



Position Paper on Gender Equality

COTTON MADE IN AFRICA

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1 Gender Equality

→ With its **Cotton made in Africa (CmiA)** initiative, the **Aid by Trade Foundation (AbTF)** aims to promote sustainable cotton production in social, economic, and ecological terms. AbTF shares the United Nations' view on the importance of gender equality as outlined in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically SDG 5. It is therefore essential for AbTF to tackle the problem of discrimination against women and to promote gender awareness and gender equality.

As farmers and workers, women greatly contribute to the cotton sector. They also take care of their families, maintain the wellbeing of their communities, and perform numerous unpaid household activities. However, women face a variety of interrelated challenges specific to their gender, including poor access to resources (e.g. land, credit, input, and time) and opportunities (e.g. education,

networks, and representation). In addition to violating a basic human right, this gender gap reduces their productivity and impedes positive development.

AbTF is aware that gender inequality is as complex as the circumstances that are causing it. Through the CmiA standard, its assurance system, and complementary activities, AbTF addresses various forms and root causes of gender inequality. In cooperation with relevant stakeholders, such as partnering cotton companies, we take action to empower women, to promote equal access to resources and opportunities, and to make women's voices heard. Only when the human rights of women are respected and gender equality is attained can a truly sustainable cotton production be achieved, contributing to improved living and working conditions for small-scale cotton farmers and ginnery workers.



2 Challenges: Why and How to Act

→ Despite their contributions to social and economic development, women's priorities and their economic and human rights have been largely overlooked, not only by decision makers but also by society at large (UN Women 2012). The resources and opportunities available to women are clearly limited, resulting in an imbalance between men and women (FAO 2011).

This runs counter to the principles of gender equality, which aim to ensure that women enjoy fundamental human rights, equal treatment, and balanced access to resources and opportunities. Further areas of focus include enabling women to develop freely and to realise their own potential. Working towards gender equality therefore goes hand in hand with empowering women and fostering non-discrimination.

3 Vision: What We Want to Achieve

→ AbTF envisions participation as well as access to resources and opportunities for women on equal terms with men, offering women the chance of personal development. Our aim is a sustainable cotton sector across Sub-Saharan Africa with partners who comply with the CmiA standard. Through the standard and additional activities, we seek to develop empowered communities and partners that foster and value gender equality. In acknowledgement of the United Nations' *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women* and the African Union's *African Charter on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women*, we strive for communities and partners that respect women's human rights and fight all forms of discrimination against women.

We envision a social environment that offers opportunities for all to develop in their best interest, regardless of gender, and in which everyone is protected from harmful work and has free access to decent working conditions. We work to offer women the capacity to raise their voices and participate in representative bodies such as farmer groups. This will enable women to benefit from an equal share of the wealth and prosperity to which they contribute.



4 Our Approach: What We Do

→ Empirical evidence shows that female farmers, when having equal access to land and inputs, are as successful as their male counterparts (FAO 2011:5). In addition, women are particularly likely to invest their income in their family, including in their children's healthcare and education, thus making a special contribution to the wellbeing of their families. AbTF is committed to creating conditions that enable female farmers and employees in cotton companies to further develop this productive potential. This includes working at cotton companies and in communities to raise awareness of women's potential for economic success as well as for positive development in general.

For CmiA, gender equality is tightly interwoven with women's empowerment and non-discrimination efforts. Women's empowerment means increasing the ability of women to make their voices heard and to participate on equal terms with men through equal access to resources and opportunities, thereby ultimately enabling them to bring about change and promote growth and development. Non-discrimination encompasses all efforts to prevent women from being singled out, excluded, or restricted in a way that hinders them from enjoying their human rights and fundamental freedoms in all spheres of life.¹ More tangibly, our actions address the following areas:

4.1 Implementation and Assurance

CmiA promotes gender equality through specific gender-related criteria and indicators in its standard. These are interrelated with women's empowerment and non-discrimination. CmiA requires its partners to make policy commitments and perform due diligence in order to minimise risks regarding gender inequality and the violation of women's rights. Cotton companies must ensure equal pay for equal work² and must protect working mothers. This includes offering maternity leave, the right to return to work after maternity leave, and additional breaks for breastfeeding mothers³. To provide women with equal opportunities in work and career advancement, cotton companies are furthermore required to maintain a written gender policy as well as a non-discrimination policy or code of conduct. Farmers and workers must be properly informed of these policies. Access to training for female farmers has to be ensured, and training material on gender equality should be provided. In addition, representatives must be nominated to act on gender issues at the field and ginnery levels. Partners need to gather sex-disaggregated data at the

ginnery and farm levels to assist CmiA in understanding the extent of women's engagement and in identifying needs for further improvements. CmiA also encourages partners to have a gender-sensitive grievance mechanism in place and to take corrective and positive action in areas where discrimination against women can occur. Although not explicitly addressing gender and women's rights, further criteria complement these efforts, e.g. with girls directly benefiting from the exclusion of child labour. At ginneries, CmiA promotes social and health protection, including through social insurance contributions and paid leave. By requiring labour regulations to be implemented and maintained, CmiA ensures that workers' rights are respected, which has the knock-on effect of deterring practices of gender inequality. CmiA discourages gender-based discrimination and fosters the recognition of freedom of association (including workers' right to form trade unions, engage in collective bargaining, and establish women's groups and representative bodies). With these complementary measures, CmiA establishes the foundation for decent working conditions for all.

1 See also Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa

2 See C100 - Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951

3 See C183 - Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 and C156 - Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981



4.2 Cooperation, Awareness, and Training

In addition to the measures for gender equality laid out in the CmiA standard, multiple CmiA activities aid partners in addressing gender equality on a broader scale. CmiA is thereby reaching out to the communities in which CmiA cotton is produced, promoting women's participation and gender equality within and beyond the sphere of cotton production.

CmiA cooperates with key stakeholders to share knowledge on the effects of gender inequality, to empower women, and to promote best practices for addressing these topics. This includes raising awareness of gender issues at the level of farmer groups and worker organisations as well as capacitating female producers to participate in decision-making.

Training courses in sustainable cotton cultivation are adapted to the needs of female participants. Women are trained as lead farmers to strengthen their role within the training groups. Gender equality training encourages participants to see men and women as equals, e.g. with husband and wife working as an evenly matched team to face challenges and exploit opportunities together. It sensitises them to the harmfulness of stereotyped

gender roles and of the idea of superiority of either of the sexes. Through training and guidance, CmiA helps change attitudes regarding the value of women and fosters new ideas on women's contributions to economic success and development. CmiA also provides materials to raise awareness about gender-related harassment and abuses and to inform workers about their rights and the procedure for reporting violations of integrity and women's rights via a gender-sensitive grievance mechanism.

Through AbTF's CmiA Community Cooperation Programme (CCCP), partners can implement projects to specifically support female farmers beyond cotton cultivation, for example by providing seed money for women's groups to kick-start income-generating activities. Further efforts focus on health and education. By building wells, the programme also improves the living conditions of women, as it is traditionally women and girls who go to draw water, sometimes having to walk long distances on unsafe paths with the heavy load. Through numerous initiatives for women's empowerment and gender equality, CmiA strengthens women's rights and position in society.





5 Summary

→ Improving the living conditions of small-scale farmers and ginnery workers in Sub-Saharan Africa is at the heart of CmiA's interests. It is directly associated with the advancement of women. Despite substantially contributing to social and economic development, women face discrimination regarding their capacities, the value of their work, and their productivity due to their gender. At the same time, they lack the access to resources and opportunities available to men.

CmiA provides a framework to help prevent and eliminate gender inequality in cotton production. The CmiA standards set out clear criteria regarding gender equality and women's empowerment. We encourage the non-discriminatory provision of resources, services, and opportunities. This includes pay and benefits, terms and conditions of employment, complaint mechanisms, and flexibility regarding work, training, and other opportunities available to women at the farm and ginnery levels.

Beyond the implementation and verification of its standards, CmiA mobilises stakeholders and resources to foster women's empowerment and to improve their living conditions and access to healthcare and education. CmiA addresses gender equality in multiple ways, including through the CmiA standards, its assurance system, and training and other initiatives that advocate for women. CmiA promotes human rights and non-discrimination for women, fosters equal access and control over resources, and raises awareness that gender equality makes economic sense. Ultimately, CmiA is contributing to better living conditions for small-scale cotton farmers and ginnery workers and to a more sustainable cotton production throughout Sub-Saharan Africa.





Concrete Action

Together with its partners, AbTF engages in development initiatives under the CmiA Community Cooperation Programme (CCCP). One priority for CCCP projects is to empower women, for example through the following measures:

- I. By building wells, CCCP projects improve the living conditions of women, saving them a lot of effort and freeing up time, for example for girls to attend school.
- II. The construction of dormitories for girls, as for example in Tanzania, also makes it easier for girls to attend secondary school, as they no longer have to make unsafe journeys to school but can sleep safely at the school.
- III. The construction of a health centre with a maternity ward in rural Tanzania greatly improved medical services for women in particular.
- IV. In cooperation with the Ana kwa Ana foundation and partnering cotton companies in Zambia, CmiA has been able to support gender officers at cotton companies who also assist local women's clubs. Beyond representing and addressing gender issues within the cotton companies, gender officers play a crucial role in advocating for women and offering training on issues such as HIV/AIDS sensitisation, basic economic skills (e.g. financial and budgetary planning), nutrition, child labour, and gender roles at home. In addition, gender officers provide moral support when the clubs have difficulties and practical advice on how to carry out club activities. They help the clubs structure their ideas and make solid plans for the future.
- V. In Tanzania, CmiA worked with an NGO, African People and Wildlife, to enable women to produce and sell wildlife-friendly honey in a self-sufficient way. The women's beekeeping initiative makes it possible for rural women to reap the financial benefits of conservation while preserving critical grasslands and corridors for wildlife. Linking women's economic empowerment with environmental protection, the project leads to more inclusive decision-making in the community and increases participants' leadership capacity, confidence in entrepreneurship skills, and status as income-generating community members.

Overview of CCCP projects (as of February 2021):

GENDER	HEALTH	EDUCATION	ENVIRONMENT
<p>70 women's clubs supported</p> <p>3 further projects for income generation and business skills</p>	<p>88 wells</p> <p>3 health centres</p> <p>410 latrines</p> <p>22 health clubs at schools (WASH)</p>	<p>90 classrooms</p> <p>66 canteens</p> <p>53 school gardens</p> <p>8 teacher houses</p> <p>1 girls' dormitory</p> <p>1 vocational training project</p> <p>34,000+ books & uniforms distributed</p> <p>5,000+ adult literacy beneficiaries</p>	<p>22 solar energy buildings</p> <p>220 eco-activists supported in recycling pesticide containers</p>



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AID BY TRADE FOUNDATION

The Aid by Trade Foundation (AbTF) was founded in 2005 by Prof. Dr. Michael Otto, an entrepreneur from Hamburg, Germany. The aim of the foundation, which operates independently of the Otto Group, is to help people to help themselves through trade, thereby preserving vital natural resources and securing the livelihoods of future generations.

With the Cotton made in Africa (CmiA) initiative, AbTF is putting its principles into practice. The trade partners of the CmiA Demand Alliance source African cotton produced according to the CmiA standard and pay the foundation a volume-based license fee that is reinvested in the cultivation areas. Consumers recognise products by the CmiA label and make a valuable contribution to protecting the environment and supporting smallholder farmers and their families in Africa.

