present in the region, the PP selected two activity-shifting leakage areas, one per each baseline scenario: - ASLA1 for PAA1 (areas under the influence of local communities) was established in collaboration with the local communities, considering buffer zones around the Western and Southern borders of the PAA1, as most probable areas of potential displacement. - ASLA2 for PAA2 and PAA3 (areas under the influence of transhumant pastoralists) was established initially based on the areas more subject to the transhumant pastoralists movements, that are areas around the Eastern and Northern borders of PAA2 and PAA3. <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Requirement</th><th>AENOR assessment and conclusion</th></tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>PDR 105. A map of the delineated boundaries.</td><td>As stated in section 8.3.2.1 of the methodology, the ASLA1 and ASLA2 are located in the same general region as the corresponding PAAs. In the PD (figure 61) and in external GIS data base (/215/), the PP provided delineation of the ASLA1 to the PP, consisting of 8 community delineated buffer zones and 3 hunting zones. In the PD (figure 70) and in external GIS data base (/215/), the PP provided delineation of the ASLA2, which is a temporary</td></tr> </tbody> </table>	Requirement	AENOR assessment and conclusion	PDR 105. A map of the delineated boundaries.	As stated in section 8.3.2.1 of the methodology, the ASLA1 and ASLA2 are located in the same general region as the corresponding PAAs. In the PD (figure 61) and in external GIS data base (/215/), the PP provided delineation of the ASLA1 to the PP, consisting of 8 community delineated buffer zones and 3 hunting zones. In the PD (figure 70) and in external GIS data base (/215/), the PP provided delineation of the ASLA2, which is a temporary
Requirement	AENOR assessment and conclusion				
PDR 105. A map of the delineated boundaries.	As stated in section 8.3.2.1 of the methodology, the ASLA1 and ASLA2 are located in the same general region as the corresponding PAAs. In the PD (figure 61) and in external GIS data base (/215/), the PP provided delineation of the ASLA1 to the PP, consisting of 8 community delineated buffer zones and 3 hunting zones. In the PD (figure 70) and in external GIS data base (/215/), the PP provided delineation of the ASLA2, which is a temporary				

Spatial boundary	Description		
		leakage area encompassed by 5 community delineated buffer zones, parts of 5 hunting zones and Zemongo Faunal Reserve. AENOR found that the boundaries of the ASLAs are clearly identified.	
	PDR 106. Maps of the landscape configuration, including: a. Topography (elevation, slope, aspect); b. Recent land use and land cover (either a thematic map created by the project proponent or publicly available map); c. Access points; d. Soil class maps (if available); e. Locations of important markets; f. Locations of important resources like waterways or roads; and g. Land ownership/tenure boundaries.	ASLA1: For assessing the landscape configuration similarity between the selected ASLA1 and the PAA1 four factors were analysed: elevation (Table 33, figure 62 in PD), slope (Table 34, figure 63 in PD), land cover (Table 35, figure 64 in PD) and soil (Table 36, figure 65 in PD). Regarding the similarities in anthropogenic characteristics, the following factors were analysed: - Access points, that are roads (low roads density in PAA1 and ASLA1, in Figure 66) and waterways (Figure 67 in PD, showing that main water courses are shared by PAA1 and ASLA1); - Locations of important markets (no markets within PAA1 or ASLA1, but distance to closest one is similar to both areas, as showed in Figure 68 in PD); - Land ownership/tenure boundaries (ASLA1 is categorized as hunting areas or "zone banale" and PAA 1 is categorized entirely as hunting area, considering that in CAR, all land belongs to the state and can be used by its people in a customary way, as showed in Figure 69 in PD). This way the PP demonstrated the accessibility of ASLA1 by local communities at least as the PAA1 (section Delineating the Activity-Shifting Leakage Area in the PD). In the opinion of the VVB, the information presented by the PP demonstrates similarities in natural and anthropogenic characteristics between PAA1 and ASLA1, and uses applicable, accurate and reliable information sources (NASA SRTM Digital Elevation 30m GEE, African Soil Atlas, 2013, Google Earth Engine – Landsat 7-8), and matches the inputs provided by the independent onsite audit interviews (section 2.4 in this report). ASLA2: For assessing the landscape configuration similarity between the selected ASLA1 and PAA2 and PAA3 four factors were analysed: elevation (Table 37, figure 71 in PD), slope (Table 38, figure 72 in PD), land cover (Table 39, figure 73 in PD) and soil (Table 40, figure 74 in PD). In the opinion of the VVB, the information presented by the PP demonstrates similarities in natural characteristics between PAA2-PAA3 and ASLA2, and uses applicable, accurate and reliable information sources (NASA SRTM Digital Elevation 30m GEE, African Soil Atlas, 2013, Google Earth Engine – Landsat 7-8). Regarding the similarities in anthropogenic characteristics, the following factors were analysed: - Access points: PAA2, PAA3 and ASLA2 are part of the Darfur cluster of transhumant pastoralists and share similarities with regards to remoteness and uninhabited zones; and the Fulani transhumance, that covers also ASLA2, PAA2 and PAA3, has the biggest influence within the Darfur cluster. Then the areas share similarity in terms of the locations of deforestation agents and their mobility (Figure 38 and 39 in PD). - Locations of important markets (no markets within PAA2, PAA3 or ASLA2, but distance to closest one is similar to both areas, as showed in Figure 75 in PD); - Locations of important resources like roads (although the	

Spatial boundary	Description		
		existence of roads is not a factor in deciding where to go for transhumant pastoralists) and waterways (Figure 77 in PD, showing that main water courses are shared by PAA1 and ASLA1); - Land ownership/tenure boundaries (ASLA2 is categorized as hunting areas, wildlife reserve and "zone banale", while PAA2 and PAA3 is categorized entirely as hunting area, considering that in CAR, all land belongs to the state and can be used by its people in a customary way, as showed in Figure 78 in PD). This way the PP demonstrated the accessibility of ASLA2 by transhumant pastoralists at least as PAA2 and PAA3 (section Delineating the Activity-Shifting Leakage Area in the PD). According the documentary evidence provided by the PP³², crosschecked by AENOR with independent documentary sources^{33, 34} and interviews with transhumant pastoralists (six interviews), livestock merchants (eight interviews), community representatives (five interviews), among a wide variety of other stakeholders, the delineation of the ASLAs is considered appropriate.	
	PDR 107. A narrative describing the rationale for selection of activity-shifting leakage area boundaries. If the activity-shifting leakage area is smaller than the project accounting area or cannot be defined, justification for the size of the area. If foreign agents have been identified as an agent of conversion, justification that they are unlikely to shift their activities outside the activity-shifting leakage area.	ASLA1: To select ASLA1, a stakeholder consultation process was carried out as part of the land use plan development. During that process the local communities that border the Western and Southern part of CCA helped to delineate, in a participatory manner, the areas that will act as a buffer between the communities and the PAA. A monitoring process is in place to determine whether they are being properly used or not, the deforestation caused beyond the selected ASLA1 should not be linked with the implementation of the project activities in the CCA. It was clarified that areas inside the PA but not covered by any PAA1 were not included within the ASLA1 as they were considered as areas constrained to conversion due to the distance between the area and communities and road (as demonstrated in the delimitation of PAA1) nonetheless the Project Area (CCA) will be protected in its entirety by AP as part of the project activities. ASLA2: The same stakeholder consultation process carried out as part of the land use plan was also considered to select parts of the ASLA2, which aimed to understand the nearby areas most likely to be used by the pastoralists in the absence of a CCA. Additionally, a proposal for transhumance corridors in the region, outside the current PAA2 and PAA3, is in definition, although not yet included as part of the ASLA2 for the first verification period considering it was not being enforced during the monitored period. Those interviewees recognized that the future corridor (regarding PAA2 and PAA3) will have benefits, especially to reduce the possible conflicts. The pastoralists	

³² Pastoralism in eastern Central Africa Implications for state, society and the environment. The Regional Information Coordination Center (2021) African Parks Network. [Find it here](#).

³³ AX-24. La transhumance en Centrafrique : une analyse multidimensionnelle. (2018). Ankogui-Mpoko et Vircoulon. [Find it here](#).

³⁴ Luizza, Matthew. (2017). Transhumant Pastoralism in Central Africa: Emerging Impacts on Conservation and Security. American Association for the Advancement of Science, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. [Find it here](#).

Spatial boundary	Description	
		recognized their participation in the design of the corridor, its feasibility and consensus, and remarked that they participated in the inclusion of water points and size. That said, for the validation and first verification, the PP proposed ASLA2 as a temporary leakage belt considering the movements done by the pastoralists in the early years of the project implementation, while the corridor will replace sectors of ASLA2. Section 8.3.2.1 in the methodology requests that the activity-shifting leakage area may not be altered after the first monitoring period unless a baseline re-evaluation is triggered, however, the boundaries of the ASLA may be revised without requiring a baseline revaluation if “conservation activity is established in the activity-shifting leakage area such that the agents of conversion no longer have access to the activity-shifting leakage area or a portion thereof”. If not, a methodology deviation may be applied”. This condition is expected to be met prior to the inclusion of the corridor as new ASLA. Then, a methodology deviation regarding the modification of the ASLAs boundaries would not be needed. Finally, the delineation of the corridors is expected to improve the monitoring and evaluation of the transhumance. Overall conclusion The process of the selection of the ASLAs, as wells as their accessibility and similarity with the corresponding PAAs was confirmed by AENOR through GIS and field and aerial surveys during the onsite visit. Additionally, during the extensive consultation process with the local communities on the edge of the PAAs (see section 2.4 in this report) it was possible to confirm the participatory consultation process (also supported by the participatory cartography records provided) carried out by the PP, as well as trace the hypothesis handled by the PP regarding the potential areas of displacement of the activities. When the project proponent is able to include more PAAs (instances), activity shifting areas will be updated considering a similar participatory process. Last, ASLAs are not smaller than the corresponding PAAs. On the other hand, through the participatory process of delineation of the ASLAs and it approach to be updated in further verifications (once more PAAs are included or once the transhumant corridors in ASLA2 are definitively set out) it was ensured that agents of conversion are unlikely to shift their activities outside the ASLAs.
	PDR 108. Results of a spatial analysis to demonstrate the activity-shifting leakage area is entirely forested as of the project start date.	ASLAs are entirely forested (eligible area) as of the project start date, as was confirmed in and cover assessment Annex, which considers Google Earth Engine – Landsat 7-8, which is applicable, accurate and reliable information. It is important to note that the total area of PAA1 used for the BEM calculations is the eligible CCF cover and similarly ASLA1 area is the eligible CCF cover (which is predominant with around 70% of the cover) only (see the assessment of PAA1 above), although the analysis of similarities also include non-eligible areas and OWS cover. On the other hand, the total area of PAA2 and PAA3 used for the BEM calculations is the eligible OWS cover. However, ASLA2 area is the eligible CCF+OWS cover, which are in similar proportions amongst PAA2-PAA3 and ASLA2 with predominance of OWS (see the assessment of PAA1 above), although the analysis of similarities also include non-forested

Spatial boundary	Description
	areas. Thus, the PP will continue to manage the entire CCA and monitor the entire ASLA2, regardless of forest class. On the other hand, a FAR was issued in order to follow up as potential leakages emissions displaced from PAA2 and PAA3' OWS to CCF areas within PAA2 and PAA3 in the upcoming verification event. PDR 109. Results of a spatial analysis to demonstrate the activity-shifting leakage area is no larger than the project accounting area. ASLAs are bigger than PAAs, so a methodology deviation was applied (see deviation 3. Activity-shifting leakage areas delimitation and monitoring, in section 3.3.6 of this report). Thus, it was confirmed by AENOR that ASLAs comply with the methodology (PDR 105-109 and section 8.3.2.1 Delineating the Activity-Shifting Leakage Area).
Market leakage area	The project does not account for emissions from market leakage.

The temporal boundaries are as follows:

Temporal boundary	Description
Project start date	PAA1 and PAA2: 15 September 2016 PAA3: 15 April 2020
Crediting period	From 15 September 2016 to 14 April 2045. The length of the crediting period is 28 years, 7 months and 0 days.
Baseline re-evaluation	As per VCS requirements, for the duration of the project it is necessary to reassess the baseline every 10 years. Then, the baseline re-evaluation will be performed during the first verification claiming credits from a monitoring period after 16 September 2026.
First anticipated monitoring period	The first anticipated monitoring period will be from 15 September 2016 to 31 December 2020.
Anticipated subsequent monitoring periods	The subsequent monitoring reports are anticipated in a two to three-year interval, but subject to change.

According to the VCS requirements, sources of emissions that are expected to increase in the project scenario compared to the baseline case must be included if the exclusion would lead to a significant overestimation of the total net anthropogenic GHG emission reductions/removals generated during the fixed baseline period. Furthermore, that sources considered insignificant according to the latest VCS Methodology Requirements can always be neglected. The GHG sources included are following, for the baseline and project scenarios:

Gas	Baseline and project sources	Included?	Justification/Explanation
CO ₂ (carbon dioxide)	Flux in carbon pods	Yes	Major pool considered in the project scenario
CH ₄ (methane)	Burning of biomass	No	Conservatively excluded
	Livestock	Yes	A required source when emissions from grazing are not de minimis

Gas	Baseline and project sources	Included?	Justification/Explanation
N ₂ O (nitrous oxide)	Burning of biomass	No	Conservatively excluded
	Livestock	No	Excluded on the basis of applicability condition 14
	Synthetic fertilizer	No	Conservatively excluded

The carbon pools included are following:

Carbon pool	Required?	Inclusion?	Justification/Explanation	Qualitative description
Above-ground merchantable tree (AGMT)	Yes, only if baseline scenario or project activities include the harvest of long-lived wood products.	No	Pool not required; the baseline scenario does not include the harvest of long-lived wood products. Conservatively excluded	-
Above-ground other tree (AGOT)	Yes	Yes	Mandatory. Major pool considered	Assumed to be completely removed from the forest during the degradation and deforestation process for the baseline scenario. The trees in this pool are assumed to have an immediate loss to CO ₂ e emissions. As the forest PAA baseline type is F-U3, it is also assumed to be converted to an emission first in the stratum with the lowest carbon stocks, and last in the stratum with the highest carbon stocks.
Aboveground non-tree (AGNT)	Yes, if the baseline scenario includes perennial tree crops. Otherwise, accounting for this carbon pool is optional.	Yes	Pool monitored in the carbon plots	Assumed to be completely removed from the forest during the degradation and deforestation process for the baseline scenario. The stocks in this pool are assumed to have an immediate loss to CO ₂ e emissions. As the forest PAA baseline type is F-U3, it is also assumed to be converted to an emission first in the stratum, with the lowest carbon stocks and last in the stratum with the highest carbon stocks.
Below-ground merchantable tree (BGMT)	Optional	No	Conservatively excluded	-
Below-ground other tree (BGOT)	Optional	Yes	Optional. May be conservatively excluded	These are assumed to be minimally impacted by the activities of the agents, therefore, the below-ground carbon pool is assumed to decay over a ten-year
Below-ground non-tree	Optional	Yes	Optional. May be conservatively excluded	

Carbon pool	Required?	Inclusion?	Justification/Explanation	Qualitative description
(BGNT)				period. As the forest PAA baseline type is F-U3, it is also assumed to be converted to an emission first in the stratum with the lowest carbon stocks, and last in the stratum with the highest carbon stocks. Emissions from the pool are determined using a root-to-shoot ratio.
Litter (LTR)	No	No	Always conservatively excluded	-
Deadwood (DW)	Yes, if AGMT is selected	No	Conservatively excluded	-
Standing deadwood (SD)	Optional	No	Conservatively excluded	-
Lying deadwood (LD)	Optional	No	Conservatively excluded	-
Soil organic carbon (SOC)	Optional	No	Pool monitored in the carbon plots	Conservatively excluded.
Long-lived wood products (WP)	Yes, if AGMT is selected	No	Conservatively excluded	-

Taking into account the justifications, assumptions and supporting information provided and the design of the project, AENOR deems that project boundaries are correctly defined and in compliance with the applicable methodology and VCS requirements.

3.3.4 Baseline Scenario

As first step to determine the baseline scenario, the PP identified the agents and drivers of deforestation. The direct drivers identified in Chinko forested land uses are:

- Transhumance practices.
- Subsistence driven activities by local communities: slash and burn agricultural and artisanal mining.

The agents of conversion present in Chinko are:

Agent	Description
Local communities	These communities are local communities that live on the periphery of the project area. The agriculturalists in the region are the Bantu people. The Bantu people living in the vicinity of the CCA are of the Banda ethnic group. Their practices affect mainly the humid dense forest at the border of the CCA, the area with the largest carbon stock in the project. These areas are under heavy pressure from local farmers and is evidenced by <i>GlobalForestwatch</i> in Rafaï and Yalinga.
Transhumant pastoralists	The transhumant pastoralist communities living in the landscape are the Fulani. The Fulani are the ethnic group with the largest nomadic pastoral community in the world. The Mbororo peoples are nomadic communities of Fulani cattle herders. They do not live in fixed abodes or practice agriculture but spend most of the time travelling in

Agent	Description
	search of new pasture for their cattle. The settled Fulani rear large ruminants, mostly cattle and donkeys.

In the PDD it is shown that the most likely scenario of land use in the absence of the proposed project corresponds to those that give continuity to the economic activities predominant in the region of study, it means, the pre-project conditions.

The procedure that AENOR has followed to evaluate the information that transhumant pastoralists and their practices are the main drivers and agents of deforestation in the project accounting areas with predominance of Open Woodland Savanna forest cover (PAA2 and PAA3) has been a long and complex process, due to the fact that it is in part a relatively ill-described and slow process and that it occurs relatively recently in specific regions of CAR. In the process, AENOR has reviewed different evidences and sources, has carried out interviews with many different people and directly visited the different ecosystems and impacted areas on site, while comparing the landscape and the effects of the Pastoralists on the Open Woodland Savanna.

In the case of local communities as agents of deforestation in the project accounting area with predominance of Closed Canopy Forest cover (PAA1), AENOR performed similar procedures of evaluation and they were described in sections above. Mainly, AENOR has reviewed different evidences and sources which demonstrate the usage and exploitation of the forest by local communities and how these activities pass the legal limit. Furthermore, during the audit site visit AENOR carried out interviews with multiple relevant stakeholders (e.g. representatives of farmers, miners, hunters, women association, young association, etc.) and directly visited areas affected by such agents to understand the post-deforestation scenario. AENOR attended the CAPEP meeting and there, it was able to interview high positions' opinions and understand the relation between the Closed Canopy Forest Cover, the exploitation of the resources and the role of the communities in these forests and their conservation.

In AENOR's opinion, the drivers of deforestation have been properly identified, since an unsustainable and continuous process of pastoralism activities in PAA2 and PAA3 lead to a deforestation of the open woodland savanna followed in the long-term by desertification. Note that within PAA2 and PAA3 there is also the presence of CCF (mostly riparian forest), however, during the analysis done for determining the historical conversion no major conversion was found in those areas. Besides that, it was determined that the risk of conversion of CCF within PAA2 and PAA3 was low considering that the agents of CCF conversion observed in the RA2 are in the northernmost areas (more than 100 km away from the Project Area border). Although the agents show extremely high mobility (and flexibility) when it comes to livestock herding, they show lower mobility when it comes to CCF conversion. Therefore, considering the historical low conversion during the periods analyzed and the low deforestation risk during this monitoring period, the PP took the decision to be conservative and rather remove the CCF cover from the eligible areas in PAA2 and PAA3. Note that from an operational perspective, the PP nevertheless continues to protect the whole protected area as mandated by the government. In PAA1 on the other hand, the local communities performing subsistence driven activities such as slash and burn agriculture and mining have a clear direct impact on deforestation in the Closed Canopy Forest. With African Parks taking over the management of the areas, they have taken corrective measures to mitigate the deforestation made by both agents. AENOR has reviewed several sources such as the information of CAR from the World Bank. It is stated

that increasing demands from agriculture and slash and burn practices is cause for concern about proper forest resource management³⁵. Other document from The World Bank (Priorities for Ending Poverty and Boosting Shared Prosperity in CAR³⁶) says that in the rainy season, the land preparation is very complicate. Plots for cultivation are smaller, and slash and burn agriculture is then practiced. The economy is largely based on mining, wood, cash crops and sale of forest products. Other evidence reviewed by AENOR was the Readiness Plan Idea Note (R-PIN) for CAR from the World Bank³⁷. In such document, it is explained that agricultural development in the CAR is still weak being limited to auto-subsistence and marketing to those regions poor in agricultural products, such as towns and mining zones etc. Such agriculture provokes important damage to ligneous covered savannahs and tropical forests as a result of the technique of slash and burn agriculture. It also favors uncontrolled or wild bushfires, the effects of which can be seen in the bushy savannahs bordering forest zones and in the forest itself. Indeed, fires lit in the height of the dry season can become extremely violent often reaching the forest canopy. In this source also is explained that the practice of shifting slash and burn agriculture is one of the main causes of deforestation. The source of the Deforestation trends in the Congo Basin³⁸ also states that the agricultural expansion, specifically the slash and burn cultivation is one of the causes of deforestation and large agribusiness operations can also play a positive role in reducing deforestation and forest degradation by employing relatively large populations who would, therefore, forgo their traditional slash-and-burn practices. In this sense, the role of the CCA project is in this line due to the recruitment of people from local communities to be part of the project.

Other source reviewed by AENOR has been The national determinants of deforestation in sub-Saharan Africa, from The Royal Society³⁹ in which it is said that the growth in urban population would also encourage increases in the shifting cultivation of staple crops in peri-urban zones, a pattern that would be consistent with the reported association between recent deforestation and growth in areas cultivated for staple crops. Also, the absence of well-remunerated non-farm jobs in cities and elsewhere makes the continued exploitation of the forests through shifting cultivation and charcoal production a more attractive prospect for rural people.

In a neighboring country, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the study of Quantifying forest cover loss in Democratic Republic of the Congo, 2000–2010, with Landsat ETM+ data (Potapov et al.2012)⁴⁰ indicates that the expansion of human populations into previously intact areas, followed by forest fragmentation, forest conversion for slash-and-burn agriculture, mining operations, charcoal production, and poaching all deleteriously impact DRC's forest resources and the future sustainability of forest ecosystem services. Another study from Democratic Republic of Congo⁴¹ explains that slash and burn agriculture caused 70% deforestation in Africa, 50% in Asia and 30% in America. Also, the income generated through the practice

³⁵ https://climateknowledgeportal.worldbank.org/sites/default/files/2021-06/15875-WB_Central%20Africa%20Republic%20Country%20Profile-WEB.pdf

³⁶ <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/459721563221464687/pdf/Central-African-Republic-Systematic-Country-Diagnostic-Priorities-for-Ending-Poverty-and-Boosting-Shared-Prosperity.pdf>

³⁷ https://www.forestcarbonpartnership.org/system/files/documents/CAR_R-PIN_English_Revised_Feb_2009.pdf

³⁸ <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/175211468257358269/pdf/Deforestation-trends-in-the-Congo-Basin-reconciling-economic-growth-and-forest-protection.pdf>

³⁹ Rudel TK. 2013 The national determinants of deforestation in sub-Saharan Africa. Phil Trans R Soc B 368: 20120405. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1098/rstb.2012.0405>

⁴⁰ Potapov et al. 2012. Quantifying forest cover loss in Democratic Republic of the Congo, 2000–2010, with Landsat ETM+ data

⁴¹ Tanzito et al. 2020. Slash-and-burn agriculture, the major cropping system in the region of Faradje in Democratic Republic of Congo: Ecological and socio-economic consequences

of slash-and-burn agriculture may be the most important if not the only one, compared to that generated by other economic activities. Finally, this agricultural practice is likely imposed to farmers by socioeconomic conditions prevailing in the region.

AENOR has reviewed the sources described above and it has been crosschecked with the PDD and supporting information of African Parks. The interviews carried out with local communities and representatives have been another opportunity to crosscheck and confirm that the information on the PDD about the drivers of deforestation is reliable and correct.

In order to further evaluate the transhumant pastoralism process, once AENOR had put the situation into context, understanding the problem of deforestation after reviewing the documentation provided by African Parks, AENOR held a briefing meeting with an expert. Dr. Leif Brottem is faculty member at Grinnell College and a research associate at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He researches topics related to pastoral security in West and Central Africa and has been working in northern Benin for 20 years. This meeting was prior to AENOR's visit to CAR, and AENOR asked about the reasons for the displacement of pastoralists, the damage caused, the composition of the groups, the type of livestock they use, the logistics of the movements, as well as other associated negative effects such as the transmission of diseases. Dr. Leif concluded that African Parks is doing a great job to sensitize the pastoralists to stop the deforestation because the implantation of other alternatives for grazing. After the meeting with Leif Brottem, AENOR had a clearer, more accurate and independent view of the situation described in the PDD.

At national level, AENOR could confirm that pastoralism is a driver of deforestation in the country, by cross-checking the evidence provided by the PP and referenced in section 3.1.4 of the PDD: Readiness Preparation Proposal in 2011⁴² and Midway Progress Report in 2020⁴³, both prepared by CAR Government. Besides, AENOR crosschecked the following independent sources, to prove that pastoralism is a driver of deforestation^{44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49}. These studies are more focused in the general context of the situation. In the study about the conflict mapping in Central African Republic⁴⁴ is detailed that since the 1990s, the Central African Republic has increasingly become home to a myriad of armed actors engaged in shifting allegiances and conflicts focused locally and/or on a broader national agenda. It was from these origins that many of those fighters participating in the 2013 putsch hailed. Since the late 1980's and 90's pastoralism has become increasingly conflict-affected. Indeed, since the 2013/2014 crisis, conflict dynamics around pastoralism have become even more complex with the advent of systemic predation on the sector and subsequent collisions of interests. Today, transhumance touches on the root of some of the most violent identity- and resource-based clashes currently taking place in the country.

⁴² https://forestcarbonpartnership.org/system/files/documents/CAR-RPP%20Revised%20March%2005%2C%202011_0.pdf

⁴³ https://forestcarbonpartnership.org/system/files/documents/MTR_REDD_FCPF_CAR_20200924_Fr_final.pdf
⁴⁴ 1809-CAR-conflict-mapping_web.pdf (ipisresearch.be)

⁴⁵ IOM (2014). Migration Dimensions of the Crisis in the Central African Republic. Department of Operations and Emergencies, International Organization for Migration, Geneva, Switzerland

⁴⁶ (PDF) Historical Ecologies of Pastoralist Overgrazing in Kenya: Long-Term Perspectives on Cause and Effect (researchgate.net)

⁴⁷ (PDF) Long-term degradation of Sahelian rangeland detected by 27 years of field study in Senegal: Long-term rangeland monitoring in the Sahel (researchgate.net)

⁴⁸ Élevage bovin et conflits en Centrafrique (openedition.org)

⁴⁹ (PDF) Grazing management systems and their effects on savanna ecosystem dynamics: A review (researchgate.net)

Other study, from the Department of Operations and Emergencies within the International Organization for Migration (IOM)⁴⁵ concludes that all transhumance corridors have been disrupted by the presence of rebel groups and there are severe mobility limitations. The relocation of herders has a significant effect on the availability of meat and its byproducts to local communities, which affects trade and commerce between pastoralists and farmers, which in turn threatens food security in CAR. Actually, the lack of safe corridors enlarges the problem of deforestation when opening new grazing routes.

Similarly, and according to the research about historical aspects about overgrazing in Kenya⁴⁶, the impacts of overgrazing and related alterations to the land are indeed crucial concerns with substantial implications for rural livelihoods and the susceptibility of pastoralist communities to various risks. Nevertheless, comprehending the interrelations among diverse factors and processes necessitates detailed, evidence-driven assessments rather than preconceived generalizations. To conclude with the same line, AENOR has reviewed the *Élevage bovin et conflits en Centrafrique*⁴⁸ and confirm that in the space of three years, the pastoral world of the Central African Republic has undergone profound upheaval. Current violence in rural areas correlates with the rhythm of the presence of livestock and herders, who are both actors and victims of exactions. The 2013 conflict is the culmination of a process of decapitalization that began over two decades ago. Then, the current security situation calls for a new vision of the geography of livestock in a sub-regional dynamic.

The study about the negative effects of grazing in the savanna ecosystems⁴⁹ is more focused on the consequences of a bad cattle management in the savanna ecosystems. Concretely, most grasses in savanna ecosystems are fairly tolerant to grazing, however, prolonged intense grazing lead to shift in species composition and reduction in biomass. The degradation of savanna is promoted in many cases due to the current management systems which are not sustainable. All these information about the general information of the transhumance techniques, the overgrazing general problems and the conflicts within the CAR were assessed by AENOR and contrasted as well with other sources such as the interviews with the Government or certain Deputies and communities.

AENOR crosschecked multiple independent sources to further confirm that pastoralists are an important agent of deforestation in the project context and that pastoralism is a driver of ecosystem conversion.

IPIS 2018⁵⁰ outlines that pastoralism dynamics were impacted by the internal conflict in the country and became more relevant in eastern CAR, where the project is located. The authors stated that the predominantly nomadic nature of pastoralist life has seen the phenomenon become a conduit for broader regional ecological, socioeconomic, and politico-military dynamics.

The conflict caused an increased presence of pastoralists in eastern CAR and became a notable dynamic in the region, the territorial expansions and herder migrations that pastoralism-related plundering and conflict have entailed, also raised tensions with local populations. This situation is not only mentioned in IPIS 2018 but also confirmed in the study done by Roselyne et al.⁵¹, who identified the movements of herders towards the eastern part of the country.

The dynamics of the pastoralism in eastern CAR are also confirmed in IOM 2014⁵² paper. As described in the document the priority for pastoralists is the health and wellbeing of their animals, and hence 'no matter where a problem arises, their first reaction is to leave'.

⁵⁰ https://ipisresearch.be/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/1809-CAR-conflict-mapping_web.pdf

⁵¹ *Élevage bovin et conflits en Centrafrique* (openedition.org)

⁵² IOM (2014). Migration Dimensions of the Crisis in the Central African Republic. Department of Operations and Emergencies, International Organization for Migration, Geneva, Switzerland

In the years prior to the project implementation, the pastoralists, faced with increasing vulnerability, have been forced to change their movements to avoid confrontations. Insecurity has been the major reason for the gradual departure of herders from certain prefectures. Many herders were forced to relocate due to insecurities long before the most recent wave of conflict, usually towards the east or cross-border.

The sources mentioned above clearly identify the agents and place them in the region in which the project is located, however, given the recent dynamic of this situation there is not much information available for eastern CAR pastoralism and their effects besides what is already provided by the project proponent. Therefore, we also checked sources that describe the effects of the drivers of deforestation in other regions.

Boles et al. 2019⁵³ for example argues that overgrazing is a long-term process with long lasting environmental and social effects leading to irreversible environmental change. The case studies in the document offer strong support to the argument that adaptive mobility is key to the ecological resilience of both pastoralist livelihoods and rangeland ecosystems. In addition, Mieke et al. 2010⁵⁴ demonstrated a long-term effect of degradation trends and pasture deterioration in areas subject to grazing, interestingly, these effects are sometimes not shown by remote sensing techniques in an early phase, so once the results are visible the situation might be severe.

Kgosikoma et al. 2013⁵⁵ did a literature review of effects of different grazing management systems and found that overgrazing and prolonged poorly managed rangelands led to land degradation including some other effects such as the removal of desirable plant species, decrease water infiltration into soil, increase soil erosion, reduce soil nutrients and alter the plant community composition to a less desirable state. This land degradation leads to deforestation and desertification in the long-term, as explained in section 3.1.4 of the PDD and verified on-site during the audit.

On top of the evidences mentioned above, it is worth noting that AENOR has also reviewed evidence provided by the PP, such as the peer-reviewed study by Dr. Thierry Aebischer, published in the scientific journal 'Biological Conservation' while working for the University of Freiburg. The study, titled "Apex predators decline after an influx of pastoralists in former Central African Republic hunting zones", which argues that the increase in deforestation is a consequence of the influx of pastoralists and the eastern CAR wilderness has recently come under threat of encroachment by nomadic pastoralists and their livestock. Pastoralists from the arid Sahel have gradually extended their range to the humid equatorial savanna over the past decades. This study is very complex and interesting, as it analyses with different methods the decline of certain animals after the presence of pastoralists. This study was explained in person by Thierry Aebischer, who is now conservation manager at African Parks, in a clear and intuitive way during the visit to CAR to the audit team. Also, Dr. Aebischer showed during the presentation other examples of deforestation and degradation by the pastoralists. They fell trees for obtaining honey, for feeding their cattle and for preparing some livestock shelter. Also was mentioned and reviewed by AENOR that, during their movements, they shoot to wild animals, use snares or they poison the rivers or waterflows. Other reports reviewed by AENOR have been ministerial reports, such as the environmental risk analysis, developed by the Government of South Sudan⁵⁶, which details many environmental risks and their main causes. For example, it talks about herders using fire to clear vegetation, with the

⁵³ (PDF) Historical Ecologies of Pastoralist Overgrazing in Kenya: Long-Term Perspectives on Cause and Effect (researchgate.net)

⁵⁴ (PDF) Long-term degradation of Sahelian rangeland detected by 27 years of field study in Senegal: Long-term rangeland monitoring in the Sahel (researchgate.net)

⁵⁵ (PDF) Grazing management systems and their effects on savanna ecosystem dynamics: A review (researchgate.net)

⁵⁶ Ministry of Environment. 2011. Environmental Impacts Risks and Opportunities Assessment: Natural resources management and climate change in South Sudan

associated problems of large fires in the region. Also, Thierry showed during the presentation other examples of deforestation and degradation by the pastoralists. They fell trees for obtaining honey, for feeding their cattle and for preparing some livestock shelter. Also was mentioned and reviewed by AENOR that, during their movements, they shoot to wild animals, use snares or they poison the rivers or waterflows.

Another external report reviewed by AENOR was the “National REDD+ Strategy of the Central African Republic”⁵⁷, a World Bank document, which states the following: ‘Grazing is one of the causes of land cover and soil degradation in CAR: (i) cattle, which graze little, cut the grass below the canopy, which does not allow the plant to regenerate quickly (ii) late fires, used to regenerate pastures, degrade the vegetation cover, (iii) the repeated trampling of cattle and their concentration around watering holes lead to the disappearance of the vegetation cover and the drying up of small streams, (iv) sometimes the felling of fodder trees, especially in the north-east of the country, is an aggravating factor. These references talk about the transhumance, as the main driver of deforestation of humid woodland and tree savannas in Central Africa, despite the efforts from the government to settle farmers in production systems, therefore it’s catalogued as a driver of deforestation in the country. This information is publicly available on the website of the FCPF for CAR, and according to it there was no cattle in most CAR before 1950.

Complementary, AENOR audit team conducted an onsite visit the country of Central African Republic in November 2022, and it was crucial to better understand the above information as well as carry out personal interviews. During this visit, the audit team was able to interview a large number of stakeholders, including community members, African Parks staff, Government staff, community leaders, etc. (see section 2.4), and they all concluded that transhumant pastoralists are the main cause of deforestation in Open Woodland Savannah. In these interviews, interviewees talked about the problems caused by pastoralists, how they removed vegetation cover, how they killed animals or raided communities. The interviewees explained the methods that the pastoralists use, such as tree felling to collect honey or setting fire to the OWS, as well as the indirect effect from overgrazing through trampling and erosion among others. The full list of interviews can be found in section 2.4 of this report.

Regarding the personal interviews, AENOR also interviewed several groups of transhumant pastoralists in different locations, and asked them about their lifestyle, their actions, the livestock, the way they grazed and the warnings from African Parks concerning illegal activities. AENOR also asked them about the sensitization activities, the corridors and the encounters with ECHO/TANGO teams among other questions. Therefore, AENOR considers that the information gathered from these interviews support the hypothesis stated by the PP about the relation of transhumance pastoralism and deforestation. All this information was processed by AENOR, and it was concluded that it all makes sense and coincides with the different sources, evidences and testimonies.

During the site visit, AENOR made several reconnaissance flights to move around the area, as it was the only or main mean of transport to cover the large distances during the audit site visit. When AENOR entered Chinko from Bangui, it was able to observe the patches of deforestation caused by the herders, and when the audit team travelled to the different points to interview the herders, it was able to observe, especially when it travelled to the north, the increasingly notable absence of vegetation as it approached

⁵⁷ Ministry of the Environment and Sustainable Development. FCPF. Midway Progress Report: Central African Republic. https://www.forestcarbonpartnership.org/system/files/documents/MTR_REDD_FCPF_CAR_En_final.pdf

the border with Sudan and therefore the presence of this group of transhumant herders was noticeable. AENOR took aerial pictures of these deforestation patches and crosschecked the current location with the GPS and the boundaries of the park, confirming it was indeed inside the boundaries of the CCA.

Regarding the deforestation effect of transhumance pastoralism in the country, no other maps were found as independent source other than the provided by the PP, however, AENOR checked the reliability of the source used by the PP, through the evaluation of publicly available information from the past 21 years, from “Global Forest Watch website”, where there was no other use of the land, apart from grazing, and remote sensing satellite pictures from “Google Earth”. Moreover, the recent data from Google Earth shows conversion of forest cover of these overgrazing areas.

In the case of deforestation by local communities in the areas considered as CCF, AENOR has relied mainly on testimonies obtained through interviews with different roles and people from these local communities, as well as from the high officials of certain communities interviewed in CAPEP. They have shown their attachment to the use of forest resources, as well as the fact that in some cases they exceed the limits of legality, promoting deforestation situations.

Some illegal activities that favor deforestation in areas inhabited by local communities are illegal mines. As the CAR Conflict Mapping study⁴⁴ indicates, some local communities depend on mining as a source of income. In fact, according to the World Bank study on diamond mining⁵⁸, diamonds are the most important mineral in CAR, and therefore an essential source of income for the communities. By this reason, communities illegally cut down trees, promoting deforestation. Yet, the government has been imposing measures to reduce this activity for years.

With all this information explained above: independent expert meetings, literature review, analysis of documentation, interviews with all stakeholders and local communities, flying over the area, crosscheck of the deforestation patches with GPS coordinates and even interviews and analysis of transhumance pastoralists themselves, AENOR considers that the information is logical, correct, true and credible. That the proponent has correctly identified the drivers of deforestation and has provided sufficient information for the audit team, with all the samples explained above and in the rest of the document, to conclude that the information is correct. AENOR considers that the information obtained from these visits is reliable.

Also, AENOR after reviewing the methodology, VM0009, deems correct that the predominant ecosystem in the central and northern part of the project area is Woodland savanna, which falls into the category of forest in the definition given by the country, therefore, the events that occur there affect not only the minority cover of grassland (<10% of the total area), but also the Woodland savanna.

AENOR has reviewed the proxy plots, which were validated by AENOR using GIS software, which shows that in the areas that were subjected to overgrazing the AGB of trees also saw a significant decrease compared with the Open Woodland Savannah plots, not only the biomass non-trees, but also the biomass of trees.

Also, it can be concluded that the methodology allows claiming ERs for deforestation and degradation of forest in its REDD component and that the conversion process occurs in Chinko forested areas and

⁵⁸ The World Bank, 2010. A comprehensive Approach to Reducing Fraud and Improving the Contribution of the Diamond Industry to Local Communities in the CAR. <https://www.slideshare.net/DrLendySpires/car-a-comprehensive-approach-to-reduce-fraud>

complies with the methodological requirements. This has already been evidenced by AENOR in other registered projects in Verra, such as the Kasigau Corridor REDD Project-Phase I Rukinga Sanctuary.

Through the interviews with Manon Laboureur, transhumance coordinator and Mohamed Hady Oumazo, assistant director of transhumance, it was checked that the corridors must be developed through an engagement process involving all interested stakeholders and a consultation and engagement process has been taken place during the first monitoring period. Also, African Parks has created the Standardised Pasture Unit in order to avoid negative effects in the proposed corridors.

African Parks have developed corridors and communicate the use of them to the pastoralist group. AENOR interviewed during the onsite visit several pastoralists, all of them recognized to know what the corridors are as well as their main function. They declared that sometimes they find posters in the trees or the ground to limit the legal and illegal places to graze. Also, the pastoralists mentioned that they would like to have bigger corridors and also more waterholes in such places, and these requirements were commented to AP during the stakeholder engagement. Also, the theme of the corridors was mentioned during other interviews, for example with communities in Bangassou. These ones declared that by the land-use plan, which is being driven by AP, the development of corridors will be done properly according to the need of all the stakeholders involved, trying to reduce or avoid the damage from these pastoralists to the rest of communities. Therefore, AENOR deems that the corridors development is being done properly, and the way in which they have been designed have been considering all the opinions.

Also, during the audit, AENOR could check that the problems with overgrazing could be avoided with a well-designed system of sustainable long-term pasture management as proposed by African Parks as part of the project activities in Chinko. AENOR, after checking the document provided by the PP “Sustainable grazing in the Eastern Central African Wilderness and its periphery”, confirms that it is expected that with a continuous monitoring of the biomass in these corridors, the carrying capacity of the ecosystem, as well as the number of people and livestock that make use of it, there will be timely action to avoid negative effects. In this document it is explained that only a geographically clearly defined space can be used for a predefined maximum number of livestock at any given time. This issue was crosschecked by AENOR in the following independent document: “transhumant pastoralism and protected areas in central Africa: from conflict to peaceful coexistence”⁵⁹.

In conclusion, AENOR after checking all the reference above can conclude that, the main deforestation agent identified in the Open Woodland Savanna (OWS) dominated areas are pastoralists, considering that their activities directly lead to the conversion of the land cover. Accordingly, with the intention to reduce the impact of the transhumance, the project proponent proposed activities that have been implemented and monitored. On the other hand, and according to the information of the PDD and the different sources and interviews assessed by AENOR, the VVB considers that, in the Closed Canopy Forest (CCF), the Local Communities are the main agent of deforestation.

These activities are described in the annual and monthly reports of African Parks. These annual reports are published in the AP website and therefore available to the general public.

⁵⁹ <https://www.observatoire-comifac.net>, Transhumant pastoralism and protected areas in Central Africa.

Many of these activities related to transhumance are based on sensitization, training, involvement in participation processes, the creation of an integrated strategy for this group, among others.

AENOR has also confirmed by the following evidences, provided by the PP: “Pastoralism_2016-2021_Chinko_Aebischer-Thierry”, “Pastoralisme_durable-controlé_SDAT_APN-Chinko_Aire-de-Conservation-de Chinko_Aebischer-Thierry” and “ Pastoralisme-non-controlé_SDAT_APN-Chinko_Aire-de-Conservation-de-Chinko_Aebischer-Thierry” that information provided in PDD is accurate and credible and the project proponent has developed during 2016 to 2021 activities with the pastoralism groups.

Moreover, it is clear for AENOR that AP has the capacities and skills to implement activities and that activities are being implemented to achieve the targets of the project. This is confirmed though testimonial evidence gathered during the auditing process and explained in section 2.4 of this report.

In opinion of AENOR, the project has been designed as a long-term project, with activities plans such as sensitization of local communities, training activities, governance of the area with a better coordination of local governments and communities during the crediting period of the project.

Hence, in opinion of AENOR, the information described in the PDD, is accurate and reliable based on evidence provided. Sources of data and information are well tracked with a clear identification of authors and dates. Evidence is conclusive in regard to the assessments done and allow AENOR conclude that an implementation plan is defined for the project, and it is being implemented with success by AP which evidence capacities, skills and means to do it.

The audit team consulted all the interviewed local stakeholders about the common land use and productive practices and prior to project implementation and all of them confirmed that the drivers mentioned above (transhumance and livestock overgrazing activities and slash and burn agriculture) were the common practice. In addition, the PP has provided in section 3.1.4 of the PDD information based on literature to justify the land use scenario selection.

The identification of the baseline scenario according to the guidelines of the methodology VM0009 is also justified in section 3.1.4 of the PDD, where a baseline type F-U3 (Forest Unplanned Conversion with a low conversion along perimeter) is also identified through a stepwise approach.

Based on these evidences, AENOR deems that assumptions, justifications and data used in the identification of the baseline scenario are appropriately justified and can be deemed reasonable. Documentary evidence used in determining the baseline scenario is relevant, and correctly quoted and interpreted in the project description. Relevant national and/or sectoral policies and circumstances have been considered and are listed in the PDD.

Thus, AENOR considers that the identified baseline scenario (pre-project conditions continuation, mainly transhumance and livestock overgrazing activities and slash and burn agriculture, that lead Forest Unplanned Conversion with a low conversion along perimeter) is correctly justified.

Determining parameter rU

The parameter rU is set to position the BEM, per PAA, relative to the onset rate of conversion immediately adjacent to the project area at the project start date. According the methodology (section 6.17 in VM009 v3.0), there are two possible methods of calculations.

The first method is based on the ratio of converted perimeter to the total threatened perimeter along the boundaries of the project area, measured as of the project start date. In the second method, rU can be quantified using the ratio of converted area within the project area to the sum of all project accounting areas less the area that is converted. Due to the dynamics of change of use in the PAA, where the agents of deforestation come from outside (local communities and pastoralists) as these are uninhabited and the drivers (agricultural, mining and overgrazing practices) begin from the edges towards the interior, Method 1 was selected. In AENOR's opinion, it is the method that best reflects the dynamics, given that it fits with the observations from the audit team during the onsite visit interviews (section 2.4 of this report) and with the hypotheses of the baseline scenario. On the contrary, the use of method 2, based on internal conversion, would not reflect the movement of agents, and would underestimate a process that is not likely to occur mainly inside or from inside to outside the PA.

AENOR verified that parameter rU, as the ratio of converted perimeter to total threatened perimeter as of the project start date was calculated considering:

Methodology request	rU Forest for F-U3 in PAA1, PAA2, PAA3
- Converted perimeter is defined as the total perimeter that has been converted prior to the project start date within 120 meters inside or outside the project area boundary, which can be measured from any point in time up until the project start date.	The converted perimeter of forest was determined by the inspection of Tropical Moist Forests product (TMF) 1990–2022 (C. Vancutsem et al., 2021) data. TMF is a global forest and annual change collection (1990-2022) map constructed by the European Commission. It was performed based on Landsat TM, ETM+, and OLI images with a size of a pixel of 30m. Its mapping approach consists of observing the evolution of spectral signatures over time and of identifying potential disruption observations (i.e. detection of an absence of tree foliage cover within a Landsat pixel for a single-date observation) for each single-date image of the time series. In the opinion of AENOR, the database is considered adequate, since: 1) it contains forest class, 2) it has information available for the analysis period, 3) the accuracy is acceptable (>70%), and 4) the spatial resolution (30x30m) is harmonizable for 120m buffer delimitation. In interview with the GIS analyst, it was explained the data processing from TMF annual deforestation downloaded info for the period 2007-20016 (PAA1 and PAA2) and period 2011-2020 (PAA3) to get the converted perimeter. First, a reclassification of deforestation to obtain forest loss accumulated in the period was carried out. Later, an analysis of the minimum mapping unit was conducted to determine and remove the accumulated forest loss in areas smaller than 0.5 hectares, which corresponds to the national definition of forest. The national forest definition considers a 10% canopy cover and 0.5 ha. An aggregation of pixels was made in order to achieve the minimum mapping unit (forest definition in CAR) and not overestimate the converted perimeter and therefore deforestation. National forest definition was confirmed by AENOR in 'Evaluation des Ressources Forestières Mondiales 2015. République Centrafricaine' (FAO, 2015)⁶⁰. A buffer of 120 meters around the cumulative conversion was considered. Finally, a post-processing to change the projection system and conversion from raster to vector and eliminating isolated polygons smaller than 0.5 ha for ensure the minimum mapping unit. Thus, it complies with methodology requests.

⁶⁰ Evaluation des Ressources Forestières Mondiales 2015. République Centrafricaine (FAO, 2015). [Find it here](#).

- Threatened perimeter is defined as that which is vulnerable as of the project start date to conversion by being accessible to the local agents of conversion and has not yet been converted.	Threatened perimeter consisted of areas with unconverted forest cover within 120-m buffer of the project boundary at the start date at risk of conversion. It complies with methodology requests, since: - Threatened perimeter did not include converted perimeter. - Perimeter with constraints that limit or prohibit accessing the project area boundary was not included; or with presence of agents and inaccessible areas for conversion for communities neither. - Non-threatened perimeter included naturally-occurring non-forest within 120 m of the project area boundary.
- Images or data from two points in time were analyzed. - Images or data used to determine conversion must not be older than ten years prior to the project start date.	It complies: - PAA1, PAA2: period analyzed is 2007 to 2016. PAA1 and PAA2 start date is 2016. - PAA3: period analyzed is 2011 to 2020. PAA3 start date is 2020.
- Measurement units for the denominator and the numerator must be the same.	In all cases was meter (m) the unit, as verified by the VVB in the shape files/PD: - Converted_Perimeter.shp - Threatened_Perimeter.shp And crosschecked by VVB with the official data base source in: https://forobs.jrc.ec.europa.eu/TMF/data

AENOR confirmed that in the PD there is sufficient information to comply with the requests in PDR.81, PDR82 and PDR83, that the analysis carried out is pertinent, is based on reliable data sources and correctly interpreted assumptions, repeatable by the VVB and therefore the calculation of the rU parameter is appropriate.

3.3.5 Additionality

The additionality of the project was performed using the tool VT0001 Tool for Demonstration and Assessment of Additionality in VCS Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use (AFOLU) project activities, v3.0. Below are the steps that were followed to assess the additionality and determine the baseline of the project:

Step 1: Identification of alternative land-use scenarios to the AFOLU project activity

With this step, alternative land-use scenarios were identified for the proposed activities of the project. The baseline scenario was identified, through the following sub-steps:

Sub-step 1a Identification of credible land-use scenarios alternative to the proposed project activity under VCS AFOLU.

Historical land uses, trends in the economic sectors, and economic activities that take place in the region of the project area were considered to define alternative and credible land-use scenarios according to the proposed project activities, that could be defined as a baseline scenario:

Sub-step 1b: Consistency of credible land-use scenarios with enforced mandatory applicable laws and regulations.

2. Transhumance and pastoralism.
3. Hunting and poaching activities.
4. Artisanal gold and diamond mining

The PDD demonstrated that all land use scenarios identified in sub-step 1a follow all mandatory applicable legal and regulatory requirements, or in case any alternative scenario does not comply with all mandatory applicable legislation and regulations, it can demonstrated, based on an examination of current practice in the region, that the mandatory law or regulation applies but those applicable mandatory legal or regulatory requirements are systematically not enforced and that non-compliance with those requirements is widespread. No scenario was removed for these reasons.

Sub-step 1c: Selection of the baseline scenario.

In the PDD it is shown that the most likely scenario of land use in the absence of the proposed project corresponds to those that give continuity to the productive activities predominant in the region of study, it means, the pre-project conditions. The identification of the baseline scenario according to the guidelines of the methodology VM0009 is also justified in section 3.1.4 of the PDD, where a baseline type F-U3 (pre-project conditions continuation, mainly transhumance and livestock overgrazing activities and slash and burn agriculture and mining, that lead Forest Unplanned Conversion with a low conversion along perimeter) is also identified through a stepwise approach. The baseline type for the PAAs was identified through a spatial analysis of the polygon following the guideline from the methodology. The results showed the percentage of deforestation within a period 10 years prior to the project start date, and within 120m of the project perimeter is less than 25%, therefore, baseline type F-U3 was selected for the three PAA.

Step 2: Investment analysis

An investment analysis was not carried out, the barrier analysis was performed instead as allowed by the tool.

Step 3: Barrier analysis

Sub-step 3a. Identify barriers that would prevent the implementation of the type of proposed project activity.

The barrier analysis demonstrated that there are significant barriers that prevent the type of proposed project activities from being implemented without income from the sale of GHG credits. Similarly, the barriers that have been identified will not prevent alternative land-use scenarios 1, 2, 3 and 4 from occurring. The following barriers were identified:

Identified barrier	Key points
Economic barriers	Access to credit
Climatic conditions barriers	Droughts and fires
Infrastructure and technologies barriers	Lack of management and institutional control.
Land tenure barriers	Main land tenure systems are not sufficient to cover the needs of population towards a sustainable development and correct use of the land.

Sub-step 3b. Show that the identified barriers would not prevent the implementation of at least one of the alternative land use scenarios (except the proposed project activity).

The barrier analysis demonstrated that there are significant barriers that prevent the type of proposed project activities from being implemented without income from the sale of GHG credits. Similarly, none of the barriers identified in Sub-step 3a prevent the implementation of alternative land uses identified in Sub-step 1a, which are land uses currently being performed in the region. Rather, a lack of funding for project activities promotes continued deforestation and degradation in the project area. In addition, barriers have been identified that would perpetuate deforestation and degradation. The most likely scenarios of land use in the absence of the proposed project correspond to those that give continuity to the productive activities that are predominant in the region of study (scenarios 1, 2, 3 and 4).

Step 4: Common practice analysis

Considering the barriers described in the barrier analysis, projects similar to the proposed project do not yet exist in the CAR and the economic incentive of the carbon market is essential in the pioneering protected areas model to ensure a viable stream to overcome these barriers and to substantially reduce the deforestation and degradation in the project area.

Thus, the PP demonstrated that the proposed project activity is not a common practice in the country, and therefore, the proposed VCS AFOLU project activity is additional.

The PP provided access to different documents and evidences (see section 2.3 of this report) supporting the above statements. Considering the justifications about the project activities and their nature, as well as the declarations of the interviewed stakeholders, AENOR deems that the identification of land-use scenarios without the project were correctly identified, and the barriers are appropriately justified and are credible.

Hence, after the assessment of the explanations and justifications in the PDD and the review of the submitted evidence, also detailed in the project documents, AENOR deems credible and reliable the assumptions and approaches followed. The information described in the PDD is consistent with evidence provided. They are also considered by the validation team as credible and reliable.

Therefore, AENOR deems that the additionality of the project is appropriately justified and in accordance with the requirements of the applied methodology and the requirements set in section 3.13 of the VCS Standard v4.1.

3.3.6 Methodology Deviations

The PP has reported three methodology deviations within this verification event, and are the following:

1. Increase in the number of carbon plots in the project accounting and proxy areas:

The project is a grouped one, therefore, have the option to expand the project to new areas in coming verification periods. One of the requirements of the Methodology is that “all plots should be measured for the first verification. All leakage plots should be measured every verification, and all proxy and project accounting area plots at least every five years, or after a significant event that changes stocks”. However, the future limits of the project are not currently within the control of African Parks, so only the controlled areas will be monitored for the first verification. However, the reduction of the area is an improvement of the accuracy, adjusting the monitoring to the biomass estimations of the area. Once the new PAAs are incorporated to the project, the PP will add new plots and the data will be also available for these sectors. Due to AP is working with the local communities, such carbon plots can be established and used as a community education program.

2. Fire management and biomass emissions:

The east of the CAR is one of the few places in the world where conditions can be created that allow processes to run naturally without significant human intervention. Quasi-natural savannah fires do not exist anywhere in the world at present and creating the conditions to bring them about is very complex, notoriously difficult and costly. However, if there is one place that could do it in the next 10-20 years, it is the east of the CAR.

To ensure effective management of the habitats of the geographical expansion, it is necessary to implement a fire management plan in accordance with the conservation objective of the protected area. Early dry season fires are part of the management tools in protected areas and are a mean of preventing late fires which can go easily out of control and potentially harm the parks infrastructure, people or habitats of high conservation value like old growth humid dense forest in the Central African forest-savanna ecotone. Indeed, they promote the production of grasses very appreciated by herbivores and participate in soil conservation. The PP has provided some pictures from NASA in the MR to demonstrate that between February and March of 2019 (which is the driest period), and December 2020 to February of 2021, Chinko is the largest area in the Sudanese and Sahelian savanna belt of North Africa with altered fire patterns that keep larger blocks unburned during the early and main dry seasons and allow for localized hot fires in the late dry season caused by natural events such as lightning strikes during storms in the early rainy season. The cause of this reduction of forest fires is due to the activities implemented by AP such as the avoiding of illegal grazing and mainly the fire management plan, with early dry season preventive fires and aerial burning using pyroshots, which creates small and controlled fires to avoid the great forest fires with devastating consequences and great amounts of GHG emissions to the atmosphere.

The African savannas evolved with fires, and it can be assumed that over millions of years, storms in the late dry season and early rainy season created localized hot fires due to large amounts of available dry biomass that is easily flammable. Such localized high intensive fires at the early rainy season could alter climax vegetation and initiate natural succession events by killing young trees and shrubs in dense woodlands and creating productive grassland patches that were most likely enhanced and maintained by large herbivore densities. The interaction of late dry season fires and locally intensive herbivory in a humid dystrophic woodland savanna most likely created a heterogeneous landscape with many big trees

in an open savanna with thickets of regenerating woodlands as well as productive grassland patches in different succession status on top of the dry and humid edaphic grasslands. Such a landscape with many large trees in a dynamic mosaic of dense humid forests, open woodland savannas and different grasslands is likely to maximize carbon stocks per unit area over time. Exact conditions, ecological interactions and carbon stock capacities remain therefore speculative and need empirical evidences by a large scale experiment which mimics conditions before human became the main driver of fires and wildlife in the Central African savanna belt. Then, there is a project activity that leads to GHG emissions, however, as the activity is performed in order to avoid uncontrolled larger fires, the GHG emissions are actually lower than in a baseline scenario without the project, therefore, the deviation does not negatively impact the conservativeness of the quantification of GHG emission reductions or removals, on the opposite, the assumption is conservative since we are not claiming the net gain in biomass obtained due to the fire management activities. In particular, the PP has provided the fires management plan /144/ which has been assessed by AENOR, and also the PP showed to the VVB during the onsite visit the different firebreaks within Chinko that were being performed in November as well as the creation of new ones.

3. Activity-shifting leakage areas delimitation and monitoring:

PDR 109 requests “results of a spatial analysis to demonstrate the activity- shifting leakage area is no larger than the project accounting area” for the delineation of the Activity- Shifting Leakage Area. However, given the characteristics of movements of the agents of deforestation, especially the transhumant pastoralists, the PP delineated ASLAs bigger than the PAAs, in order to cover the areas most likely of displacement by the agents based on the monitoring of their movements.

Additionally, it was not possible to perform the assessment of proportion of degradation set out in section B.2.8 of the methodology in all the sectors included as ASLAs through on the ground sampling methods. Therefore, the PP performed a remote sensing monitoring process in which the deforestation occurring within the ASLAs during the first monitoring period will be included as part of the leakage emissions and deducted for the net GHG emission reductions if there is any conversion above the historical average. Once the PP secures funding from carbon credits, the monitoring process of the leakage areas will involve a combination of on the ground sampling and remote sensing techniques.

Deviations from the applied methodology are permitted where they represent a deviation from the criteria and procedures relating to monitoring or measurement set out in the methodology, as it is the case. On the hand, the deviation does not negatively impact the conservativeness of the quantification of GHG emission reductions or removals: having a bigger area to monitor and using remote sensing processes for evaluating the deforestation occurring within the ASLAs, since any deforestation occurring within the ASLAs during the first monitoring period will be included as part of the leakage emissions and deducted for the net GHG emission reductions, is more conservative.

Overall conclusion

The stated deviations meet with the criteria and specifications for permitted methodology deviations, as they affect criteria and procedures relating to monitoring or measurement set out in the methodology. The results of the application of these measures in both cases are conservative, so they do not overestimate the calculation of the reduction of emissions but increase results accuracy. Therefore, in AENOR's opinion, the above deviations are valid. Therefore, the methodology deviations applied to the project are

valid, since does not negatively impact the conservativeness of the quantification of GHG emission removals.

This is the first monitoring period, and then there are no previous deviations to be reported. On the other hand, these three deviations are reported similarly in the MR.

3.3.7 Quantification of GHG Emission Reductions and Removals

Procedures for quantifying the GHG emission reductions generated by the project during the project crediting period were conducted in accordance with the methodology VM0009 for Avoided Ecosystem Conversion, v3.0.

The validation team performed an intensive quantification review of all input data, parameters, formulas, calculations, conversions, statistics and resulting uncertainties and output data to ensure consistency with the VCS documentation, methodology modules, and the PDD.

Furthermore, the validation team reproduced all calculations and crosschecked selected samples in case of the inventory plots to ensure accuracy of the results. Conversion factors, formulas, and calculations were provided by the PP in spreadsheet format to ensure all formulas were accessible for review. The validation team recalculated subsets of the analysis to confirm correctness. Where applicable, references for analysis methods or default values were checked against relevant scientific literature for best practice.

The validation activities in which risks were assessed were the evaluations of the monitoring system (data flow, data control procedures, etc.) but mainly the quality of raw data as well as sources and the spreadsheet calculations. AENOR reproduced and verified 100% of sheets in the spreadsheets /115/ in the project area. The project boundaries for the monitoring period were 100% checked using the GIS data /51-71/ and some points and tracks were gathered from the visit to crosscheck with the final coordinates. The carbon stock changes were also verified and crosschecked with values reported on the PDD.

3.3.7.1 Baseline Emissions

The change in baseline emissions for a monitoring period [m] ($E_{BA}^{[m]}$) were calculated using the equation [F.15] of the methodology. This process was applied separately for each project accounting area.

$$E_{BA}^{[m]} = E_B^{[m]} - E_B^{[m-1]} \quad [F.15]$$

This is a function of the cumulative emissions at the beginning ($E_B^{[m-1]}$) and end ($E_B^{[m]}$) of the monitoring period as given by equation [F.16]

$$E_B^{[m]} = E_{B\ BM}^{[m]} + E_{B\ SOC}^{[m]} - C_{B\ SOC}^{[m]} - C_{B\ BGB}^{[m]} - C_{B\ DW}^{[m]} - C_{B\ WP}^{[m]} \quad [F.16]$$

Where

$E_{B\ BM}^{[m]}$ = Cumulative baseline emissions from biomass at the end of the current monitoring period,

$E_{B\ SOC}^{[m]}$ = Cumulative baseline emissions from soil carbon at the end of the current monitoring period,

$C_{B\ SOC}^{[m]}$ = Carbon not decayed in SOC (soil organic carbon) at the end of the current monitoring period,

$C_{B\ BGB}^{[m]}$ = Carbon not decayed in BGB (below ground biomass) at the end of the current monitoring period,

$C_{B\ DW}^{[m]}$ = Carbon not decayed in DW (dead wood) at the end of the current monitoring period,

$C_{BWP}^{[m]}$ = Carbon not decayed in WP (wood products) at the end of the current monitoring period.

The following sections explain the process followed to obtain the values used in the equation. The project does not include SOC, wood products nor deadwood, therefore, these variables of the equation [F.16] were not calculated.

Calculating Baseline Emissions from Biomass

The baseline emissions from biomass were determined based on the baseline type applicable (F-U3) and the carbon pools selected.

The cumulative emissions from biomass ($E_{B BM}^{[m]}$) were calculated using equation [F.21]. However, considering that the baseline type is F-U3, the Spatial Algorithm for Biomass, expected in equation [F.24], was used. This algorithm is the most conservative spatial model for depleting carbon stocks.

$$E_{B BM}^{[m]} = BEM_{U2,3}(c_{p BM}^{[m=0]}, c_{B BM}^{[m]}, t^{[m]}, x^{[m]}) \quad [F.21]$$

$$E_{B BM}^{[m]} = BEM_{U2,3}(c_{p 1 BM}^{[m=0]}, c_{B BM}^{[m]}, t^{[m]}, x^{[m]}) \quad [F.24]$$

The BEM for baseline type F-U3 is presented in equation [F.4]

$$BEM_{U2,3}(c_P, c_B, t, x) = \frac{A_{PAA}(c_P - c_B) + \frac{HA_{U2,3}(c_P, c_B)t}{t_{PL}}}{1 + e^{\ln\left(\frac{1}{r_U}\right) - \beta(t+0.5q) - \theta(x)^T}} - HA_{U2,3}(c_P, c_B)$$

where

$$HA_{U2,3}(c_P, c_B) = \frac{A_{PAA}(c_P - c_B)}{1 + e^{\ln\left(\frac{1}{r_U}\right) - \beta(0.5q) - \theta(x_0)^T}} \quad [F.4]$$

Calculating Carbon Not Decayed in Below Ground Biomass (BGB)

The carbon non-decayed in BGB was calculated using equation [F.32]

$$C_{B BGB}^{[m]} = \sum_{i \in M} DEM_{BGB} \left(E_{B \Delta BGB}^{[i]}, t, t^{[m]}, t^{[i-1]} \right) \quad [F.32]$$

3.3.7.2 Project Emissions

Project emissions for a monitoring period [m] ($E_{P \Delta}^{[m]}$) were calculated using the equation [F.41], this process was applied separately for each project accounting area.

$$E_{P \Delta}^{[m]} = E_{P \Delta BRN}^{[m]} + E_{P \Delta LS}^{[m]} + E_{P \Delta SF}^{[m]} + A_{PAA} \left(c_p^{[m-1]} - c_p^{[m]} \right) - C_{p \Delta WP}^{[m]} \quad [F.41]$$

Where

$E_{P \Delta BRN}^{[m]}$ = Cumulative project emissions due to burning at the end of the current monitoring period,

$E_{P \Delta LS}^{[m]}$ = Cumulative project emissions due to livestock grazing within the project area,

$E_{P \Delta SF}^{[m]}$ = Cumulative project emissions due to the use of synthetic fertilizers within the project area,

A_{PAA} = Area of project accounting area,

$c_p^{[m-1]}$ = Project carbon stocks at the beginning of the current monitoring period,

$c_p^{[m]}$ = Project carbon stocks at the end of the current monitoring period,

$C_{p \Delta WP}^{[m]}$ = Project carbon stocks in wood products at the end of the current monitoring period.

The project does not consider emissions from the use of synthetic fertilizers, due to burning nor wood products, therefore, the parameters $E_{p \Delta SF}^{[m]}$, $E_{p \Delta BRN}^{[m]}$ and $C_{p \Delta WP}^{[m]}$ are assumed as zero in the equation.

Calculating Emissions from Changes in Project Stocks

The carbon stocks in the project will be measured at least every five years to comply with the methodology requirements.

Calculating GHG Emissions from Livestock Grazing

Considering that the baseline scenario PAA2 and PAA3 is the continuation of pastoralist activities, emissions from livestock grazing are considered when the pastoralist graze within the PAAs using equation [F.43] with a small adjustment, the emission factor defined for the livestock population is multiplied by a factor of the number months in which the livestock grazed during the year.

$$E_{p \Delta LS}^{[m]} = \sum_{i \in T} \left(\frac{f_{LSi} * n_{LSi}}{10^3} \right) * 21 \text{ [F.43]}$$

3.3.7.3 Leakage

Leakage emissions for a monitoring period [m] ($E_{LA}^{[m]}$) were calculated using equation [F.44] and the cumulative emissions from leakage were calculated using [F.45], this process was applied separately for each project accounting area.

$$E_{LA}^{[m]} = E_L^{[m]} - E_L^{[m-1]} \text{ [F.44]}$$

$$E_L^{[m]} = E_{L ASF}^{[m]} + E_{L ASG}^{[m]} + E_{L ME}^{[m]} \text{ [F.45]}$$

Where

$E_{L ASF}^{[m]}$ = Cumulative emissions from activity-shifting leakage in forested strata at the end of the current monitoring period,

$E_{L ASG}^{[m]}$ = Cumulative emissions from activity-shifting leakage in native grassland strata at the end of the current monitoring period (not applicable),

$E_{L ME}^{[m]}$ = Cumulative emissions from market leakage at the end of the current monitoring period.

Leakage Mitigation Strategies

The activities implemented for the project are designated to reduce the conversion resulting from the drivers previously identified in section 3.3.4 of this report, according to the Theory of Change described in section 2.1.11 of the PDD.

Estimating Emissions from Activity-Shifting Leakage

Emissions from activity-shifting leakage were calculated using the Leakage Emissions Model (LEM) and following the equation [F.46]. The leakage is estimated by directly observing conversion and/or degradation in the activity leakage area.

$$E_{L ASF}^{[m]} = LEM \left(c_p^{[m]}, c_B^{[m]}, p_{L DEG}^{[m]}, t^{[m]}, x^{[m]} \right) \text{ [F.46]}$$

The LEM is parameterized using equations [F.48].

$$LEM_F(c_P, c_B, p_{L\ DEG}, t, x) = p_{L\ DEG}^{[m]} A_{AS}(c_P - c_B) - \frac{A_{AS}(c_P - c_B)}{1 + e^{\ln\left(\frac{1}{p_{L\ DEG}^{[m]}} - 1\right) - \beta t - \theta(x_0 - x)^T}}$$

[F.48]

For the ex-ante calculations of leakage, considering the availability of recent data, the PP included as leakage emissions from deforestation during the 2016-2020 period and then an average of those years.

Estimating Proportion of Degradation

To calculate the proportion of degradation the process consisted in in-situ observation, walking throughout each plot and counting the number of stumps and trees in the plot. However, considering the remoteness of the region and the logistics required to do an in-situ observation in the areas of the pastoralism corridor, the PP proposes to use satellite imagery analysis to determine the conversion in those areas, if there is any conversion above the historical average then it will be considered as leakage emissions from the project. As soon as conditions allow onsite inspection, monitoring process of the leakage areas will involve a combination of on the ground sampling and remote sensing techniques.

Determining Emissions from Market Leakage

According to the methodology, when the agents and drivers of conversion only use land converted in the baseline for subsistence, no market leakage will occur as a result of the project, and potential leakage, if any, is restricted to the activity-shifting type.

Considering the deforestation/conversion agents present in the area, emissions from market leakage will not be accounted for, and the cumulative emissions from market leakage for every monitoring period will be zero.

3.3.7.4 Net GHG Emission Reductions and Removals

Quantifying Gross Emissions Reductions

The Gross Emissions Reductions (GERs) for a monitoring period [m] ($E_{\Delta\ GER}^{[m]}$) and project accounting area were quantified using the equation [F.53]

$$E_{\Delta\ GER}^{[m]} = E_{B\ \Delta}^{[m]} - E_{P\ \Delta}^{[m]} - E_{L\ \Delta}^{[m]} - E_U^{[m]} \quad [F.53]$$

Where

$E_{B\ \Delta}^{[m]}$ = Change in baseline emissions,

$E_{P\ \Delta}^{[m]}$ = Change in project emissions,

$E_{L\ \Delta}^{[m]}$ = Change in emissions due to leakage,

$E_U^{[m]}$ = Cumulative confidence deduction at the end of the current monitoring period.

Determining Deductions for Uncertainty

The confidence deduction $E_U^{[m]}$ was determined following the equation [F.57], which is a linear combination of weighted standard errors of estimates from baseline emissions models (BEM) and carbon stock measurements.

$$E_U^{[m]} = E_{B\Delta}^{[m]} \left[\frac{1.64}{E_{B\Delta}^{[m]} + A_{PAA}^{[m]} + A_{PXC}^{[m]}} \sqrt{(U_{EM}^{[m]})^2 + (U_p^{[m]})^2 + (U_B^{[m]})^2} - 0.15 \right] \text{ [F.57]}$$

After using equation [F.57] the Cumulative confidence deduction at the end of the current monitoring period value obtained was 0. The equation has a strong dependence of the total project area, which is used to divide the 1.64 factor (from the Z value of 90% confidence), considering that the project has a big project accounting area the value obtained is really low, later that value has a 0.15 deduction which turn it into a negative value. Thus, no uncertainty deduction is applied.

Determining Reversals

In the event of reversals, the project will follow the VCS procedures for loss events.

Quantifying Net Emissions Reductions for a PAA

The total Net Emissions Reductions (NERs) for a monitoring period [m] were calculated using equation [F.55], which are GERs minus buffer account allocation.

$$E_{\Delta NER}^{[m]} = E_{\Delta GER}^{[m]} - E_{BA}^{[m]} \text{ [F.55]}$$

Determining Buffer Account Allocation

The allocation of GERs to the buffer account was determined following the AFOLU Non-Permanence Risk Tool, version 4.0. After applying the tool, the total value obtained was 6.5% (2% in the internal risks, 0% in the external risks and 4.5% in the natural risks), however, according to the requirements of the tool, the minimum risk rating shall be 10, regardless of the risk rating calculated. Therefore, a 10% was used to determine the buffer account allocation. As a result of the process the percentage of GERs allocated in the buffer account is 10%.

Quantifying Net Emissions Reductions across PAAs

The NERs were calculated separately for each PAA and then summed to determine the total NERs in a monitoring period.

Ex-Ante Estimation of NERs and VCUs

Ex-ante estimation of NERs and VCUs was calculated according to the steps below, with the following results:

Year	Estimated baseline emissions or removals (tCO ₂ e)	Estimated project emissions or removals (tCO ₂ e)	Estimated leakage emissions (tCO ₂ e)	Estimated net GHG emission reductions or removals (tCO ₂ e)	Buffer (tCO ₂ e)	VCUs
2016 ⁶¹	97,680	7,387	8,933	81,359	8,136	73,222
2017	352,384	17,640	144,923	189,820	18,982	170,837
2018	374,724	5,040	8,017	361,667	36,168	325,498
2019	398,538	2,520	24,224	371,793	37,180	334,613
2020	452,672	4,850	13,989	433,833	43,384	390,448

⁶¹ 2016 values are from September to December. For a better alignment of future instances, the project calculates the emission reduction in a calendar year basis.

Year	Estimated baseline emissions or removals (tCO ₂ e)	Estimated project emissions or removals (tCO ₂ e)	Estimated leakage emissions (tCO ₂ e)	Estimated net GHG emission reductions or removals (tCO ₂ e)	Buffer (tCO ₂ e)	VCUs
2021	491,332	6,300	46,142	438,890	43,890	394,999
2022	521,795	6,300	47,185	468,309	46,832	421,476
2023	554,138	6,300	48,236	499,602	49,962	449,639
2024	590,141	6,300	49,306	534,535	53,454	481,080
2025	624,894	6,300	50,358	568,235	56,824	511,410
2026	663,362	6,300	46,900	610,162	61,018	549,144
Total	5,121,660	75,238	488,214	4,558,205	455,830	4,102,366

AENOR deems that values are correct and consistent with the sources. The values and estimates presented in the PDD and in the spreadsheets /115/ are considered reasonable based on the documentation reviewed, further references and the result of the remote interviews to the technical teams (30/07/2021, 15/12/2022, 28/09/2023 and other communications along the process).

The PDD describes in an appropriate way with evidence and justifications how the project activity fulfills with the applicability conditions of the tool.

Based on the information reviewed, it can also be confirmed that the sources used are correctly quoted and interpreted in the PDD and supporting documents. All assumptions and data indicated in the PDD and all relevant sources were checked and confirmed and are listed in the PDD, including their references and sources.

In essence, the methodology was correctly applied following the requirements. All values in the PDD are considered reasonable in the context of the proposed VCS project activity. Data sources are quoted correctly. Hence, the calculation of baseline emissions, project emissions and the estimated net GHG emission reductions are considered correct.

3.3.8 Monitoring Plan

The monitoring plan presented in the PDD complies with the requirements of the methodology. The audit team checked all parameters presented in the monitoring plan against the requirements of the methodology. For the monitoring of carbon stock changes, the requirements and parameter list as per methodology and associated tools were followed.

The list of parameters available at validation and the values used was also checked by AENOR and it is deemed complete and consistent with calculations and assumptions considered. The following table summarizes the data/parameters available at validation:

Data/Parameter available at validation	Value	Assessment procedure and result
β Effect of time on the cumulative proportion of conversion over time (Unitless)	RA1 (PAA1) : 2.48800E-04 RA2 (PAA2, PAA3): 1.18000E-04	Reference area and historic reference period. Correctly estimated and inputted in the calculation spreadsheets.

Data/Parameter available at validation	Value	Assessment procedure and result
$\hat{\sigma}_{EM}$ Estimated standard deviation of the state observations used to fit the logistic function for the BEM (unitless)	RA1 (PAA1): 0.09938 RA2 (PAA2, PAA3): 0.08182	Remote sensing image interpretation. Correctly estimated and inputted in the calculation spreadsheets.
A_{PAA} Area of Project Accounting Areas (ha)	PAA1: 148,395.64 PAA2: 713,408.61 PAA3: 363,225.39	GIS analysis prior to sampling.
A_{PX} Area of proxy area for the Project Accounting Areas (ha)	Proxy1 (PAA1): 79.2 Proxy2 (PAA2, PAA3): 404.4	GIS analysis prior to sampling. Correctly estimated and inputted in the calculation spreadsheets.
f_{LSi} Emission factor for the defined livestock population, I (kg CH ₄ head ⁻¹ yr ⁻¹)	48	IPCC default values. Correctly selected and estimated and inputted in the calculation spreadsheets.
n_d Number of spatial points in the reference area (no unit)	RA1 (PAA1): 1,654 (1,146 sites that were forest at the beginning of the reference period) RA2 (PAA2, PAA3): 2,566 (out of which 1,802 were forest at the beginning of the reference period)	Remote sensing image interpretation. Correctly estimated and inputted in the calculation spreadsheets.
q Lag between start of degradation and conversion (days)	0	Default value. Correctly selected and inputted in the calculation spreadsheets.
r_{RS} Expansion factor for above-ground biomass to below-ground biomass (root/shoot ratio) (Unitless)	0.232	IPCC 2019 Refinement, Chapter 4, Table 4.4. Correctly selected and inputted in the calculation spreadsheets.
r_U Onset proportion of conversion immediately adjacent to project area (Unitless)	PAA1: 3.1242 PAA2: 5.5914 PAA3: 1.8925	GIS analysis and image interpretation. Correctly estimated and inputted in the calculation spreadsheets.
t Time since project start date (Days)	PAA1, PAA2, PAA3: 1,568	Monitoring records. Correctly estimated and inputted in the calculation spreadsheets.
t_i The point in time of the observation made at point i (Days)	Various	Remote sensing image interpretation. Correctly estimated and inputted in the calculation spreadsheets.
t_{PL} Length of project crediting period (Days)	10,438	Public-Private partnership Agreements. Correctly selected and inputted in the calculation spreadsheets.
t_{PAI} Number of days after the project start date for the start of a project activity instance in a grouped project (Days)	PAA1: 0 PAA2: 0 PAA3: 1,308	Public-Private partnership Agreements. Correctly selected and inputted in the calculation spreadsheets.

Data/Parameter available at validation	Value	Assessment procedure and result
w_i Weight applied to the i th sample point in the Project Accounting Areas reference area (Unitless)	Various	Remote sensing image interpretation. Correctly estimated and inputted in the calculation spreadsheets.
x_i, y_i Latitude and longitude of the i th sample point in the Project Accounting Areas reference area (Geographic coordinates)	Various	Remote sensing image interpretation. Correctly estimated and inputted in the calculation spreadsheets.

The list of parameters to be monitored is the following:

Data/Parameter available at verification	Value	Assessment procedure and result
$A_{p1}^{[m=0]}$ Area of Project Accounting Areas stratum 1 prior to first verification event (ha)	PAA1: 148,395.64 PAA2: 713,408.61 PAA3: 363,225.39	GIS analysis prior to sampling. Correctly estimated and inputted in the calculation spreadsheets. Note that in PAA1, Stratum 1 is CCF. In PAA2 and PAA3, Stratum 1 is OWS. There is no second stratum in PAAs.
$A_{p2}^{[m=0]}$ Area of Project Accounting Areas stratum 2 prior to first verification event (ha)	NA	There is no second stratum in PAAs.
$c_B^{[m]}$ Baseline carbon stocks at the end of the current monitoring period (tCO ₂ e/ha)	PAA1: 195.55 PAA2, PAA3: 42.83	Proxy area sampling. Correctly estimated and inputted in the calculation spreadsheets.
$c_{B\ BGB}^{[m]}$ Carbon not decayed in BGB at the end of the current monitoring period for the Project Accounting Areas (tCO ₂ e)	PAA1: 161,890.3 PAA2: 176,387.4 PAA3: 34,759.4	Proxy area sampling. Correctly estimated and inputted in the calculation spreadsheets.
$c_{B\ b}^{[m]}$ Baseline scenario average carbon stock in selected carbon pools (tCO ₂ e/ha)	PAA1: 195.55 PAA2, PAA3: 42.83	Proxy area sampling. Correctly estimated and inputted in the calculation spreadsheets.
$c_{B\ BM}^{[m]}$ Baseline carbon stocks in biomass at the end of the current monitoring period for the Project Accounting Areas (tCO ₂ e/ha)	PAA1: 195.55 PAA2, PAA3: 42.83	Proxy area sampling. Correctly estimated and inputted in the calculation spreadsheets.
$c_p^{[m]}$ Project carbon stocks at the end of the current monitoring period for the Project Accounting Areas (tCO ₂ e/ha)	PAA1: 652.70 PAA2: 179.98 PAA3: 179.98	Project accounting area sampling. Correctly estimated and inputted in the calculation spreadsheets. Note that the value for PAA1 is based on the stock of CCF cover, while the value for PAA2 and 3 is based on the stock of OWS cover
$c_p^{[m-1]}$ Project carbon stocks at the beginning of the current monitoring period for the Project Accounting Areas (tCO ₂ e/ha)	-	Project accounting area sampling. Correctly estimated and inputted in the calculation spreadsheets.
$c_p^{[m=0]}$ Project carbon stocks prior to first	PAA1: 652.70 PAA2: 179.98 PAA3: 179.98	Project accounting area sampling. Correctly estimated and inputted in the calculation spreadsheets. Note that the value for PAA1 is

Data/Parameter available at verification	Value	Assessment procedure and result
verification event for the Project Accounting Areas (tCO ₂ e/ha)		based on the stock of CCF cover, while the value for PAA2 and 3 is based on the stock of OWS cover
$c_p^{[m=0]}_{1\ BM}$ Project carbon stocks in biomass in stratum 1 prior to first verification event for the Project Accounting Areas (tCO ₂ e/ha)	PAA1: 652.7 PAA2, PAA3: 179.98	Project accounting area sampling. Correctly estimated and inputted in the calculation spreadsheets. Note that in PAA1, Stratum 1 is CCF. In PAA2 and PAA3, Stratum 1 is OWS. There is no second stratum in PAAs.
$c_p^{[m=0]}_{2\ BM}$ Project carbon stocks in biomass in stratum 2 prior to first verification event for the Project Accounting Areas (tCO ₂ e/ha)	NA	There is no second stratum in PAAs.
$c_p^{[m=0]}_{BM}$ Project carbon stocks in biomass prior to first verification event for the Project Accounting Areas (tCO ₂ e)	PAA1: 96,858,220 PAA2: 128,399,813 PAA3: 65,373,577	Project accounting area sampling. Correctly estimated and inputted in the calculation spreadsheets.
$c_p^{[m]}_b$ Average carbon in biomass in the Project Accounting Areas (tCO ₂ e/ha)	PAA1: 652.70 PAA2: 179.98 PAA3: 179.98	Project accounting area sampling. Correctly estimated and inputted in the calculation spreadsheets. Note that the value for PAA1 is based on the stock of CCF cover, while the value for PAA2 and 3 is based on the stock of OWS cover
$c_p^{[m]}_{1\ b}$ Average carbon in biomass for Project Accounting Areas, stratum 1 (tCO ₂ e/ha)	PAA1: 652.7 PAA2, PAA3: 179.98	Project accounting area sampling. Correctly estimated and inputted in the calculation spreadsheets. Note that in PAA1, Stratum 1 is CCF. In PAA2 and PAA3, Stratum 1 is OWS. There is no second stratum in PAAs.
$c_p^{[m]}_{2\ b}$ Average carbon in biomass for Project Accounting Areas, stratum 2 (tCO ₂ e/ha)	NA	There is no second stratum in PAAs.
$E_{\Delta GER}^{[m]}$ GERs for the current monitoring period (tCO ₂ e)	PAA1: 608,902 PAA2: 805,618 PAA3: 23,948	Area measurements. Correctly estimated and inputted in the calculation spreadsheets.
$E_{\Delta GER}^{[i]}$ GERs for monitoring period i (tCO ₂ e)	PAA1: 608,902 PAA2: 805,618 PAA3: 23,948	Area measurements. Correctly estimated and inputted in the calculation spreadsheets.
$E_{\Delta NER}^{[i]}$ NERs for monitoring period i (tCO ₂ e)	PAA1: 548,010 PAA2: 725,055 PAA3: 21,553	Area measurements. Correctly estimated and inputted in the calculation spreadsheets.
$E_B^{[m]}$ Cumulative baseline emissions at the end of the current monitoring period (tCO ₂ e)	PAA1: 789,131.2 PAA2: 859,327.7 PAA3: 152,202.7	Proxy area measurements. Correctly estimated and inputted in the calculation spreadsheets.
$E_B^{[m-1]}$	0	Proxy area measurements.

Data/Parameter available at verification	Value	Assessment procedure and result
Cumulative baseline emissions at the beginning of the current monitoring period (tCO ₂ e)		Correctly estimated and inputted in the calculation spreadsheets.
$E_{B \Delta}^{[m]}$ Change in baseline emissions (tCO ₂ e)	PAA1: 789,131.2 PAA2: 859,327.7 PAA3: 152,202.7	Proxy area measurements. Correctly estimated and inputted in the calculation spreadsheets.
$E_{B \Delta BGB}^{[i]}$ Change in baseline emissions from below-ground biomass during monitoring period I (tCO ₂ e)	PAA1: 47,829.7 PAA2: 48,558.9 PAA3: 6,285.2	Monitoring the proxy area. Correctly estimated and inputted in the calculation spreadsheets.
$E_{B BGB}^{[m]}$ Cumulative baseline emissions from below-ground biomass at the end of the current monitoring period (tCO ₂ e)	PAA1: 179,088.5 PAA2: 195,037.3 PAA3: 35,207.1	Measurements in the proxy area. Correctly estimated and inputted in the calculation spreadsheets.
$E_{B BGB}^{[m-1]}$ Cumulative baseline emissions from below-ground biomass at the beginning of the current monitoring period (tCO ₂ e)	0	Measurements in the proxy area. Correctly estimated and inputted in the calculation spreadsheets.
$E_{B BM}^{[m]}$ Cumulative baseline emissions from biomass at the end of the current monitoring period (tCO ₂ e)	PAA1: 951,021.5 PAA2: 1,035,715.1 PAA3: 186,962.1	Measurements in the proxy area. Correctly estimated and inputted in the calculation spreadsheets.
$E_{BA}^{[m]}$ Cumulative emissions allocated to the buffer account at the end of the current monitoring period (tCO ₂ e)	PAA1: 60,892 PAA2: 82,551 PAA: 2,395	Per VCS Methodology VM0009, section 8.4.4. Correctly estimated and inputted in the calculation spreadsheets.
$E_L^{[m]}$ Cumulative emissions from leakage at the end of the current monitoring period (tCO ₂ e)	PAA1: 180,226.6 PAA2: 19,859.7 PAA3: 0	Measurement obtained in the two leakage areas for the monitoring period. Correctly estimated and inputted in the calculation spreadsheets.
$E_L^{[m-1]}$ Cumulative emissions from leakage at the beginning of the current monitoring period (tCO ₂ e)	0	Measurements in the leakage areas. Correctly estimated and inputted in the calculation spreadsheets.
$E_{L \Delta}^{[m]}$ Change in emissions due to leakage (tCO ₂ e)	PAA1: 180,226.6 PAA2: 19,859.7 PAA3: 0	Measurement obtained in the two leakage areas for the monitoring period.. Correctly appointed.
$E_{L ASF}^{[m]}$ Cumulative emissions from activity-shifting leakage in forested strata at the end of the current monitoring period (tCO ₂ e)	PAA1: 180,226.6 PAA2: 19,859.7 PAA3: 0	Measurement obtained in the two leakage areas for the monitoring period. Correctly appointed.
$E_p^{[m]}$ Change in project emissions (tCO ₂ e)	-	Not applicable in this monitoring period.

Data/Parameter available at verification	Value	Assessment procedure and result
$E_p^{[m]} \Delta BRN$ Cumulative project emissions due to burning at the end of the current monitoring period (tCO ₂ e)	-	Not applicable in this monitoring period.
$E_p^{[m]} \Delta LS$ Cumulative project emissions due to livestock grazing within the project area (tCO ₂ e)	PAA1: 0 PAA2: 33,847.4 PAA3: 3,590.1	Monitoring in the project area. Correctly estimated and inputted in the calculation spreadsheets.
$E_U^{[m]}$ Cumulative confidence deduction at the end of the current monitoring period (tCO ₂ e)	0	Equations according VCS Methodology VM0009, section 8.4.1.1. Correctly estimated and inputted in the calculation spreadsheets.
n_{LSi} The number of head of livestock species / category i in the project area (Count)	Multiple values per PAA and year	Monitoring in the project area. Correctly estimated and inputted in the calculation spreadsheets.
$P_{LDEG}^{[m]}$ Portion of leakage due to degradation in forest at the end of the current monitoring period (unitless)	0.18	Monitoring in the leakage area. Correctly estimated and inputted in the calculation spreadsheets.
$P_{LDEG}^{[m=0]}$ Portion of leakage due to degradation prior to first verification event (unitless)	0.18	Monitoring in the leakage area. Correctly estimated and inputted in the calculation spreadsheets.
$P_{LCONG}^{[m=0]}$ Portion of leakage due to native grasslands prior to the first verification event (unitless)	-	Not applicable, since native grasslands are not present in the current PA.
$P_{LCONG}^{[m]}$ Portion of leakage due to native grasslands conversion at the beginning of the current monitoring period (unitless)	-	Not applicable, since native grasslands are not present in the current PA.
$P_{LCONG}^{[m-1]}$ Portion of leakage due to native grasslands conversion at the end of the current monitoring period (unitless)	-	Not applicable, since native grasslands are not present in the current PA.
$t^{[i-1]}$ Time from project start date to beginning of monitoring period i (Days)	NA	Current is the first monitoring period.
$t^{[m]}$ Time from project start date to end of current monitoring period (Days)	Multiple values	Monitoring records. Correctly estimated and inputted in the calculation spreadsheets.
$t^{[m-1]}$ Time from project start date to beginning of current monitoring period (Days)	NA	Current is the first monitoring period.
$U_B^{[m]}$	32.45	Correctly estimated and inputted in the calculation

Data/Parameter available at verification	Value	Assessment procedure and result
Total uncertainty in proxy area carbon stock estimate (tCO ₂ e)		spreadsheets.
$U_{EM}^{[m]}$ Total uncertainty in Baseline Emissions Models for the Project Accounting Areas (tCO ₂ e)	PAA1: 0.09938 PAA2: 0.08182 PAA3: 0.08182	Correctly estimated and inputted in the calculation spreadsheets.
$U_p^{[m]}$ Total uncertainty in Project Accounting Areas carbon stock estimate (tCO ₂ e)	33.81	Correctly estimated and inputted in the calculation spreadsheets.
$wc_{Pi}^{[m=0]}$ Weighted average carbon stocks for biomass or SOC in the project for the set of selected strata for the Project Accounting Areas (tCO ₂ e)	PAA1: 652.70 PAA2: 179.98 PAA3: 179.98	Inventory. Correctly estimated and inputted in the calculation spreadsheets. Note that the value for PAA1 is based on the stock of CCF cover, while the value for PAA2 and 3 is based on the stock of OWS cover

The procedures described in section 3.3.3 of the PDD were reviewed by the AENOR team and cross-checked against the applicable methodology and associated tools. The audit team found it to be in compliance with methodological requirements, and good practice as defined.

In opinion of AENOR, all necessary parameters required by the selected methodology are contained in the monitoring plan. They are clearly described, and the means of monitoring detailed in the plan comply with the requirements of the methodology. Tables in section 3.3.2 of the PDD detail the different data variable to monitor along with the data unit, recording frequency, purpose of data, QA/QC (quality assurance and quality control), etc. Thus, the monitoring plan is in compliance with the applicable methodology.

After the review of evidence provided by the PP, the interview and communications with PP, AENOR confirms that monitoring arrangements described in the monitoring plan are feasible within the project design and that the means considered for the implementation, including data management, quality and assurance control procedures, are sufficient to ensure that the GHG net anthropogenic reductions achieved resulting from the proposed VCS project activity can be reported ex post and verified. Therefore, in AENOR's opinion, the PP will be able to implement the monitoring plan.

3.3.9 Dissemination of Monitoring Plan and Results (CL4.2)

Every monitoring period the relevant documentation about the results of the monitoring and verification of this project will be published in the Verra platform. Summaries of these monitoring reports will be translated into local languages and disseminated amongst communities were appropriate. Project activities and their results will also be discussed at regular community consultation meetings. This will ensure that even with the high levels of illiteracy in the region, monitoring information will be made available to all local communities living on the periphery of the park. AENOR confirms by the sights of the visit that the PP properly records all the data, and they have the skills to provide clear documentation for the monitoring plan dissemination among stakeholders. During the interviews, AENOR asked if they receive any type of material and all the interviewees, recognized that information about the project, PDD and MP were shared with them, and explained in depth when needed.

3.3.10 Non-Permanence Risk Analysis

The project utilized the non-permanence risk analysis tool (AFOLU Non-Permanence Risk Tool 4.0) to assess risk according to internal risk, external risk, natural risk, and mitigation measures for minimizing risk. The audit team reviewed the Non-Permanence Risk Report following VCS Standard v4.1 and confirmed that the project adheres to the requirements set out in the VCS AFOLU Non-Permanence Risk Tool.

At all levels, the audit team evaluated the rationale, appropriateness, and justifications of risk ratings chosen by the PP. Each risk factor was thoroughly assessed for conformance. A brief review of each factor is shown in the table below.

Risk factor	Risk Rating	Assessment
Internal Risks		
Project Management: (assessed using table 1 of the VCS AFOLU Risk Tool)-	-2 (total may be less than zero) In AENOR's opinion, total project management risk rating (-2) is properly justified and in accordance with the AFOLU Non-Permanence Risk Tool: VCS V4.0.	a) Not applicable. GHG credits are not based on planted species. Moreover, no GHG credits have previously been issued. Not applicable = 0 b) Ongoing enforcement to prevent encroachment by outside actors is required to protect more than 50% of stocks on which GHG credits have previously been issued. No credits have been issued. Not applicable = 0 c) The management team does include individuals with significant experience in all skills necessary to successfully undertake all project activities. The management team includes more than 20-year experience, different departments have wide experience in their respective sectors, such as financial, administrative, management or HR. AENOR has reviewed the CV /179-186/ of the personnel involved in the CCA project Risk rating = 0 is justified d) The management team does maintain a presence in the country, they are based either on the capital of the country or in the project headquarters, moving continuously around the project area and the reference area. AENOR has visited the AP headquarters in Bangui, 2 hours from Kocho. Risk rating = 0 is justified e) Management team includes individuals with significant experience in AFOLU project design and implementation, carbon accounting and reporting under the VCS Program. AENOR has reviewed SP webpage and deems that the information is correct Risk rating= -2 is justified. f) No adaptive management plan in place. Not applicable = 0

Risk factor	Risk Rating	Assessment
Financial viability (assessed using table 2 of the VCS AFOLU Risk Tool).	5 (total may not be less than zero) In AENOR's opinion, total financial viability risk rating (5) is properly justified and in accordance with the AFOLU Non-Permanence Risk Tool: VCS v4.0.	a) Project cash flow breakeven point is greater than 10 years from the current risk assessment. AENOR has reviewed the cashflow /175/ and deems that the information is correct. Risk rating = 3 is justified b) – d) See above. Not applicable = 0 e) Project has secured less than 15% of funding needed to cover the total cash out before the project reaches breakeven. Not applicable = 0 f) The project has secured 27% of funding needed to cover the total cash out required before the project reaches breakeven. AENOR has reviewed the cashflow /175/ and deems that the information is correct. Risk rating = 2 is justified g) - h) See above. Not applicable = 0 j) Project has available as callable financial resources at least 50% of total cash out before project reaches breakeven. Not applicable = 0
Opportunity Cost (assessed using table 3 of the VCS AFOLU Risk Tool).	-4 (total may be less than zero) Then, in AENOR's opinion, total opportunity cost risk rating (-4) is properly justified and in accordance with the AFOLU Non-Permanence Risk Tool, v4.0.	a) – c) See below. Not applicable = 0 d), Baseline activities are subsistence-driven, and the project generates net positive impacts in the well-being of the communities. AENOR has reviewed section 4.2.3 of the PDD and crosschecked with information from the onsite visit. Risk rating = 0 is justified e) – f) See above. Not applicable = 0 g) African Parks, the project proponent, is a non-profit conservation organization. Risk rating = -2 is justified h) The project is protected by legally binding commitment to continue management practices that protect the credited carbon stocks over the length of the project crediting period. The project is protected by legally binding commitment to continue management practices that protect the credited carbon stocks over the length of the project crediting period. On 15 April 2020 African Parks signed a 25-years partnership agreement with the government of Central African Republic for the management and financing of the conservation area. This agreement superseded a previous

Risk factor	Risk Rating	Assessment
		agreement signed in 2014 to protect the area. The crediting period covers the full length of the current agreement. AENOR has reviewed the agreements with the Government and deems that the information is reliable. Risk rating= -2 is justified i) Project is not protected by legally binding commitment to continue management practices that protect the credited carbon stocks over at least 100 years. Not applicable = 0
Project Longevity (assessed using table 4 of the VCS AFOLU Risk Tool).	3 (total may not be less than zero) 3 (total may not be less than zero) In AENOR's opinion, Total Project Longevity is properly justified and in accordance with the AFOLU Non-Permanence Risk Tool, v4.0.	a) See below. Not applicable = 0 b) The project longevity is assumed to be 54 years, beginning from the project start date in 2016 and up to 2070 Risk rating = 3 is justified. According to section 2.2.4 of the AFOLU Non-Permanence Risk Tool, the longevity is defined as "the number of years beginning from the project start date that project activities will be maintained, which may be longer than the crediting period, where projects can demonstrate that activities that maintain carbon stocks on which GHG credits have previously been issued will continue beyond the project crediting period". Paragraph 2 of the section states "Evidence shall be provided that project ownership can be maintained for the entire longevity (e.g., where control is secured through a concession that is shorter than the project longevity, such concession is renewable for the full longevity period being claimed)." In the case of Chinko project, the project proponent used 54 years as longevity, beginning from the project start date in 2016 and up to 2070. The start date of the longevity was demonstrated with the agreement signed between African Parks and the Central African Republic government in 2014, whose translation into English was also provided. On the other hand, the end date of the longevity was demonstrated by Art 71 and 72 of chapter XII (duration and revision) and Art 73 of chapter XIII (termination) of the agreement signed by both parties in 2020 for a 25-year period /176-177/. Article in the chapters are as follows: Art 71 of the agreement <i>"Le présent Accord est conclu pour une durée de vingt-cinq (25) ans à compter de la date de sa signature. Il est renouvelable par tacite reconduction par notification d'une des Parties manifesté par une notification écrite, après un préavis de six (6) mois à compter de la date de notification."</i> (This Agreement is concluded for a period of twenty-five (25) years from the date of its signature. It shall be renewable by tacit agreement upon written notification by one of the Parties, after six (6) months' notice from the date of notification). AENOR confirmed that the agreement is renewable with the

Risk factor	Risk Rating	Assessment
		intention of one of the parties and the longevity period described by the project proponent complies with the requirement set in the tool. Art 72 states “Le présent Accord peut, à l’initiative de l’une des Parties, faire l’objet de modification ou de révision par un avenant signé par les deux (2) Parties. Les avenants dûment signés font partie intégrante du présent Accord. Aucune autre modification, aucun rajout ni aucune autre révision du présent Accord ne sont valables s’ils ne sont pas consignés par écrit et signés par les parties au présent Accord. « ("This Agreement may, at the initiative of one of the Parties, be amended or revised by an amendment signed by both Parties. Duly executed addenda shall form an integral part of this Agreement. No other amendment, addition or revision to this Agreement shall be valid unless in writing and signed by the parties to this Agreement") From the Art above, AENOR confirmed that in the case of any change to the agreement both parties must agree and sign, therefore, no changes of conditions that are relevant for the longevity are expected without the revision and approval from African Parks. Art 73 states “Nonobstant l’épuisement du processus de résolution de différends en Articles 78-82 ci-dessus, et toute autre disposition contraire, il peut être terminé de manière anticipée à l’Accord dans les cas suivants: • En cas de manquement grave aux dispositions de cet Accord, la Partie qui n’est pas en défaut peut exiger de l’autre Partie, par notification écrite, qu’elle remédie au manquement reproché. Dans ce cas un plan d’action est établi de commun accord. Si, après six (6) mois de la mise en œuvre du plan d’action, le manquement persiste, la Partie qui n’est pas en défaut peut notifier à la Partie sa décision de mettre fin à l’Accord six (6) mois après notification ; • Par APN, suite à un préavis écrit de trente (30) jours, si : (i) elle n’est pas en mesure de mobiliser les fonds nécessaires pour assurer le fonctionnement de l’ACC-PF ; ou (ii) en cas de suspension des financements ; ou (iii) si, selon l’avis de APN il n’est pas possible d’atteindre les objectifs de l’Accord sur le long terme à cause de contraintes excessives. • Par consentement mutuel des Parties ». (Art 73 states "Notwithstanding the exhaustion of the dispute resolution process in Articles 78-82 above, and any other provision to the contrary, the Agreement may be terminated early in the following cases: • In the event of a serious breach of the provisions of this Agreement, the Party not in default may require the other Party, by written notice, to remedy the alleged breach. In this case, a plan of action shall be established by mutual

Risk factor	Risk Rating	Assessment
		agreement. If, after six (6) months of the implementation of the action plan, the defaulting Party persists, the Party not in default may notify the Party of its decision to terminate the Agreement six (6) months after notification. - By APN, following thirty (30) days written notice, if: (i) it is unable to raise the funds necessary to operate the CCA-FP; or (ii) in the event of a suspension of funding; or (iii) in the opinion of the APN it is not possible to renew the agreement. Regarding the points mentioned above, AENOR confirmed that the possibility of the renewal of the agreement will always be in the hands of African Parks, since it is not the sole and exclusive competence of the national government. - By mutual consent of the Parties. To conclude, as per the conditions expressed in the articles described above, AENOR verified that the project longevity complies with what is stated in paragraph 2 of the section 2.2.4 of the AFOLU Non-Permanence Risk Tool, and, in any case that African Parks is complying with the agreement and has the intentions to continue the agreement, there will be guarantees to renew it. AENOR reviewed the legal analysis provided by South Pole and African Parks and confirms that it is consistent and demonstrates compliance with the project longevity and tenure requirements. Likewise, AENOR reviewed the publication of the land tenure agreement in the CAR official gazette /178/, which is archived at the Secrétariat Général du Gouvernement (SGG), and it can be obtained by direct request. Last, AENOR reviewed the Legal Opinion issued by an independent professional, whose credentials were provided and support the credibility of the opinion. Finally, paragraph 3 of the section states "For all AFOLU project types, the entire project longevity shall be covered by management and financial plans as submitted to local government or financial institutions, or otherwise made public, in which the intention to continue management practices is stated and planned for and may include external evidence such as municipal land-use plans, institutional structures, or tools such as ecological-economic zoning". In the case of Chinko project, African Parks elaborates a 5-year business plan that is renewed each year, this plan sets short to medium objectives, targets and actions using the latest available financial data to project the development of management activities. In addition, African Parks has already finalized a Long-Term Sustainability Strategy (LTSS) for Chinko, this strategy provides the integrated long-term strategy for ensuring overall sustainability of the Conservation Area and taking into consideration the intention to continuing the management practices beyond the current agreement dates. The vision for Chinko is being the largest functional tropical wilderness in Africa with recognition of its value by all its

Risk factor	Risk Rating	Assessment
		stakeholders. The LTSS is underpinned by two key aspirations for the future of the project area. The first is an overall vision for the desired state of the park, a picture of the future that reflects the restoration and maintenance of all that makes the park unique and conservation-worthy in perpetuity (a clear intention to continue management practices beyond the years covered by the current agreement). The second is the articulation of a set of three component impacts (ecological, socio-political and financial) that are prerequisites for achieving overall sustainability for the park. In addition, African Parks has been working for more than 3 years in establishing a Land Use Plan in the region, the intention of this plan is to define, together with the stakeholders involved, activities that allow continuing protecting the forest and maintaining carbon stocks stored beyond the project crediting period. The Government and African Parks, after multiple workshops and understandings of the project, signed an agreement for the management of the carbon credits issued due to the project /187-200/. Considering the different plans and strategies developed by African Parks and the information provided and discussed during the audit process, it was clear for AENOR that African Parks has guarantees to renew the agreement and has intentions to do so and continue the management practices beyond the years covered by the current agreement. With all that details into consideration, AENOR was able to conclude that 54 years is an appropriate longevity and the score of 3 complies with the Tool requirements, and that the agreement constitutes sufficient evidence that project ownership will be maintained for the entire project longevity period stated and that no precondition or exception to renewal exists.
Total internal risk = 2 (total may not be less than zero)		
External Risks		
Land Tenure and resources access/impact (assessed using table 6 of the Risk Tool).	0 (total may not be less than zero) 0 (total may not be less than zero) in AENOR's opinion, total land tenure (0) is properly justified and in accordance with the AFOLU Non-Permanence	a) See below. Not applicable = 0. b) the land is government owned and is managed by African Parks through a renewable 25-years management agreement. AENOR has reviewed the agreements with the government /72-73/ Risk rating = 2 is justified c) - d) There are no disputes over land tenure or ownership of the project area in more than 5% of the project area nor disputes over access/use rights (or overlapping rights). Risk rating=0 is justified e) This not a WRC project (Wetlands Restoration and Conservation).

Risk factor	Risk Rating	Assessment
	Risk Tool, v4.0	Not applicable = 0 f) The project area is protected by legally binding commitment to continue management practices that protect the credited carbon stocks over the length of the project crediting period. AENOR has reviewed the agreements with the government and complementary performed interviews with representatives of the Ministry of environment. Risk rating= -2 is justified g) No disputes over land tenure, ownership or access/use rights exist. Not applicable = 0
Community engagement (assessed using table 7 of the Risk Tool).	-5 (total may be less than zero) -5 (total may be less than zero) in AENOR's opinion, total community engagement (-5) is properly justified and in accordance with the AFOLU Non-Permanence Risk Tool, v4.0.	a) The project area is uninhabited, there are no households living within the project area. Not applicable = 0. b) The PP had multiples meetings covering all permanent settlements in the west, south and east of the area. AENOR has reviewed the attendance lists and further evidence to support the stakeholder engagement information as well as crosschecking this information with questions during the onsite audit. Risk rating=0 is justified. c) The project generates net positive impacts on the well-being of the communities. Risk rating= -5 is justified.
Political Risks (assessed using table 8 of the Risk Tool).	4 (total may not be less than zero) 4 (total may not be less than zero) in AENOR's opinion, total community engagement (4) is properly justified and in accordance with the AFOLU Non-Permanence Risk Tool, v4.0.	a) The average governance score in Central African Republic across the six indicators of the World Bank for the 2015-2019 period is -1.55. AENOR has reviewed the World Bank indicator /201/ and deems that it is correct. Risk rating= 6 is justified. b)-e) See above. Not applicable = 0 f) The Central African Republic is a member of the Forest Carbon Partnership in the Readiness Fund. Risk rating = -2 is justified.
Total external risks = 0 (Total may not be less than zero)		
Natural risks		
Fire Risk (assessed using table 10 of the	LS*M=2.5	Less than every 10 years. Fires are common during the dry season in the savannah ecosystem in Africa. Chinko project

Risk factor	Risk Rating	Assessment
Risk Tool).		implements an early burning strategy in order to prevent uncontrolled fires later in the season. AENOR has reviewed the fire analysis /203-204/ and have visited the activities related to preventive burning fires during the onsite visit in November 2022 to confirm that the information stated in this section of the NPRR is truth. Thus $L \times S = 5$ is reasonable. Mitigation (M) measures = 0.5
Pest and disease outbreaks (assessed using table 10 of the Risk tool).	$LS \times M = 0$	Several studies have shown a negative correlation between the biodiversity of ecosystems and the emergence of outbreaks of pests and diseases that affect these ecosystems. It is assumed that no loss of the carbon stocks will be produced. AENOR has reviewed the evidence about pest and diseases /210-212/ and was compared with the NPRR and PDD information as well as with interviewing several people during the onsite visit. Thus $L \times S = 0$ Mitigation (M) measures = 0
Extreme weather (assessed using table 10 of the Risk tool).	$LS \times M = 2$	Floods and droughts are events that can occur surprisingly in many savannas. AENOR has reviewed the risk of floods /205/ and deems that information is reasonable. Thus $L \times S = 2$ is reasonable. No mitigation measures. Mitigation (M) measures: 1
Geological risks (assessed using table 10 of the Risk Tool).	$LS \times M = 0$	The project area is not within volcanoes activity area, earthquakes risk zone nor landslide risk area. Thus $L \times S = 0$ is reasonable. Mitigation (M) measures: Not applicable.
Total natural risks = 4.5		
OVERALL RISK RATING = $2 + 0 + 4.5 = 6.5\%$. Then an overall risk rating of 10% is considered.		

The allocation of GERs to the buffer account was determined following the AFOLU Non-Permanence Risk Tool, version 4.0. After applying the tool, the total value obtained was 6.5% (2% in the internal risks, 0% in the external risks and 4.5% in the natural risks). However, according to the requirements of the tool, the minimum risk rating shall be 10%, regardless of the risk rating calculated. Therefore, a 10% was used to determine the buffer account allocation.

AENOR has checked that information provided in the NPRR for the period is consistent with supporting documents provided. The assumptions and justifications provided to determine the risk rating of each risk factor are elaborated and they are based on provided documents using conservative assessments. AENOR deems that information provided is reliable and appropriate from reliable sources, thus, the overall risk rating is credible and realistic. Thus, the overall risk rating of 10% is credible and realistic and in such a way it was applied to calculate NERs.

3.3.11 Optional Gold Level: Regional Climate Change Scenarios (GL1.1)

Africa is highly vulnerable to the various manifestations of climate change. The situations that are particularly important, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) are:

- Water resources

- Food security at risk from declines in agricultural production and an uncertain climate
- Natural resources productivity at risk and biodiversity that might be irreversibly lost
- Vector and water borne diseases, especially in areas with inadequate health infrastructure
- Exacerbation of desertification by changes in rainfall and intensified land use

It is the opinion of the audit team, based on the support evidence provided by the PP and the observed impacts attributed to climate change described in Report of the IPCC, that the PP has appropriately identified the likely climate change and climate variability scenarios affecting the project area.

Considering the main land use scenario of the project area, which is pastoralism use, the potential changes to the land use described by the PP is deemed as reasonable by AENOR.

3.3.12 Optional Gold Level: Climate Change Impacts (GL1.2)

The main impacts in the project zone regarding social and biodiversity aspects are listed below:

- Community wellbeing: climate change will further exacerbate development challenges in CAR, impacting agricultural production and food security significantly due to the changes in the regime of precipitation and alteration in temperature, and will weaken the ability of the environment to provide vital resources and services. Many pastoral communities include transnational migrants in search of new seasonal grazing. In drought situations, such pastoralists may come into conflict with settled agrarian systems.
- Biodiversity: In protected forests like Chinko in the CAR which are home to megafauna, climate change could result in additional pressure by both altering ecosystem dynamics and encouraging human encroachment into these areas. The climate impacts in the region could shrink the physical extent of habitats that currently have protected status or shift the distribution of specific plant species on which endangered species depend to areas outside of protection.

AENOR has reviewed the UNFCCC information about climate change in CAR as well as some studies about the climate change effects in biodiversity, such as the climate risks in the Central Africa regional program for the environment (carpe) and Congo basin, in which it is stated that climate change impacts could shrink the physical extent of habitats that currently have protected status or shift the distribution of specific plant species upon which endangered species depend to areas outside of protection.

The audit team asked to AAPP about observed changes attributable to climate change and their impact to local community members and both confirmed the assessment made by the PP. Thus, AENOR considers that it is demonstrated that current or anticipated climate changes are having or are likely to have an impact on the well-being of communities and the conservation status of biodiversity in the project zone and surrounding regions.

3.3.13 Optional Gold Level: Measures Needed and Designed for Adaptation (GL1.3)

The PP has described the main measures needed in the project area in section 3.4.3. Among all the measures, some of them are:

- Develop transhumant pastoralism corridors (TPCs).
- Monitor wildlife and human activities to optimize conservation activities and strategies.
- Review and amend the zoning in relation to key species and habitats for effective management and appropriate protection.
- Expand the core protection area.
- Recruit and train a sufficient number of rangers, eco monitors, eco transhumance officers and control room operators.
- Adequately equip law enforcement teams.
- Develop a fit for purpose vehicle and aircraft fleet for operations, with adequate maintenance facilities and maintenance plans.

Based on the observations made during the onsite visit by the VVB and testimonies gathered from the interviews, it is the opinion of the audit team that the activities design and implemented by the project deliver the intended impacts on climate change adaptation and assist communities and biodiversity to adapt to the probable impacts of climate change. The measures are based on the casual model of the project as described in response to G1.8 (section 2.1.11 of the PDD), since they are main activities of the project.

3.4 Community

3.4.1 Descriptions of Communities at Project Start (CM1.1)

Section 4.1.1 of the PDD provides a detailed description of the context of the communities affected by the project, their wellbeing and their characteristics and diversity. The PP provides information on distribution by gender, age, marital status, occupation, religion, language, and ethnic groups.

As stated, Chinko Is uninhabited and only has limited road access and minor infrastructure development. There are, however, local communities and other stakeholders living in the surrounding landscape that need to be considered within the larger context of the project. The local communities living on the periphery of the CCA are mainly found to the south and west of the CCA. These communities dependent on subsistence agriculture activities as well as hunting and the use of other forest resources for consumption or as a source of income. The local communities are predominantly composed of Bantu populations, although some Fulani pastoralists do live in the same villages and have become sedentary.

The other important group of communities are the Transhumant pastoralists. They are the Mbororo who their main economic activity is cattle rearing but they also practice poaching for bushmeat and ivory and harvest NTFPs from the landscape.

The audit team considers the information set out in the PDD to describe the wellbeing and the characteristics and diversity of the communities in the project zone is credible and faithfully represents the reality in the project zone. The audit team reviewed the sources and evidence that support the information, and used external sources such as the Luizza, Matthew. (2017). Transhumant Pastoralism in Central Africa: Emerging Impacts on Conservation and Security, which is a deep and general document about pastoralism in CAR, explaining among others the different groups such as Fulani, Peulh, Fula, Mboro, etc. It has been crosschecked the information during the onsite visit performed in November 2022, in which the AENOR team has interviewed different people from surrounding communities, Mbororo's

people and has visited communities such as Bangassou, Rafaï and Sam-ouandja. Therefore, AENOR confirms that the information of the PDD is reliable and truth.

3.4.2 Interactions between Communities and Community Groups (CM1.1)

Section 4.1.2 of the PDD describes the interactions among communities towards the project and the PP. Based on the declarations made by different community members during the onsite visit and the interviews performed in Kocho, Sam-ouandja, Bangassou and Rafaï, the audit team has no reason to consider the information provided in the PDD not accurate. Also, AENOR has carried out one meeting with one expert in pastoralism and Mbororo community, which has confirmed the behavior and group structure of transhumant pastoralists.

3.4.3 High Conservation Values (CM1.2)

The PP identified some HCV related to community well-being:

- Buffer/transition zone
- Chinko and Mbari Rivers

The qualifying attribute of both HCVs is the consideration as areas that provide critical ecosystem services to the communities. The relevance of both HCV, especially in the provision of vital water environmental services, was confirmed to the audit team. AENOR has visited some of the rivers and waterflows of the CCA and deems that this network of water is vital for all the communities living in the surroundings of CCA. AENOR has interviewed representatives of hunting association, and they have declared that buffer zones are important to still gather resources. AENOR attended the CAPEP (Comité des Aires Protégées et leurs Périphéries, Stakeholder Council), which consists in a congress of people from all the communities, and one of the topics discussed was the land-use plan, in which the buffer zone is designed according to the needs of the communities as well as the conservation values.

Thus, AENOR deems that the PP has appropriately identified the HCVs related to community well-being.

3.4.4 Without-Project Scenario: Community (CM1.3)

Section 4.1 of the PDD provides a justified description of the characteristics of the communities in the non-project scenario. Some of the factors that impact the well-being of communities are insecurity, conflict between transhumant pastoralists, lack of education, lack of employment and health among others.

AENOR has reviewed sources to obtain information about the situation in CAR and the surroundings of Chinko and contrasted with the information gathered by the onsite interviews with local communities. During these interviews, for example, they stated that CCA is a source of employment, which is proportional to an improve in economy and health of families. AENOR has deeply reviewed the sources referred in the PDD such as the (Ondoua Ondoua, G. et al 2017). Also, interviewees stated that the conditions previous to Chinko implementation were really complicated, highlighting the continuous conflict with pastoralists.

Therefore, throughout the information of the PDD about the without-project conditions and the information obtained from the interviews with local communities, AENOR deems that the information and the changes are truthful and reliable.

3.4.5 Expected Community Impacts (CM2.1)

Section 4.2.1 of the PDD lists the following expected community impacts of the project:

- Increased income generating opportunities
- Improved agriculture practices
- Increased perception/recognition of the value of forest resources
- Improved skills through training
- Increased employment opportunities for locals

All impacts presented are direct result of the implementation of the planned project activities. Thus, it is the opinion of AENOR that they are realistic and credible. All interviewed reported to have already experience the described impacts that they were considered to produce a positive change in their well-being.

Based on the evidence, the audit team deems the expected community impacts, the key assumptions and methodological choices used to anticipate the impacts on each community group resulting from project activities under the without-project scenario followed the CCB requirements.

3.4.6 Negative Community Impact Mitigation (CM2.2)

African Parks aims to assist local communities on the periphery of the CCA through different activities aimed at increasing income-generating opportunities, improving agricultural practices, skills training and supporting local education and healthcare wherever possible. The project activities will provide education and skills training to local communities to ensure that the integrity of the HCV areas is maintained and can continue to provide critical ecosystem services to the local communities.

Community members who depend on illegal activities to support their livelihoods (i.e. poaching, illegal wildlife trade, illegal mining) may experience short-term negative impacts from project activities that seek to curb these activities. At the same time, however, the project will provide alternatives to these activities that are capable of replacing this income with sustainable business development opportunities.

Activities that have been undertaken to avoid/mitigate negative impacts on stakeholders include:

- Careful assessment of existing local conditions and stakeholder dynamics, prior to project implementation
- Significant stakeholder consultation prior to project implementation

The project has and will continue to train and recruit a number of eco-monitors that will maintain regular community presence and undertake regular assessments of program activities and impacts to ensure that any potential negative impacts would be identified, reported, documented, and addressed/resolved within in a timely manner.

The audit team verified this information during the direct interviews. AENOR has reviewed the trainings and the methodology implemented to mitigate possible negative effects. The interviewees recognized that the measures are positive and will support the lack of other activities.

Therefore, it is the opinion of AENOR that the PP has adequately identified the potential negative impacts to the community well-being and has developed the adequate measures to mitigate them in an effective manner.

3.4.7 Net Positive Community Well-Being (CM2.3, GL1.4)

Section 4.2.3 of the PDD describes the net well-being impacts of the project. Since the project started in 2016, community members have already experienced these positive impacts. Proof of that was provided to the audit team during the interviews with the community members participating in the onsite auditing process. The respondents demonstrated in all cases a net positive impact in the community well-being derived from the project. Other positive impacts on community well-being that are expected from the project activities include: improved regional security, a reduction in conflict between local communities and transhumant pastoralist groups, and an increase in skills and employment opportunities amongst local communities. All the interviewees recognized that transhumant pastoralists cause damage to their crops, sometimes conflicts with communities and they are a big trouble for biodiversity. However, with the development of corridors, and the labor of AP by sensitization and controlling the access of the pastoralists, the communities have better security conditions. Other important role of the project is the generation of employment. Previous to the project implementation the opportunities were very poor, and the communities needed to obtain income from resources, many times illegal resources. Currently, due to the implementation of Chinko Conservation Area Project, the communities have a source of employment which is directly proportional to security, health improvement, biodiversity damage reduction, etc.

Thus, the audit team deems the net impact of the project on the community wellbeing is positive and there was no evidence found on the contrary. The list of benefits described in the PDD is considered as credible and achievable by the audit team.

3.4.8 High Conservation Values Protected (CM2.4)

To ensure the continuity of the High Conservation Values for the community, monitoring activities will be undertaken to mitigate any unforeseen impacts. Considering that stakeholders are an active part of the process, it is expected that areas HCVs will be managed properly avoiding negative impacts; one of the outcomes of the land use plan is to improve communities' access to natural resources. The buffer/transition zones and Chinko and Mbari Rivers will have continuous monitoring processes to ensure the continuity of the high conservation values for the community.

The audit team found no evidence of any of the HCVs related to community well-being was or will be adversely affected by the project. The implementation of vigilance activities by different staff of AAPP demonstrate that the incidence of illegal activities decreased exponentially.

3.4.9 Impacts on Other Stakeholders (CM3.1)

The project activities are unlikely to have any long-term impacts on the well-being of other stakeholders.

The transhumant pastoralists that enter the CAR from the Darfur region of Sudan may be impacted by the project activities because grazing is illegal in the project area and the project aims to enforce the national laws in this regard. This impact will be short term as the project will establish corridors as well as provide support and knowledge sharing with these stakeholders to ensure that the project area is protected, and pastures are managed in a sustainable way over the long term.

Several positive impacts have been identified for other stakeholders, and the audit team deems the expected impacts on other stakeholders, the key assumptions and methodological choices used to anticipate the impacts on said groups resulting from project activities under the without-project scenario followed the CCB requirements.

3.4.10 Mitigation of Negative Impacts on Other Stakeholders (CM3.2)

The project will establish transhumant pastoralist corridors in which the herders are able to practice sustainable grazing. African Parks will also train a sufficient number of eco-transhumance officers who will carry out sensitization activities with the transhumant pastoralists.

Based on the nature of the potential negative impact, crosschecked with the direct observations and interviews performed in November 2022, it is the opinion of AENOR that the PP has developed the adequate measures to mitigate it in an effective manner.

3.4.11 Net Impacts on Other Stakeholders (CM3.3)

No net negative impacts on other stakeholders are anticipated. The project activities are designed to ensure that transhumant pastoralists that currently practice illegal grazing in the project area will be provided with improved access to sustainably managed pasture.

Assessment by the audit team concluded that the likelihood of net negative impacts on the well-being of other stakeholder groups is adequately addressed in the PDD. In the opinion of AENOR, the claim of net positive other stakeholder well-being impacts by the project is supported by evidence, is credible and reflects faithfully the project benefits on these communities. According to AENOR observations, the net impacts of the project activities are positive for each stakeholder group.

3.4.12 Community Monitoring Plan (CM4.1, CM4.2, GL1.4, GL2.2, GL2.3, GL2.5)

Section 4.4.1 of the PDD presents the community monitoring plan design. The monitoring plan provides the list of indicators to monitor. These indicators are directly correlated to the project activity outputs and the expected community impacts. The main indicators measured are:

1. Number of AP employees trained, with a frequency of every verification period, and the main group are the rangers and eco employees.
2. Audio-visual content, such as films, radio programs or billboard campaigns, dedicated to local communities and the frequency is once off.
3. Skills training program for local sedentary communities and with frequency of every verification period.
4. Trainings of sustainable agriculture and new technologies, dedicated to local communities and will be monitored every verification period.
5. Number of community-based IGA's being implemented for local communities and monitored each verification period.
6. Number of potential operator and expand tourism opportunities, for AP employees and monitored every verification event.
7. Number of schools visited each year to show the benefit of protecting area to local communities and will be monitored each year.

AENOR deems that the community monitoring plan identifies community variables to be monitored, the areas to be monitored, the sampling methods and the frequency of monitoring and reporting following the CCB requirements in this regard. The monitoring variables are directly linked to the project's variables that are connected to project objectives related to communities and community groups and to outcomes, outputs and impacts related to community well-being that were identified through the theory of change and allowed the assessment of the effectiveness of measures taken to maintain or improve High Conservation Values related to the well-being of the community. Thus, AENOR deems the community monitoring plan was elaborated according to the CCB standard, including the monitoring of climate change adaptation benefits and exceptional community benefits to meet the Gold Level requirements.

3.4.13 Monitoring Plan Dissemination (CM4.3)

Every monitoring period the relevant documentation about the results of the monitoring and verification of this project will be published in the Verra platform. Summaries of these monitoring reports will be translated into local languages and disseminated amongst communities where appropriate. Project activities and their results will also be discussed at regular community consultation meetings. This will ensure that even with the high levels of illiteracy in the region, monitoring information will be made publicly available to all local communities living on the periphery of the park.

This was verified by the audit team during stakeholder interviews, in which interviewees confirmed that they were aware of the monitoring procedures and that the PP has already shared with them monitoring results on a regular basis.

3.4.14 Optional Gold Level: Exceptional Community Criteria (GL2.1)

Not applicable.

3.4.15 Optional Gold Level: Short-term and Long-term Community Benefits (GL2.2)

Not applicable.

3.4.16 Optional Gold Level: Community Participation Risks (GL2.3)

Not applicable.

3.4.17 Optional Gold Level: Marginalized and/or Vulnerable Community Groups (GL2.4)

Not applicable.

3.4.18 Optional Gold Level: Net Impacts on Women (GL2.5)

Not applicable.

3.4.19 Optional Gold Level: Benefit Sharing Mechanisms (GL2.6)

Not applicable.

3.4.20 Optional Gold Level: Benefits, Costs, and Risks Communication (GL2.7)

Not applicable.

3.4.21 Optional Gold Level: Governance and Implementation Structures (GL2.8)

Not applicable.

3.4.22 Optional Gold Level: Smallholders/Community Members Capacity Development (GL2.9)

Not applicable.

3.5 Biodiversity

3.5.1 Existing Conditions (B1.1)

In the section 5.1.1 of the PDD further information is provided. The project area is made up of uninhabited Medio-Sudanian and Sudano-Guinean savannah, with patches of Congolian lowland rainforest as well as a pristine freshwater river system. Chinko's mosaic of ecosystems located at such a latitude on the African continent, means that this area is rich and unique in biodiversity.

About the fauna, there are 26 species of carnivores, including top predators such as the endangered African wild dog, the highly vulnerable Northern lion and nine different species of mongoose, along with 11 primate species, including Eastern chimpanzees, 24 even-toed ungulates, including Eastern giant eland, bongo antelope, Lelwel hartebeest, eight different species of duikers as well as five ant-eating mammals, including all four species of the African pangolin in this area. There are also several species of birds, reptiles and fish. Regarding vegetation, REDD+ vegetation inventory done in 2020 by African Parks showed the presence of certain typical rain forest like the critically endangered Mukulungu (*Autranella congolensis*) the endangered Wenge tree (*Millettia laurentii*) and true African ebony (*Diospyros crassiflora*).

Hunting, poaching and the illegal wildlife trade, is the largest threat to biodiversity in this region; local people hunt in the savannas throughout the year, but tend to hunt intensively during the rainy season. The main hunting methods used are trapping with snares and hunting with nets and guns. Hunting in this region consists of small-scale legal hunting for mostly local consumption, small-scale illegal hunting (poaching) by relatively local actors and large-scale poaching for commercial purposes.

The audit team visited the CCA and performed several activities to identify the biodiversity conditions. Some of the direct species-sightings that the audit team was able to see were: warthog, giant eland, oribi, mongoose, waterbuck, hyena, duikers, bushbuck, giant forest hog, guineafowls and other type of birds. The PP showed examples of cameratraps of Chinko, shown the presence of other animals such as chimpanzees, elephants, wild dogs, lions or leopards among others. Also, by the patrolling activities performance, the audit team identified some of the plant and trees species, as well as the typical vegetation formations according to the part of the area: savannah, congolian rainforest and pristine freshwater river system. Therefore, AENOR considers that the information stated in the PDD, is correct by the review of the evidence and complementary explanations such as the Aebischer et al., papers, the African Parks Annual Report of 2014, the direct interviews and the observations made by the rest of

activities in the audit. Based on such information, it is the opinion of AENOR that the existing biodiversity conditions described above are accurate and reliable.

3.5.2 High Conservation Values (B1.2)

The biodiversity HCVs identified by the PP coincide with the community HCVs described in section 3.4.3 of this report:

- Chinko conservation area zone
- Chinko and Mbari Rivers
- Threatened species

The qualifying attribute of HCVs in terms of biodiversity is that they are nationally significant concentrations of biodiversity values in the form of protected areas.

The CCA zone is a mix of habitats and is the most suitable place and ecotone for several species such as wild dog, chimpanzee, and African forest elephant. The number of rivers and water system within Chinko allow the establishment and maintenance of the forest and dense vegetation inside Chinko these characteristics in addition to others such as the remoteness, allow the presence of 26 species of carnivores and other threatened species.

The relevance of the HCV has been reinforced, assessed and contrasted with the interviews carried out during the field visit in November 2022, when this was verified by the audit team during stakeholder interviews, in which interviewees confirmed that they were aware importance and relevance of the HCV in the biodiversity of the region. *Several explanations from Thierry Aebischer were also used to crosscheck the information on the PDD and the testimonies of the communities. Direct observations of Flora and Fauna in such zones were also used to validate the information of the PDD. AENOR has observed the water basin in Chinko when the audit team did an aerial flight to the North of the Project Area. In this flight, AENOR confirmed that the important flux of water in all around the PA is very important for the Biodiversity, and the consideration as a HCV is correct. This is linked to the CCA, which the whole area has a crucial value for Biodiversity due to the variety of ecosystems, the amount of shelter and food, make another positive opinion of AENOR about this HCV. Finally, the threatened species are a key point in the ecosystem, and the intense work that AP is doing to conserve and protect the, was also noted and confirmed by AENOR after the review of the Monitoring Plan and the testimonies from the onsite visit. Thus, AENOR deems that the PP has appropriately identified the HCVs related to biodiversity. Complementary, AENOR has used external sources to review the relevance of this HCV in the CAR biodiversity.*

3.5.3 Without-project Scenario: Biodiversity (B1.3)

As previously stated, the project area is uninhabited. There are, however, a number of activities that currently take place in, and around, the area that have a direct impact on the biodiversity of the region. These activities include unsustainable hunting practices and the illegal wildlife trade, transhumant pastoralism and unsustainable agricultural practices, amongst others. Without the project, it is highly likely that these activities would continue, which would have a negative impact on the biodiversity of the project area.

The practice of pastoralism (transhumance) is common in Eastern CAR. Pastoralism involves the strategic mobility of cattle through the landscape searching for water and grazing resources in areas of high rainfall variability.

Without the projects unsustainable hunting practices, poaching, both on a small and commercial scale, and the illegal wildlife trade are likely to not only continue but intensify in the project area. The reason for this is because the high demand for meat and ivory by organized Sudanese poachers, and the demand for meat, fish and skin/scale by commercial poachers for exportation to the DRC. Other unsustainable practices such as illegal gold mining that uses highly toxic chemicals, as well as logging, will also cause heavy erosion and micro-climate changes that would seriously affect biodiversity in the project area.

AENOR has carried out interviews and asked about the conditions in the area now and years ago, when all these illegal activities were being performed without control. It was very relevant the opinion of the interviewees, confirming that years ago, was very common to see animals such as elephants and lions close to the communities, but after the arrival of transhumant pastoralists, they almost wiped out several populations of animals, but now the numbers of these species have been positively affected by the activities done by African Parks in and around the CCA.

AENOR has used the evidence and supporting information such as the Transhumant Pastoralism in Central Africa: Emerging Impacts on Conservation and Security⁶² paper, in which is stated that transnational transhumance occurs within a landscape of escalating violent conflict that has local to global implications for human and environmental security; yet as a priority issue, it has long been ignored, receiving limited media exposure, international assistance, or policy attention.

Considering the sources of the information provided by the PP and the rationale of the causal relations described in the PDD, the audit team found no inconsistencies in the description of the potential without-project scenario and considers expected changes to biodiversity conditions in the without-project scenario were well defined in the PDD in compliance with the CCB requirements.

3.5.4 Expected Biodiversity Changes (B2.1)

The specific expected biodiversity changes described in the PDD are:

- Improve of biodiversity connection: The Chinko Conservation Area in the eastern part of CAR, in the ecotone between the pristine moist forest and the open savanna woodlands, making the area one of the most diverse in the country.
- Fauna conservation: The management of the area creates a safe place for wildlife, with them being protected by a team of rangers that patrol the area against illegal poaching and attempt to prevent conflicts with any of the pastoralism activities.

⁶² Luizza, M. (2017). *Transhumant Pastoralism in Central Africa: Emerging Impacts on Conservation and Security (English)*. <https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.15410.91843/1>

All expected changes presented are direct result of the implementation of the planned project activities. Thus, it is the opinion of AENOR that they are realistic and credible. Interviews with responsible of the CCA and the vigilance confirmed the credibility of the expected biodiversity changes.

In opinion of AENOR, information about expected changes on biodiversity from project activities is accurate since it is based on records taken from direct monitoring. AENOR concludes that the 'with project' scenario improves the biodiversity of the project areas and helps to preserves habitat for fauna and flora and rare, endangered, and endemic species in the HCVs.

3.5.5 Mitigation Measures (B2.3)

As reported before, the main threats to biodiversity are transhumant, poaching, forest fire and natural resources exploitation. Some activities have been implemented to reduce drastically these negative effects to the conservation of Chinko. The activities vary according to the different strategic lines. For example, for reducing poaching, one of the main activities is the creation of a well-equipped team, with further development of an informant network with an associated incentive scheme which will act as an Early Warning System and information sharing platform. AENOR has interviewed personnel from the rangers and eco teams, and attended briefing meetings, in which every night, the personnel discuss about the problems, or illegal activities identified such day. AENOR accompanied AP team to one of the flights of patrolling and explained how the process of reporting information is. AENOR has observed the training camp for the patrolling team, also AENOR verified that there is a specific storage room to store the equipment used by the rangers and they carry all the needs to work in the field.

About fire management, the main activity is to keep fires as small as possible. Therefore, in the time of the visit, the dry season was starting, and the AP team created small prevention fires to avoid the biggest ones at the end of the dry season. AENOR accompanied the team in the prevention fires creation activities, and also saw other small handmade fires (prevention) from the patrolling aircraft.

Transhumance pastoralism is a very harmful activity in Chinko, so AP created a specific team to sensitize these group and is establishing a land use plan, in which corridors are designed. AENOR has visited and interviewed these groups and asked them if they know what the corridors consists of. The pastoralists confirmed that the corridors are in mind of AP and are being created by the collaboration of all the communities. Also, they confirmed that several advertisements were placed in the frontier of the area to advise that grazing is not legal onwards.

For other illegal activities and natural exploitation such as hunting, the buffer zones are the place for that, and communities will have the opportunity to still hunting, fishing or sustainable harvesting in these areas.

Based on the evidence provided and the information gathered from onsite interviews it is the opinion of AENOR that the PP has developed the adequate measures to mitigate the negative impacts on biodiversity in an effective manner.

3.5.6 Net Positive Biodiversity Impacts (B2.2, GL1.4)

With project activities already planned, negative effects from poaching or natural resources exploitation will be kept out of the project area, which will provide better conditions for biodiversity in terms of refuge and provision of ecosystem services such as food and shelter. In addition, management activities and

sensitization regarding the transhumant pastoralism practice will reduce the impact on the natural ecosystems and fauna, favoring the protection of vulnerable and endangered species.

Therefore, the net impact on biodiversity will be positive because of the protection of the ecosystems in the project area, as well as the conservation of vulnerable species which have their habitats in the park. Moreover, the management and sensitization of transhumant pastoralism practice will improve conditions in the park, with specific zones for the movement of herds, reducing the impact on fauna from poaching and habitat degradation.

The audit team considers these statements to be credible, correct and representative of what is being implemented by the project. AENOR deems the project is having and going to have a positive net gain for biodiversity in the project area. Thus, it is the opinion of AENOR that the project has net positive biodiversity impact. The audit team deems that the PP has demonstrated that project activities will assist the biodiversity to adapt to the probable impacts of climate change, as per GL1.4 of the CCB Standard v3.1.

3.5.7 High Conservation Values Protected (B2.4)

With project activities already planned, negative effects from poaching or natural resources exploitation will be kept out of the project area, which will provide better conditions for biodiversity in terms of refuge and provision of ecosystem services such as food and shelter. In addition, management activities and sensitization regarding the transhumant pastoralism practice will reduce the impact on the natural ecosystems and fauna, favoring the protection of vulnerable and endangered species.

The audit team found no evidence of any of the HCVs related to biodiversity were or will be adversely affected by the project.

3.5.8 Species Used (B2.5)

The project does not contemplate the use of species.

3.5.9 Impacts of Non-native Species (B2.6)

No non-native species are used in the project zone as part of the project.

3.5.10 GMO Exclusion (B2.7)

No GMOs are used to generate GHG emissions reductions or removals.

3.5.11 Inputs Justification (B2.8)

No fertilizers, chemical pesticides, biological control agents and other inputs are used for the project.

3.5.12 Waste Products (B2.9)

No waste products are generated in the project activities.

3.5.13 Negative Offsite Biodiversity Impacts (B3.1) and Mitigation Measures (B3.2)

Some negative impacts to biodiversity could take place outside of the project area, caused by law enforcement in the core area moving the hunting and poaching activities to the periphery of the project area. Thus, it is important that the management activities include local communities and transhumance pastoralism, in order to promote and control hunting activities and the sustainable use of natural resources, as well as working together with the government to ensure that regulations on poaching are enforced and that those who engage in these practices are penalized.

It is the opinion of AENOR that the PP has demonstrated that potential negative offsite biodiversity impacts from the project are being mitigated by the activities described above. To validate the information, the audit team conducted interviews with the Ministry of Environment in Bangui, and confirmed the link between the environmental legislation and the harmful illegal activities carried out in many cases throughout the CAR country. The authorities stated that the work of African Parks is very supportive and positive for the environment and the country. The authorities are aware of the improvements in flora and fauna populations following the implementation of African Parks as CCA managers.

3.5.14 Net Offsite Biodiversity Benefits (B3.3)

Thanks to the project activities, vulnerable and endangered species will be impacted in a positive way, with their habitats being protected and the amount of poaching and illegal hunting occurring being dramatically reduced. Furthermore, by managing transhumance pastoralism in the area this will reduce affectations on the natural ecosystems in the area, which support more than 70 mammal species in the park, including key species such as chimpanzees, elephants, wild dogs, lions and hippopotamuses, among others. AENOR has checked and compared this information with records of the presence of species and direct observations among others. The assessment of certain studies and the testimonies from local communities and the Government made clear that the effect of the project is making positive effects on biodiversity. It is the opinion of AENOR that the PP has demonstrated that there are offsite biodiversity benefits due to the project activities.

3.5.15 Biodiversity Monitoring Plan (B4.1, B4.2, GL1.4, GL3.4)

Section 5.4.1 of the PDD presents the biodiversity monitoring plan design. The monitoring plan provides the list of indicators to monitor. These indicators are directly correlated to the project activity outputs and the expected biodiversity changes.

The main objective will be the restoration and maintenance of the ecosystem, so as to preserve maximal biodiversity and species numbers, and to allow natural ecological processes to flourish. Due to the high volume and various characteristics of the species present in the project area, multiple sampling methods have to be implemented when monitoring so as to reduce the possibility of the non-detection of species of interest:

- Camera traps
- Track counting
- Ultralight motorized aircraft

- Satellite collars

AENOR has seen all the techniques used to monitor biodiversity. During the onsite visit, AENOR has followed the rangers in the collection of the camera traps, and further storing of data. Also, the team explained how they identify the animals by their tracks on the ground, which is one of the methods of track counting used since 2012.

AENOR followed also the team in one of the motorized aircraft flights to look for animals, and some baboons were seen during the flight.

About the collars, the PP showed AENOR the lion's collars and the location of other animals collared located by GPS during the briefing meetings that AP staff carry out every night in Kocho.

Regarding the species that are being monitored, the species identified in the PDD include Eastern giant eland, Roan, Waterbuck, Northern Lion, Spotted hyena, Wild Dogs, etc. For each species, the method of monitoring is different regarding their habits and locations, as well as their morphology. AENOR has verified the presence of all of these monitoring methods, such as camera traps, track counting, aircraft monitoring and satellite collars. AENOR observed all these monitoring methods, and also, during one of the meetings with the Biodiversity and Conservation Manager, Thierry Aebischer, AENOR was able to review the in-depth, meticulous and accurate way of monitoring the species described in the PDD. Thierry showed the different inventory techniques for each species regarding their characteristics. Data for each species had been analyzed with specific techniques, and this was explained to the VVB. The PP showed the results of the monitoring of each species and the objectives of its monitoring.

Complementary, every day, the Chinko staff had a briefing meeting, where they discussed the most relevant points of the day. In these meetings, the Chinko staff showed and explain to each other the location of some animals collared by GPS as well as interesting sightings of key species (or their tracks) by the patrol teams.

AENOR considers that the species identified in section 5.4.1 of the PDD and their monitoring procedures are defined properly, and the PP has developed accurate methods to obtain valuable information from the inventories and monitoring.

In conclusion, AENOR deems that the biodiversity monitoring plan identifies biodiversity variables to be monitored, the areas to be monitored, the sampling methods and the frequency of monitoring and reporting following the CCB requirements in this regard. The monitoring variables are directly linked to the project's biodiversity objectives and the expected effectiveness of the measures taken to maintain or enhance identified high conservation values related to nationally significant biodiversity present in the project zone. Thus, AENOR deems the biodiversity monitoring plan was elaborated according to the CCB Standard.

3.5.16 Biodiversity Monitoring Plan Dissemination (B4.3)

Every monitoring period the relevant documentation about the results of the monitoring and verification of this project will be published in the Verra platform. Summaries of these monitoring reports will be translated into local languages and disseminated amongst communities where appropriate. Project activities and their results will also be discussed at regular community consultation meetings.

This was verified by the audit team during stakeholder interviews, in which interviewees confirmed that they were aware of the monitoring procedures and that the PP has already shared with them monitoring results on a regular basis.

3.5.17 Optional Gold Level: High Biodiversity Conservation Priority Status (GL3.1)

The PP has demonstrated the presence of at least five critically endangered, nine endangered and 12 vulnerable fauna species being in the area according to the IUCN. In addition, preliminary results of the vegetation inventory showed the presence of certain typical rain forest species like the critically endangered Mukulungu (*Austroriparia congolensis*) the endangered Wenge tree (*Millettia laurentii*) and true African ebony (*Diospyros crassiflora*).

The conservation team showed to AENOR results of the studies and samples of the trap cameras in which images of Chimpanzees, wild dogs, African forest elephant and other relevant animals were found in Chinko recently.

3.5.18 Optional Gold Level: Trigger Species Population Trends (GL3.2, GL3.3)

According to the 2018 annual survey, the following species have been identified within the project area:

- Eastern Chimpanzee
- African wild dog
- African Savanna Elephant

This information was verified by the audit team by cross checking with the official IUCN Red List website and with the project records, pictures from trap cameras and interviews with workers. It is the opinion of AENOR that the project complies with the requirements of the CCB Standard for Gold Level exceptional biodiversity benefits.

4. VALIDATION CONCLUSION

AENOR has validated that the project Chinko Conservation Area REDD+ Project, Central African Republic is in compliance with the VCS Standard v4.1 and the CCB Standards v3.1 without qualifications or limitations.

The project proponent, African Parks (AAPP), has demonstrated that the ownership of the project is unconditional, undisputed and unencumbered, in accordance with VCS requirements.

AENOR has performed the validation of this conservation project in CAR on the basis of all issues and criteria of VCS and CCB. The conclusions of this report showed that the project, as it was described in the Project Description, is in line with all criteria applicable for the validation.

The validation consisted of the following three phases: i) a desk review of the project design and the baseline and Monitoring Plans; ii) follow-up onsite interviews with project stakeholders; iii) the resolution of outstanding issues and the issuance of the final Validation Report and opinion. In the course of the validation process corrective actions and clarifications were raised. All have been successfully closed as explained in Appendix 1.

The methodology VM0009 Methodology for Avoided Ecosystem Conversion v3.0 was applied to quantify net GHG emission reductions and removals from project activities that prevent conversion of areas covered with natural vegetation in the eastern part of the country which are expected to be converted, degraded and deforested in the absence of the project.

The review of the project design documentation and additional documents related to baseline and monitoring methodology; and the subsequent background investigation, follow-up interviews and review of comments by parties have provided AENOR with sufficient evidence to validate the fulfillment of the stated criteria.

In detail, the conclusions can be summarized as follows:

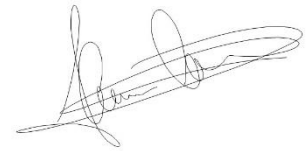
- The project is in line with all criteria of the VCS Standard v4.1 and the CCB Standard v3.1.
- The project additionality is sufficiently justified in the PDD.
- The Monitoring Plan is transparent and adequate.
- The analysis of the baseline emission, project emissions and leakage has been carried out in a transparent and conservative manner.
- The project start date is 15-September-2016 and will have a lifetime and crediting period of 28 years and 7 months, until 14-April-2045. During this period the project expects to generate an estimated annual average of net emissions reduction of 442,839 tCO₂e and a total of 4,558,205 tCO₂e for the 2016-2026 period. Considering a 10% non-permanence risk buffer, the average amount of tradable VCUs per year in the period is 398,553 and a total of 4,102,366 for 2016-2026 period. The project is likely to achieve these reductions during its lifetime.

- The project has demonstrated to be able to achieve climate, community, and biodiversity benefits, including Gold Level Climate Change Adaptation Benefits and Gold Level Exceptional Biodiversity Benefits.

AENOR confirms with a reasonable level of certainty that the Project Description and the claimed emission reductions are free from major errors, omissions, or inaccuracies.

Madrid, 20 November 2023

Javier Cócera
Lead auditor



5. APPENDIX 1: CORRECTIVE ACTIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS REQUESTS

Corrective action requests (CARs)

CAR ID:	01	Date: 11/01/2023
Description of CAR		
The following errors have been found within the PDD document: 1. In section 2.1.9, the list of stakeholders does not match with the previous stakeholder enumeration of section 2.1.8. 2. In section 2.1.13, some milestones of the implementation schedule do not report the complete date. 3. In section 3.1.1, the name of the methodology is not the correct one 4. In section 4.1.1, it is stated that the average life expectancy in the CAR is 51 and 55 years. However, according to the evidence provided, these values are wrong		
Country participant response		Date: 18/01/2023
In response to the errors found by the VVB the following updates were done within the PDD document: 1. Section 2.1.8 was updated to include the list of stakeholders described in section 2.1.9, now both sections have the same stakeholders. 2. In section 2.1.13, the date of the milestones of the implementation schedule was updated to include the day, however, not all of them have a specific day but are activities done for multiple months or an extended period of time, so a footnote was added to provide clarity on this matter. 3. The name of the methodology was corrected in section 3.1.1 4. In section 4.1.1 the average life expectancy in CAR was updated to include the values in 2022, the text is now clear to indicate that we are referring to the values in that specific year. 5. The table with the List of threatened or endangered species documented on the project area, available in section 5.1.1, was updated to consider the status as of January 2023. African Mahogany was removed as well as African Skimmer and the status of some others was updated as well.		
Documentation provided by the Country Participant		
Updated PDD		
VVB Assessment		Date: 24/01/2023
1. Section 2.1.8 was updated to include the list of stakeholders described in section 2.1.9 2. The date of the milestones of the implementation schedule was updated in Section 2.1.13 to include the day/month/ year. 3. The name of the methodology in section 3.1.1 has been corrected. 4. section 4.1.1 has been updated to include the average life expectancies in CAR. 5. Section 5.1.1 with list of threatened or endangered species documented on the project area was		

Therefore, CAR 01 is closed

CAR ID:	02	Date: 11/01/2023
Description of CAR		
According to the VCS and CCB Project Description Template the next sections require the following: 1. In section 2.1.7 "provide a map of the project zone including: areas where offsite climate impacts are predicted; areas where other SH will be impacted and Areas where offsite BD impacts are predicted. However, the requirement is not fulfilled. 2. In section 2.3.5 "describe how communities and other stakeholders are informed of the process for CCB validation and verification". However, this section does not match with the requirement since is more related to the auditor visit. 3. In section 2.3.9 "demonstrate that all consultations have been undertaken directly with communities", however, the requirement is not met. 4. In section 2.3.14, "identify how local capacity is not lost through staff turnover", however, the requirement is not met. 5. In section 2.5.1 "mapping the tenure is mandatory", however the requirement is not met 6. In section 2.5.2, "demonstrate with documented consultations and agreements that the project will not encroach uninvited on private property, community property or government property. The process by which free, prior and informed consent will be or has been obtained of those whose		
Country participant response		Date: 18/01/2023
To comply with the requirements of the VCS and CCB Project Description Template the following updates were done in the document: 1. Figure and written description of the section 2.1.7 were updated to provide more details of the areas where offsite climate impacts are predicted; areas where other stakeholders will be impacted and areas where offsite biodiversity impacts are predicted. 2. Section 2.3.5 was updated to clearly describe the measures taken and communication methods used to inform the stakeholders of the CCB validation and verification process. Section 2.3.6 was updated as well including the information previously available in Section 2.3.5. 3. Section 2.3.9 was updated to describe that consultations have been undertaken directly with communities, proven record of the consultations and communication channels was also shown during the audit site visit. 4. Section 2.3.14 was updated to include a description of the process done when turnover occurs. 5. Section 2.5.1 was updated to include a map of land the tenure in the country. 6. Section 2.5.3 was updated to show that the project will not encroach uninvited on private property, community property or government property and that considering the land tenure, free, prior and informed consent was not necessary because there were no stakeholders whose property rights were affected by the project		
Documentation provided by the Country Participant		

Updated PDD		
VVB Assessment		Date: 24/01/2023
Therefore, CAR 02 is closed 1. Section 2.1.7 was updated to provide more details of the areas where offsite climate impacts are predicted among others. 2. The section has been updated to describe how communities and other stakeholders are informed of the process for CCB validation and verification. 3. Section 2.3.9 has been updated to demonstrate that all consultations have been undertaken 4. Section 2.3.14 is updated. 5. Section 2.5.1 map of land the tenure in the country is included. 6. The section 2.5.3 is updated accordingly.		
CAR ID:	03	Date: 11/01/2023
Description of CAR		
According to the VCS and CCB Project Description Template the next sections require the following: 1. In section 3.1.6 "Describe and justify any methodology deviations. Include evidence to demonstrate the following: The deviation will not negatively impact the conservativeness of the quantification of GHG emission reductions or removals". The deviation relates only to the criteria and procedures for monitoring or measurement and does not relate to any other part of the methodology. Please, states the affectation or not to the conservativeness also to the <u>first</u> deviation 2. In section 3.3.3, "provide further information about the organizational structure, responsibilities, and competencies. Also, about the methods for measuring, recording, storing, aggregating collating...." However, the requirement is not met.		
Country participant response		Date: 18/01/2023
To comply with the requirement, the following updates were done: 1. Section 3.1.6 was updated to include a description of the reason for needing the deviation and why it will not negatively impact the conservativeness of the quantification of GHG emission reductions or removals and that the deviation relates only to the criteria for monitoring or measurement and does not relate to any other part of the methodology. 2. Section 3.3.3 was updated to provide further information about the organizational structure, responsibilities, and competencies and also more details about the methods for measuring and recording as well as storing, aggregating and collating the produced information.		
Documentation provided by the Country Participant		
Updated PDD		
VVB Assessment		Date: 24/01/2023

Therefore, CAR 03 is closed

Clarification requests (CLs)

1. The section 3.1.6 has been updated accordingly
2. The program and other details of the MD have been updated

CL ID	01	Date: 11/01/2023
Description of CL		
Please, provide further explanations about the following topics: 1. In section 2.1.9, within table 1, explain what are the rights, interest and relevance of the employees group and local sedentary communities, transhumant pastoralists, private philanthropic. 2. In section 2.1.12 it is unclear the correlation between SDG in the country and in the project. Table 3 shows the SDG for CCA but this is not explained above as for the country. 3. In section 2.3.1, please provide further explanations about the method to share information among communities 4. In section 2.3.4, within the workers group, please provide further information about costs and benefits 5. In section 2.3.8 is stated that Because of African Parks' presence in the area, all questions or inquiries of the people should be resolved in a timely manner and all communications will be recorded. ☐ Please, provide further information about these records. 6. In section 2.5.6 provide further explanation about the land-use plan. 7. In page 97, please, provide conclusions about the new criteria and factors assessed such as distance to markets 8. In section 4.2.4 provide further explanations about the statement that none of the HCV will be affected		
Country participant response		Date: 18/01/2023
The following updates were done: 1. Section 2.1.9 has been updated to properly describe the rights, interest and overall relevance of the stakeholders. 2. The description in section 2.1.12 has been updated to provide more details of how the project proponent is expected to contribute to the improvement of the selected SDGs and its relationship with the national priorities. 3. Section 2.3.1 has been updated to provide further explanations about the method to share information among the different stakeholders. 4. Section 2.3.4 has been updated to provide more details of the costs and benefits of the employees. 5. Section 2.3.8 has been updated to simplify the description of the plan for having communication and consultation with the stakeholders. 6. Section 2.5.6 has been updated to provide further explanation about the land-use plan and how once successfully implemented will avoid disputes. 7. In section 3.1.4, subsection "Delineating Reference Areas", new criteria were included in the		

Documentation provided by the Country Participant	
paragraphs prior to the figure have the details and at the end of the subsection there is a conclusion of the delineation. Updated POP 8. Section 4.2.4 has been updated include more details about the statement that none of the HCV	
VVB assessment	Date: 24/01/2023
1. The rights, interest and overall relevance of the stakeholders have been described in section 2.1.9 2. Section 2.1.12 on SDG alignment with the project have been updated 3. Section 2.3.1 on information sharing to stakeholders has been updated. 4. Employee costs and benefits have been updated in this section 5. Stakeholders' communication and consultation have been simplified in this section. 6. Section 2.5.6 has been updated to provide further explanation on land use and issues resolution. 7. The Section 3.1.4 has new criteria included in the delineation. 8. The statement "none of the negative impacts on the community Therefore, CL 01 is closed	

CL ID	02	Date: 11/01/2023
Description of CL		
Provide the following documentation or evidence: - In section 2.3.12 it is stated that the feedback and grievance redress procedure has three stages. Please provide evidence about this. The one in the HR statement is just the brief description but not explained all the information. - In section 2.3.14 it is stated that the project has been using the orientation and training guidelines. Please provide evidence of such guidelines. Same for the capacity development planning policy. - Please, provide evidence of some of the SOPs stated in section 2.3.17 - Please, provide the Ondoua Ondoua, G, 2017 evidence - Please provide the Aebischer 2020 and 2017 evidence - Please provide the evidences n°: 57, 69, 70 - Please provide the Blom, Yamindou, & Prins, 2004 evidence		
Country participant response		Date: 18/01/2023
1. Section 2.3.12 has been updated to improve the description of the grievance mechanism and to Provide the following documentation or evidence:		

- provide the necessary evidence. The following documents were added: APN Grievance Mechanism and Chinko - Mécanisme de feedbacks, plaintes et réponses
2. Section 2.3.14 has been updated to improve the description of the resources used by African Parks for the workers training, the statements done in that section are supporting by two documents already available in the folder (HR SOP and Law Enforcement SOP) but also a new document was added as supporting documentation (Human Rights Training Curriculum).
 3. The following SOP were added as supporting documentation for section 2.3.17: Health and Safety, Medica Evacuation, Missions and Medical Emergency
 4. Ondoua Ondoua, G, 2017 evidence provided.
 5. Aebischer 2020 and 2017 evidence provided.

Documentation provided by the Country Participant

70 is an Appendix of the PDD, available within the main document already.

Updated PDD
Blom, Yamindou, & Prins, 2004 evidence provided.

Folder named CL02 with the new documents required in items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7

VVB assessment

Date: 24/01/2023

1. Section 2.3.12 on feedback and grievance redress procedure had been updated
2. Section 2.3.14 has been updated according to the CL-02 -2 findings
3. Four file evidence have been provided under the CL 02/SOP folders in the supporting documents.
4. Article by Ondoua Ondoua, G, 2017 has been provided in the supporting document
5. Aebischer 2017 and 2020 has been provided in the supporting document.
6. Evidences no. 57, 69 and 70 have been provided.
7. Blom, Yamindou, & Prins, 2004 have been provided in the supporting documents.

Therefore, CL 02 is closed

AENOR

Código

PROJECT: Cruzeiro Conservation Area

LOCATION: Serra - outcrops

ATTENDANCE LIST

MEETING TOPIC: women

DATE: 19/11

No	NAME & SURNAME	ROLE/PROFESSION/STAKEHOLDER GROUP	COMMUNITY	SIGNATURE
1	Luís Carlos	AENOR		
2	Daniel Maydon	AENOR		
3	Alana Maydon		Trabalho Doméstico	
4	Lyana Maydon		Trabalho Doméstico	
5	Alana Costa		Doméstico	
6	Ana Carolina		Trabalho Doméstico	
7	Rafaela Costa		Trabalho Doméstico	
8	Alana Costa		Trabalho Doméstico	
9				
10				
11				
12				
13				
14				
15				
16				
17				
18				
19				
20				
21				
22				
23				
24				
25				
26				
27				
28				
29				
30				
31				
32				
33				
34				
35				
36				
37				
38				
39				
40				
41				
42				
43				
44				
45				
46				
47				
48				
49				
50				
51				
52				
53				
54				
55				
56				
57				
58				
59				
60				
61				
62				
63				
64				
65				
66				
67				
68				
69				
70				
71				
72				
73				
74				
75				
76				
77				
78				
79				
80				
81				
82				
83				
84				
85				
86				
87				
88				
89				
90				
91				
92				
93				
94				
95				
96				
97				
98				
99				
100				

		ATTENDANCE LIST	
PROJECT: <i>Centro Comunitario Area</i>		LOCATION: <i>Seon - O. Benja</i>	
MEETING TOPIC: <i>Traschunant - postnatal</i>		DATE: <i>17</i>	
NO	NAME & SURNAME	ROLE/PROFESSION/TAKEHOLDER GROUP	COMMUNITY
1	<i>José Carlos</i>	<i>NIEXR</i>	
2	<i>Daniel Medina</i>	<i>AENOR</i>	
3	<i>Alvaro Acuña</i>		<i>Turkey, Benja</i>
4	<i>Marcela ADAT</i>		<i>Turkey, Benja</i>
5	<i>Guillermo Sánchez</i>		<i>Turkey, Benja</i>
6	<i>Maria Teresa</i>		<i>Turkey, Benja</i>
7	<i>Amor Abulmaye</i>		<i>Turkey, Benja</i>
8	<i>María Saez</i>		<i>Turkey, Benja</i>
9	<i>Verónica Acuña</i>	<i>Verónica Acuña - Clínica</i>	<i>AP</i>

AENOR		LOCATION: kado		ATTENDANCE LIST
PROJECT: Chitro Conservation area		DATE: 18/11/22		
MEETING TOPIC: Community meeting				
NO	NAME & SURNAME	ROLE/PROFESSION/TAKEHOLDER GROUP	COMMUNITY	SIGNATURE
1	Community N° 1			
1	BALISEKO Bernard	President of hunting Association	BAKOMA	<i>[Signature]</i>
2	KATILI Armand	President of hunting Association	YANDA	<i>[Signature]</i>
3	Community N° 2			
2	Joe FORTIN Samson	President of youth Association	NKSO BAC	<i>[Signature]</i>
3	Paula GIRA Jean	President of youth Association	NKSO BAC	<i>[Signature]</i>
4	Community N° 3			
3	WAGHOMBE Jean	President of OFPA subregion	KITIKA	<i>[Signature]</i>
4	BAROMBA Pierre	President of OFPA subregion	YINBA BAKOMA	<i>[Signature]</i>
5	Community N° 4			
4	KEANANDA Pierre	President of Forces group	BAKOMA NKSO	<i>[Signature]</i>
5	KANBA Jean	President of youth	BAKOMA NKSO	<i>[Signature]</i>
6	Community N° 5			
5	YAN NKSO Jean	Community representative	NKSO GULO	<i>[Signature]</i>
6	MASOUMI Jean	Minister for health	FORC	<i>[Signature]</i>
7	Community N° 6			
6	BOKA Lukuma	Director of village	LENGO	<i>[Signature]</i>
7	MAGAZIN Roger	Chief of village	95000	<i>[Signature]</i>

AENOR
Confia

PROJECT: Chirba Conservation Area
MEETING TOPIC: CAPER meeting

LOCATION: Bangassou
DATE: 19/11/2022

ATTENDANCE LIST

No	NAME & SURNAME	ROLE/PROFESSION/STAKEHOLDER GROUP	COMMUNITY	SIGNATURE
1	Abdoul Fofana	deputé Bangassou	Bangassou	[Signature]
2	M. LEVAT & Co	Secr. P. 1/ Bangassou	Bangassou	[Signature]
3	GUERBA	Secr. 2/ Bangassou	Bangassou	[Signature]
4	ALI - TRAORE	DR - ELEVADE	Bangassou	[Signature]
5	NGRASSA	Point focal ASER	DEMBIA	[Signature]
6	BENEDICTE	Secr. 1/ Bangassou	DEMBIA	[Signature]
7				

PAGE 01 OF 01

AENOR
Confia

PROJECT: Chirba Conservation Area
MEETING TOPIC: Stakeholder meetings

LOCATION: Bangassou
DATE: 19/11/2022

ATTENDANCE LIST

No	NAME & SURNAME	ROLE/PROFESSION/STAKEHOLDER GROUP	COMMUNITY	SIGNATURE
01	Adrian J. J. J.	NEPITE	DEMBIA	[Signature]
02	BENEDICTE	Secr. 1/ Bangassou	DEMBIA	[Signature]
03	CEPHE	Secr. 2/ Bangassou	DEMBIA	[Signature]
04	M. LEVAT & Co	Secr. P. 1/ Bangassou	DEMBIA	[Signature]
05	BENEDICTE	Secr. 1/ Bangassou	DEMBIA	[Signature]
06	BENEDICTE	Secr. 1/ Bangassou	DEMBIA	[Signature]

PAGE 01 OF 01

AENOR
Confia

PROJECT: Chirba Conservation Area
MEETING TOPIC: CAPER meeting

LOCATION: Rafai
DATE: 20/11/2022

ATTENDANCE LIST

No	NAME & SURNAME	ROLE/PROFESSION/STAKEHOLDER GROUP	COMMUNITY	SIGNATURE
01	M. LEVAT & Co	Secr. P. 1/ Bangassou	CHIRBA	[Signature]

PAGE 01 OF 01

AENOR
Confia

PROJECT: Chirba Conservation Area
MEETING TOPIC: CAPER meeting

LOCATION: Rafai
DATE: 20/11/2022

ATTENDANCE LIST

No	NAME & SURNAME	ROLE/PROFESSION/STAKEHOLDER GROUP	COMMUNITY	SIGNATURE
1	Abdoul Fofana	deputé Bangassou	RAFAI	[Signature]
2	Abdoul Fofana	deputé Bangassou	RAFAI	[Signature]
3	Abdoul Fofana	deputé Bangassou	RAFAI	[Signature]
4	Abdoul Fofana	deputé Bangassou	RAFAI	[Signature]
5	Abdoul Fofana	deputé Bangassou	RAFAI	[Signature]
6	Abdoul Fofana	deputé Bangassou	RAFAI	[Signature]
7	Abdoul Fofana	deputé Bangassou	RAFAI	[Signature]
8	Abdoul Fofana	deputé Bangassou	RAFAI	[Signature]
9	Abdoul Fofana	deputé Bangassou	RAFAI	[Signature]
10	Abdoul Fofana	deputé Bangassou	RAFAI	[Signature]
11	Abdoul Fofana	deputé Bangassou	RAFAI	[Signature]
12	Abdoul Fofana	deputé Bangassou	RAFAI	[Signature]
13	Abdoul Fofana	deputé Bangassou	RAFAI	[Signature]
14	Abdoul Fofana	deputé Bangassou	RAFAI	[Signature]
15	Abdoul Fofana	deputé Bangassou	RAFAI	[Signature]
16	Abdoul Fofana	deputé Bangassou	RAFAI	[Signature]
17	Abdoul Fofana	deputé Bangassou	RAFAI	[Signature]
18	Abdoul Fofana	deputé Bangassou	RAFAI	[Signature]

PAGE 01 OF 01

AENOR
Confia

PROJECT: Chirba Conservation Area
MEETING TOPIC: CAPER meeting

LOCATION: Rafai
DATE: 20/11/2022

ATTENDANCE LIST

No	NAME & SURNAME	ROLE/PROFESSION/STAKEHOLDER GROUP	COMMUNITY	SIGNATURE
19	Abdoul Fofana	deputé Bangassou	RAFAI	[Signature]
20	Abdoul Fofana	deputé Bangassou	RAFAI	[Signature]
21	Abdoul Fofana	deputé Bangassou	RAFAI	[Signature]
22	Abdoul Fofana	deputé Bangassou	RAFAI	[Signature]
23	Abdoul Fofana	deputé Bangassou	RAFAI	[Signature]
24	Abdoul Fofana	deputé Bangassou	RAFAI	[Signature]
25	Abdoul Fofana	deputé Bangassou	RAFAI	[Signature]
26	Abdoul Fofana	deputé Bangassou	RAFAI	[Signature]
27	Abdoul Fofana	deputé Bangassou	RAFAI	[Signature]
28	Abdoul Fofana	deputé Bangassou	RAFAI	[Signature]
29	Abdoul Fofana	deputé Bangassou	RAFAI	[Signature]
30	Abdoul Fofana	deputé Bangassou	RAFAI	[Signature]
31	Abdoul Fofana	deputé Bangassou	RAFAI	[Signature]
32	Abdoul Fofana	deputé Bangassou	RAFAI	[Signature]
33	Abdoul Fofana	deputé Bangassou	RAFAI	[Signature]
34	Abdoul Fofana	deputé Bangassou	RAFAI	[Signature]
35	Abdoul Fofana	deputé Bangassou	RAFAI	[Signature]
36	Abdoul Fofana	deputé Bangassou	RAFAI	[Signature]

PAGE 01 OF 01

AENOR
Confia

PROJECT: Chirba Conservation Area
MEETING TOPIC: CAPER meeting

LOCATION: Bangassou
DATE: 20/11/2022

ATTENDANCE LIST

No	NAME & SURNAME	ROLE/PROFESSION/STAKEHOLDER GROUP	COMMUNITY	SIGNATURE
1	Abdoul Fofana	deputé Bangassou	RAFAI	[Signature]
2	Abdoul Fofana	deputé Bangassou	RAFAI	[Signature]
3	Abdoul Fofana	deputé Bangassou	RAFAI	[Signature]
4	Abdoul Fofana	deputé Bangassou	RAFAI	[Signature]
5	Abdoul Fofana	deputé Bangassou	RAFAI	[Signature]
6	Abdoul Fofana	deputé Bangassou	RAFAI	[Signature]
7	Abdoul Fofana	deputé Bangassou	RAFAI	[Signature]

PAGE 01 OF 01