Seedlings for Cameroon

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.**
   Mangroves trees are an important part of Cameroon's ecology. Their root systems act as nurseries for fish and prawns, which is vital for community and commercial fisheries and for promoting biodiversity. Mangroves also protect the 30% of Cameroonians who live in coastal areas from flooding, storm surges, and erosion with their absorbent and stabilizing roots. As climate change develops and sea level rises, flooding and erosion will worsen along the coast, and some fish will struggle to adapt. This is why it is so important to protect our mangrove forests from unsustainable harvesting. The country lost 30% of its mangroves between 1980 and 2005, and they are not being replaced quickly enough to sustain mangrove ecosystems. One of the main reasons mangroves are disappearing is fish smoking. IRAD Batoke researchers have developed a new design for a fish smoking oven that use baked bricks and a mechanical filter to reduce the amount of mangrove wood needed, along with the harmful fumes fish smokers breathe in while they work. The new oven also makes the fish safer to eat, which means that fish smokers may be able to get their product to appeal to an international market.

2. **This is Seedlings.**
   Cameroonian farmers know firsthand that temperatures are rising and rainfall is decreasing, as well as becoming unpredictable. People are migrating to wetter parts of the country as northern Cameroon, where rivers and wells are dry for much of the year, turns to desert. This leads to tension as people compete for land and resources in the south. To combat this problem, many people already collect and store rainwater runoff from their roofs to water crops and cattle during dry spells, but digging a community farm pond is a more reliable, larger-scale way to harvest water. This method has already been proven to meet water needs in communities across Cameroon, and is often a collaborative effort between farmers and herders. Even if water security is not yet a major concern in your area, worsening effects of climate change mean that digging a pond would be a wise investment for the future. Listen for the next episode of Seedlings when we will give you specific steps for digging a farm pond in your community.

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3. **This is Seedlings.**
In our last episode, we discussed how drought caused by climate change is causing mass migration and water insecurity across Cameroon. Now we will walk you through the basic steps to dig a pond to catch and hold rainwater for your crops or livestock. First choose an area that is already low-lying so that rainwater naturally flows into it, preferably with clay soil. Test if the soil will hold water by squeezing a damp handful. If it holds together and doesn't crumble, the soil is suitable for a pond. An ideal size for the pond to minimize evaporation and seepage into the ground is 10 meters by 10 meters and 3 meters deep. If you encounter a problem digging to that depth, such as shallow soil, you may instead build walls at ground level to create a large trough and build soil up around it so you can still make use of water flowing down from higher ground. After the pond is in place, either dug or at ground level, you may wish to line it with clay, stone, brick, or plastic sheeting to prevent water draining out. Dig an "inlet" channel and an "outlet" channel to draw water in and release it in case of overflow. If you want to filter some of the silt out of the pond naturally, dig a small pit, 1 meter by half a meter, and half a meter deep, in the "inlet" channel, close to the pond. Use some of the dug-out soil to build an embankment around the pond and plant vegetation to prevent erosion.

4. **This is Seedlings.**
Kemit Ecology is a startup company based in Douala that is addressing one of Cameroon's biggest environmental hazards: burning wood and charcoal for fuel. Trees are being cut down for fuel at an unsustainable rate in our country, which, along with the carbon dioxide released from burning them as fuel, contributes to climate change. This means fewer trees to take carbon dioxide out of the air, to prevent erosion of nutrient-rich agricultural land, and to keep water sources from evaporating quickly. Kemit Ecology is fighting these problems with their eco-friendly product, "bio-charcoal" – charcoal made from vegetable scraps, like plantain peels and corncobs, left on the street after outdoor markets. The startup's manager Mueller Tenkeu Nandou said of his company's briquettes, "It's an ecological solution. Collecting the rubbish cleans up the streets even before it is turned into fuel. […] And from the environmental standpoint, organic charcoal emits very little greenhouse gas and practically no smoke." Tenkeu is right. One kilo of bio-charcoal emits two times less polluting gas than traditional charcoal, cooks two more meals, and in Douala, costs 125 XAF less.