

# CHILDREN AND COTTON CULTIVATION

## Good practices and “worst forms of child labour”



Ghana Edition



# Foreword

“Cotton made in Africa” (CmiA), an initiative of the Aid by Trade Foundation (AbTF), aims at improving the social, ecological and economic living conditions of a large number of African cotton farmers and their family members. Together with partnering cotton companies and the COMPACI (Competitive African Cotton Initiative) project, CmiA ensures trainings in modern, efficient and environmentally friendly cotton cultivation methods. Through its independent verification system, it has set up social, economic and environmental criteria to follow the 3 P “people – profit – planet” philosophy.

AbTF is actively engaged in protecting children. Under the CmiA sustainability standard, all “worst forms of child labour” as defined by the ILO Conventions 138 and 182 are prohibited, and compliance is regularly controlled on site. In the case of family smallholdings, children may exceptionally help on their family’s farm provided that the work is not liable to damage their health, safety, well-being, education or development, and that they are supervised by adults who give them appropriate training.

The present picture book concerning children on smallholder cotton plantations in Western Africa is designed to stand up for the rights of children and to sensitize all actors in the cotton production, especially cotton producers.



# How to use the picture block?

The picture block is an instructive tool, which can be used during a **training session** by displaying the included set of images. Its structure, with image on the front and text on the back, allows the user (trainer or extension worker) to pass the key messages on the subject in an interactive, participatory way.

The trainer stimulates reflection and discussions amongst participants. The interaction is based on the real concerns of the participants and takes the form of a continuous dialogue of «**question-answer**» with the participants. The transfer of key messages and their understanding is fully ensured by a set of questions and answers listed in the overleaf.

During a session, the images will be shown (one after the other) to the audience and the participants should interpret and discuss the activities shown in the image, with the aim to make the participants understand the importance of the addressed topic. The proposed questions and answers can serve as guidance to the trainer. If the answers of the participants do not instantly bring the **key messages** across, further leading questions should be asked by the trainer to help the participants discover the key message. These questions should start with: Who/What/When/Where/Why? to gather relevant information.

Questions and answers act as a guide for the trainer and should not be read continuously during the session with the participants. After discussing a specific image and going through the questions, ask

one of the participants to summarize it again to make sure that the message of the picture is understood. Then the next image can be shown and discussed in the same way.

Leave time for the audience to look at the pictures and think of it. Actively involve also the more quiet participants!

Each image is accompanied by a page facing the trainer, holding the narrative text with a set of questions and answers, as well as key messages in English.

The story shown in the pictures revolves around two cotton farmer families.

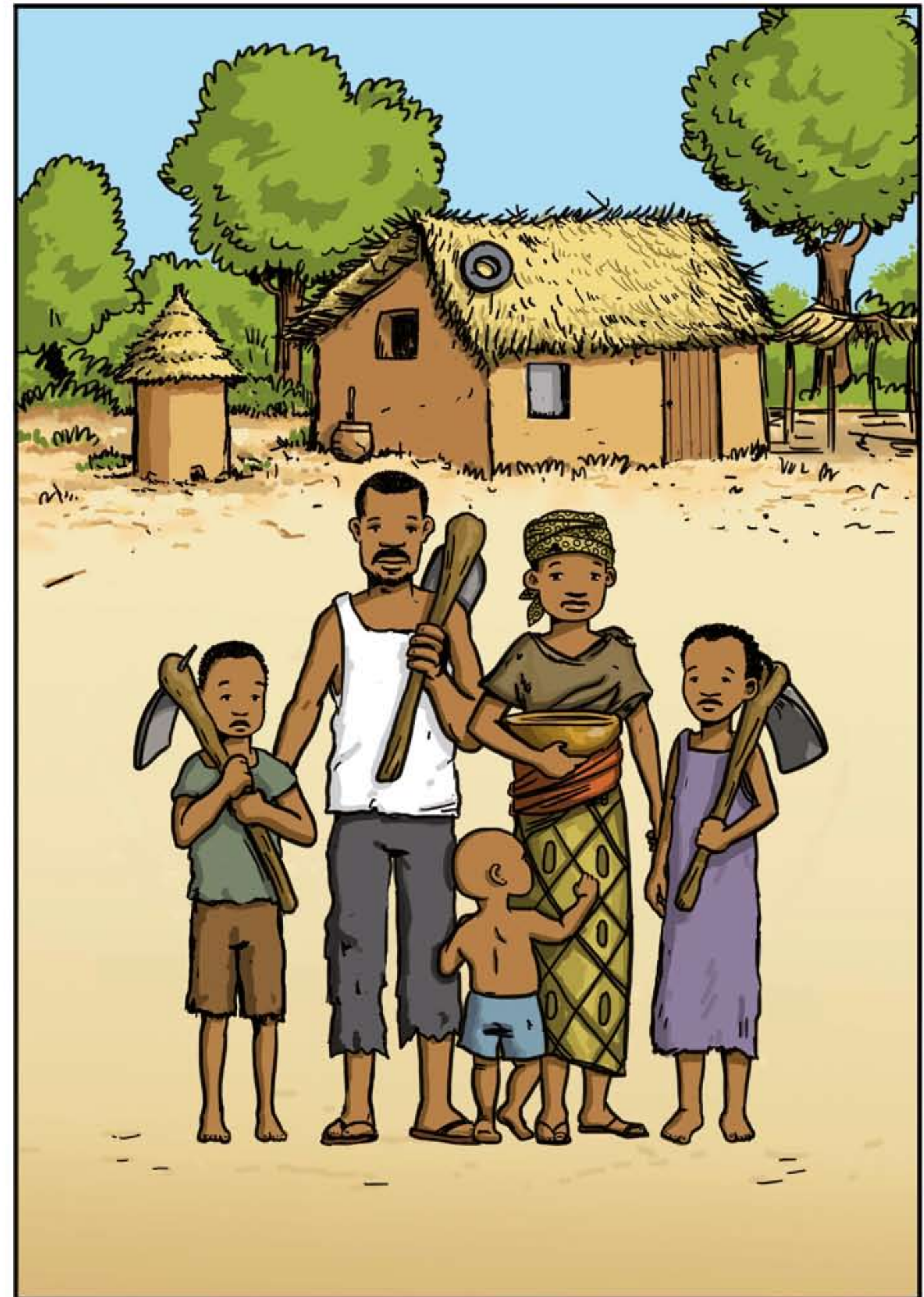
**Please name the characters** based on the common names used in your country/area to create a familiar atmosphere. Please fill out the table below so it can serve you as a reference and also fill out the child's name on the empty lines in the following text:

FAMILY (left)	
Father	<i>Abou</i>
Mother	<i>Janet</i>
Older son (15)	
Older daughter (13)	

FAMILY (right)	
Father	<i>Moussa</i>
Mother	<i>Mariam</i>
Older daughter (14)	
Older son (10)	

Suggestions or modification by farmers and trainers are welcome for the improvement of this picture block.







# Picture 1

**Q. What do you see on picture A?**

**A.** We see the family of Abou and Janet. Their house is in good condition with a corrugated roof. They have oxen which facilitate their work, and they are dressed in good new clothes. They have 5 children: the eldest boy (age 20; works and lives in the city), an older son \_\_\_\_\_ (age 15), the daughter \_\_\_\_\_ (age 13), another boy (age 6) and a baby. The three children seen are dressed in school uniforms.



**Q. What do you see on picture B?**

**A.** We see the family of Moussa and Mariam. Their house is very modest with a straw roof, they do not have oxen, and they wear old clothes. They have 4 children: the eldest boy (age 20; he is unemployed and lives in the city), an older daughter \_\_\_\_\_ (age 14), a younger brother \_\_\_\_\_ and a baby brother. The two children with hoes do not attend school, but are going to work in the fields instead.

**Message:** Both families started equally. But through training, education, accounting, and good farming practices the family of Abou on picture A has been able to improve their standard of living. Mussa uses farming methods that continue to use children to work in the fields with no time for schooling. Under CmiA and under national law, parents should send all their children to school.







## Picture 2



**Q. What do you see on the LEFT side of the picture?**

**A.** Abou's children are waving to their father as they go to school.

**Q. Why is it good to send the children to school?**

**A.** Going to school, children will learn to read, write and count. This opens many ways for them. Also, children can help their parents to read documentation and to get a better understanding of agronomy. Calculation and reading skills can be used to better manage the farm. Children can also help their parents to read letters, contracts and keep records of drugs and pesticides.

**Q. What do you see on the RIGHT side of the picture?**

**A.** Moussa and Mariam are going with their two children to work in the farms fields.

**Q. What are some of the problems of taking the children to the fields instead of sending them to school?**

**A.** It hinders children from learning how to read and write and it also affects the family's farming practices. This is usually so because no family member is able to read manuals on agriculture and calculations made during the marketing season.

**Message:** *Going to school will give the children the perspective of a better future.*







## Picture 3

**Q. What do you see on the picture?**

**A.** Abou's family is producing compost. The daughter \_\_\_\_\_ (put her name) already knows how to read. She is reading and explaining the instructions of the manual to her father to produce good quality compost. Her brother \_\_\_\_\_ brings cotton stalks with the oxen cart. Those stalks will be cut for the compost, and mixed with plant rests and with ashes.



**Q. What are Abou and Janet and the others doing?**

**A.** Abou is preparing the different layers that are necessary to fill the compost. The mother brings water. The smaller brother helps taking care of the baby.

**Q. Why is Abou setting up a compost?**

**A.** Rather than burning the cotton stalks to clean the soil, it is better to turn them into compost to fertilize the soil and have good yields. Using compost is a very good and cheap way to fertilize the soil. Thanks to compost, Abou spends much less money than if he had to buy fertilizer, because biomass is available for free.



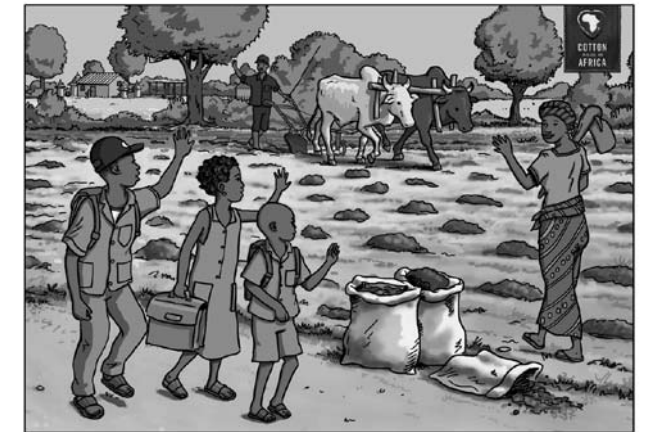




## Picture 4

**Q. What do you see in the picture?**

**A.** It is morning. The children are going to school as their father Abou tills the soil.



**Q. What are the parents doing with the compost?**

**A.** To increase the fertility of the field, Abou has distributed compost onto the soil to mix with the earth during ploughing. The mother helps spread the heaps of compost that were brought in bags.

**Q. Why does the father not need the children's help to guide the oxen?**

**A.** We can see that the oxen wear the yoke and that they are harnessed from behind. Abou does not need the children's help to guide the oxen, because the animals have been trained to follow his commands.







## Picture 5

**Q. What do you see in this picture?**

**A.** The cotton has been planted and growing but now needs thinning. The whole family is participating in thinning the cotton plants.



**Q. Can the children help with this task?**

**A.** Thinning is not a dangerous task. If children help during their holidays, after school or on the weekend, this is something where they can participate and help their parents.

Older children can also help by keeping the farm animals away from the field.







## Picture 6

**Q. What do you see in this picture?**

**A.** Abou is preparing the slurry for the insecticide treatment on the field. He wears his protective equipment: overalls, boots, a hat, goggles, gloves and a mask to not inhale the spray. If he doesn't have an overall, long trousers and a shirt with long sleeves can also give minimum protection.



**Q. Why does he wear protective clothes?**

**A.** Pesticides, especially concentrated, are very hazardous to health. Only adults should handle them with special care.

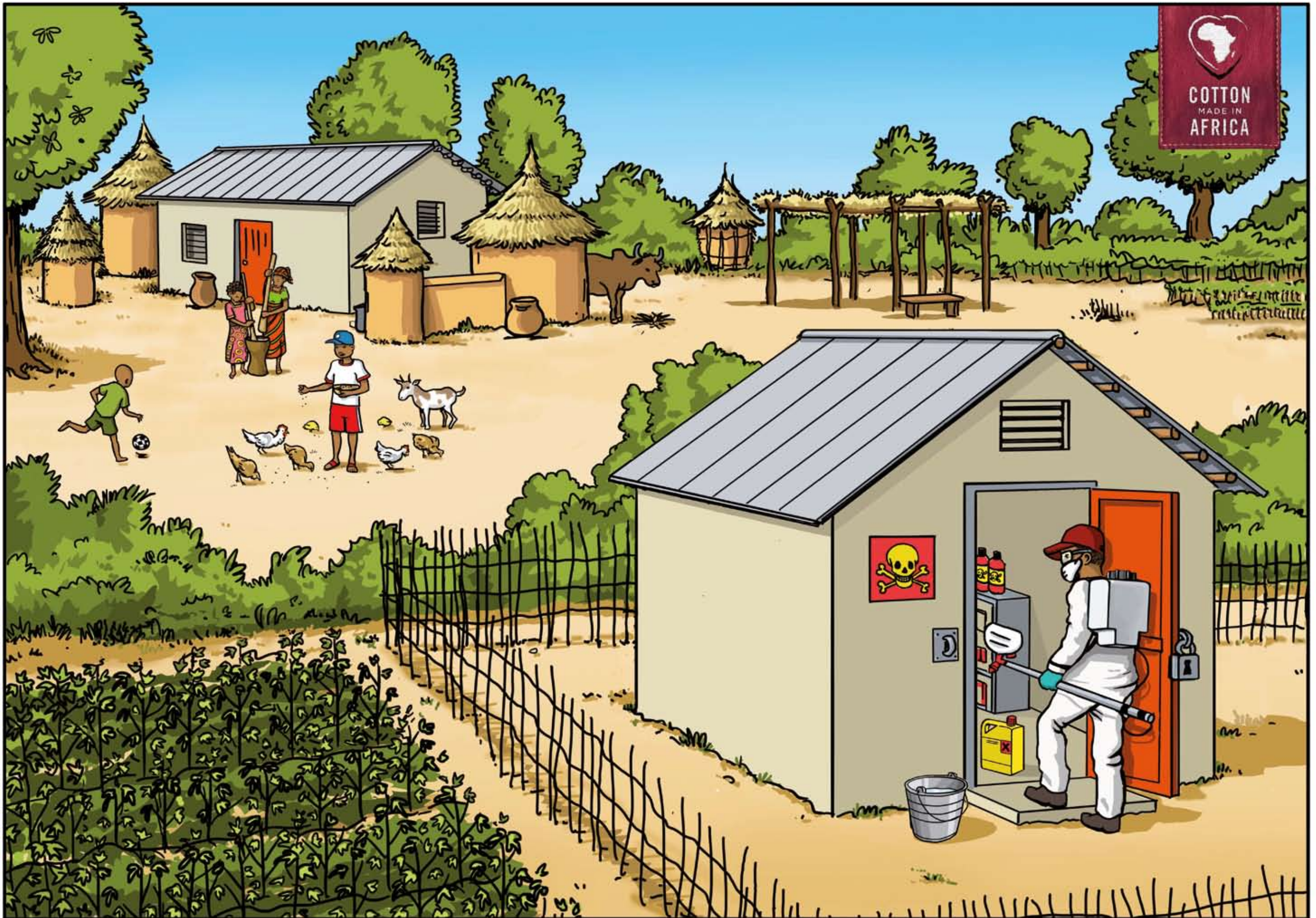
**Q. What is Abou doing with the empty pesticide containers?**

**A.** He has already cut one empty bottle and will bury it immediately to prevent children from finding and using them to play or drink with. You cannot reuse empty bottles of insecticides.

**Q. Are children allowed to help with this task?**

**A.** No, they are not. Pesticides are especially hazardous to children and young persons because they are still growing. The son \_\_\_\_\_, who is not yet 18 years old, brings water, but he strictly does not have the right to approach. Abou orders him to leave the field. Application of pesticides is also strictly prohibited for breastfeeding and pregnant women.







## Picture 7



**Q. What do you see in the picture?**

**A.** Abou has finished spraying and left the field. He has buried the empty pesticide containers in a pit. He is putting his spraying equipment in a well-ventilated shed which is fenced, with a padlocked solid door located away from the family farm.

**Q. Why is he not storing pesticides inside his home?**

**A.** Insecticide products are very toxic. They and everything that has been in touch with pesticides, like protective clothing, should always be stored in a secure location that children cannot access. Abou must wash himself completely as well as all the items he has used for spraying.

**Q. What are the other family members doing?**

**A.** Janet and her children have remained at home, away from the treatment in the fields. Janet is preparing the meal helped by her daughter \_\_\_\_\_ (put name). Her brother \_\_\_\_\_ (put name) feeds the chickens while the little brother plays football. Children can help the family with many different tasks: taking care of the poultry, collecting eggs, helping prepare meals, taking care of the garden, washing clothes, etc.

**Message:** *Pesticide products and everything connected to their application are very harmful and absolutely need to be stored away from children's reach. If a shed like the one in the picture cannot be built, pesticides should at least be safely locked away.*







## Picture 8

**Q. What do you see in this picture?**

**A.** The image shows some of the tasks that children can do to help their parents outside the house. For example, outside school time, they can bring animals to graze, keeping them out and away from insecticide treated fields, fetch water and firewood, harvest fruit (mango, groundnuts etc.) and help sell products from the farm at the market.



**Q. Does the fight against child labor mean that children will become lazy and are not allowed to help their parents?**

**A.** No. Children can add to the family income without doing tasks that endanger their health and development. But it is important that they have the possibility to go to school.







## Picture 9

**Q. What do you see in the picture?**

**A.** This is the cotton season. Abou and Janet are reaping cotton.



**Q. Are the children helping their parents?**

**A.** In his spare time from school, Daniel helps, but at his own rhythm. In the shade \_\_\_\_\_ (daughter's name) and \_\_\_\_\_ (son's name) help sort cotton and eliminate plastic wastes, leaves and pebbles. Cotton harvested by hand is cleaner than machine harvested. It is possible to improve the quality by removing impurities. Triage is a work that children can do.

**Message:** Cotton harvesting is a task that older children can participate in during holidays, on the weekend or after school, but this should not be under duress, threat or violence.







# Picture 10

**Q. What do you see in the picture?**

**A.** We see Abou's cotton field on the left, and on the right Moussa's. Abou's harvest is a lot better than Moussa's, although Moussa's children have spent much time working with him.



**Q. If Abou's children have been busy in school and not been working in the fields, how could Abou have such a good harvest?**

**A.** Abou has reaped a good harvest because he has improved the soil by adding compost and because he has used insecticide spraying on the crops only when necessary. This way, he has also saved a lot of money.

His children have not been lazy or lost their time in school! In fact, they have learned many things that were also helpful to their parents. For example, they could read information concerning treatments or instructions from the field officers.

**Q. What has gone wrong on Moussa's field?**

**A.** Moussa has not used techniques to improve soil fertility. He spent much money on buying pesticides and he didn't apply them only when really needed. Therefore, caterpillars and other pests have ravaged the crop, and his harvest was poor.

As Moussa cannot read or write, it was difficult for him to follow the trainings given, and his children could not help him either. Moussa's family has not had the chance to make progress.

**Message:** *Children who go to school do not become lazy. Instead, they provide a better growing performance and ultimately, more profit for the whole family.*







# Picture 11

**Q. What are Abou and his wife doing?**

**A.** Abou's family is preparing to bring the harvested cotton to the market. Abou carries the heavy bags, while his wife is filling the donkey cart.

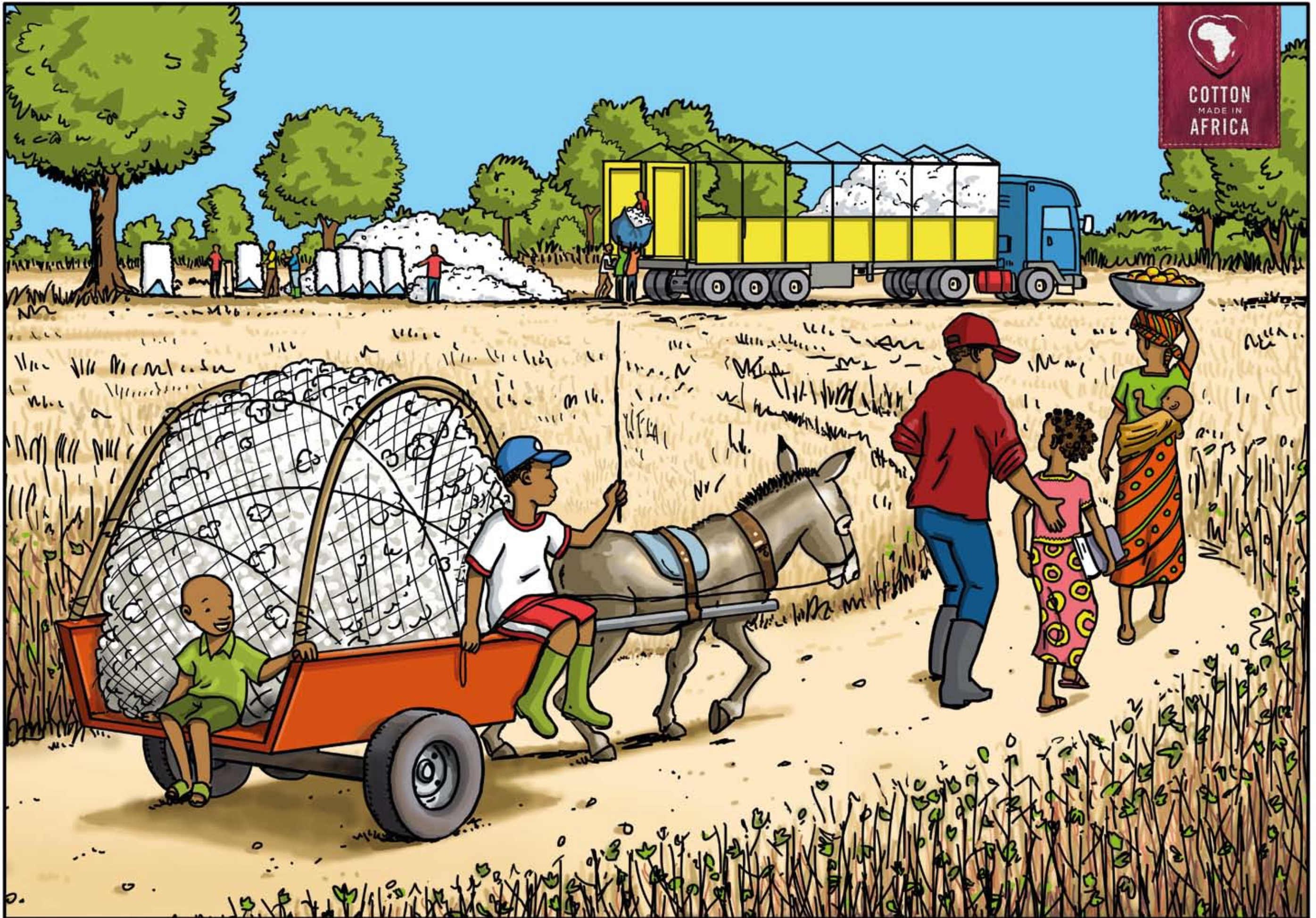


**Q. What are the children doing?**

**A.** The boy \_\_\_\_\_ (put boy's name) is stamping the cotton. His sister \_\_\_\_\_ (girl's name) brings water. Behind, in the tree's shade, we can see the donkey and the little brother playing with the baby.

**Message:** *The whole family is participating according to the strength of each one : only adults carry heavy loads. All tasks that can damage the children's growth and their health are prohibited by law.*







## Picture 12

**Q. What can you see on the picture?**

**A.** \_\_\_\_\_ (boy's name) has asked to guide the donkey cart to the cotton market. Traditionally, children and young adults take care of the animals. As they are smaller than adults, animals are often less scared of them, leading to good relations.

Behind, we can see the market where the men are loading the cotton onto the truck. Abou's wife takes fruit to the market to sell them at the market.



**Q. Can the children also carry cotton bales?**

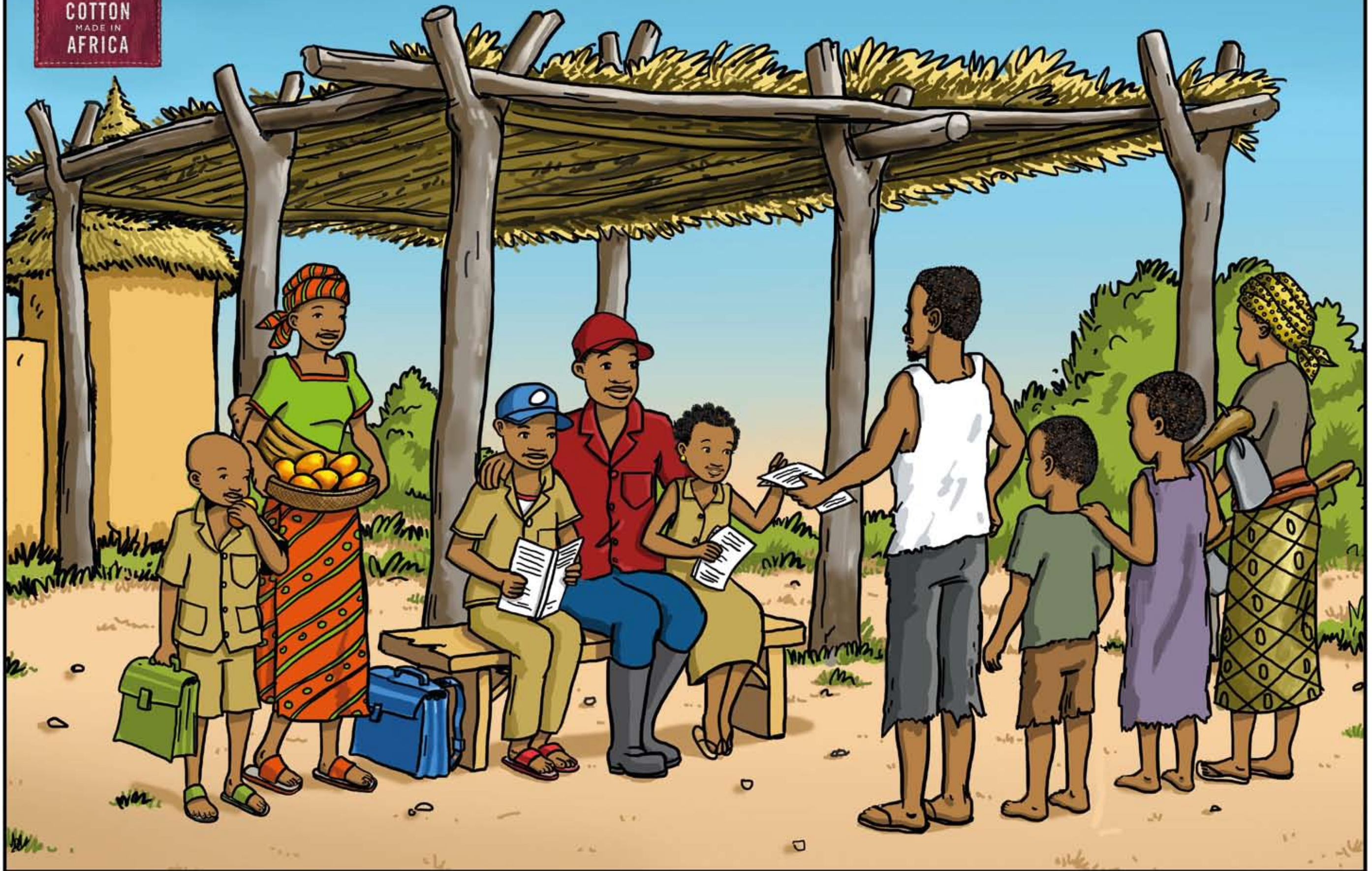
**A.** No. It is strictly forbidden that children and adolescents carry heavy loads as this can cause damage to their growth. Loading the truck with heavy loads is a hard work that only adult men should do.

**Message:** Cotton marketing is an important moment for all farmers and for the whole family. A good cotton harvest and reasonably used inputs mean good incomes for a whole year.





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## Picture 13

**Q. What are Abou and his family doing?**

**A.** Abou and his family are relaxing, looking at the year's cotton production accounts. Their neighbor Moussa stops by to ask if Abou's daughter can read an important document for him, as he cannot read.

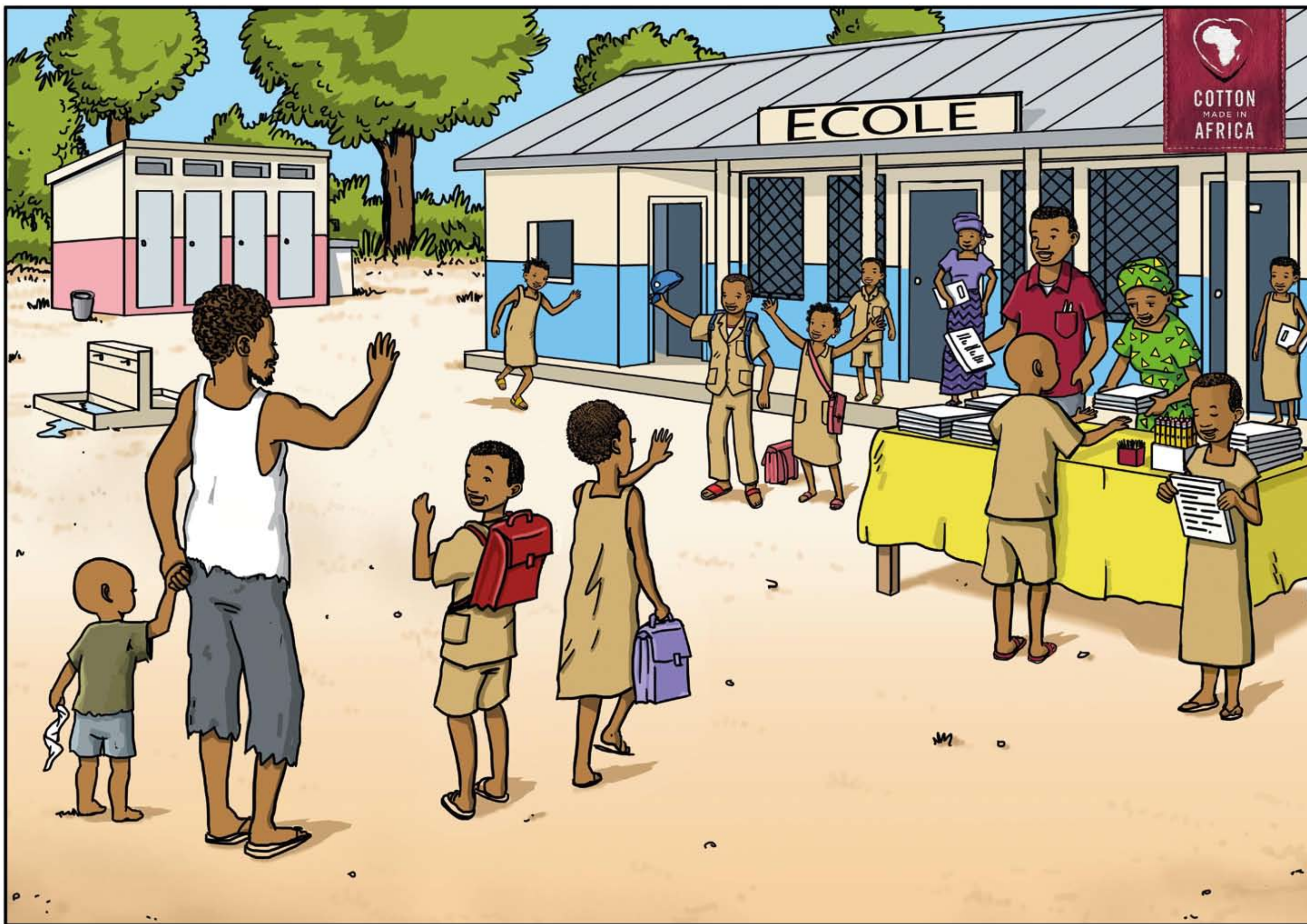
At school, children acquire knowledge to which parents sometimes have no access. They can also read the contracts, labels, notices, expiration dates and production slips.

**Q. What can children become who go to school?**

**A.** With the knowledge transmitted to them at school, children can help their families improve their living conditions. Children can also develop their talents and, if they work hard at school, become teachers, midwives, engineers, accountants or agronomists.









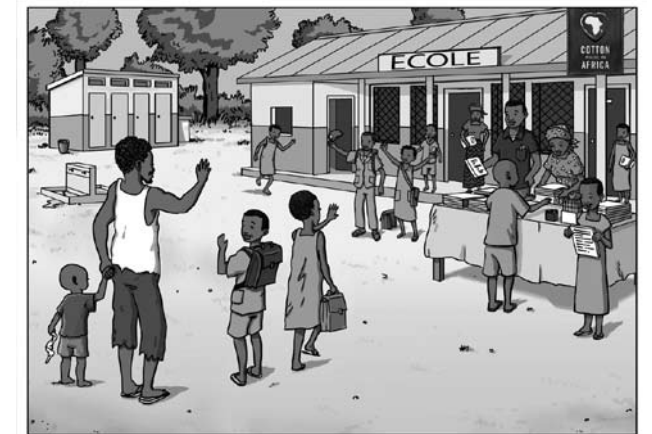
## Picture 14

**Q. What do you see in the picture?**

**A.** It's the beginning of the school year. Abou's children are happy with the arrival of Moussa's children at their school.

**Q. What has made Moussa change his mind and send his two older children to school?**

**A.** Moussa has observed Abou and his family throughout the year. He has understood that education provides better opportunities for children and the entire family: health, wellness, higher crop yields and more income. Moussa has decided to invest in the best way by sending his children to school also.









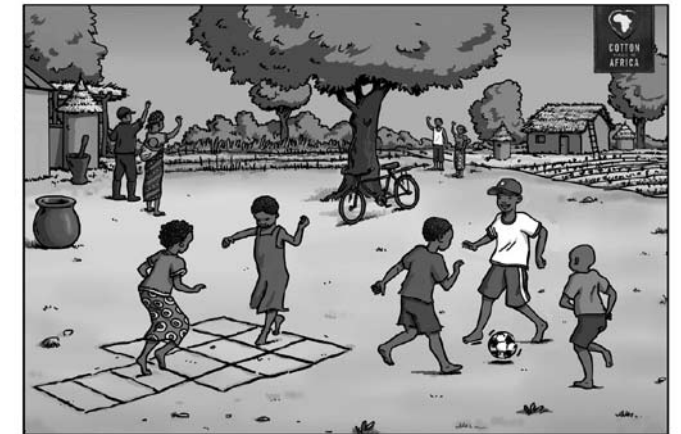
## Picture 15

**Q. What do you see in the picture?**

**A.** It's the weekend and school is out. Abou's and Moussa's children are playing and relaxing together.

**Q. Why is it important for children to do so?**

**A.** Children have the right to play. Playing is also absolutely necessary to their health and proper development.





## Aid by Trade Foundation

The Aid by Trade Foundation was created in 2005 by Dr. Michael Otto, an entrepreneur from Hamburg, Germany as an independent organization from the Otto Group. Its goal is to provide aid by trade for people to help themselves, thereby preserving vital natural resources and securing the livelihoods of future generations. The Aid by Trade Foundation is the umbrella organization of Cotton made in Africa and realizes its goals through this initiative.

## Imprint

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