Agricultural labour practices are vital pillars of Universal’s approach to sustainable tobacco production.

The drama groups combine the entertainment value of the performing arts with their capacity to highlight issues relevant to community development. They are able to focus people’s attention on problems in a way that challenges their perception of the situation. The dramatization encourages them to take a fresh look at the problem and work out new solutions.

The drama sessions have become a highlight for the local communities, awaited with great anticipation and discussed for many days afterward. The performances act as a catalyst, involving people in dialogue and prompting them to take action on the issues they face rather than just accepting their circumstances. Like audiences around the world, the growing communities identify with the characters and increase their own sense of identity and self-confidence in addressing issues.

By tapping into the oral traditions of these rural communities, and combining them with social gatherings and free entertainment, MLT organized “drama sessions” to explain the agricultural labor practices and reinforce the lessons of the field technicians. Drama groups made up of local actors visit tobacco-growing communities to sing and dance their message, using catchy tunes that are easily understood and remembered.

In 2016, having engaged seventeen drama groups to cover their entire production catchment, MLT organized 2,673 sessions attended not only by contracted farmers but by entire communities, thus spreading these messages well beyond tobacco production. Due to their success, the drama groups’ repertoire has been extended to other topics of interest to the communities, such as financial literacy.