



Collection and Sales of Second-hand Clothes

The Humana People to People network & second-hand clothes business

We are of the opinion that the most sustainable piece of clothing is the one already made, and we engage ourselves in working towards closing the loop between furthering new clothes production and creation of textile waste.

Our Humana People to People global network is engaged in the second-hand clothes industry at all stages of the supply chain. Through our continuous activities we see ourselves playing our part in positively taking action against climate change.

With the combined purpose of raising funds for social development and at the same time protecting the environment, we create a motivating option for the European members of the public to donate their used clothes in a sustainable way.

Our members collect used clothes through a network of containers and shops across Europe. The collected clothes is processed, sorted and given value. Some clothing is sold in second-hand stores in Europe, while other items are sent for further sorting and sale in Africa. The clothes sent to Africa are reused again by millions of people.

DAPP Malawi, one of our members, is part of the global network cooperation between Europeans and Africans in the second-hand clothes sales. The cooperation, which started in 1995, has grown over the years and made it possible to unlock value in the second-hand clothes from Europe. Selling the clothes in Malawi has made it possible to economically sustain families through trade and create surplus which DAPP Malawi uses to fund its development projects.

Moses Chibwana, the Acting Country Director for DAPP Malawi values the advantages that come from being a member of the Humana People to People network. The network's conferences have assisted DAPP Malawi with sharing best practices on what has worked in other countries to overcome challenges in second-hand clothes business.

"We value being a part of the cooperation between the European and African countries who work together as a collective in selling second-hand clothes. When we have conferences, we share experiences; we hear how in the north they are doing? How it is in Mozambique and Zambia? We really benefit a lot, and more importantly, the Humana People to People Federation itself provides a service of how we can get organized to meet the local competition we face in the market," says Moses.

"Our business as approach reached a time when it was no-longer helping to make enough profits. There are now more players who are selling the second hand clothes to the same people we are serving. In 2018 we introduced new systems based on other countries' experiences. We got the support from the Federation on how we can make a new business plan that fits the current situation. The new organization is bearing good results. It has made us to think differently, at the same time, not losing focus," says Moses.

Our members have a working mutual support arrangement, which place focus on maintaining high quality of clothes being sold in the receiving African countries. The support DAPP Malawi receives from the regional team called Service Station, is important in promoting business development and expansion.

Tatyana Naeva is a Sorting Center Manager for the second-hand clothes in Malawi. Her responsibilities include engaging the European suppliers and other service providers to ensure the sustainability in quality business operation of the sorting center.

"We have in place systems of reporting and quality control. From each container, which arrives in our warehouse we take three samples from only three bales'. We inspect the quality and the type of the clothes we got. The assessment outcome is the feedback we report to our suppliers. The cooperation has significantly raised the quality of the clothes we sell on the market from low to better quality," says Tatyana.

"Having the Sorting Center running needs support. We have the Service Station team, which works with all the African countries' second-hand clothes. They keep a health communication line for making it possible to succeed in our work. Through the Service Station they always bring fresh ideas on how we can be better. Sometimes our business face challenges locally, it is then when we get support on what to do to make things better," says Tatyana.

Our members in Europe also sell some of the second-hand clothes in retail shops. The surplus from Europe is donated as funding to social projects being run by members of Humana People to People. DAPP Malawi receives some of the donations, which often they combine with own local second-hand clothes sales surplus. The donations extended has made it possible to implement development projects covering education, agriculture, health, rural community development and among other initiatives.

"Our member friends in the north, apart from the second-hand clothes, they also donate funds. The need to reach more people of Malawi with development work is enormous. The internally raised surplus funds from second-hand clothes form our own funds we can use to create partnerships with other partners in development work. So the funds we receive as donation from our European members helps us to have the muscle of doing more and inviting more partnerships and reach many districts in Malawi," says Moses.