

3 3.0 THE SADC VULTURE CONSERVATION STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN (SADC VCSAP)

3.1 VISION

To establish the SADC region as a global model for vulture recovery where viable self-sustaining vulture populations fulfil their ecological roles across intact habitats, supported by effective threat mitigation, science-based policies, and communities that value and benefit from vulture conservation while honouring their cultural significance.

3.2 MISSION STATEMENT

To conserve, protect, and restore vulture populations through dedicated funding, collaboration with local communities and stakeholders, fostering awareness and education, advocating for supportive policies, integrating vulture conservation into sustainable development, and enhancing monitoring and research efforts to promote biodiversity and ensure healthy vulture populations for future generations.

3.3 OVERALL GOAL

To ensure the long-term survival of vulture populations across the SADC region by 2035 through collaborative and integrated efforts that promote sustainable development, address key challenges, systematically reduce threats, enhance conservation data, and involve local stakeholders, while recognizing the ecological importance of vultures and fostering coexistence with wildlife.

These statements above encapsulate the overarching goals and aspirations of the strategy while addressing the identified threats and challenges (Sections 1.4 and 1.6, respectively) and SMART objectives in the body of the Strategy.

3.4 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Guiding Principles directly applicable and impactful for vulture conservation within the framework of this SADC strategy are outlined and justified below. Prioritizing these principles will help ensure that vulture conservation efforts are scientifically sound, adaptive, collaborative, community-based, and transparent.

Guiding Principle 1: Scientific and technical collaboration and cooperation: Vulture conservation requires a strong understanding of their biology, ecology, threats, and effective mitigation strategies. This principle directly supports this by promoting:

- Sharing research findings on vulture populations, movements, and causes of decline (e.g. poisoning).
- Collaborative projects between scientists and conservation organizations across the SADC region to monitor vulture populations, implement anti-poisoning strategies, and address habitat loss.
- Leveraging expertise from different countries to develop and implement best practices for vulture conservation.

Guiding Principle 2: Regional Ownership and Inclusive Participation: This principle anchors vulture conservation in a mutually accountable 'whole-of-society, whole-of-government' approach. By framing ecosystems and species as irreplaceable shared inheritances, all actors—governments, communities, NGOs, and private sectors—become joint custodians of these resources with the following guides:

- Emphasis on active participation of all stakeholders at various levels to ensure collective ownership and long-term sustainability.
- Fostering consensus among all SADC Member States, ensuring that all voices are heard and valued in the development and implementation of vulture conservation strategies.

Guiding Principle 3: Horizon scanning to identify new and emerging threats that may need to be addressed: Vulture populations face a complex and changing set of threats. An adaptive approach is essential because:

- Vulture populations can be affected by various, often unpredictable factors (e.g., changes in land use, new energy infrastructure, disease outbreaks, and shifts in livestock management practices). An adaptive approach allows for flexible responses based on real-time monitoring and evaluation of conservation interventions.
- Allows for adjustments to strategies based on the effectiveness of implemented actions.

Guiding Principle 4: Synergizing with relevant multilateral agreements: Vultures are wide-ranging species, and their conservation often requires international cooperation. This principle facilitates:

- Alignment with international agreements like the CMS, which has specific Action Plans for vultures.
- Collaboration with other countries across vulture movement ranges to address threats that occur across borders (e.g., illegal poisoning).
- Accessing funding and technical support from international organizations dedicated to biodiversity conservation.

Guiding Principle 5: Contribution and Rights of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs): Local communities often live alongside vulture populations and can play a crucial role in their conservation. This principle emphasizes:

- Involving local communities in monitoring vulture populations and reporting threats (e.g., poisoning incidents).
- Incorporating traditional knowledge on vulture ecology and behaviour into conservation strategies.
- Addressing human-wildlife conflict issues related to vultures and livestock depredation in a way that benefits both people and vultures.
- Ensuring that conservation initiatives respect the rights and livelihoods of local communities.

Guiding Principle 6: Transparency: Trust is crucial for effective conservation, and this principle promotes:

- Open communication on the status of vulture populations, the threats they face, and the effectiveness of conservation efforts.
- Public access to information on conservation policies and regulations.
- Accountability in the implementation of conservation actions.

3.5 PILLARS, PRIORITY AREAS, STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES, STRATEGIES AND ACTIVITIES

The term "pillars" refers to the fundamental components or key focus areas that support and uphold the overall strategy. Based on the background information gathered primarily through the situation analysis, the content can be grouped into four pillars:

Pillar A: Reducing Threats to Vultures;

Pillar B: Enhancing Data and Conservation Efforts;

Pillar C: Involving Stakeholders and Communities; and

Pillar D: Providing the Means for Implementing the Strategy.

Each pillar is thematically organized to present a clearer structure of the nine priority areas for vulture conservation (see Table 3) (thereafter referred to as Priority Areas), highlighting their rationale, eleven strategic objectives, strategies, and activities in a more digestible and discernible format. Timeline for strategic objectives are indicative rather than prescriptive, allowing for contextual adaptation and interpretation by Member States.

Table 3: Pillars, Priority Areas and Strategic Objectives of the SADC Vulture Conservation Strategy and Action Plan

Pillar	Priority Areas	Strategic Objectives
Pillar A: Reducing Threats Faced by Vultures	Priority Area 1: Mitigating Environmental Threats to Vultures	By the end of 2035, reduce the incidence of poisoning-related vulture deaths in key affected regions by at least 75%, while also restoring at least 30% of the critical nesting habitat across the Range Member State.
	Priority Area 2: Combating Illegal Killing and Trade, and Over-exploitation of Vultures	By 2035, reduce vulture mortality from illegal killing, trade, and over-exploitation by at least 75% 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	By December 2035, establish and maintain long-term regional population assessments in collaboration with all range member states to gather baseline population and satellite tracking data for all vulture species in the region, map critical habitats and movement corridors, and implement a capacity-building program for at least 10 local experts in vulture conservation practices in each Range State.

Pillar	Priority Areas	Strategic Objectives
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 at least 30% of the target vulture areas.
		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
Pillar D: Providing the Means of Implementing the Strategy	Priority Area 7: Resource Mobilization and Allocation	Secure dedicated and aligned financial and non-financial resources for vulture conservation, aiming for 100% of the annual funding requirement by the end of 2030 through partnerships with private and public sector entities and other innovative means.
	Priority Area 8: Capacity Building and Skills Development	By 2029, strengthen the required capacity and skills for vulture conservation in all the Range Member States.
	Priority Area 9: Policy and Governance.	By December 2028, develop or review and implement national vulture conservation policy frameworks in all range Member States, ensuring that all these frameworks include specific measures for protecting vulture habitats and mitigating identified threats. By the end of 2029, integrate vulture conservation goals into the relevant development and biodiversity strategic plans, e.g. National Biodiversity Strategies, of all Range Member States, ensuring that all (100% of) these plans include specific objectives for vulture protection and habitat conservation.

In the following sections 3.5.1-3.5.4, SADC Member States are encouraged to select the best set of activities relevant in their country to achieve the strategic objective. This may be all or only some of the indicative activities noted below, or variations of the indicative activities.



3.5.1 PILLAR A: REDUCING THREATS FACED BY VULTURES

3.5.1.1 PRIORITY AREA 1: MITIGATING ENVIRONMENTAL THREATS TO VULTURES

Strategic Objective: By the end of 2035, reduce the incidence of poisoning-related vulture deaths in key affected regions by at least 75%, while also restoring at least 30% of the critical nesting habitat across the Range Member State. (Using 2024 baseline and GBF Target 2, respectively)

Strategies and indicative activities for Priority Area 1 are in Table 4.

**Table 4: Strategies and activities for Priority Area 1:
Mitigating Environmental Threats to Vultures**

Strategy	Strategic Objectives
Strategy 1: Protect, restore, and connect habitats to ensure the long-term viability of vulture populations.	Activity 1: Update and expand upon the significant existing assessments by identifying remaining information gaps in the mapping of critical vulture habitats, including nesting sites, feeding areas, and movement routes. Build on current data to refine conservation guidance, ensuring priority areas for protection and restoration reflect the most complete and current understanding available.
	Activity 2: Establish or enhance protected areas (PAs)** and Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs) *** that provide safe habitats for vultures. This can involve designating areas where human activities are managed to minimize disturbances and preserve key habitats.
	Activity 3: Implement reforestation projects and habitat restoration initiatives that focus on restoring degraded landscapes and enhancing food and nesting sites availability for vultures.
	Activity 4: Create and/or maintain habitat connectivity through the establishment of corridors, buffer zones and other means to facilitate herbivore and vulture movement while protecting their habitats from human disturbances.
	Activity 5: Collaborate with farmers, landowners, and local communities to promote sustainable land-use practices that minimize habitat degradation. This can include advocating for agro-ecological practices, and controlled grazing to coexist with vulture populations and their habitats.
	Activity 6: Implement measures to mitigate human-wildlife conflicts and reduce the use of poison and bait intended for damage-causing animals, as this practice often leads to the accidental deaths of vultures that feed on the carcasses of these targeted animals.
Strategy 2: Educate the public, farmers, traditional healers, pest controllers, and community to reduce harmful substances	Activity 1: Implement coordinated campaigns targeting the use of harmful substances such as toxic baits and lead ammunition.
	Activity 2: Collaborate with traditional healers and community leaders to raise awareness on the dangers of poisoning and develop local mitigation strategies.

Strategy	Strategic Objectives
	Activity 3: Launch educational initiatives targeting farmers, pest control operators, and the general public on the risks associated with certain chemicals and the importance of vultures in the ecosystem. Provide training on safer pest management practices that do not rely on harmful poisons.
Strategy 3: Enforce strict regulations on the use of pesticides and rodenticides that can inadvertently poison vultures through secondary poisoning.	Activity 1: Develop and implement stringent science-based guidelines that outline acceptable pesticide and rodenticide usage, including recommendations for safer alternatives that minimize harm to non-target species such as vultures.
	Activity 2: Create and maintain systems for monitoring the use and effects of pesticides and rodenticides, focusing on regions where vultures are known to forage. This could involve collaborations with environmental and wildlife organizations to track incidents of poisoning and identify high-risk areas
	Activity 3: Strengthen enforcement mechanisms for existing regulations on pesticide and rodenticide by increasing inspections, imposing penalties for violations, and working with law enforcement to combat illegal pesticide use that poses a risk to wildlife, particularly vultures.
Strategy 4: Develop proper waste disposal methods, especially for animal carcasses, to prevent poisoning from toxic substances that vultures may consume.	Activity 1: Create designated disposal sites for animal carcasses that are equipped for safe and environmentally friendly methods for managing dead animals. These sites should be accessible to farmers and livestock operators and managed in a way that minimizes the risk of toxic substances e.g. nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) and lead (Pb) being released into the environment.
	Activity 2: Develop and conduct training programs for farmers, livestock owners, and waste management personnel on safe animal carcass disposal techniques (This training should include best practices for handling, transporting, and disposing of carcasses) to reduce the risk of vultures consuming poisoned or contaminated animals.
	Activity 3: Work in partnership with key players such as local governments, veterinary services, and environmental agencies to create and enforce regulations on the disposal of animal carcasses. This collaboration should include the development of standards for proper disposal methods that consider both animal health and wildlife protection.

****The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) defines a protected area as “a clearly defined geographical space, recognized, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values” (Dudley,2008)**

*****An “other effective area-based conservation measure” (OECM) is defined by the CBD in Decision 14/8 as: A geographically defined area other than a Protected Area, which is governed and managed in ways that achieve positive and sustained long-term outcomes for the in situ conservation of biodiversity with associated ecosystem functions and services and where applicable, cultural, spiritual, socio-economic, and other locally relevant values. (CBD, 2018).**

3.5.1.2 PRIORITY AREA 2: COMBATING ILLEGAL KILLING AND TRADE, AND OVER-EXPLOITATION OF VULTURES

Strategic Objective: By 2035, reduce vulture mortality from illegal killing, trade, and over-exploitation by at least 75% across key vulture habitats through enhanced law enforcement, community engagement, and demand reduction strategies. (Using 2024 baseline).

Strategies and indicative activities for Priority Area 2 are in Table 5.

Table 5: Strategies and activities for Priority Area 2: Combating Illegal Killing and Trade, and Over-exploitation of Vultures

Strategy	Strategic Objectives
Strategy 1: Strengthen law enforcement and anti-Poaching efforts to detect poisoning on carcasses, dismantle illegal hunting and trafficking networks targeting vultures	Activity 1: Implement comprehensive training initiatives for law enforcement and judiciary services focused on enhancing their understanding of wildlife protection, with an emphasis on vulture conservation and related enforcement strategies.
	Activity 2: Implement advanced surveillance systems (e.g. those utilizing technologies such as satellite trackers deployed on vultures, drones and camera traps) to monitor vulnerable vulture habitats for poaching and illegal trade activities in real-time.
	Activity 3: Develop and implement standard operating procedures to handle suspect poisoning incidences covering collection, transportation, storage of specimens and detoxification of poisoned carcasses/environment.
	Activity 4: Create and implement a robust intelligence network or information-sharing platform among regional and with international law enforcement agencies, NGOs, and local communities to track and respond to cross-border vulture crimes in the region.
	Activity 5: Foster community involvement by establishing a system that recognizes and rewards individuals for reporting illegal activities affecting vultures.
	Activity 6: Execute targeted undercover operations to infiltrate and dismantle illegal hunting and trafficking networks centred on vultures in the region
	Activity 7: Carry out widespread campaigns to educate the public on the ecological importance of vultures and the consequences of illegal hunting.
	Activity 8: Implement a system for regular monitoring and evaluation of anti-poaching strategies to adjust approaches or adapt strategies based on effectiveness and emerging threats.
	Activity 9: Improve and increase capabilities for law enforcement including resource-sharing in anti-poaching initiatives, and forensic laboratories for DNA analysis and poisoning detection, to support prosecutions.
	Activity 10: Foster collaboration among regional and with international law enforcement agencies to combat cross-border vulture trafficking

Strategy	Strategic Objectives
Strategy 2: Reduce demand for vulture Body Parts	Activity 1: Research to understand the motivation behind, and drivers of the demand for vulture body parts in traditional medicine and other uses; and develop targeted interventions including targeted behaviour change campaigns to reduce consumer demand.
	Activity 2: Launch social marketing campaigns on the harmful effects of using vulture body parts and promote vulture conservation.
	Activity 3: Conduct targeted awareness campaigns to dispel harmful traditional beliefs and superstitions driving the demand for vulture body parts.
	Activity 4: Identify and promote ways to reduce reliance on vulture body parts while discovering alternative economic opportunities, sustainable livelihoods, and sustainable practices that do not involve vulture body parts within the community, in collaboration with key community players such as traditional healers and community leaders
	Activity 5: Introduce certification programs for traditional healers who commit to sustainable practices and refrain from using vulture body parts.
	Activity 6: Implement and enforce stricter regulations on the sale and trade of vulture body parts in traditional medicine markets.
	Activity 7: Conduct regular market surveys to monitor the demand for vulture body parts and identify emerging trends or new markets.
Strategy 3: Strengthen Legal Frameworks and Policies	Activity 1: Enact or review and enhance existing wildlife protection laws to better address vulture conservation and the illegal trade of vulture body parts.
	Activity 2: Advocate for stricter penalties, clearer legal definitions related to the illegal killing, poisoning, and trafficking of vultures, and tougher enforcement measures against poachers and traffickers involved in vulture-related crimes.
	Activity 3: Designate critical habitats as protected areas or conserved areas to provide safe environments for vultures and deter poaching activities.
	Activity 4: Create and implement policies aimed at restoring and preserving vulture habitats that have been degraded by human activities.
	Activity 5: Ensure that vulture conservation is incorporated into national biodiversity strategies and action plans.
	Activity 6: Work towards strengthening international agreements and conventions that protect vulture species occurring in the region.
	Activity 7: Promote collaboration among government agencies, NGOs, and law enforcement to enforce wildlife protection laws effectively.
	Activity 8: Establish standardized reporting mechanisms for wildlife crimes that facilitate data collection and sharing among relevant authorities.
	Activity 9: Provide training programs for law enforcement and judicial officials on wildlife protection laws and proper protocols for prosecution.
	Activity 10: Engage local communities in the development of wildlife protection policies to ensure their needs and knowledge are considered.
	Activity 11: Develop and promote guidelines for the sustainable use of vultures, including but not limited to, the harvesting of their parts for medicinal purposes. These guidelines must be based on rigorous scientific research to ensure the long-term viability of vulture populations.

3.5.1.3 PRIORITY AREA 3: INFRASTRUCTURE AND DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES

Strategic Objective: Develop, disseminate, and implement vulture guidelines for infrastructure development, aligned with international best practices and approved by all Range Member States by 2028.

Strategies and indicative activities for Priority Area 3 are in Table 6.

Table 6: Strategies and activities for Priority Area 3: Infrastructure and development guidelines
Whilst infrastructure development in the wrong places.... we already know that energy infrastructure is one of the critical ones. It is not explicitly mentioned

Strategy	Strategic Objectives
Strategy 1: Integrate vulture Conservation into Infrastructure Development	Activity 1: Facilitate a collaborative process to develop informed conservation guidelines by organizing stakeholder workshops and reviewing research on vulture conservation and infrastructure planning, including spatial planning for wind energy projects.
	Activity 2: Develop, implement, and periodically review and update detailed infrastructure development guidelines tailored to the regional context of SADC Member States, emphasizing processes that minimize impacts on vulture populations. These guidelines should provide best practices for site selection, construction methodologies, and habitat preservation, while also considering the unique legal frameworks and decision-making processes of each country. The guidelines should also include operational phase mitigation measures including shutdown on demand, and on-site carcass management. There are some tools already in use which probably need to be promoted and adopted, just to recognize existing tools. https://www.birdlife.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Guide_to_assess_Avian_Data_for_EIA_reports.pdf
	Activity 3: Develop and implement a robust dissemination strategy, including the publication of the guidelines in accessible formats, and implement training programs to educate stakeholders on the importance of these guidelines and how to effectively integrate them into their infrastructure projects.
Strategy 2: Design eco-friendly infrastructure for vulture conservation	Activity 1: Mandate comprehensive EIAs for all proposed infrastructure projects to identify potential impacts on vulture habitats and species, supporting the development of mitigation strategies.
	Activity 2: Incorporate green infrastructure elements, such as wildlife corridors, green roofs, and native vegetation, into project designs to enhance habitat connectivity and support vulture populations.
	Activity 3: Create tailored design guidelines for various infrastructure projects that highlight vulture conservation priorities providing specific recommendations for features that minimize habitat disruption and promote safe vulture movement.
	Activity 4: Identify existing infrastructure that poses a threat to vulture populations, and recommend vulture friendly adjustments when it is being repaired or retrofitted.

Strategy	Strategic Objectives
	Activity 5: Facilitate collaboration among project developers, energy engineers, conservationists, and local communities to ensure eco-friendly design principles are effectively integrated and maintained throughout the infrastructure project life-cycle. Making use of existing platforms such as https://www.cms.int/en/taskforce/energy-task-force
	Activity 6: Establish and implement monitoring systems to evaluate the effectiveness of eco-friendly design principles in reducing habitat destruction and human-vulture conflict, and adapt strategies as needed based on results. There are some tools already in use which probably need to be promoted and adopted, just to recognize existing tools: https://www.ifc.org/en/insights-reports/2023/bird-bat-fatality-monitoring-onshore-wind-energy-facilities
Strategy 3: Monitor and enforce infrastructure development compliance	Activity 1: Establish or enhance and implement a policy framework that requires developers to adhere to specific guidelines when operating in identified vulture-sensitive areas, as determined through the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process.
	Activity 2: Create and implement a comprehensive monitoring framework that outlines key indicators, methodologies, and timelines for assessing compliance with the infrastructure development guidelines. This framework should include criteria for data collection and analysis, ensuring clarity and consistency.
	Activity 3: Provide training programs for Government personnel involved in monitoring, enforcement, conducting assessments and reporting compliance status.
	Activity 4: Schedule regular compliance audits for infrastructure projects to assess adherence to the established guidelines. These audits should focus on both pre-construction and post-construction phases to ensure ongoing compliance.
	Activity 5: Establish and implement a grievance mechanism for stakeholders and the public to report non-compliance or potential violations. This may involve setting up online platforms, hotlines, or community-based reporting systems that encourage transparency and accountability.
	Activity 6: Develop and implement enforcement protocols that detail actions to be taken in cases of non-compliance, including fines, penalties, or remediation measures. This should also involve legal frameworks that support effective enforcement.
	Activity 7: Foster ongoing communication and collaboration with stakeholders, including project developers, communities, and conservationists, to share monitoring results, progress updates, and to encourage a culture of compliance.
Strategy 4: Prioritize technical assistance and support for vulture-friendly infrastructure development	Activity 1: Organize workshops, training sessions, and conferences for infrastructure developers and government agencies on vulture conservation and the implementation of vulture-friendly infrastructure development practices.
	Activity 2: Provide technical support to developers and government agencies on the design and implementation of vulture-friendly infrastructure development practices, including assessments, feasibility studies, and project planning.
	Activity 3: Develop and share resources, including case studies, best practices, and technical guidelines, to support developers and government agencies in implementing vulture-friendly infrastructure development practices.
	Activity 3: Facilitate networking and partnerships among developers, government agencies, and conservation organizations to leverage expertise, resources, and collaboration in vulture conservation efforts.

Strategy	Strategic Objectives
Strategy 5: Collaborate with international experts and organizations to stay updated on best practices in vulture conservation and infrastructure development.	Activity 1: Identify and establish relationships with international experts, organizations, and institutions with expertise in vulture conservation and infrastructure development.
	Activity 2: Engage in a series of integrated networking, research, and experiential learning initiatives aimed at enhancing expertise in vulture conservation and infrastructure development. This will include participating in international conferences, workshops, and online forums; conducting literature reviews and case studies to assess best practices; and organizing study visits to countries with successful projects
	Activity 3: Document and share knowledge gained from international collaborations and best practices through reports, publications, and presentations to domestic stakeholders, policymakers, and practitioners.
	Activity 4: Collaborate with international partners to develop standardized guidelines, protocols, and standards for vulture conservation and infrastructure development that can be adopted globally.
Strategy 6: Develop and promote innovative solutions to mitigate the impact of infrastructure development on vulture habitats and populations	Activity 1: Conduct research and analysis to identify the causes and effects of infrastructure development on vulture habitats and populations, as well as potential solutions.
	Activity 2: Identify, develop, and deploy innovative solutions to mitigate the impacts of infrastructure development on vulture habitats and populations, such as vulture-friendly infrastructure design or habitat restoration.
	Activity 3: Engage with stakeholders, including local communities, infrastructure developers, and conservation groups, to gather feedback and input on the innovative solutions.
	Activity 4: Develop and implement an outreach and communications plan to promote the innovative solutions to a wider audience, including policymakers, industry leaders, and the public.
	Activity 5: Collaborate with national governments, as well as industry leaders, to develop and implement policies and regulations that support the adoption of innovative solutions to mitigate the impacts of infrastructure development on vulture habitats and populations.

3.5.2 PILLAR B: ENHANCING DATA AND CONSERVATION EFFORTS

3.5.2.1 PRIORITY AREA 4. DATA COLLECTION AND MONITORING

Strategic Objective: By December 2035, conduct at least three long-term regional population assessments in collaboration with all range member states to gather baseline population data for all vulture species, satellite tracking data for all vulture species in the region, map critical habitats and movement corridors, and implement a capacity-building program for at least 10 local experts in vulture conservation practices in each Range State.

Strategies and indicative activities for Priority Area 4 are in Table 7.

Table 7: Strategies and activities for Priority Area Priority Area 4. Data Collection and Monitoring

Strategy	Strategic Objectives
Strategy 1: Enhance vulture monitoring	Activity 1: Establish baseline data for key indicators, including vulture populations, habitats, threats, poisoning, and other relevant factors. This foundational data will serve as the starting point for our goal to double the area covered by tracked vulture movements by 2035, using the baseline established in 2026.
	Activity 2: Establish and implement comprehensive standardized monitoring programs to track vulture populations, mortality rates, movement patterns, and threats to their survival and threats in key habitats.
	Activity 3: Implement advanced technologies such as GPS tracking and remote sensing to gather accurate data on vulture movements and habitat use.
	Activity 4: Develop and implement a standard survey protocol, including methodology, frequency, and sampling strategy, to ensure accurate and consistent data collection.
	Activity 5: Provide training and capacity building for survey teams, including data collectors, observers, and analysts, to ensure they have the necessary skills and knowledge.
	Activity 6: Develop a database to store and manage survey data, including population numbers, habitat use, and other relevant information (see Strategy 1, Activity 4, above, This Priority Area)
	Activity 7: Prepare and disseminate reports on survey findings, including results, recommendations, and implications for conservation, to stakeholders, including governments, NGOs, and local communities
	Activity 8: Collaborate with key stakeholders, including local communities, NGOs, and governments, to ensure that surveys are conducted in a way that is respectful, inclusive, and responsive to local needs and concerns.
Strategy 2: Enhance research on vultures	Activity 1: Establish and implement comprehensive vulture research programs, and partner with universities and research organizations to conduct studies, covering a variety of relevant topics to inform and improve conservation strategies for vultures.
	Activity 2: Develop and implement citizen science initiatives to involve local communities in data collection and monitoring of vulture populations.
	Activity 3: Develop and implement standardized framework to analyze key vulture population and habitat parameters, and socio-economic, and policy-related data at both regional and national levels.
	Activity 4: Disseminate research findings through various channels including workshops, publications, and conferences to increase awareness and inform conservation efforts
	Activity 5: Establish and maintain a centralized database that compiles vulture monitoring data, making it accessible for researchers, policymakers, and conservationists.
	Activity 6: Regularly assess the effectiveness of implemented conservation strategies and adapt them based on empirical research outcomes.
Strategy 3: Collaborate with international organizations to develop a shared data platform and reduce data gaps.	Activity 1: Engage with relevant international organizations, NGOs, and governmental bodies to gather support and involvement in the data platform initiative.
	Activity 2: Conduct a needs assessment to identify existing data sources, gaps in information, and specific requirements for the shared data platform

Strategy	Strategic Objectives
	Activity 3: Design, develop, and implement a user-friendly and accessible shared data platform in collaboration with technical experts and partners. Additionally, provide training and resources for stakeholders to effectively use the platform and contribute data.
	Activity 4: Create and implement guidelines and protocols for data sharing, including standards for data formats, access permissions, and privacy considerations.
	Activity 5: Establish systems for ongoing monitoring, evaluation, and maintenance of the platform to ensure its long-term sustainability and effectiveness.
Strategy 4: Adopt and deploy suitable technologies in vulture research and monitoring	Activity 1: Research and improve suitable tracking and monitoring technologies, such as GPS devices, drones, camera traps, and aerial surveys, tailored to the specific vulture species under study, while considering factors like size, weight, and battery life.
	Activity 2: Standardize and adopt detailed protocol for capturing and fitting GPS devices to individual birds, ensuring that the methods are ethical and minimize stress to the animals, and ensuring proper documentation of each bird's details (e.g., species, age, and location).
	Activity 3: Provide training to field teams on how to safely capture birds, attach tracking devices, and collect data, while adhering to relevant ethical guidelines.
	Activity 4: Analyze tracking data and prepare comprehensive reports and visualizations of the tracking data to effectively communicate key findings to stakeholders, policymakers, and the scientific community. This will enable the integration of GPS data into broader conservation initiatives.
	Activity 5: Develop and use outreach materials to inform the public on the project, the importance of vulture wide movement and habitat use, and how technology is being used for conservation.
Strategy 5: Share and coordinate data at the regional level	Activity 1: Develop and implement robust central data management systems to track trends in vulture populations, illegal killing/trade, and conservation efforts (initiatives).
	Activity 2: Develop and implement standardized protocols for data collection and quality control procedures (on vulture sightings, nesting sites, mortality causes, and threats, ensuring consistency, reliability, and comparability across all contributing Member States.
	Activity 3: Train national and regional wildlife conservation staff on data management and database usage while organizing regular regional forums for knowledge sharing and capacity building related to database development.
	Activity 4: Form a committee consisting of experts and stakeholders from member states to guide database development, ensure compliance with conservation goals, and oversee data sharing efforts.
	Activity 5: Develop and deploy a secure, accessible, and user-friendly online platform to facilitate data uploading, sharing, analysis, and collaboration among range Member States for vulture conservation efforts.
	Activity 6: Develop and formalize agreements among range states regarding data sharing protocols, confidentiality, and data usage to foster cooperation.
	Activity 7: Set up a regional monitoring framework to track the effectiveness of the database in informing conservation efforts and identify trends over time.

Strategy	Strategic Objectives
	Activity 8: Implement or facilitate collaborative projects that leverage shared data to address trans-boundary vulture conservation issues, such as poaching, habitat loss, and poisoning incidents.
	Activity 9: Facilitate partnerships between regional research institutions to conduct studies based on data collected in the database, addressing key threats to vultures collaboratively

