

Seedlings for Zambia



Change begins with Knowledge

The word “broadcast” means “to scatter seeds.” With these programs, you can plant seedlings throughout your daily broadcast to become a Green Station. Seedlings are short pieces about climate change that can include facts, simple solutions, nature poems, songs, and listener ideas.

1. This is Seedlings,

a new, compact version of Seed to Grow, where we take a minute to think about our environment and what climate change means in our everyday lives. So what is climate change? Humans introduce large amounts of carbon dioxide gas into the atmosphere when we burn fuel for cars, factories, and even cooking stoves. This extra carbon dioxide has produced a “greenhouse effect,” where the gas traps heat from the sun, causing the average global temperature to rise. In the past 100 years, the Earth has warmed by 0.74 degrees Celsius, and it is still warming. This may not sound like a big change in temperature, but we are already able to feel the effects: drought, flooding, melting glaciers which cause the seas to rise, and extreme weather events. Listen for the next Seedlings segments, when we will hear more about the effects of global warming.



2. This is Seedlings.

More than one-third of our country’s population does not have a reliable supply clean drinking water, and more than half lacks access to sanitation facilities. This can lead to diseases like diarrhea and cholera. This problem is worsening as development activity, poor farming practices, and climate change contribute to rivers and streams drying up. In Namwala, the Munyeke River used to run all year, but now dries up by May or June, a phenomenon people are seeing throughout the country. Plant cover around streams purifies water, keeps water from evaporating, and prevents soil erosion, and when an area is deforested for construction projects, this can cause water to dry up. Farmers often divert water that would otherwise naturally flow into streams, making less water available for drinking and domestic use. Climate change is causing more droughts in Zambia and across Africa, which also decreases the water supply. The government’s Water Resource Management Authority encourages people to form local water-user committees, which help to oversee water distribution and plan sustainable ways to manage water resources.



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3. This is Seedlings.

Every year, Zambia is losing up to 300,000 hectares, about 0.6% of its forests, to deforestation. The forest retains and purifies our water, removes carbon dioxide, a gas that contributes to climate change, from the air, provides habitat for endangered wildlife, and supplies us with wood and other renewable resources. When we lose forest to encroaching farmland and logging for timber, firewood, and charcoal, we are losing an investment in our future. Ninety percent of Zambia's population uses charcoal as an energy source, and for many, charcoal-making is their livelihood. As the population grows and energy demand increases, our forest is expected to disappear at an even faster rate. This means that to protect forests, charcoal must be produced sustainably by planting trees and rotating areas for charcoal making – regulations that should be enforced by community groups. Fuel-efficient stoves are another way to take pressure off of forests, and are easy to make from clay found in the soil. Make a cylindrical chimney out of clay, supported on the inside by sticks, leaving a gap at the bottom to insert fuel and an opening at the top where the support sticks poke out. Light a fire and leave the chimney to dry. When the sticks burn away and the clay is dry, a pot can be inserted into the opening or a pan can rest on top.

4. This is Seedlings.

Climate change and population growth are threatening food security across Zambia. Most of our food is produced by small-scale farms that do not have access to irrigation systems, and so are completely dependent on the rain. Climate change means that rain is more difficult to predict and droughts are becoming more common. Small-scale farmers who have set up their own irrigation systems are able to grow vegetables in the dry season and earn 35% more money, and this can make all the difference to food security. Farmers are using systems such as treadle pumps and manmade ponds to access groundwater and store rainwater throughout the year. The treadle pump requires no fuel source, and works by stepping up and down on the treadle to bring groundwater to the surface. Prices begin at 220 ZMW, and farmers have been getting interest-free loans for the pumps from NGOs and websites like Kiva. The treadle pump has some limitations, however. Unless a farmer can access information about where and how deep the aquifer lies, he or she may find that the pump, which reaches a maximum depth of seven meters, cannot reach the groundwater. Farm ponds have been successful across the country, but work best where land slopes down to collect rainwater, and where soil contains clay to prevent water draining away.



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