

## **Project Update: July 2021**

### **Awareness sessions in three important cities in the country concluded**

Between May and July 2021, we implemented one of the most important activities in our project: awareness sessions in three of the four cities with most important vulture populations in Guinea-Bissau, having reached over 550 people from all target stakeholders.

Bafatá, Gabú and Canchungo, three of the most populated cities in Guinea-Bissau, were our destinations during the months of May, June and July 2021, where we organised several awareness sessions in different settings. Our aim was to inform, educate and exchange about the role of vultures in natural and human ecosystems, and the importance of vulture conservation for local and national communities in Guinea-Bissau and the rest of West Africa. These cities are home to very important vulture populations, especially of Hooded vultures, which have been found to live in higher densities in places with larger human populations, a knowledge acquired during our previous Rufford Small Grant (project link [here](#)). Henceforth, we have selected these cities as important areas to conduct awareness sessions.

During our stay, we organised meetings with regional and local government officials, officers of the police department and border/migration control and religious leaders, with whom we had the opportunity to discuss vulture conservation and importance, and hand in posters, t-shirts and flyers from our awareness kit. Furthermore, we delivered several talks and presentations in local language to agents from the Veterinary office, National and Forest Guards, to local associations of traditional healers, livestock herders, butchers and meat sellers. Media professionals, specifically journalists and radio station host and DJs were also included in our sessions. We had the opportunity to give interviews in local radio stations in every city we visited, broadcasting interesting information and fun facts about the biology, ecology and behaviour of vultures, while delivering messages about their importance and why they are threatened in West Africa to the audience. Finally, we also delivered talks at schools and had meetings with teachers to convene the importance of teaching to their students the ecological importance of vultures and the consequences of their declines for human communities in West Africa, particularly in Guinea-Bissau. We also handed communication materials in schools, and booklets with a summary of the key points about vultures and their conservation, which will allow teachers to continue to pass on the message to their students.

The awareness activities were very successful, having reached a total of 557 people, and we felt that the message was well received by most stakeholders, who also showed to be very interested and interacted with us by asking questions, sharing information about vultures in their area and adding their own observations and opinions in favour of vulture conservation. Unfortunately, many stakeholders noted that they have been perceiving a noticeable decline in the number of Hooded vultures, notably in the slaughterhouses. This is quite possibly related with the mass poisoning event that took place in the country in early 2020, especially affecting Hooded vultures in the cities of Bafatá and Gabú. All stakeholders agreed that these awareness activities are very important to halt the declines and change the human behaviours of risk to vultures.

Next, we will focus the awareness activities on the capital, Bissau, which hosts the largest Hooded vulture population in the country.



Meeting with local government officials, religious and community leaders in Bafatá and Gabú, with a power point presentation and talk.



Talk in schools with students from a high school in Bafatá (left) and training session with teachers in Canchungo.



Radio interviews in community radios of Bafatá and Canchungo.



Communication materials hand in in a school in Bafatá.



Meeting and talk to officers from the Regional Office of Livestock, in Gabú.



Talk and meeting with members of the association of traditional healers of Gabú.

In the months of April and July 2021, we carried out a workshop and a training session about the biology, ecology, behaviour, and conservation of vultures in Guinea-Bissau. These activities were delivered to stakeholders involved with environmental and conservation institutions, law enforcement agencies, judiciary police and the national office of veterinary.

In April 2021 we organized and delivered a two-day online training session to members of our partner institutions in Guinea-Bissau aiming at training them on the biology, ecology, behaviour, and conservation of vultures and instructing them on the use of the awareness kit produced for this project. These trainees are members of the NGO ODZH – Organization for the Defence of Wetlands, and of IBAP - the national Institute for Biodiversity and Protected Areas, and main partners for the implementation of this project on the field.

In July 2021, in partnership with Birdlife and together with our partner institutions in Guinea-Bissau, we organised a one-day hybrid workshop (using both online and in-person speakers) in Bissau, for stakeholders involved with environmental and conservation institutions, law enforcement agencies, judiciary police and the national office of veterinary. Attendants came from several regions of the country. The workshop was focused on the illegal traffic, trade and poisoning of wildlife in Guinea-Bissau and West Africa, and ways to fight and mitigate these issues. We invited national and international experts to deliver talks about several subjects around illegal traffic and trade, including experts in national biodiversity, experts in laws and we gave talks about vulture conservation, poisoning events, and illegal trade in West

Africa and in the country. During the discussions we had the chance to debate and exchange about the many aspects of vulture conservation in the country and the responsibilities of each of the institutions present, as well as about the importance of the national population of Hooded vultures in an international point of view. The elements from the police enforcement and other stakeholders gave very positive feedbacks about the activity, and we believe that this kind of events are key to change the faith of vulture populations in Africa.



Training workshop in Bissau for environmental and conservation institutions, law enforcement agencies, judiciary police and the national office of veterinary. Event was hybrid, with some international speakers joining from Zoom.