



Inspiring Entrepreneurship among Seed Business Operators

An Agronomist of a local NGO, Lead Trust- Bulawayo, Ms. Sikhulekile Ncube, organized a seed fair inspired by Africa Lead's leadership and change management training in June 2012. The seed fair builds market linkages between seed producers and small-holder farmers in Hwange, Zimbabwe. Its objective is to create a platform to enable farmers to showcase and promote market opportunities for sorghum (SV4) and pearl millet (PMV3) seed producers.

Seed producers in Hwange produce high quality seeds certified by the Matopo Research station. Despite this, seed producers have never got a return of sufficient worth to stay in business. Ms. Ncube sent out letters to all seed producers and farmers in the Hwange community inviting over 400 farmers, 5 seed houses, and 58 seed producers. In addition, Ms. Ncube invited Africa Lead's Champions from Hwange who attended the Bulawayo session. Ms. Ncube said that "the intent of inviting the Hwange Champions was to prolong the energy created by the Africa Lead's training while installing the attitude of "everything is possible" in the Champions' mentality.

Over 200 of the invited farmers and all seed producers participated in the seed fair organized in June 2012. This event has introduced a competitive seed market that generates mutual benefits: seed business operators are accessing sustainable markets and smallholder's farm productivity is boosted. Ms. Ncube said that in addition to the market linkages, the seed fair has served as a platform to exchange information and good practices.

Ms Ncube intends to make the seed fair an annual event so that farmers continue to produce quality seeds each season. "This year we used tents which are temporal, but from this event we hope to raise money which will kick-start the project of building a marketplace." Through the chief for the area (Chief Shana) and other stakeholders, Ms Ncube applied for a stand where farmers market can be built. The Chief facilitated the acquisition of a 1000 square meter stand to be used by farmers annually as a permanent marketplace for farmers. ■