SAFIRE

2025: A year of building community resilience.

About us

Southern Alliance for Indigenous Resources (SAFIRE) works at the critical nexus of poverty, climate change, and environmental degradation in Zimbabwe. Operating currently across Manicaland, Masvingo, and Matabeleland South provinces, we work with marginalised rural and peri-urban communities. These areas face challenges such as low, erratic rainfall and severe climate shocks like droughts and floods. Our mission is to help restore and sustainably manage these vital natural resources, building resilient livelihoods that can adapt to a changing climate.

We drive sustainable change by focusing on four core, interconnected pillars of Natural Resource Management:

- **Nature-Based Enterprises:** We unlock the economic potential of healthy ecosystems. By developing sustainable businesses around indigenous resources (honey, mopane worm, Marula, Baobab, etc.), we empower over 33,000 households. These enterprises not only generate income but also incentivise the protection and sustainable harvesting of natural resources, resulting in a $165 increase in the average monthly household income.
- **Ecosystem Restoration & Biodiversity:** We actively heal degraded lands. Our comprehensive approach includes reforestation, wetland protection, and sustainable irrigation schemes. To date, this has resulted in over 597,000 trees planted, 50,000 hectares restored through reforestation, and the protection of 5,600 hectares of vital arable land, enhancing biodiversity and ecological services.
- **Climate-Smart Agriculture & Water Security:** We champion practices that adapt to and mitigate climate impacts. This involves promoting conservation agriculture, agroforestry, and, crucially, developing resilient water infrastructure. This year, our solar-powered systems have transformed water access, securing reliable irrigation,livestock water, and domestic supply in vulnerable communities.
- **Clean Energy & Forest Protection:** We reduce pressure on precious forest resources. By introducing efficient technologies like Tsotso stoves, we've achieved a remarkable 60% reduction in deforestation across 9 districts of Zimbabwe, preserving critical habitats and carbon sinks.



2025 results

This year, SAFIRE has demonstrated a profound commitment to ecosystem-based adaptation, helping turn the tide against environmental degradation and climate vulnerability in Zimbabwe's arid lowveld and beyond. Our holistic approach to Natural Resource Management (NRM) is not only restoring vital ecosystems but also empowering communities to become stewards of their environment. From establishing community-managed nurseries for reforestation, to introducing innovative solar-powered water solutions that breathe life into parched landscapes, we have seen early hopeful steps in things changing for the better. This is not just about planting trees; it is about restoring ecosystems, making sure that communities benefit from the sustainable use of their natural resources through NTFPs and sustainable livelihood activities.

48,000 seedlings growing in community-managed nurseries across four wards, with 27 hectares ready for planting.

These seedlings are being raised by communities themselves and will be planted on 27 hectares already identified for restoration this year. This approach builds local ownership while enabling near-term recovery of degraded land.

92 community members trained in nursery management and plant care (56 women, 36 men).

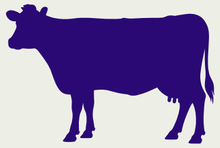
Community members were trained in nursery management, pest control, and watering schedules. This investment in skills ensures restoration continues beyond the project period and strengthens long-term local stewardship, led largely by women.

Construction materials for water harvesting structures distributed to 10 households.

By providing materials for rainwater harvesting structures, households now have more reliable water for domestic use and small-scale irrigation. This strengthens resilience to erratic rainfall and reduces daily water stress.

Two community gardens fully solarised and equipped (Romorehoto and Mandakotsira).

Solar-powered water systems replaced unreliable shallow wells. These systems now support irrigation, livestock watering, and household use. The shift has reduced the time women spend collecting water and strengthened food and nutrition security through reliable crop production.



Reliable daily water access secured for 1,280 livestock.

In Buhera, automated water troughs now serve approximately 680 cattle and goats in Romorehoto and 600 in Mandakotsira. This directly benefits more than 250 livestock-owning households and indirectly supports many others who depend on livestock-based income. By stabilising livestock production, pressure on forests as a coping strategy is reduced.

Immediate food security for 68 plot-holder households.

With dependable irrigation, farmers acted quickly. In Mandakotsira, maize crops are nearing harvest. In Romorehoto, farmers have already harvested and sold watermelons in local markets. Each household is earning an average monthly income of USD 90. Reduced dependence on wetlands for cultivation is helping relieve pressure on these fragile ecosystems.

Safe domestic water for more than 150 households and 38 teachers.

Potable water taps now serve surrounding villages and nearby schools. This has significantly reduced the time women and youth spend fetching water from distant sources and improved health and hygiene outcomes.

13 hectares of wetlands and riverine systems protected and restored across three districts.

Protecting wetlands safeguards natural water infrastructure. Restoration reduces erosion, improves water quality, and supports year-round water availability for farming and fish ponds, as seen in Romorehoto. These ecosystems now support water security for an estimated 11,500 people. In Chidzivamhango, the restored wetland is already generating income through mushroom harvesting and fish farming.

From Riverbank Farming to Climate-Smart Resilience: The Zivei Community's Turning Point

The Zivei community in Buhera faced a dangerous double crisis: dependence on unpredictable rainfall and the destructive practice of farming along fragile stream banks. This practice stripped riverbanks of protective vegetation, accelerated soil erosion, and placed the riverine ecosystem at risk, directly threatening food security during climate shocks.

Working in collaboration with local government agencies, we supported 49 farmers to move away from riverbank cultivation. Together, we established a one-hectare Zivei Solar-Powered Community Garden. This shift was supported through clean, reliable solar micro-irrigation, indigenous tree seedlings to restore stream areas, and training in climate-smart agriculture, with a focus on soil-conserving legumes and small grains.

With reliable water access in place, 48 women took the lead in transforming the one-hectare plot into a productive and sustainable farming space. They are now securing their harvests without degrading the river and are leading local efforts to restore the surrounding ecosystem.

Before, we were just eager to feed our families, even though it meant putting our rivers at risk by farming along the stream banks," says Tanaka Chitumbura.

Today, the Zivei Garden stands as a model of water-efficient, sustainable farming. Pressure on the riverine ecosystem has eased, allowing natural riverbanks to recover. The garden is thriving with healthy crops, strengthening soil conservation, reinforcing responsible natural resource management, and building long-term community resilience.

She adds, **"The training showed us that we can benefit from our land without destroying it. We now only practice climate-smart agriculture in our garden because it is the sustainable way forward."**

Restoring Wetlands, Rebuilding Livelihoods: Philip Mutudza's Path to Resilience

In Mutudza Village of Buhera District, Philip Mutudza, 56, has long depended on rainfall, like many smallholder farmers in the area. As droughts grew longer and seasons more unpredictable, this dependence led to poor harvests, declining income, and daily challenges in providing for his family.

Philip's path to resilience began with the restoration of Romorehoto Wetland, which had been degraded after years of overuse. Once the wetland was fenced and protected, it recovered quickly and became a new livelihood opportunity for the community.

Building on this restored water source, Philip and other farmers were introduced to aquaculture and fish farming. Inspired by the success of the wetland management committee, Philip constructed two small fish ponds at his homestead and stocked them with fingerlings from the community project. For him, the ponds represent more than a source of food. They are an investment in long-term stability. He now expects to harvest twice a year, with each cycle projected to earn more than USD 2,000, while providing a reliable source of protein for his family of six.

The benefits extend beyond fish production. Instead of discarding nutrient-rich pond water, Philip channels it into his vegetable garden, where it supports crops such as vegetables and maize. This integrated system restores soil fertility, reduces pressure on natural resources, and generates daily income from the sale of fresh produce.

Philip has also adopted Farmer-Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR), which promotes the regrowth of indigenous trees from existing root systems. By protecting and pruning natural woodlots, he has increased biodiversity around his homestead and secured a sustainable supply of firewood and fodder.

"FMNR has put me in control of my land," he says. "I regularly prune my trees, and no one is allowed to cut them down. I now see my land as an asset to be managed, not a resource to be exhausted."

From Rain Dependence to Agroforestry Enterprise: Tawanda Bukuta's Transformation

For 41-year-old Tawanda Bukuta of Ward 12, Mutasa District, life was shaped by unreliable rainfall and degraded farmland. His household income rarely exceeded $100 per month, leaving his family exposed to food insecurity and financial stress. Like many smallholder farmers in the district, he relied on traditional rain-fed agriculture in an increasingly fragile landscape.

Three years ago, SAFIRE, through the Zimbabwe Forest Restoration Project, offered a new opportunity. The project identified farmers willing to adopt new approaches, and while many hesitated, Tawanda stepped forward. He joined the forest restoration initiative and received nursery materials such as shade nets and potting plastics, alongside training in standardized silviculture and advanced nursery management.

With new skills and resources, Tawanda quickly excelled. His well-managed nursery became a practical demonstration of what was possible, encouraging sixty other farmers to form the Bonda Fruit Tree Orchards and Nursery Group. Tawanda emerged as a local resource person, producing high-quality peach seedlings that meet export standards.

"The training standardized our planting methods and enabled us to produce fruit trees that are now export quality," he explains.

Today, Tawanda's six-hectare homestead reflects a thriving agroforestry system. He manages 2,000 peach trees alongside indigenous riverine species such as acacia, muonde, and mukute, which are helping restore local ecosystems. His monthly income has increased from USD 100 to approximately USD 1,500, enabling him to independently cover school fees, food, and healthcare for his family.

Tawanda now supplies markets across four districts: Rusape, Beatrice, Murehwa, and Nyanga. He is also planning to expand into beekeeping, an activity that supports pollination, strengthens biodiversity, and aligns naturally with his agroforestry model.
"I have learned the importance of protecting and nurturing our forests," he says. "There is life in these ecosystems."

Looking Ahead to 2026

In 2026, with your support, we will reach up to 18,000 community members participating in restoration activities and restore at least 10,000 hectares of land in targeted marginal rural and peri-urban areas in the lowveld of Zimbabwe through habitat restoration and sustainable land management practices, enhancing the quality and availability of ecological services.

Thank you from the SAFIRE team

As we close out 2025, it is with immense gratitude and pride that we reflect on a year of growth and impact made through your unwavering support.

Your belief in SAFIRE's vision for a resilient, ecologically sound Zimbabwe has translated directly into tangible change: cleaner water, forests, restored ecosystems, empowered communities, and sustainable livelihoods. Thank you for standing with us and making a difference!