



*Pioneering Conservation Action*



## **R90 000 WORTH OF INDIGENOUS TREES EXCHANGED FOR GOODS IN VOSLOORUS**

Eighteen thousand indigenous trees grown by participants in the Indigenous Trees for Life project in Vosloorus were traded for R 90 000 in goods at a “Green Futures Store” recently.

Through this initiative run by conservation NGO the Wildlands Conservation Trust, adults and children are trained to grow trees from seed, (they are known as treepreneurs) and once trees reach a certain height, they are traded for credit which can be “spent” at Green Futures Stores, the market place set up for treepreneurs to exchange their credits for goods.

Apart from the purchase of food and household items, treepreneurs also traded their credit for building materials such as corrugated iron sheets and window frames, and wheelbarrows. Two of the young treepreneurs paid their school fees and one mother is saving credit from her trees to pay for university fees for her child.

As part of their vision of “A Sustainable Future for All”, Wildlands developed this programme to afford poor and vulnerable communities the opportunity to purchase food, clothes, education support, building material, water tanks, solar water heaters, solar powered lighting and bicycles, all while growing indigenous trees to assist in conservation initiatives.

Nine year-old Sfiso Maphosa traded 100 of his trees for a bicycle. A grade four pupil at Zimele Primary School, he has grown 236 trees since the start of the programme in 2009. He said “I am going to ride on my bicycle that I have worked for. I have also bought myself school shoes and other items and I am very happy.”

Unilever South Africa has partnered with the Wildlands Conservation Trust on projects for many years, including funding the Indigenous Trees for Life Programme in a number of communities. There are currently 188 treepreneurs in Vosloorus ; many of the adults are unemployed and the programme enables them to purchase much needed groceries.

Renée Burton, Assistant Sustainability Manager, Unilever South Africa, said: “Unilever South Africa is committed to creating a better future in which people can improve their quality of life without increasing their environmental footprint. Through our partnership with Wildlands, we are working towards making a difference in the lives of people by helping them help themselves while creating environmental awareness.”