

**Project Assignment**  
**SPO Standard for Conflict Affected Areas**  
**( 28 January 2025)**

This project assignment contains the most important information about the project. The project will be carried out according to the Standard Operating Procedures for the Development of Fairtrade Standards/Minimum Prices and Premiums. More information on these procedures can be found [here](#) on the website.

**Rationale for and justification of need for the project :**

2 pilots were carried out in conflict affected areas (CAA) since 2017. Since September 2021, there have been no more pilots for conflict areas and it has been recommended that an alternative approach has to be developed (decision of the Oversight Committee). In November 2022, the FI. Board decided to assign a group of experts with the task of developing a long-term solution for conflict areas.

Several producer organisations will lose their certification because they can no longer be audited on site (Requirement for Assurance Provider rule: 'withdrawal of certification if no on-site audit for more than 3 consecutive years' is possible).

Fairtrade is committed to addressing farmers who are disadvantaged and marginalized, to contribute to better living conditions thanks to their economic activity. In conflict affected areas, this commitment remains relevant and essential because farmers are clearly in this disadvantaged and marginalized situation and maintaining a remunerative economic activity is crucial to help slow down the devastating effects of conflict in these areas.

**Risk assessment :**

The risks identified so far relate to:

**Credibility and Audit Integrity:** Conducting on-site audits in conflict areas is almost impossible but alternative auditing solutions, such as self-reporting and third-party assessments might lower the level of assurance and credibility, especially on certain criteria such as traceability and labour rights.

**Alignment between the new CAA certification and EU regulations:** Some practices such as HREDD and traceability of cocoa and coffee products until their production plots might be complex to certify under the new CAA scheme, in particular because of the impossibility to audit on-site.

**Reputation and Brand Integrity:** Modifying the standards while using the Certification Mark specifically for conflict areas may create inconsistencies in how Fairtrade certification is perceived. This could weaken the Fairtrade brand if consumers and stakeholders see the standards as less rigorous in these zones.

**Risks of Applicability linked to the definition of CAAs:** There is a potential conflict of interest between CAA identified by FI and FLOCERT "no-go zones". This should be tackled to avoid zones where no certification is possible and zones where both schemes ("normal" certification and CAA certification) could be available.

**Balancing Impact for producers and audit capacity:** The goal is that the new standard fits into the boxes of the current SOP and audit capacities, but also that it truly responds to the challenges of the POs and their buyers and creates real opportunities for the Fairtrade system (business, advocacy, visibility, etc.).

**Project Start Event :**

Publication of the draft project assignment

**Project start Date**

28.01.2025

**Project End Event:**

Publication of the new standards for conflict areas

**Project End Date**

Q4 – 2025

**Project Goal and objectives :**

**Goal :**

The goal of this project is to formalise a new standard and a new assurance approach for organisations in areas affected by long-term conflict. In this way, the goal is to find a solution to the issues of control and non-compliance for contextual reasons in organisations located in these areas. The deliverable of this project will be: an SPO standard adapted for conflict areas. This Standard dedicated to conflict zones will be applicable to organisations included in the perimeter of these zones, whether they are already Fairtrade certified or are new applicants for certification.

## Objectives :

**Develop final proposals for a new SPO standard for conflict areas for approval by Standards Committee**

## Specific objectives :

**Define the areas covered by this new standard:**

- Identify the criteria that make it possible to objectively define a conflict zone and how to define these zones as a Scheme Owner. This methodology will help to clarify areas that will be broad enough for all Producer Organisations (POs) to be able to apply to a Fairtrade certification, but restricted enough not to become an “easy solution” nor disrupt competition amongst POs.
- The use of objective databases and ongoing links with specialist organisations will be explored. The aim will be to define these zones on a regional scale and not just on a country scale (which is too restrictive in relation to reality). The list of conflict zones to which this new standard will apply (and to which the classic Fairtrade standard will no longer apply) will be aligned between FI and FLOCERT.

**Adapting the SPO standard for conflict areas:**

- Identify the key objectives of Fairtrade's contribution in conflict areas. Among the issues of commercial practices, human rights, democracy and impact on the environment, it will be necessary to define which will have priority in conflict areas in order to then arbitrate on the criteria to be retained in the event of potential compliance difficulties for organisations and/or audit difficulties.
- Identify the criteria of the SPO standard that need to be adapted as part of this new project because the POs located in these areas cannot be compliant due to the context of long-term conflicts. FLOCERT, the POs concerned and expert organisations in these regions will be consulted.
- Identify the points of the SPO standard that require adaptation of audit methods in these areas: (1) points that are feasible for POs and that can be audited by documentary means; (2) points that are feasible for POs but that cannot be audited by documentary means alone. For these 2nd points, a new approach could be studied (self-assessment by the POs and/or monitoring by another organisation in the field, for example). FLOCERT, the POs concerned and expert organisations in these regions will be consulted.
- Reformulate the criteria of the standard on the basis of these conclusions: (1) Deletion or adaptation of certain criteria of the standard on the basis of the key Fairtrade contribution objectives established for these areas; (2) Deletion or adaptation of certain criteria of the standard for which the POs cannot comply due to the context; (3) Deletion or adaptation of certain criteria of the standard which cannot be audited by documentary means and for which other methods of control/observation are not sufficient.

**NB :** DRC and Myanmar areas have been identified as “pilot zones”, where we have information on the difficulties for POs to reach the standards and for Flocert to conduct onsite audits. This is why the project will investigate those 2 areas in particular. The global goal of this project remains to build a certification solution (standard + audit methodology) that could be applied in any conflict-affected area.

**Anticipate the consequences of this new standard on the Fairtrade system:**

- Define how to track material flows along the supply chain according to the rules of this new standard and ensure the consistency of the existing traceability rules of the generic existing Fairtrade standard. FLOCERT will be consulted on this issue.
- Define the ‘buffer’ period to enable organisations to switch from one standard to another in the event of a change in the status of their location between application of the generic existing Fairtrade standard and this new standard for conflict zones.

## Connection with Theory of Change (ToC) :

The ILO has established the existence of a vicious circle between the existence of conflicts, the development of illicit economies, the lack of economic opportunities, the lack of decent work and the perpetuation of violence.

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| <p>On the other hand, international organisations and UN agencies are striving to identify and implement solutions to stabilise economic activities, the population and peace in these regions, while recognising that agricultural production paid for at fair prices is adapted to competition and reduces the development of other illegal activities (drug and arms trafficking, etc.).</p> <p>This project is linked to the Fairtrade Impact Goals (at least Sustainable resilient livelihoods, decent work, and sustainable resilient and fairer supply chains) in connection with intervention via standards &amp; certification.</p>            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |             |                  |                  |              |                         |                |             |            |                                                                   |            |                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <p><b>Project scope :</b></p> <p>This project covers all the regions within the Fairtrade geographical scope that are potentially affected by long-term conflict and that could be defined as areas eligible for this new standard.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <p><b>Out of Scope :</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Price and premium reviews</li> <li>- Product specific reviews</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                          |             |                  |                  |              |                         |                |             |            |                                                                   |            |                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <p><b>Project Timelines and information on opportunities to contribute :</b></p> <p><b>Scoping :</b> December 2024 – January 2025</p> <p><b>Field visits in DRC and Myanmar by/ with local partners for i)</b> investigation on local challenges &amp; ii) Baseline definition for visited POs : Q1 2025</p> <p><b>Research :</b> February - April 2025</p> <p><b>Consultation focused to the organisations concerned and expert organisations :</b> May June 2025</p> <p><b>Drafting final proposal :</b> July-September 2025</p> <p><b>SC decision :</b> November 2025</p> <p><b>Publication :</b> Q1-2026</p> <p><b>Implementation :</b> Q3-2026</p> | <p><b>Decision Making Process :</b></p> <p>The final decision will be taken by the Standards Committee (SC), a body made up of stakeholder representatives. The SC will aim at making a decision based on consensus. They may reword the final proposal if needed to reach consensus. If consensus cannot be reached, the SC will resort to voting.</p> |             |                  |                  |              |                         |                |             |            |                                                                   |            |                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <p><b>Project Owner (Unit) :</b></p> <p>Alina Amador (Head of Standards) and Eleonora Gutwein (Head of Assurance and Compliance)</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | <p><b>Project Manager (contact point for the project) :</b> Laurie Roubas (Max Havelaar France)</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |             |                  |                  |              |                         |                |             |            |                                                                   |            |                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <p><b>Project Team (Unit) :</b></p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td><b>Standard Team Members</b></td><td>Jebet Yegon</td></tr> <tr> <td><b>Assurance</b></td><td>Eleonora Gutwein</td></tr> <tr> <td><b>Brand</b></td><td>Patricia Magana-Spiegel</td></tr> <tr> <td><b>FLOCERT</b></td><td>Neetu Singh</td></tr> <tr> <td><b>PNs</b></td><td>Michael Kitetu (FTA)<br/>Subhra Tudu (NAPP)<br/>Angel Burgos (CLAC)</td></tr> <tr> <td><b>NFO</b></td><td>Laurie Roubas/Jules Colombo (MHFrance)<br/>Stijn Decoene (FTBelgium)</td></tr> </table>                                                                                                             | <b>Standard Team Members</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Jebet Yegon | <b>Assurance</b> | Eleonora Gutwein | <b>Brand</b> | Patricia Magana-Spiegel | <b>FLOCERT</b> | Neetu Singh | <b>PNs</b> | Michael Kitetu (FTA)<br>Subhra Tudu (NAPP)<br>Angel Burgos (CLAC) | <b>NFO</b> | Laurie Roubas/Jules Colombo (MHFrance)<br>Stijn Decoene (FTBelgium) | <p><b>Project Environment :</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Certified POs in conflict areas (especially in DRC and Myanmar)</li> <li>• Certified Traders in conflict areas (especially in DRC)</li> <li>• PNs</li> <li>• NFOs</li> <li>• NGOs and Organisations dedicated to conflict and dangerous areas</li> <li>• Local organisations dedicated to support POs work in conflict areas</li> </ul> |
| <b>Standard Team Members</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Jebet Yegon                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |             |                  |                  |              |                         |                |             |            |                                                                   |            |                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Assurance</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Eleonora Gutwein                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |             |                  |                  |              |                         |                |             |            |                                                                   |            |                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Brand</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Patricia Magana-Spiegel                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |             |                  |                  |              |                         |                |             |            |                                                                   |            |                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>FLOCERT</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Neetu Singh                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |             |                  |                  |              |                         |                |             |            |                                                                   |            |                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>PNs</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Michael Kitetu (FTA)<br>Subhra Tudu (NAPP)<br>Angel Burgos (CLAC)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |             |                  |                  |              |                         |                |             |            |                                                                   |            |                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>NFO</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Laurie Roubas/Jules Colombo (MHFrance)<br>Stijn Decoene (FTBelgium)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |             |                  |                  |              |                         |                |             |            |                                                                   |            |                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |