



*Southern Alliance For
Indigenous Resources*

*2026 1st Quarter
Newsletter*



*Strengthening local communities to restore, manage
and sustainably benefit from thriving ecosystems*



The first quarter of 2026 has been about deepening roots in restored wetlands, in policy spaces shaping Zimbabwe’s climate future, and in the communities we operate in. From supporting Community Resource Management Plans in Bikita and Chiredzi, to contributing to Zimbabwe’s 3rd Generation NDC, to celebrating community heroes whose environmental foresight from decades ago still yields fruit today.

Across our work, we have seen what becomes possible when communities are trusted as the primary architects of their own resilience. This newsletter brings together the stories, partnerships, and milestones that defined our January–March 2026 period.

95%
Tree survival
rate in
ECOTERRA
sites

600
Trees
distributed
to schools in
Chiredzi

150+
Trees
planted by
one
community
champion



Strengthening Zimbabwe's Climate Architecture

In February, we participated in the Ministry of Environment, Climate and Wildlife's stakeholder workshop to develop Zimbabwe's 3rd Generation NDC (2025–2035). The workshop brought together key actors to assess implementation of the 2021 NDC, advance dialogue on mitigation and adaptation priorities, and consolidate evidence for a next-generation



framework with clear, actionable measures. The workshop provided a vital chance for SAFIRE to make sure that local governance systems, nature-based businesses, and community-led solutions are integrated into national climate commitments rather than being considered afterthoughts.

Prior to the workshop, SAFIRE and the Department of Climate Change had a fruitful bilateral meeting to discuss further cooperation in line with Zimbabwe's NDC priorities. These include the implementation of climate projects, research, and monitoring and evaluation systems that convert data into real community impact.



We also engaged with the Zimparks CAMPFIRE Office on strengthening community-based natural resource management, and later participated in a two-day Community Conservation Partner Engagement Workshop convened by ZimParks in collaboration with Maliasili. Discussions focused on new provisions under the Parks and Wildlife Amendment Act (No. 4 of 2025) and ZimParks' 2026 priorities for community conservation.



Wetlands and the Communities They Sustain

September 2024



February 2026



On World Wetlands Day (2 February), SAFIRE reflected on the critical role of wetland restoration in the drought-prone areas where we work. Healthy wetlands keep water tables high, ensure community wells remain functional, and support households with water for livestock and nutrition gardens.

Our restoration work at the Chidziyamhango wetland offered one of the quarter's most powerful visual proofs of impact. In 2024, SAFIRE Director Estella Toperesu, Team Leader David Chikanda, and NRM Officer Phakamani Gasa Sithole planted one of the first trees in the then-newly restored site. Revisiting the same spot during the 2026 Strategic Planning field visit, the transformation was breathtaking the same people, the same tree, but an entirely revitalised landscape.

It is precisely the kind of image our vision of "thriving and diverse ecosystems supporting productive lands and resilient communities" is made of.

Our wetland restoration work also received national media coverage: [263Chat](#) featured SAFIRE's efforts in a piece highlighting Zimbabwe's wetland restoration journey, and [EnviroPress](#) covered our agroforestry work in Mutasa, where climate-resilient farming is helping farmers diversify incomes and restore degraded land.



The Headman Who Acted Before the World Had a Name for It



Headman Titus Wadzenenga, now 78, was practicing climate adaptation well before the concept became common in global conversations.

In the 1990s, this visionary leader observed that households farming along the banks of the Mutunha River were silting the waterway and degrading the Mutunha Dam. Without a donor and without a budget, drawing only on indigenous knowledge, environmental conscience and quiet authority, he rallied some 24 households to voluntarily move off the riverbanks and establish a communal garden on higher ground.

That single decision, made decades ago, is the reason the Advance Community Garden in Wadzenenga thrives today. Headman Titus Wadzenenga is a climate champion not because of any title, but because of what he chose to protect before the world had a name for it. We celebrate him as a living reminder that community-led conservation often precedes, and outlasts, any formal programme.

Read the full story at safirezim.org.

Planning for Impact: SAFIRE's 2026 Annual Work Planning Workshop



In late February, SAFIRE held its Annual Review & Planning Workshop, facilitated with support from Maliasili. The week-long process was dedicated to strengthening alignment across the organisation and ensuring that all programmes are firmly anchored in SAFIRE's 5-Year Strategic Plan.

Growing Together: Communities, Schools, and Restored Landscapes

The Empowerment of Communities and Organisations Transforming Economies toward Restoration of Rural Areas project (ECOTERRA) continued to gain momentum in the first quarter of 2026, powered by the active participation of local communities, schools, and traditional leaders across Bikita and Chiredzi.

January monitoring visits across six wards recorded an impressive 95% tree survival rate, a result that speaks to the genuine ownership communities have taken of environmental restoration. Four new schools in Bikita District have been identified as future tree planting and learning sites, integrating climate education with practical action.

In Malipati, Chiredzi, 600 trees were recently distributed across four schools, with each institution becoming a hub for environmental education and hands-on stewardship. The project is nurturing a generation that not only understands sustainable land management, but practises it.

ECOTERRA is funded by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation through Cesvi Onlus, with support from COSV and the Forestry Commission Zimbabwe.



Communities as Leading Their Own Resilience

Across Bikita and Chiredzi, SAFIRE has been facilitating Community Resource Management Planning (CRMP) meetings as part of the CBA-SCALE Southern Africa+ project, funded by BMUV-IKI and supported by CARE Zimbabwe, the Environmental Management Agency, and the Forestry Commission Zimbabwe.

CRMPs are more than planning documents, they are participatory processes through which communities identify threats to their local natural resources, develop a collective environmental vision, and map practical steps to reach that vision. The process is deeply interactive: residents name the problems, shape the future they want to see, and own the journey toward it



When SAFIRE's team arrived in Ward 2, Mashoko, Bikita, they found a dedicated local resource monitor who had personally planted 150 trees across several villages in his ward, driven entirely by a commitment to protecting his community's environment.

His efforts are exactly the kind of ground-level leadership that CRMPs are designed to find, recognise, and amplify. SAFIRE is now working with him to scale his nursery into a ward-wide initiative, turning individual dedication into community-wide impact.

Traditional leaders and environmental committees in the ward have raised the alarm over the loss of precious indigenous trees, particularly Mitondo and Mikute which are often sold as firewood.

“When communities identify their own problems and design their own solutions, the results are both durable and deeply owned.”

Looking Ahead

As we move into the second quarter of 2026, we remain committed to deepening our partnerships, scaling nursery operations at the ward level and generating the evidence that places local communities at the centre of conservation and climate resilience outcomes.

We also look forward with great anticipation to the official launch of SAFIRE's 5-Year Strategic Plan. This is a milestone that will publicly anchor our commitments to thriving ecosystems, resilient communities, and sustainable local economies.

The plans developed in collaboration with communities, the wetlands restored, and the trees planted are not endpoints. They are the foundations on which resilient futures are built.

About us :

SAFIRE is a regional NGO whose focus is to improve rural livelihoods and resilience through sustainable utilization of their natural resources in Zimbabwe.



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