



The Southern Africa Ramsar Regional Initiative (SARRI)



Get Involved

Join Us!

Partner with us in protecting wetlands for people and nature.
Opportunities for:

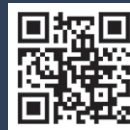
- Technical support
- Funding and collaboration
- Research and exchange

Contact Information:

www.sarriwet.org

 Southern Africa Ramsar Regional Initiative (SARRI)

 The Southern Africa Ramsar Regional Initiative



“SARRI is a timely initiative—bringing together science, policy, and people to shape a better future for wetlands in the SADC region.”



About SARRI

The Southern Africa Ramsar Regional Initiative (SARRI) is a Ramsar-recognized platform that promotes the wise use of wetlands across the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region. SARRI supports collaboration between countries, communities, and stakeholders to enhance wetland conservation and sustainable livelihoods, in line with the objectives of the Ramsar Convention.

Formally adopted at COP14 in 2022 with support from IUCN as mandated by SADC, SARRI aims to address shared wetland challenges through joint planning, governance, and action. A regional task force—comprising Botswana, Lesotho, Madagascar, South Africa, and Zambia—was established to operationalize the initiative, with support from partners including OFB, NatureXpairs, MedWet, and IUCN ESARO.

A major milestone was the La Réunion Workshop held in May 2024, where 12 SADC member states (Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe) and partners developed the governance model, identified key priorities, and adopted the La Réunion Declaration—a collective commitment to protect wetlands for biodiversity, climate resilience, and the well-being of local communities.

Objectives

- 01** To promote the wise use of wetlands in the SADC region and ensure stronger cooperation and synergies to effectively implement the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and its strategic plans;
- 02** To ensure that SARRI is inclusively and transparently governed and that its strategic plan is developed and implemented in accordance with the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands' strategic plans and resolutions;
- 03** To develop and implement an effective resource mobilization strategy that fosters collaboration with international organization partners for financial and technical support for wetlands and people;
- 04** To enhance capacity building, networking, expertise, knowledge generation and sharing in wetlands amongst SARRI Members and other stakeholders;
- 05** To ensure effective regional coordination in wetland related issues; and;
- 06** To facilitate the implementation of regional projects that address common challenges in wetlands management, conservation, and restoration.

Our vision

A Southern Africa and Indian Ocean Island states where wetlands across all member states are conserved, sustainably managed, and celebrated as vital ecosystems. These wetlands support rich biodiversity, provide critical ecosystem services, and enhance the resilience and well-being of the communities that depend on them.

Our Mission

To promote the wise use of wetlands in the SADC region and ensure stronger cooperation and synergies to effectively implement the Ramsar Convention and its strategic plans

Why SARRI Matters






Wetlands are under threat in the SADC region. From shrinking water availability to biodiversity loss and land-use pressure, wetlands across Southern Africa face urgent challenges. Many are transboundary and require coordinated, cross-border action. Yet efforts are often fragmented, under-resourced, and disconnected from community needs.

SARRI provides a regional solution. SARRI connects SADC countries, communities, and conservation partners to address wetland degradation through joint action, policy support, and shared learning. By working together, we can:

- Enhance water security through the protection of vital wetland ecosystems
- Strengthen community resilience by integrating wetlands into sustainable livelihoods
- Protect biodiversity corridors across borders
- Support Ramsar implementation with a regional voice and coordination platform


SARRI is uniquely positioned to link local actions to global commitments—bridging science, policy, and practice to safeguard wetlands for people and nature across Southern Africa.

What's Unique About SARRI?

 <p>A Regional Platform Rooted in Ramsar</p> <p>SARRI is one of the few Ramsar Regional Initiatives dedicated to the Southern Africa context—aligning international commitments with regional realities and priorities.</p>	 <p>Cross-Border Collaboration for Shared Wetlands</p> <p>SARRI brings SADC countries together to jointly manage transboundary wetlands, recognizing that ecosystems and water flows don't stop at national borders.</p>	 <p>People-Centered and Community-Driven</p> <p>SARRI places local communities and indigenous knowledge at the center, promoting sustainable livelihoods and equitable wetland use.</p>
 <p>Policy to Practice</p> <p>SARRI links science, research, and traditional knowledge to practical action on the ground—while also influencing policy at national and regional levels.</p>	 <p>Partnership-Powered</p> <p>With support from IUCN, OFB, MedWet, NatureXpairs and others, SARRI leverages technical expertise, funding, and networks to drive change at scale.</p>	 <p>A Structured, Strategic Approach</p> <p>SARRI is guided by clear governance mechanisms, a multi-year workplan, and the La Réunion Declaration, ensuring accountability, transparency, and sustainability.</p>

Alignment with Ramsar COP Themes & Global Commitments

SARRI is strategically aligned with the priority themes of the Ramsar Convention and contributes to broader global environmental goals through integrated action on wetlands. The initiative supports:

 <p>Nature-Based Solutions</p> <p>Promoting wetlands as cost-effective, locally adapted solutions to climate and development challenges</p>	 <p>Climate Resilience</p> <p>Enhancing the role of wetlands in climate change adaptation, carbon storage, and reducing disaster risks for vulnerable communities.</p>	 <p>Biodiversity Corridors</p> <p>Maintaining and restoring wetlands as critical habitats and ecological linkages across borders—supporting species migration and genetic flow.</p>
 <p>Wetland Restoration & Financing</p> <p>Mobilizing resources and building regional capacity for the restoration and sustainable financing of degraded wetlands.</p>	 <p>Alignment with other Global and regional Frameworks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNCCD: Combatting land degradation and desertification through wetland conservation. • CBD: Supporting biodiversity targets by protecting and sustainably using wetland ecosystems. • IWRM: Promoting Integrated Water Resources Management by safeguarding wetlands as natural water regulators. • Regional coordination with River Basin Organizations eg ZAMCOM, ORASECOM, LIMCOM, OKACOM, BUPUSACOM including the Great Green Wall. 	

By working across sectors and agreements, SARRI bridges the gap between environmental conventions—turning policy into action for wetlands, water, and people in Southern Africa.



Developing the SARRI Strategy

A comprehensive regional strategy is being co-developed with member states and partners to guide SARRI's direction, governance, and impact—anchored in Ramsar principles and SADC priorities



Mobilizing Resources for Impact

SARRI is actively seeking support to strengthen community resilience and build national and local capacity for wetland management. This includes funding for training, knowledge exchange, and community-based initiatives that promote nature-based solutions as well as build community resilience to climate change impacts.

Partnering for Regional Policy & Action

Through collaboration with SADC institutions, IUCN, OFB, Ramsar Secretariat, Nature Xpairs, MedWet, and others, SARRI connects wetland science, practice, and policy at both regional and global levels, including the Ramsar COP.

