



ENGAGING SCHOOL CHILDREN TO PROMOTE THE IMPORTANCE OF TREES



TEACH THE IMPORTANCE OF TREES AND HOW TO CARE FOR THEM AT PRIMARY SCHOOLS



HELPING PRIMARY SCHOOLS CREATE WOODLOTS WHICH WILL BE LOOKED AFTER BY THE CHILDREN

ZLTC COMPLEMENTS THE AFFORESTATION ACTIVITIES OF ITS CONTRACTED FARMERS, BY TEACHING THE IMPORTANCE OF TREES AND HOW TO CARE FOR THEM AT PRIMARY SCHOOLS, HELPING THEM TO CREATE WOODLOTS WHICH WILL BE LOOKED AFTER BY THE CHILDREN

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When the land reform programme was implemented in Zimbabwe, many people moved to rural areas and tobacco farming shifted from large estates to smallholder farmers. As a result, in 2012 Zimbabwe Leaf Tobacco Company (ZLTC) started a forestry programme with small-scale farmers to promote the importance of trees and create a new consciousness of the environment. A new phase of the programme was started in 2016/7 season, promoting woodlot development through schools. The knowledge gained by school children will reach their families too, many of whom are tobacco growers.

ZLTC met with Ministry of Education officials at central, provincial and district level to formalise the programme. Its implementation was facilitated by the fact that agriculture and environment management studies are now part of the new school curriculum. To ensure the programme's effectiveness on the ground, ZLTC also consulted various other stakeholders, including the Forestry Commission, the Environmental Management Agency, and Rural District Councils. Then, 291 schools were engaged and woodlots covering 331 hectares were set up across the provinces of Manicaland and Mashonaland East, West and Central, with more than half concentrated in Mashonaland Central where the majority of ZLTC smallholder farmers are based.



ZLTC and various other stakeholders helping to formalise and implement the tree planting programme in schools.



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ZLTC's forestry team spearheaded the programme, training the teachers and creating operating procedures suitable for the schools. Tree seedlings, raised by eighteen contracted nurseries across the region, were provided by ZLTC, while the schools provided the land and resources for their establishment. In order to encourage participants, at the end of each agronomical year ZLTC will select the three best-performing schools and distribute prizes in the form of garden tools, stationery and sports equipment.



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The main threats to the trees' survival are termites and the damage caused by animals grazing in the area. To prevent termite attacks, ZLTC treated the woodlots with a low-toxicity insecticide, and the schools are responsible for guarding the woodlots from livestock. Contracted growers living around schools, who will benefit from the presence of the woodlots, will be encouraged to use their ZLTC wild fire management training to assist with protecting them.

When the woodlots were first inspected in April 2017, the average survival rate was above 85%. A second round of assessments was undertaken in July 2017, after which the first competition winners were announced.

The experience and insights gained in the first year have been used to improve the programme, making maintenance easier until the woodlots are mature enough to harvest.

