Building local plant nurseries for the rehabilitation of quarries

The business case

As part of its quarry rehabilitation process, Lafarge has developed local plant nurseries that respect indigenous species and are adapted to the local environment. This initiative is part of broader methodologies and best practices developed by the company to optimize its quarry reclamation, with the final objective of strengthening the acceptability of its operations in the long run.

The issue

Mitigating impacts and restoring biodiversity, critical steps for extractive industries

Lafarge is a French group operating in resources extraction and building materials. Extractive industries have potential impacts on biodiversity, for example, through the removal of soil in the early stages of extraction, or through the destruction of habitats during the mining operations. Mitigating biodiversity impacts during operations, and rehabilitating the site afterwards, is therefore critical as it is linked to the acceptability of Lafarge's operations in the long run and its company reputation.

The response

Plant nurseries as part of biodiversity restoration

To maximize the conservation interest of its restoration projects, Lafarge has developed a number of tools and best practices organized in a biodiversity management system.

The creation of local nurseries is an important feature of the rehabilitation process as plants ensure soil stability and landscape integration. Local nurseries ensure the respect of indigenous species, the adaptation to the local biogeographical context, and avoid the spread of invasive species.

Plant nurseries have been created specifically in Uganda and the Philippines where Lafarge is rehabilitating quarries. The quarry team, together with a workforce from the local community, selects and collects seeds, and grows plants in significant numbers. In some cases, seeds or material for vegetative multiplication are collected directly in the vicinity of the quarry. Local know-how also plays an important role: local communities sometimes help choose the potentially most adapted species and build the protocols for plant multiplication, planting and after care. In some quarries, partnerships with botanical authorities can also be the ultimate stage of the process in order to formalize the way the plants are selected, according to their adaptation to local conditions.

The results

Specific outcomes in Uganda

In Uganda, the nursery has a production capacity of 100,000 seedlings per year including seedlings for alternative fuel: 30,000-50,000 seedlings are used for alternative fuel plantations and approximately 12,000-15,000 seedlings are used for rehabilitating the mined area. The local communities, on average, receive around 30,000 to 50,000 seedlings depending on the applications made by the community members for seedlings each season. The nursery project itself employs more than 30 people. These actions, whilst helping Lafarge rehabilitate its former quarry, have also helped the company secure its operations in the region.

FURTHER INFORMATION

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