IUCN SSC Species Survival Commission

Species

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2024-2025 Report of the IUCN Species Survival Commission and Secretariat

Stand-alone report
IUCN SSC African Elephant Specialist Group

The IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC)

The IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC) is a science-based network of thousands of volunteer experts from almost every country of the world, all working together toward achieving the vision of "a just world that values and conserves nature through positive action to both prevent the loss and aid recovery of the diversity of life on earth."

Members of SSC belong to one or more of near 200 Specialist Groups, Red List Authorities, Action Partnerships, Task Forces, and Conservation Committees that make up the Network, each focusing on a taxonomic group (plants, fungi, mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, fishes, and invertebrates), national species, or a disciplinary issue, such as sustainable use and livelihoods, translocation of species, wildlife health, climate change, and conservation planning.

Framed by the Species Conservation Cycle, SSC's major role is to provide information to IUCN on biodiversity conservation, the inherent value of species, their role in ecosystem health and functioning, the provision of ecosystem services, and their support to human livelihoods. This information is fed into the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.

2021-2025 Species Strategic Plan

The IUCN Species Strategic Plan encompasses the joint work of the IUCN Species Survival Commission and a number of partnerships to achieve more than 2,700 targets proposed by the Network during the 2021-2025 quadrennium.

To accomplish those targets, the Species Conservation Cycle was established, which is the conceptual framework for the Network activities. The Species Conservation Cycle's main purpose is to guide efforts for valuing and conserving biodiversity through three essential components that are linked to each other:

ASSESS: Understand and inform the world about the status and trends of biodiversity.

PLAN: Develop collaborative, inclusive and science-based conservation strategies, plans and policies.

ACT: Convene and mobilise conservation actions to improve the status of biodiversity.

Their implementation requires two transversal components:

NETWORK: Enhance and support our immediate network and alliances to achieve our biodiversity targets.

COMMUNICATE: Drive strategic and targeted communications to enhance our conservation impact.

SSC Species Report

Annual progress in the implementation of the 2021-2025 Species Strategic Plan is documented in the *SSC Species Report*, which consists of a comprehensive description and analysis of the activities and results generated by the members of the SSC Network and Centers for Species Survival (CSS) each year. Each SSC and CSS group contributes to this document by providing a yearly summarised description of their achievements, which is presented in standalone reports.

Structure of the IUCN SSC and CSS Stand-alone Reports

Animalia

Fungi

Plantae

National Species

Disciplinary

Action Partnership

Task Force

Red List Authority

Committee

Center for Species Survival

Stand-alone reports summarize the activities conducted and results generated by each group member of the SSC and CSS. Following, is the structure of the stand-alone report and the contents under each session.

Title of the group

Photograph(s) of the Chair/Co-Chairs

Group information

Includes names of Chair/Co-Chairs, Vice-Chairs, Deputy Chairs, Red List Authory Coordinators, Program Officers, Species Survival Directors, and Species Survival Officers, their institutional affiliations, number of members and social networks currently active.

Logo of the group

Mission statement

Includes the mission of the group.

Projected impact for the 2021-2025 quadrennium

Includes the description of the impact on species conservation resulting from the implementation of the targets formulated by the group for the 2021-2025 quadrennium.

Targets for the 2021-2025 quadrennium

Includes the targets planned by the SSC or CSS group for the 2021-2025 quadrennium ordered alphabetically by component of the Species Conservation Cycle. Each target is labeled with a numerical code (e.g., T-001, T-012) that identifies it in the SSC DATA database and its status for the reported year is indicated (Not initiated, On track or Achieved).

Activities and results

Includes the targets for which activities were conducted and results that were generated during 2024 (full year) and 2025 (first quarter), ordered alphabetically, first by component of the Species Conservation Cycle, and second by Activity Category. Description of activities and results includes the indicator that best describes progress, its associated quantitative or qualitative result, and the narrative description of the activity conducted or result obtained. Each activity or result reported is linked to the Key Species Result to which it is mainly associated (e.g., KSR#1, KSR#5).

Acknowledgements

Includes the acknowledgements to funding agencies, partners, and persons who contributed to the progress of the targets of the group.

Summary of achievements

Summarises information of the group's strategic plan for the quadrennium and progress achieved implementing targets for all the components of the Species Conservation Cycle during the reported year.

Example for the recommended citation:

Okita-Ouma, B, and Slotov, R. (2025). 2024-2025 Report of the African Elephant Specialist Group. In: IUCN SSC and Secretariat. *Species: Annual Report of the IUCN Species Survival Commission and Secretariat 2024-2025*. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN. 10 pp.

2024-2025 Report

IUCN SSC African Elephant Specialist Group

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99

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Mission statement

The mission of the African Elephant Specialist Group (AfESG) is to promote the long-term conservation of Africa's elephants throughout their range.

Projected impact 2021–2025

To promote the long-term conservation of African elephants throughout their range.

Targets 2021–2025

ASSESS

T-001 Compile, review and synthesise information on African elephant numbers and distribution across all range states, with a special emphasis on forest populations, within the African Elephant Database.
Status: Achieved

T-002 Participate in the Monitoring the Illegal Killing of Elephants (MIKE)-Elephant Trade Information System (ETIS)-Technical Advisory Group (TAG) processes.
Status: On track

T-003 Publish the Red List assessments for African Forest Elephant (*Loxodonta cyclotis*) and African Savanna Elephant (*Loxodonta africana*) in 2021.
Status: Achieved

T-004 Conduct Green Status assessments for both elephant species in priority regions.
Status: On track

T-005 Update AfESG's position statement on the removal of African elephants from the wild for captive use out of their natural range.
Status: On track

T-006 Revise the 'IUCN/SSC AfESG Guidelines for the *in situ* 'Translocation of the African Elephant for Conservation Purposes' in line with the broader IUCN conservation translocation guidelines.
Status: On track

T-007 Develop guidelines/criteria for prioritising sites for survey support.
Status: On track

T-008 Continue to determine the genetic identity of taxonomically undefined elephant populations.
Status: On track

T-009 Fulfil the AfESG's obligations to CITES.
Status: Achieved

T-032 Update guidelines on population survey methods by incorporating newly emerging techniques for Savanna and Forest Elephants.
Status: Achieved

T-036 Provide a better understanding of the context and conceptualisation of sustainable use of African elephants through the consumptive and the non-consumptive uses continuum.
Status: On track

PLAN

T-012 Enhance the functionality and capacity of the African Elephant Database and form a consortium for its technical and financial support.
Status: Achieved

T-013 Re-invigorate the African Elephant Library, build the capacity to curate historical survey information and investigate gaps.
Status: Achieved

T-015 Continue with the provision of technical input into the revision of the African Elephant Action Plan when called upon by the range states.
Status: Achieved

T-016 Support strategic and action planning processes at national, regional and continental levels, including assisting with the production of National Elephant Action Plans.
Status: On track

T-017 Develop updated AfESG guidelines on human-elephant co-existence (HEC),

Meeting of AfESG and U.S Congress Staff
Photo: Benson Okita

AfESG meeting with Mozambique Wildlife Alliance
Photo: Rachel Sharon

innovative new approaches based on landscape-level spatial planning, known elephant behaviours and community-based conservation approaches.
Status: On track

ACT

T-025 Release a statement on the AfESG's position on the two species issue.
Status: Achieved

T-030 Provide technical guidance for management of elephants as requested.
Status: On track

T-031 Advise on the conservation and management of elephant range and critical habitats.
Status: On track

NETWORK

T-026 Promote and – where appropriate – establish collaborations with relevant IUCN SSC Specialist Groups.
Status: On track

T-027 Establish relevant working groups to engage with key issues that have been identified.
Status: Achieved

T-028 Respond to emerging issues and changing priorities.
Status: On track

T-029 Hold AfESG members meeting sessions in 2022 and 2024/2025 and – where appropriate or necessary – also hold brief inter-session online meetings.
Status: Achieved

T-033 Fundraise for the running of the AfESG secretariat and for AfESG activities.
Status: Achieved

T-034 Develop a community of practitioners through the HEC Working Group, exchanging information on best practice and successes and failures of appropriate tools in different contexts in Africa and in Asia.
Status: On track

T-035 Create a community of young innovative local people to participate in elephant management and conservation issues.
Status: Achieved

COMMUNICATE

T-021 Enhance communication within and outside of the AfESG membership on key issues about African elephants, through the establishment of a task force on communication.
Status: On track

T-022 Publish in 2023/2024 an update of the 2016 African Elephant Status Report (AESR) and publish a numbers and range only AESR in 2024.
Status: On track

T-023 Promote the creation and maintenance of linkages/connectivity between elephant habitats.
Status: On track

T-024 Promote the *Pachyderm* biannual international peer-reviewed journal on elephants and rhinos.
Status: Achieved

Activities and results 2024-2025

ASSESS

Green Status Assessment

T-004 Conduct Green Status assessments for both elephant species in priority regions. (KSR 6)

Number of new Green Status of Species assessments completed: 1

Result description: The IUCN Green Status of Species (GSS) assessment for the African Forest Elephant is currently underway and is expected to conclude by early 2025. Following its completion, the GSS assessment for the African Savanna Elephant will commence, aligning with the completion of the African Savanna Elephant Status Report. These assessments are crucial for providing a comprehensive understanding of how each species is

faring across its historic range. They will address key knowledge gaps, particularly regarding the extent of depletion across fragmented habitats. Each assessment will generate novel, spatially specific insights, offering critical data to inform and shape targeted conservation actions. By delivering accurate, reliable, and up-to-date knowledge in an accessible format, these assessments will enable stakeholders to better understand the challenges and opportunities in elephant conservation. They will facilitate the identification of gaps, common ground, and shared priorities for action at all levels — national, regional, and continental — enhancing efforts in conservation, management, and governance.

Red List

T-003 Publish the Red List assessments for African Forest Elephant (*L. cyclotis*) and African Savanna Elephant (*L. africana*) in 2021. (KSR 6)

Number of global Red List reassessments completed: 0

Result description: Following IUCN policies and procedures, the IUCN AfESG plans to produce Red List assessments for each elephant species at least every 10 years and, if possible, every five years. This schedule will allow for the analysis of long-term population trends across three generations. Both the Red List assessments and the African Elephant Status Reports depend on robust population estimates derived from regular survey work, which are maintained in the African Elephant Database (AED) after undergoing a technical vetting process by the Data Review Working Group (DRWG). Ideally, Red List reassessments are initiated once an updated Status Report on a species has been published. The Red List Authority (RLA) of the IUCN AfESG has commenced the reassessment of the African Forest Elephant, as updated data are now available from the African Forest Elephant Status Report (AFESR). Work on the re-assessment of the Savanna Elephant will begin once the African Savannah Elephant Status Report (ASESR) is complete. The IUCN AfESG aims to publish the reassessment for the Forest Elephant by the end of 2025 and for the Savanna Elephant by the end of 2026.

Research activities

T-001 Compile, review and synthesise information on African Elephant numbers and distribution across all range states, with a special emphasis on forest populations, within the African Elephant Database. (KSR 5)

Number of scientific publications about species research that acknowledge SSC affiliation: 2

Result description: The AfESG manages the African Elephant Database (AED), the official repository for geospatial data on the numbers and distribution of African elephants. This database is a critical tool for monitoring and assessing the status of both Forest and Savanna Elephants, providing accurate, up-to-date, and statistically unbiased information on their distribution, abundance, and trends to support conservation efforts. In 2021, the AfESG formally recognised the distinction between the two African elephant species: the African Forest Elephant (*L. cyclotis*) and the African Savanna Elephant (*L. africana*). This recognition highlights significant differences in their conservation status, morphology, genetics, ecology, reproduction, and behaviour. The AfESG is currently preparing the first-ever African Elephant Status Reports to reflect this distinction. The African Forest Elephant Status Report is scheduled for release in December, 2024 followed by the African Savanna Elephant Status Report in June, 2025.

T-002 Participate in the Monitoring the Illegal Killing of Elephants (MIKE)-Elephant Trade Information System (ETIS)-Technical Advisory Group (TAG) processes. (KSR 5)

Number of scientific publications about species research that acknowledge SSC affiliation: 1

Result description: The CITES MIKE Programme recently convened the 20th meeting of the MIKE-ETIS Technical Advisory Group, bringing together its global and sub-regional experts to guide and advise on MIKE and ETIS analyses that will inform future CITES discussions and ensure the technical and analytical soundness of both programmes. The AfESG has contributed detailed reports to CITES-MIKE as requested by the Secretariat, supporting the compilation of reports presented to the Animals Committee and CoP meetings. The respective Co-Chair member of the MIKE-ETIS Technical Advisory Group (TAG) actively participated in meetings and processes, including method development. Additionally, the Co-Chair responded to specific requests, such as assisting with documenting alternative techniques used in unique situations to estimate population sizes, e.g. gallery forests. He also confirmed whether the current MIKE dung survey standards could still be used in the interim.

T-007 Develop guidelines/criteria for prioritising sites for survey support. (KSR 5)

Number of publications produced in internal journals of SSC groups: 0

Result description: Future Forest Elephant surveys must prioritise regions in West Africa and Eastern Africa, as well as areas with smaller or isolated forest elephant populations. In many of these regions, current population figures are labelled as guesses rather than robust estimates, underscoring the urgent need for accurate data. Despite their smaller size, these populations are of critical importance for the conservation of the species, particularly in maintaining genetic diversity and ecological balance. Notably, improved field information has revealed an expansion of known elephant ranges in some areas. To build on these findings, it is imperative to allocate greater resources toward systematic and targeted surveys in these priority regions. These efforts will not only enhance data reliability

Patience G and Kathleen Gobush representing AfESG during 78th SC held in Geneva (3rd-8th Feb 2025)
Photo: Kathleen Gobush

but also inform more effective conservation strategies. The forthcoming 2024 African Elephant Status Reports will provide comprehensive insights into the specific survey needs across all range states. This will serve as a crucial tool for guiding targeted survey efforts and ensuring that conservation actions are data-driven, strategic, and impactful.

T-032 Update guidelines on population survey methods by incorporating newly emerging techniques for Savanna and Forest Elephants. (KSR 5)

Number of publications produced in internal journals of SSC groups: 0

Result description: The Manual of Elephant Surveys provides a comprehensive guide for conducting accurate and ethical elephant population assessments. It covers a wide range of survey methodologies tailored to varying landscapes and elephant populations, including aerial surveys, dung counts, and direct observations. The manual emphasises the importance of systematic planning and the use of robust statistical techniques to ensure reliable data. New methods for counting elephants, both in savannas and forests, leverage advanced technology to enhance accuracy and reduce environmental impact. For Savanna Elephants, aerial surveys using high-resolution cameras and thermal imaging are increasingly common, allowing for precise counts even across vast landscapes. Satellite imagery and machine learning algorithms are also employed to identify elephant herds from space, providing large-scale population data. These complement forest-specific techniques like acoustic monitoring, DNA analysis of dung, and camera traps, which remain valuable for dense habitats. Additionally, drones are used in both ecosystems, offering a low-cost, non-invasive alternative to traditional methods. Integrated modelling combines data from multiple sources, improving overall accuracy and efficiency. These innovative approaches are revolutionising how elephant populations are monitored. The AfESG is discussing with Simon Hedges to review and include the new methods to the manual of Counting Elephant.

T-036 Provide a better understanding of the context and conceptualisation of sustainable use of African elephants through the consumptive and the non-consumptive uses continuum. (KSR 5)

Number of publications produced in internal journals of SSC groups: 0

Result description: Long-standing conflicts over the sustainable use of elephants in Africa have undermined effective collective action. These conflicts are driven by unequal distribution of the costs and benefits of elephant conservation, as well as differing values and perspectives on the sustainability and effectiveness of conservation efforts. The AfESG Sustainable Use Task Force has taken this challenge and are using a three-prong approach. This approach builds on best practices in conflict transformation by integrating scientific evidence with diverse moral values and perspectives to foster common ground. It involves eliciting the mental models — theories of change — of working group members on African elephant-human co-existence, identifying assumptions and gaps in knowledge, and addressing these through systematic evidence synthesis. Additionally, community perspectives are incorporated through literature review and facilitated through in-person mapping, with iterative workshops held to enhance consensus among stakeholders.

Synergy

T-009 Fulfil the AfESG's obligations to CITES. (KSR 5)

Number of reports to CITES: 1

Result description: The AfESG Secretariat undertook visits to Mozambique and Ghana for data collection and engagement with range states. Representatives of the AfESG participated in the African Range State Dialogue Meeting (2024) in Botswana, where they presented updates on the current status of African elephant populations and the ranges of the two recognized species, *L. africana* and *L. cyclotis*. Looking ahead, the AfESG team will prepare to attend SC78 (2025), CoP20 (late 2025), and other similar meetings (dates TBD) to actively contribute to plenary discussions, working groups, and direct engagements with range state delegations.

PLAN

Planning

T-012 Enhance the functionality and capacity of the African Elephant Database and form a consortium for its technical and financial support. (KSR 9)

Proportion of partners onboard to support information system: 0%

Result description: The original African Elephant Database was a large monolithic application. Monolithic applications are so difficult to maintain because there are lots of interdependencies between different parts of the code which are not usually

AfESG meeting with Daryl E. Bosu (Left) - the Deputy National Director of A Rocha Ghana
Photo: Rachel Sharon

apparent and a software engineer has to get a very good understanding of the entire application before attempting to make even a small change. The new application is modular and has different components of the overall system separated into their own "programmes". This not only makes changes less risky but also makes enhancements and new functionality much easier to develop. The first phase focused on porting the existing functionality to React on the front end and Node JS and .Net Core on the backend while utilising Amazon Web Service (AWS) cloud services. It was completed in June, 2024. The modern technology stack allows for greater extensibility and serviceability of the system and contains improved algorithms for displaying data, uncertainty metrics and site-level population dynamics over time. It also can now separate analyses by elephant species for the first time. The US Fish and Wildlife Services (USFWS) will support the Phase II enhancements — enhanced features for data review and replacement, and enhanced features for range mapping. These new capabilities, features and extensions to the AED will support more dynamic updates of the database, more refined validation of data outputs, more efficient data compilation, and release of intermediate summaries to be produced annually.

T-013 Re-invigorate the African Elephant Library, build the capacity to curate historical survey information and investigate gaps. (KSR 8)

Number of technical documents to support the development of conservation plans/ strategies: 0

Result description: The AfESG Database Manager and Administrative Assistant are tasked for curating and organising historical survey data, with a particular focus on email correspondences dating back to 2016. This effort includes integrating references from the recently updated African Forest Elephant Status Report (2023) and the Savannah Elephant Status Report (2024), ensuring the comprehensive archival and accessibility of all historical survey information. Additionally, Festus Ihwagi has been appointed as the new Task Force Leader.

T-016 Support strategic and action planning processes at national, regional and continental levels, including assisting with the production of National Elephant Action Plans. (KSR 8)

Number of conservation plans/strategies updated: 1

Result description: The majority of the 37 African elephant range states have successfully developed and launched their National Elephant Action Plans (NEAPs), including Angola, Benin, Botswana, Chad, Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Gabon, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Namibia, Nigeria, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, which are all current. Countries such as Tanzania, Mali, Cameroon, and Côte d'Ivoire are in the process of updating their outdated action plans, while others are still in the development phase. The AfESG will continue to provide input and technical support to the NEAP processes. The Group remains actively involved, either directly or through its expert members in their personal capacities, in supporting range states in the development of elephant strategies and NEAPs. Most NEAPs align with the aspirations of the African Range States as outlined in the African Elephant Action Plan (AEAP), further streamlining their activities.

T-017 Develop updated AfESG guidelines on human-elephant co-existence (HEC), innovative new approaches based on landscape-level spatial planning, known elephant behaviours and community-based conservation approaches. (KSR 8)

Number of technical documents to support the development of conservation plans/ strategies: 0

Result description: The IUCN AfESG initiated a process in 2023, together with the Chair of the IUCN SSC Human-Wildlife Conflict and Coexistence Specialist Group, to tailor the IUCN Guidelines for Human-Wildlife Conflict (HWC) 2023 to the specific challenges encountered between humans and elephants and the corresponding solutions. These 2023 IUCN HWC guidelines will undergo a thorough review for contextualisation for African elephants by the IUCN AfESG HECx TF, with a resulting comprehensive framework then available to assist range States in preventing or mitigating human-elephant conflict, and promoting human-elephant coexistence, consistent with the objectives contained within the African Elephant Action Plan. The first meeting was held on June 20, 2024 to discuss the Guidelines. Alexandra Zimmerman, Co-Chair of the Human-Wildlife Conflict and Coexistence Specialist Group introduced the participants to the IUCN Guidelines on Human-wildlife conflict and coexistence and the five principles that form the core thinking and structure of this guidance, which the HWCCSG believes would be a good structure also for the African elephant-specific document. There was a suggestion that we use a Systems Analysis Approach which is "an in-depth evaluation of the processes involved in creating a product or service. A focus on the people within the system and empathy for those persons accessing the system can provide information for solving problems or planning for development or changes in processes". This very much aligns with principle 2 of the IUCN Guidelines for Human-Wildlife Conflict.

ACT

Conservation actions

T-030 Provide technical guidance for management of elephants as requested. (KSR 10)

Number of technical documents provided to support conservation actions: 0

Result description: The AfESG is poised to embark on a collaborative initiative with the Human-Elephant Conflict Working Group (HEC WG) and the IUCN SSC Human-Wildlife Conflict and Coexistence Specialist Group (HWCCSG). Their collective goal is to draft an insightful and authoritative guiding document that addresses the issue of

Human-Elephant Conflict. This endeavour is designed to complement and align with the existing IUCN SSC Guidelines on Human-wildlife Conflict and Coexistence. The AfESG is set to play a pivotal role by providing crucial technical support for the development of this essential guideline. The AfESG was invited as technical experts to participate and provide information on the status of African elephants and related assessments at the African Elephant Dialogue Meeting, focusing on harmonising conditions for live African elephant trade. The information document prepared for the meeting highlighted preliminary results from ongoing assessments. The meeting took place on September 23-26, 2024 in Maun, Botswana, with 31 of the 37 African elephant range states in attendance, alongside two IUCN AfESG members, a representative from the UNEP African Elephant Fund, and CITES Secretariat staff. The AfESG's scientific independence was recognised, and the Group was requested to establish a mechanism ensuring that relevant government authorities in African elephant range states share survey data and are consulted before status reports and population estimates are published. The AfESG's report covered updates on elephant populations, the ranges of both species, and assessments, including the Red List and Green Status.

Policy

T-025 Release a statement on the AfESG's position on the two species issue. (KSR 10)

Number of position statements addressing major drivers/emerging threats of species or population loss: 0

Result description: The recognition of two species by the IUCN has enabled the Red List status of the species to be separated. This resulted in different categorisations of threat for the two species, the Forest being Critically Endangered (CR) and the Savanna being Endangered (EN). The two Red List assessment were overdue, and a key focus of this period was to ensure that they were published. In addition, we have already planned the next Red List assessment, to be finalised within the recommended interval of five years. The new assessments will be conducted once the two status reports have been published and will use the updated population data published in those reports.

The process for the two status reports provides updated evidence that the AfESG can present to range states in order to support their decision-making. This information is included in AfESG info-docs to CITES as well as, for example, the invited presentation on the status and assessments of the two species to the Dialogue meeting of the range states held in Botswana in 2024; the AfESG were invited by the CITES Secretariat to attend as experts.

NETWORK

Capacity building

T-027 Establish relevant working groups to engage with key issues that have been identified. (KSR 2)

Number of task forces and working groups established: 0

Result description: The Red List Task Force, led by Kathleen Gobush, has initiated a project to assess the Green Status of African Forest Elephants (*L. cyclotis*) and African Savanna Elephants (*L. africana*). This initiative aims to enhance conservation efforts for both species. Simultaneously, the Task Force is working on the reassessment of their Red List status, with completion anticipated by the end of 2026. Meanwhile, the Sustainable Use Task Force, under the leadership of Duan Biggs, is conducting a study titled 'Transforming the Conversation on the Sustainable Use of Africa's Elephants'. This study seeks to identify areas of consensus and evidence required to address disagreements. It takes a holistic approach, integrating evidence, perceptions of risks and threats, and diverse moral values to evaluate acceptable actions and uses concerning elephant conservation.

T-034 Develop a community of practitioners through the HEC Working Group, exchanging information on best practice and successes and failures of appropriate tools in different contexts in Africa and in Asia. (KSR 2)

Number of people trained in conservation action: 1

Result description: In 2023, the AfESG launched an initiative to tackle human-elephant conflict (HEC) by adapting the IUCN Guidelines for Human-Wildlife Conflict (HWC) to the specific challenges faced by African elephants. This effort is being conducted in partnership with the Chair of the IUCN SSC Human-Wildlife Conflict and Coexistence Specialist Group. The AfESG's HECx Task Force is contextualising the 2023 HWC guidelines to address conflict scenarios unique to African elephants, aiming to create a framework that aids range states in preventing and mitigating HEC, aligned with the African Elephant Action Plan's goals of promoting coexistence. Additionally, the AfESG is leading a project to establish a range-wide baseline of HEC risk by mapping conflict events and socio-ecological drivers across elephant ranges. This initiative will identify risk patterns and prioritise high-risk areas for targeted intervention. Practical guidelines, including risk maps, will be developed for conservation practitioners in collaboration with partners like Save the Elephants (STE). These tools will support effective, localised HEC mitigation strategies. A specialised curriculum for wildlife management programmes will introduce non-lethal, proactive HEC solutions, and a network of young professionals will be established to enhance capacity through interactive resources and collaboration in addressing HEC challenges.

T-035 Create a community of young innovative local people to participate in elephant management and conservation issues. (KSR 2)

Number of members included in a community of elephant management and conservation issues: 5

Result description: A primary goal of the AfESG is to train and mentor a community of young, innovative conservationists. Two funded programs, the Red List and Human-Wildlife Conflict (HWC) initiatives, have been identified as training platforms for this purpose. Dr Kathleen Gobush, who leads the Green Status of Species (GSS) assessments for African Forest and Savanna Elephants, also oversees the Red List reassessment process. In this role, the Red List Coordinator (RLC) have assembled volunteer expert teams and have recruited graduate student interns from a range of states with a conservation science interest, providing mentorship and hands-on experience. Similarly, Loki Osborn, who leads the HWC program, will support graduate student interns from elephant range states. This intern will assist in compiling data on HEC incidents and mitigation measures from selected sites, focusing on conflict hotspots across diverse elephant habitats. These internships offer valuable, hands-on experience in conservation research and management across Africa, benefiting a number of young graduates from elephant range states.

Membership

T-029 Hold AfESG members' meeting sessions in 2022 and 2024/2025 and – where appropriate or necessary – also hold brief inter-session online meetings. (KSR 2)

Number of members meetings held: 1

Result description: The AfESG members' meeting took place on October 3, 2024. During the meeting, the Co-Chairs provided an overview of AfESG's key activities, including leadership and governance updates, progress on the Red List and Green Status assessments for both African elephant species, and updates on status reports. Additionally, a meeting with members of the Communications Task Force was held on November 19, 2024. The agenda included discussions on the Range States Dialogue Meeting Communique and an update from the CITES focal point regarding the recognition of the two African elephant species under CITES. An in-person meeting for AfESG members is tentatively scheduled for September, 2025 with the venue being either Kenya or Tanzania. The final dates and location will be decided during an online webinar with all members.

Synergy

T-026 Promote and – where appropriate – establish collaborations with relevant IUCN SSC Specialist Groups. (KSR 3)

Number of IUCN groups collaborating with AfESG: 0

Result description: Both the African Elephant Specialist Group (AfESG) and Asian Elephant Specialist Group (AsESG) contribute to *Pachyderm*, an international, peer-reviewed journal focused on the conservation and management of African and Asian elephants, as well as rhinos. This publication serves as a platform for sharing research findings and conservation strategies between the two groups, promoting a collaborative approach to elephant conservation. Through these joint efforts, AfESG and AsESG enhance global understanding and conservation of elephant species, using shared knowledge and resources to address common challenges effectively. Also, the AfESG and AsESG have embarked on working together to establish an Asian Elephant Database based on the structure of the African Elephant Database and enhancement based on its uniqueness and characteristics of data collection of the Asian Elephant. The concept note of this development has been written and is being reviewed by the two specialist groups.

T-028 Respond to emerging issues and changing priorities. (KSR 4)

Number of emerging and relevant issues addressed: 1

Result description: AfESG representatives participated in the African Elephant Range State Dialogue Meeting (RSDM) held during September 23-26, 2024 in Maun, Botswana. During the meeting, the AfESG delegation delivered a detailed presentation, followed by an extensive question-and-answer session with the Parties. Their presentation, outlined in paragraphs 8-10.a of the Communiqué covered various aspects of African elephant conservation, with specific notes and requests from the range states. In addition to the formal presentation, the AfESG delegation engaged in one-on-one discussions with many of the Parties attending the meeting. These follow-up interactions allowed the delegates to provide additional clarity and address specific queries, ensuring that the participants received more in-depth information related to African elephant conservation and management. This dialogue facilitated closer collaboration and understanding between AfESG and the range states.

T-033 Fundraise for the running of the AfESG secretariat and for AfESG activities. (KSR 1)

Number of funding partners established and maintained: 0

Result description: The AfESG Secretariat has successfully secured substantial funding to support its operations, with commitments from key partners including the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS, 2024–2027), CITES-MIKE (currently negotiating the 2025–2029 phase), Save the Elephants (STE, 2022–2025), the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW, 2022–2026), the Paul G. Allen Family Foundation (2021–2025), and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF, 2022–2024). Building on this strong foundation, the Secretariat is actively expanding its fundraising efforts by approaching prominent prospective donors such as Jeff Bezos, Manu Chandaria, and Mohammed Bin Zayed (MBZ), among others. These efforts aim to further strengthen the Secretariat's ability to deliver impactful conservation outcomes.

Meeting of AfESG and Ghana Wildlife Division team
Photo: Rachel Sharon

COMMUNICATE

Communication

T-021 Enhance communication within and outside of the AfESG membership on key issues about African elephants, through the establishment of a task force on communication. (KSR 13)

Number of print communications materials distributed in relation to specific taxonomic groups: 0

Result description: In 2024, the AfESG launched a dedicated website developed by Tenacity Works Ltd under the leadership of Lucy Vigne and the Communication Task Force. The website was introduced on Elephant World Day to centralise resources, updates, and key information about African elephant conservation. It includes species-specific sections, elephant population data, working group initiatives, and resources such as PDFs, how-to guides, and links to AfESG partners. The phased rollout began with a brochure-style setup and will expand with multi-language translations and dynamic features such as interactive maps. Complementing the online initiatives, the Human-Elephant Conflict and Coexistence (HECx) Working Group, led by Loki Osborn, adapted the IUCN Human-Wildlife Conflict guidelines specifically for African elephants, focusing on middle-to-upper-level decision-makers. This collaboration aims to provide structured guidance on addressing conflict while supporting coexistence within African landscapes, with next steps planned for November, 2024. Furthering conservation initiatives, AfESG's Database (AED) has been revamped with a modern modular system, enhancing functionality and data reliability for range mapping and population dynamics, backed by support from the USFWS. Similarly, the Red List and Green Status assessments, led by Kathleen Gobush, are progressing, providing crucial data for understanding the conservation status and recovery potential of forest and savanna elephants. Meanwhile, Duan Biggs heads a task force addressing polarised debates on the sustainable use of elephants, working to integrate diverse perspectives for consensus-based solutions. Recent member meetings of the AfESG, held virtually, reflect these ongoing projects and partnerships, culminating in an upcoming in-person gathering scheduled for 2025 in Kenya or Tanzania.

T-022 Publish in 2023/2024 an update of the 2016 African Elephant Status Report (AESR) and publish a numbers and range only AESR in 2024. (KSR 13)

Number of print communications materials distributed in relation to specific taxonomic groups: 0

Result description: The African Forest Elephant Status Report is set to progress through final stages toward completion by early 2025. Following IUCN editorial review, signoff, and completion of the design, layout, and professional proofreading, the report will be finalised by the end of October, 2025. By November, 2025 it will undergo review by the IUCN publications officer, with all edits incorporated by mid December, 2024. The report is scheduled for final approval and publication by the end of December, 2024. Translation, additional design elements, and printing are expected to conclude by January 31, 2025. For the African Savannah Elephant Status Report, publication is targeted for June, 2025. Key stages include the finalisation of tables, maps, and core narrative elements by end November, 2024, with secondary narrative reviews and forensic edits wrapping up by mid December, 2024. The initial IUCN review will take place by March, 2025 followed by a second review after layout and design in April, with external feedback addressed by January 31, 2025. Translation, printing, and distribution will conclude by the end of June, 2025.

T-024 Promote the *Pachyderm* biannual international peer-reviewed journal on elephants and rhinos. (KSR 13)

Number of print communications materials distributed in relation to specific taxonomic groups: 1

Result description: The 2024 report from the AfESG Co-Chairs to *Pachyderm* highlights significant activities, including updates on the status of Forest and Savannah Elephants, the overhaul of the African Elephant Database (AED), and initiatives focused on the AED's sustainability, governance, and enhanced communication efforts. The report also covers AfESG's active participation in the African Elephant Range State Dialogue Meeting (ARSDM), where key outcomes were shared. Additionally, it details AfESG's engagement with range states on broader issues such as capacity building, elephant surveys, conservation, and strengthened communication to facilitate information sharing and collaboration among stakeholders. Contribute copies of *Pachyderm* to the Library of Congress Overseas Offices in Nairobi.

Summary of achievements

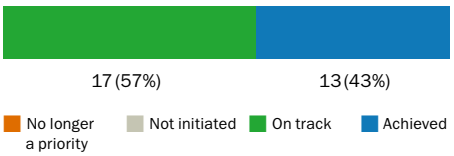
Total number of targets 2021–2025: 30

Geographic regions: 15 Global, 15 Africa

Actions during 2024-2025:

Assess:	8 (KSR 5, 6)
Plan:	4 (KSR 8, 9)
Act:	2 (KSR 10)
Network:	7 (KSR 1, 2, 3, 4)
Communicate:	3 (KSR 13)

Overall achievement 2021–2025:



Black Rhino (*Diceros bicornis*)
Photo: Save The Rhino Trust Namibia

Marsh Cinquefoil
(*Comarum palustre*)
Photo: Magnus Goransson

Azores Nursery Spider
(*Pisaura acoreesins*)
Photo: Paulo A.V. Borges

Suweon Treefrog
(*Dryophytes suweonenis*)
Photo: Amael Borzee

Phallus aureolatus
Photo: Juliano Baltazar

Eurasian Griffon (*Gyps fulvus*)
Photo: Andre Botha

Black and White Snapper
(*Macolor niger*)
Photo: David B. Snyder