



Collection and Sales of Second-hand Clothes

Providing quality clothes

Humana People to People's second-hand clothes sourced from Europe are known for good quality, durability and for cheap price. Second-hand clothes are unique for being about well-known brands, fashion and it's quite rare to find a similar piece worn by another person locally.

In Malawi, 70% of the population lives on less than US\$ 1 per day, depending heavily on income from subsistence farming. The figure translates into 13 million people who lack disposable income to buy new clothes and thus can only depend on second-hand clothes. Many Malawians opt for buying second-hand clothes as it suits their economic circumstances with others finding the superior quality as a motivating factor.

Good quality clothes are accessible for people who otherwise cannot afford to buy clothes of such a standard. In African countries, sales cover both urban and rural areas, while shops are often located in cities. Most of the clothes are sold in bales of 15kg, 45kg to small traders, with 450kg for big customers who employ family members and others to take the clothing to markets for sale.

DAPP Malawi is one of the 29 members of Humana People to People and receives second-hand clothes from other members in Europe for sale. A lot of effort goes towards caring for the clothes, quality assessment, sorting, categorizing clothes into specific market segments, and towards customer care standards.

Cooperation is critical in ensuring higher quality of second-hand clothes being sent to Africa. DAPP Malawi engages its clothes suppliers in Europe to guarantee better quality of second-hand clothes, which is marketable and can compete on the local market.

'We have a good cooperation with our suppliers in Europe as we always exchange feedback upon assessing the clothes quality we receive in Malawi. Each container we receive undergoes quality control checking, the results are given as feedback. Before the onset of COVID-19 we had a functional exchange visit with our suppliers. They used to come to Malawi, visit our sorting center, retail shops, wholesale outlets and customers markets,' says Moses Chibwana, Acting Country Director for DAPP Malawi.

'The interactions have supported us to continue providing quality clothes for the local market. It has strengthened the continuous supply of quality, affordable and durable clothes to Malawians many of whom lack the economic means to buy new clothes,' says Moses.

As the second-hand clothes arrive in Malawi there is a lot of work involved. DAPP Malawi created a center with a sole responsibility of sorting the second-hand clothes for the market.

Gustino Aramson is the DAPP Malawi Sorting Center Production Manager working at the site in Blantyre, Malawi. He leads the operation of four major divisions of the sorting center, which cover the warehouse, sorting, pressing and transit departments.

'Each day we take clothes from the warehouse and put them on the tables for main sorting, a stage where clothes are separated into eight categories that is textile clothes, children's clothes, blouses, shirts, trousers, winter clothes, tropical mix and miscellaneous. The next processing stage is fine sorting. Fine sorters grade the quality of the clothes into grade A, B and C for each category. Soon after grading there is scaling, baling and stocking of the bales in the transit section,' explains Gustino.

The whole sorting process treats each item of clothes received with the customer in mind. It is a critical strategy, which determines marrying cloth quality with pricing.

Customers who buy second-hand clothes from DAPP Malawi shops are supported to adopt a business approach. The arrangement is fundamental in realizing profit and increasing sales in short space of time.

'We have created a close relationship with our customers so that when they come to our shop we make an effort of having them to stay as our loyal customers. We enter them into our customer database and take note of the type of clothes they buy. We ration some of the most popular clothes such as children's clothes so all customers can have some to buy. We follow our customers to their markets to see how they sell, price and display their clothes,' explains Angellina Ngwira, DAPP Malawi's Commercial Manager for wholesaling.

The aspect of quality has gone beyond not only about ensuring access to fashionable, durable, cheap and stylish clothes but also supporting the customers DAPP Malawi does business with. Each month wholesaling outlets offer trainings, invite a successful customer or a financial institution as part of improving customers' business management practices.