



SADC VULTURE CONSERVATION STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN: 2025-2035





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ACRONYMS

| | |
|------------------|---|
| BLI | BirdLife International |
| BSAD | Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan |
| CBD | Convention on Biological Diversity |
| CITIES | Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna |
| CMS | Convention on Migratory Species of Wild Animals |
| EIA | Environmental Impact Assessment |
| EMP | Environmental Management Plan |
| FANR | Food, Agriculture, and Natural Resources |
| HVC | Human-Vulture Conflict |
| IUCN | International Union for the Conservation of Nature |
| KAZA TFCA | Kavango Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area |
| LEAP | Law Enforcement and Anti-poaching |
| MoA | Memorandum of Agreement |
| MoU | Memorandum of Understanding |
| M&E | Monitoring and Evaluation |
| MsAP | Multi-Species Action Plan |
| MS | Member States |
| NBSAP | National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan |
| NSAIDs | Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organization |
| OECM | Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measure |
| PA | Protected Area |
| RMS | Regional Member State |
| SADC | Southern African Development Community |
| SADCs | SADC Secretariat |
| TCW | Technical Committee on Wildlife |
| TFCA | Transfrontier Conservation Area |
| VCSAP | Vulture Conservation Strategy and Action Plan |



FOREWORD

Vultures play an indispensable ecological role in safeguarding the health and balance of ecosystems across the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region. As nature's clean-up crew, these iconic scavengers contribute to disease control, nutrient cycling, and environmental stability. Yet today, vultures are among the most threatened bird species globally, facing precipitous population declines due to poisoning, habitat loss, and illegal trade. Their disappearance signals not only a biodiversity crisis but also a growing threat to public health, ecosystem integrity, and the cultural heritage of local communities.



The **SADC Vulture Conservation Strategy and Action Plan (2025–2035)** offers a visionary and coordinated framework to confront these urgent challenges. This strategy is developed through a participatory, evidence-based process with the support of technical partners, including the IUCN Vulture Specialist Group, BirdLife International, and national stakeholders. The Strategy sets out targeted interventions under four strategic pillars: Policy and Governance; Research, Monitoring, and Information Management; Threat Mitigation, Communication and Awareness.

This Strategy reflects a unified regional commitment to reverse vulture declines and enhance the resilience of ecosystems and communities. I call upon all Member States, partners, and stakeholders to champion the implementation of this Strategy with urgency, collaboration, and innovation.

Together, we can secure a future where vultures continue to soar across Southern Africa, sustaining life, ecosystems, and the well-being of generations to come.

A blue ink signature of Elias M. Magosi, written in a stylized, cursive script.

Elias M. Magosi
SADC Executive Secretary



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) Vulture Conservation Strategy and Action Plan (VCSAP) 2025-2035 outlines a strategic framework aimed at reversing the dramatic decline of vulture populations across the southern African region. Recognized for their critical ecological role in maintaining ecosystem health, vultures are currently facing severe threats, including poisoning, belief-based use, collisions and electrocutions and habitat loss. The VCSAP seeks to mobilize collective action among the 12 SADC vulture range states to address these challenges through coordinated conservation efforts, emphasizing stakeholder engagement and data-driven decision-making.

The VCSAP is structured around four main pillars, i.e. (i) Reducing Threats to Vultures, (ii) Enhancing Data and Conservation Efforts, (iii) Stakeholder and Community Involvement, and (iv) Providing the Means for Implementing the Strategy. Each pillar contains priority areas with specific strategic objectives aimed at fostering collaboration among member states, enhancing public engagement, and aligning conservation with local and regional development goals. The priority areas for vulture conservation in the region are summed up in the Executive Summary Table 1.

| Pillar | Priority Areas | Aim |
|--|---|---|
| Pillar A: Reducing Threats Faced by Vultures | Priority Area 1: Mitigating Environmental Threats to Vultures | Reduce the incidence of poisoning-related vulture deaths in key affected regions while also restoring the critical nesting habitat across the Range Member State. |
| | Priority Area 2: Combating Illegal Killing and Trade, and Over-exploitation of Vultures | Reduce vulture mortality from illegal killing, trade, and over-exploitation across key vulture habitats through enhanced law enforcement, community engagement, and demand reduction strategies. |
| | Priority Area 3: Infrastructure and Development Guidelines | Develop, disseminate, and implement vulture guidelines for infrastructure development, aligned with international best practices and approved by all Member States by 2035. |
| Pillar B: Enhancing Data and Conservation Efforts | Priority Area 4: Data Collection and Monitoring | Conduct long-term regional population assessments in collaboration with all range member states to gather satellite tracking data for all vulture species in the region, map critical habitats and movement corridors, and implement a capacity-building program for local experts in vulture conservation practices in each Range State. |
| Pillar C: Involving Stakeholders and Communities | Priority Area 5: Stakeholders and Communities Engagement in Vulture Conservation | By 2030, establish and strengthen community-led conservation projects that directly protect the target vulture areas. |

| Pillar | Priority Areas | Aim |
|---|---|---|
| Pillar D: Providing the Means of Implementing the Strategy | | Champion behavioural change among traditional healers, private sector actors, farmers, and other identified key players towards vulture conservation across all range Member States by 2029. |
| | Priority Area 6: Strengthening international collaboration and partnerships | Establish a regional framework for cross-border vulture conservation that coordinates efforts across nations, enhances collaborative actions, strengthens global agreements, fosters knowledge exchange, secures funding, builds regional networks, harmonizes conservation policies, and advocates for vulture conservation by 2027. |
| | Priority Area 7: Resource Mobilization and Allocation | Secure dedicated and aligned financial and non-financial resources for vulture conservation through partnerships with private and public sector entities and other innovative means. |
| | Priority Area 8: Capacity Building and Skills Development | Strengthen the required capacity and skills for vulture conservation in all the Range Member States. |
| | Priority Area 9: Policy and Governance. | Develop or review and implement national vulture conservation policy frameworks in all range Member States. |
| | | Integrate vulture conservation goals into the relevant development and biodiversity strategic plans the range of all Member States. |

The VCSAP articulates a clear vision for the SADC region, aiming to become a global model for vulture recovery through effective threat mitigation, science-based policies, regional collaboration and vibrant community participation. The plan sets ambitious targets, including a 75% reduction in vulture mortality from illegal activities and a significant improvement in habitat protection. To realize these goals, the strategy calls for proactive collaboration among Member States, governmental agencies, and civil society. It aims to align local conservation initiatives with international frameworks, fostering synergies with other regional instruments and global agreements, such as the Convention on Migratory Species and the Convention on Biological Diversity Global Biodiversity, and a number of regional instruments.

By committing to the comprehensive actions contained in this document, the SADC Member States will not only safeguard vulture species but also uphold the integrity of their ecosystems, ensuring a sustainable and ecologically balanced future for the region.

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