

2023 | Humana on the African market

Sorting and sales of second-hand clothing



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Cover image: Packaging in bales. DAPP Malawi. Photo: Tatyana Naeva.

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1. SUMMARY

The report examines Humana People to People's (Humana) efforts to ensure transparency and traceability in the second-hand textile trade. It focuses on Humana's activities in four African countries (Malawi, Mozambique, Angola, and Guinea-Bissau) and aims to document the material flow, working conditions, and waste management.

Export of Textiles to Africa

- In 2023, Humana's textile collection organizations, in eight countries, covered by this report (Denmark, Finland, Germany, Italy, Norway, Slovakia, Spain and Sweden) collected 85,871 tons of second-hand clothing.
- After sorting in Europe, 23% of the textiles were exported to Africa, with 9% going to Humana's African sorting and sales organizations in Angola, Guinea-Bissau, Malawi and Mozambique covered by this report.
- Pre-sorting in Europe removes waste and damaged items before export.

Import and Sorting in Africa

- The total import to Humana's African sorting centres was 13,711 tons in 2023.
- 79% of imports were "Tropical Mix", while 11% were winter products.
- Textiles are sorted into specific categories before resale or donation.

Waste Management

- According to reports from the four African sorting centres, waste from sorting is less than 0.4% of total imports.
- The waste is either recycled or delivered to local municipal waste treatment.
- There are strong indications that local waste treatment is insufficient in terms of environmental impact compared to what we know in European countries.

Employment and Working Conditions

- Sorting centres provide stable employment, with wages above the national average.
- Employees receive health insurance, meals, and transport.
- Training is required for sorting staff to ensure quality control.

Recommendations for further work in Humana's African sorting centres

- Improve waste treatment documentation.
- Gather data on defects in imported textiles.
- Assess the volume of unsold textiles in wholesale and retail.

2. ABOUT THE REPORT

The Humana People to People ('Humana') federation are working for more transparency and traceability in the business sector for used textiles. Traceability in the value chain of used textiles is a crucial aspect of promoting sustainability, resource efficiency, quality assurance, ethical practices, and consumer empowerment within the textile industry.

Textiles collected for reuse have received increasing public attention in recent years. It has been documented that the reuse of textiles provides environmental benefits by keeping the textiles in use for a longer time and reducing the consumption of new textiles. Also, positive socio-economic effects like profits for charitable purposes, job creation etc.

On the other hand, negative claims indicate that export of used textiles to Africa, Asia and South America creates waste problems there and outperform local textile industry. The critics have to some extent succeeded in creating distrust in the second-hand clothing (SHC) sector, locally as well as globally. It affects political decisions and European legislation regarding international textile production and trade. To enable politicians to build legislations on facts, transparency and documentation of the SHC sector, its volumes and flows, environmental and socio-economic effects, are crucial.

The purpose of this report is to:

- Trace the export of textiles to Africa originated from collection by eight Humana organizations in Europe (Denmark, Finland, Germany, Italy, Norway, Slovakia, Spain and Sweden), hereafter called "Humana-8".
- Investigate Humana's textile operations in four African countries (Malawi, Mozambique, Angola and Guinea Bissau), hereafter called "DAPP/ADPP".
- The following issues have been investigated:
 - Documentation of material flow through the process
 - Destiny of sorted textiles with special emphasis on waste
 - Working conditions of employees (on an overall plan).

Method and sources for the report:

- **Interviews** with Tone Kvaestad, on behalf of DAPP Malawi . Tone works for The Federation Humana People to People, and with the Member Countries that are sorting and selling SHC in Africa, among them DAPP Malawi.
- **Data analysis** of textile flows based on Humana's Textile Transparency Reports.
- **Documentation** provided by Humana sorting centres in the four African countries, including their own reports and data.
- **Visual inspections and audits** of sorting centres, that Humana collector organizations are using in Europe (conducted by Mepex).
- **Information from Humana's website:** <https://www.humana.org/where-we-work> and sources.

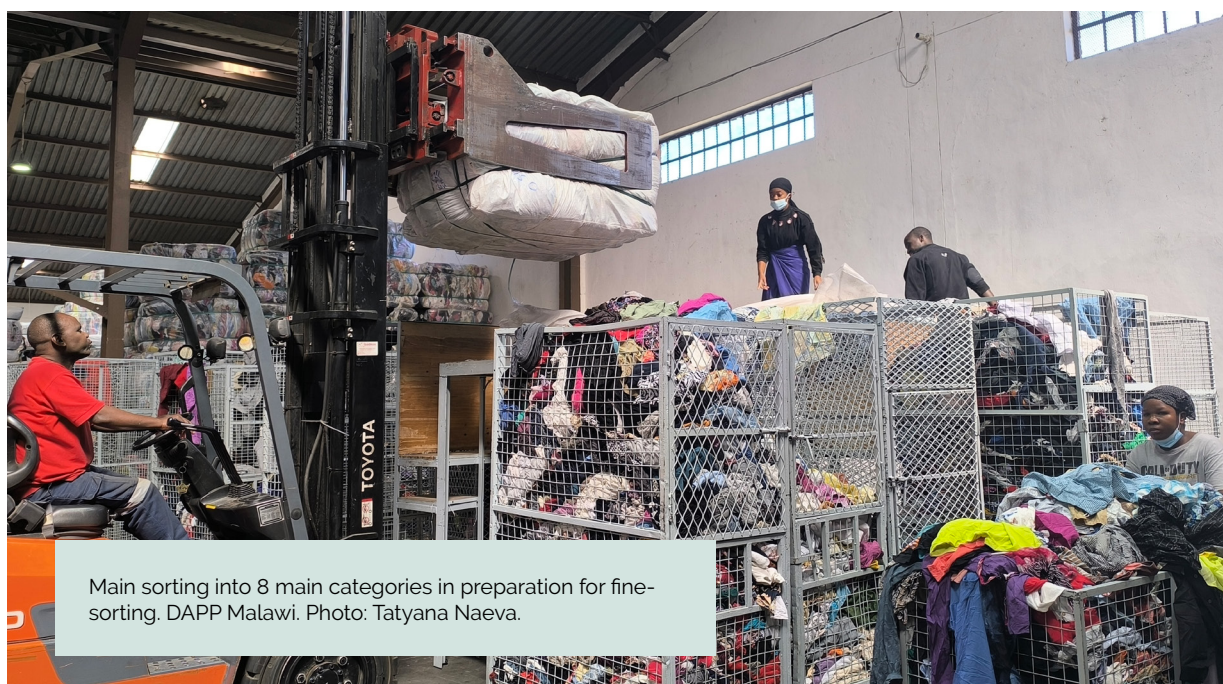
3. HUMANA PEOPLE TO PEOPLE

The federation Humana People to People ('Humana') counts 29 independent international charitable organisations, engaged in 46 countries in Europe, Africa, Asia and America. In 2023, Humana invested approximately 129 million USD in education and development projects worldwide. Of this, 24.6% was funded through Humana's second-hand textiles business.

The Humana's second-hand textiles business related to the collection- and sale of second-hand textiles is connected to Humana's organizations in the US and Europe. Textiles are collected, sorted and sold in Humana's own second hand stores, or sold to other customers, often sorting facilities. A large part of the collected textiles is sorted in Humana's own sorting centres, but significant quantities are also sold to independent commercial sorting facilities.

Most of the collected second-hand textiles are sold for reuse and recycling in the home markets in Europe, but a substantial part is exported to African countries. This applies both to Humana's collection and to other players in the worldwide market for second-hand textiles. The reason for this is that there is a surplus of textile qualities that are better suited in Africa than in the domestic markets where the textiles are collected combined with a demand in the African market for second hand textiles.

Humana has established sorting centres in Angola, Guinea-Bissau, Malawi and Mozambique where imported second-hand textiles undergo further fine sorting before being sold in Humana's local stores or to other sellers in the local market. The purpose of sorting textiles in these countries is to ensure better, and more market-adapted qualities and to enhance local development.



4. EXPORT OF SECOND HAND TEXTILES

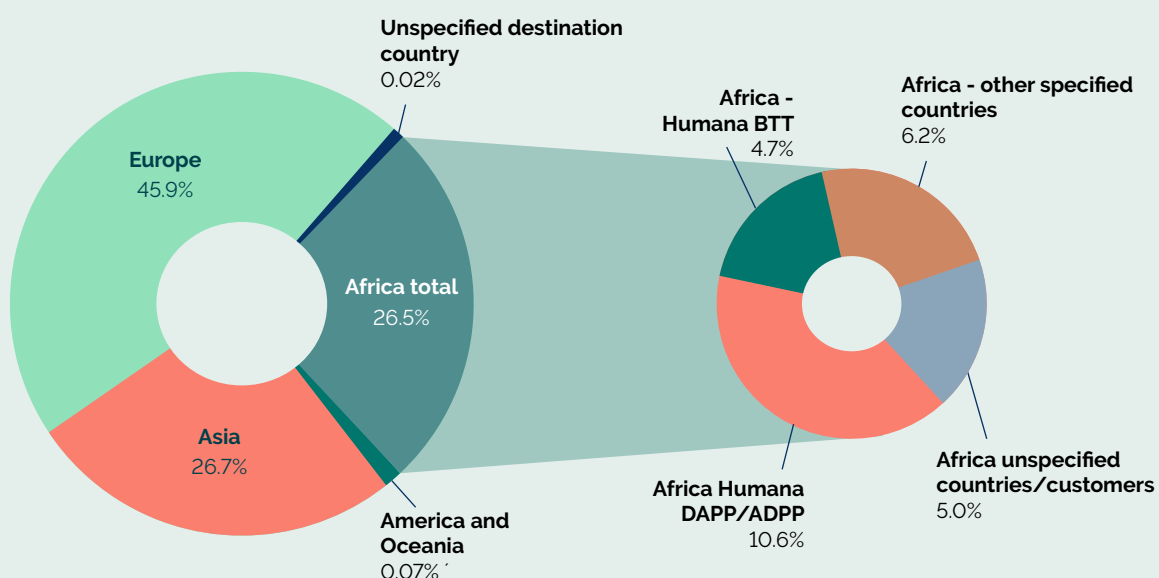
The export figures are based on the data collected related to the Textile Transparency Reports for Humana collection organisations in Denmark, Finland, Germany, Italy, Norway, Slovakia, Spain and Sweden ("Humana-8"). The data describes the flow of second-hand textiles from these collection organisations in 2023, and 35 sorting centres in Europe receiving these textiles.

In this report we apply the same assumption as in the Textile Transparency Report; that for each sorting centre, the quality of the textiles from the Humana-8 is at least equal to the average quality of the total amounts of textiles received at the sorting centres.

The Humana-8 collected in total 85,871 tons of second-hand clothing in 2023. The 35 sorting centres that have reported to Mepex accounts for 97% of the total amount's textiles collected, hence most collected textiles are included in the calculations.

Most of the sorting centres receive textiles from other customers in addition to the Humana-8. In total, the textiles from Humana-8 accounted for 55% of the total amount sorted at the 35 sorting centres that has reported. The numbers in Figure 1 and Table 1 are estimated with some degree of uncertainty since the sales reports from the sorting centres are not restricted to textiles received from Humana collection.

Figure 1. Destiny of collected textiles from eight Humana organizations after sorting in Europe 2023.

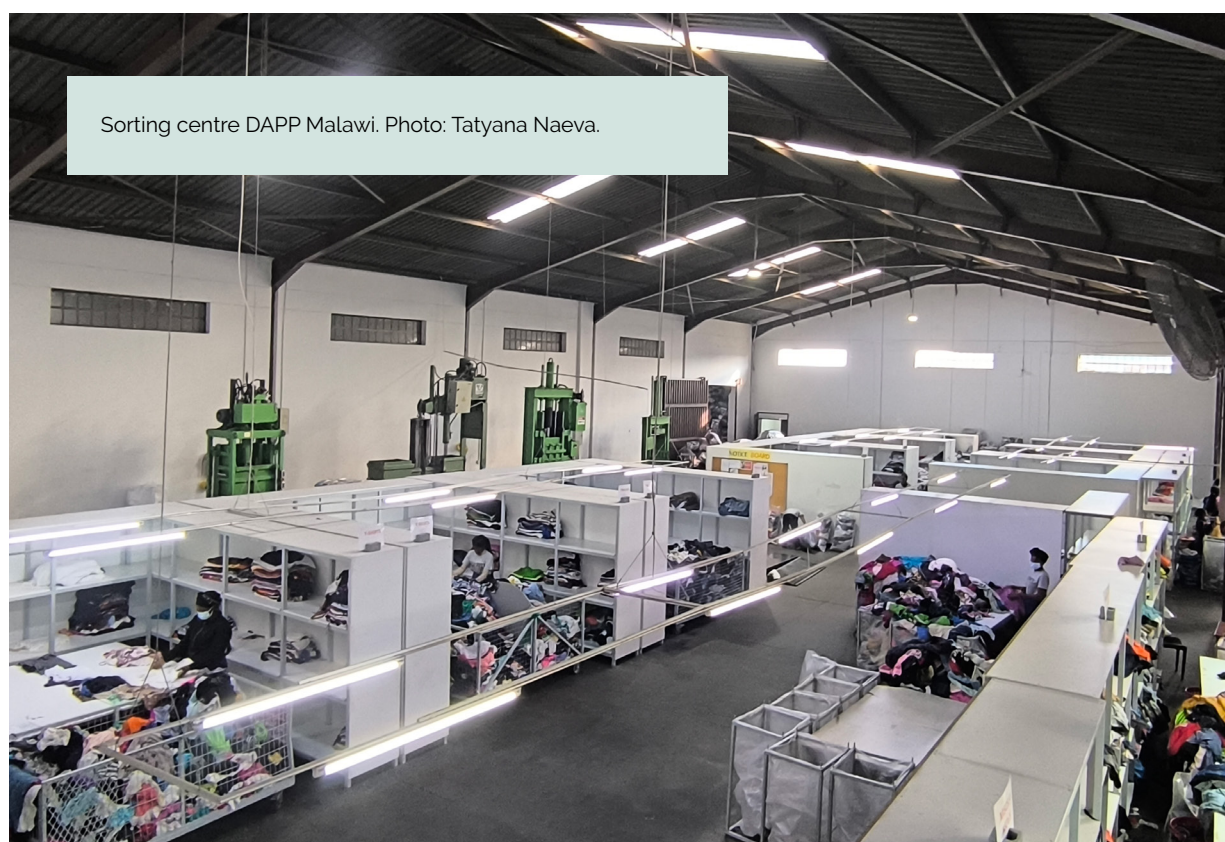


After sorting, the textiles are sold to customers around the world, as shown in Figure 1. Different customers and countries in Africa receive 26.5% of the total amount of textiles. Humana organisations in four African countries (DAPP/ADPP), which are the focus of this report, receive 10.6 % of the total. Other customers in Africa are BTT¹ (also Humana) in Kenya and Uganda (4.7 %), other specified customers (6.2 %) and unspecified customers in Africa (5.0 %).

Based on the information available, the textiles exported to Africa are found to be primarily reuse qualities, where waste and damaged items are sorted out in Europe before export. The exception from this is some few examples of export of either original or pre-sorted textiles to sorting centres in Tunisia where the waste from the sorting process are treated locally.

The sorting centres in Europe informs us that the exported textiles are sorted qualities specifically intended for the African market and does not include waste or broken textiles not suitable for reuse. This claim has also been subject to control by several audits carried out by Mepex at sorting centres during the last years. At the audits we perform visual inspections of the sorting process, documentation and random control of shipment documents, invoices etc.

The main purpose of these audits is to check whether the sorting facilities have credible and robust solutions for registration and reporting and their capabilities to separate between textiles for reuse, recycling and waste. Admittedly, we have not focused specifically on checking whether Africa qualities meet the specific requirements of customers in Africa. Nevertheless, based on our observations, we are under the impression that the qualities intended for export to Africa are indeed of reuse quality.



¹ *Baltic Textile Trading is a part of Humana, with import companies in Kenya and Uganda. It is decided not to include them in the scope of this report.*

Table 1. Textiles collected by Humana-8 sold to African countries. Calculated. 2023

Country	Textiles collected from Humana-8 2023 calculated (tons)	Share	Comment with reference to Figure 1
Kenya	3 888	19,11 %	Mostly BTT
Africa	3 114	15,31 %	Africa unspecified
Africa del Sur	3 071	15,09 %	DAPP/ADPP
Benin	1 633	8,03 %	Africa other specified
Malawi	1 482	7,29 %	DAPP/ADPP
Mozambique	1 135	5,58 %	DAPP/ADPP
Togo	974	4,79 %	Africa other specified
Zambia	895	4,40 %	Africa other specified
Angola	886	4,36 %	DAPP/ADPP
Congo	843	4,14 %	Africa other specified
Uganda	596	2,93 %	Mostly BTT
Ivory Coast	484	2,38 %	Africa other specified
Burkina Faso	439	2,16 %	Africa other specified
Senegal	425	2,09 %	Africa other specified
Mali	179	0,88 %	Africa other specified
Tanzania	89	0,44 %	Africa other specified
Mauritania	89	0,44 %	Africa other specified
Cameroon	52	0,26 %	Africa other specified
Botswana	31	0,15 %	Africa other specified
Somalia	17	0,08 %	Africa other specified
Gabon	15	0,07 %	Africa other specified
South Africa	7	0,03 %	Africa other specified
Total Africa	20 346	100,00 %	

4.1. Pre-sorting in Europe before export

Second-hand textiles exported to Africa by Humana-8, or its subcontractors, are always pre-sorted² before export. Waste (non-textiles) and damaged textiles have been removed, and the items are checked to be consistent with defined categories for the African market.

The pre-sorting in Europe follows detailed sorting criteria developed by people that have been working long term with the relevant second-hand market in Africa. Each of these qualities are defined in written procedures which is communicated by the African sorting centre to the exporter.

In the following, we aim to describe how the textiles are characterized and pre-sorted before export. It is important to be aware that description gives a simplified picture of the sorting regime, and that in practice it is more nuanced.

Roughly speaking, we can say that the bales HPP's sorting centres in Africa receive are pre-sorted into at least six main categories each of which indicates the market and assumed saleability, "shop quality", "tropical mix", "handbags", "mixed Africa shoes", "winter mix", "WCCR"³. "Tropical mix" is by far the biggest quantity that the HPP sorting centers are receiving. Tropical mix is also the only of the 6 main categories that is sorted at the HPP's sorting centres in Africa. All "shop quality", "handbags", "mixed Africa shoes" are sold as they are imported, without extra sorting, while "winter mix", "WCCR" are repacked into smaller bales.

Each of the main categories has defined in writing which types of textile product groups can, and must not, be included. Some examples of different textile product groups are shoes, bags, household textiles, t-shirts, skirts, and so on. The sorting centres in Europe must follow instructions for the quantity distribution (percentage or number) of the different textile product groups that must be in each bale. This is important so that the recipient does not get too much or too little of any textile product type.

In addition to sorting into at least 6 main categories (shop, tropical mix, winter mix etc) and product groups (jacket, trousers, etc.), they must also be assessed according to the levels of assumed marketability. This is referred to as cream, A-, B-, C-quality, and waste.

The sorting centres in Europe are also required to follow precise instructions for packaging, describing accepted packaging material, size and weight for the bale, and procedures for registration. Each bale usually weights between 400–450 kg.

² The exceptions for this are some exports of unsorted textiles to sorting centres in Tunisia, but this is a small proportion and these textiles and the waste that is removed are handled in the local market in Tunisia.

³ Children's mixed autumn and light winter rummage age 0-12

5. IMPORT TO ADPP/DAPP

The analysis in this section is based on detailed reports on received amounts from the sorting Humana centres in Africa. Table 2 shows the import of textiles from the different Humana sorting centres in Europe. The total import of textiles to ADPP/DAPP in 2023 equals 13,711 tons. About 13% is imported from non-Humana sorting centres (Bultex + other in Table 2) but the same quality criteria also apply to these.

Humana's sorting centres in Angola, Guinea Bissau, Mozambique and Malawi (ADPP/DAPP) exclusively imports pre-sorted textiles. This is confirmed through the reports we have received and through interviews conducted in the project. However, we have not made any physical checks of this beyond the audits mentioned here in the report.

The imported amounts Humana's four sorting centres in Africa (ADPP/DAPP) reports to us, have been compared to reports we have received from the sorting centres as part of the Humana-8 Textile Transparency reporting. The numbers match to a high degree. The differences are commented below the table. In one case (HPP Turkey) there is a significant mismatch, but we have not asked the respondents for an explanation.

Table 2 shows that a large share (79%) of the textiles imported are "Tropical mix" which is a mix of reuse textiles suitable for the African market. Interestingly, a significant amount (11%) of the imports are winter products. We have been informed that there is also a market for these products in the relevant markets.

Most of the import is packed in big bales (450 kg) as shown in Table 4. As can be seen in Table 5, the imported amounts are substantially higher than the amount sorted at all the four sorting centres. We have not asked for an explanation. Maybe the excess is stored at warehouse.



Closing bales and attaching labels with sorted textiles.
DAPP Malawi. Photo: Tatyana Naeva.



Table 2. Import of textiles by suppliers. Tons. 2023

Supplier	ADPP Angola	ADPP Guinea Bissau	ADPP Mozambique	DAPP Malawi	Total	Note
HPP-Madrid-Spain	282	492	887	1 090	2 751	2
HPP-Vilnius-Lithuania	456		577	1 241	2 274	1
HPP-Barcelona-Spain	72	193	813	542	1 619	2
HPP-Tallin-Estonia	335		240	687	1 262	1
HPP-Helsinki-Finland	536		521	91	1 148	1
HPP-Slovakia	156		100	478	733	3
HPP-Bulgaria	103		75	526	704	4
HPP-Milan-Italy	73		289	285	647	1
Bultex-Bulgaria	234		149		383	1
HPP-Turkey			23	283	306	5
HPP-From Sweden, packed in HPP Bulgaria-Sweden	127			167	295	3
HPP-Berlin-Germany			72		72	1
HPP-Oman			24	0	24	1
Other	730			764	1 494	6
Total	3 104	685	3 768	6 155	13 711	

Notes:

1. Same amount are reported from exporter and importer.
2. Report from exporter only give total ("Africa del sur") which is near equal to the total imported.
3. Report from exporter only give total ("Federation") which is near equal to the total imported.
4. Report from exporter gives a total which we interpret as sum of the two supplier lines given in the import report.
5. Report from exporter don't match with import reports. Maybe this can be explained by volumes in transit. We have not asked the respondents for an explanation of this.
6. We haven't received reports from these exporters. Name of independent sorting centres (non-Humana) are omitted due to confidentiality matters.

Table 3. Import by categories. 2023.

Category of import	Tons	Share
Tropical Mix	10 859	79 %
Winter products	1 555	11 %
Shoes	985	7 %
Summer 2	313	2 %
Total	13 711	100 %

Table 4. Import by packaging. 2023.

Packaging type	Share of total import
Big Bales	88 %
Winter Clothes (all suppliers in 45kg+BB)	12 %
Small Bales (45 kg)	0,5 %
Original Bags	0,05 %
Total	100,00 %

Table 5. Import vs. sorting. Tons. 2023.

	ADPP Angola	ADPP Guinea Bissau	ADPP Mozambique	DAPP Malawi	Total
Imported	3 104	685	3 768	6 155	13 711
Sorted	2 033	550	2 516	4 662	9 760
Deviation	1 071	135	1 252	1 493	3 951



Control of imported textiles upon arrival. DAPP Malawi.
Photo: Tatyana Naeva.

6. SORTING AT ADPP/DAPP

6.1. Reception and quality control

When the textiles arrive at the sorting centre, they are received by the import officer, a guard and a representative from the sorting centre. The import officer ensures that the number of bales and the weight of each one are recorded. Afterwards, the data is checked with the packing list accompanying the container.

The import inspector checks 500 items from one selected bale per container. If it contains more than 5% defects, she checks two more bales from the same container. Quality deviations are reported to the supplier (exporter) and will be subject to financial reduction if significant.

We have not investigated the extent of such deviations in the project. Nor do we have information indicating that exports of unsorted textiles have occurred, or what consequences this may have if so.

Successively with registration and unloading, each bale is transported and stacked, by category (example "Shoes" or "Tropical mix").

6.2. Sorting

Later, the forklift driver transports one bale at a time with the desired category, for example "tropical mix", or "winter mix", to the area for fine sorting. Here the bales are opened manually and the first step in sorting at HPP's sorting centres starts.

First, the textiles are sorted into 8 main categories: "Children clothes", "T-shirts", "Blouses and shirts", "Dresses and skirts", "Trousers", "Miscellaneous", "Textiles", "Winter".

The various main categories are then transported to a new area suitable for "fine sorting". Here they are divided according to several levels: categories describing the products (e.g. shorts, $\frac{3}{4}$ trousers, ladies trousers, men's trousers, economy men's trousers, long-sleeved ladies T-shirt, short-sleeved ladies T-shirt, sleeveless ladies T-shirts, round-neck T-shirt, Polo T-shirt etc.) material, trend and style. The carefully sorted products are packed in bales of 15 kg and 45 kg.

All bales which have been weighed and labelled are registered in two books: "Production book", which contain all categories for the sorting centre and "Fine sorters book" where they monitor the production achievements of each sorter.

The 15- and 45- kilo bales, which contains specific product types, are stacked in the warehouse before they are later sold to various customer groups within the intended market and industry. Table 6 shows a breakdown of the sorting yields of the different sorting centres in 2023.

Table 6. Yield of sorting in percentages of total. 2023.

Main category	ADPP Angola	ADPP Guinea Bissau	ADPP Mozambique	DAPP Malawi	Total
K - Tropical Mix small bales	29,8 %	8,3 %	12,9 %	4,2 %	19,5 %
I - Economy	14,2 %	21,5 %	20,9 %	23,9 %	18,0 %
B - Ladies summer	10,2 %	15,5 %	12,9 %	19,5 %	12,5 %
A - Children summer	9,1 %	13,3 %	12,6 %	16,7 %	11,3 %
E - Textiles A+B	8,2 %	12,9 %	11,2 %	11,8 %	10,2 %
F - Children winter	7,7 %	7,4 %	7,7 %	1,7 %	7,3 %
D - Unisex summer	5,8 %	8,4 %	7,6 %	10,4 %	7,1 %
C - Mens summer	4,1 %	6,1 %	5,9 %	9,4 %	5,3 %
J - Shop Clothes own Production	4,2 %	0,0 %	3,2 %	0,0 %	2,9 %
H - Mens winter	2,6 %	4,7 %	2,1 %	0,8 %	2,8 %
G - Ladies winter	2,5 %	1,4 %	2,4 %	1,6 %	2,2 %
L - Donation Packages	1,1 %	0,0 %	0,1 %	0,0 %	0,5 %
Waste	0,3 %	0,4 %	0,5 %	0,0 %	0,4 %
Total	100,0 %	100,0 %	100,0 %	100,0 %	100,0 %

6.3. Control of sorted qualities

Integrated into the sorting process is a well-established control regime to ensure that the sorted qualities comply with the requirements described.

The chief sorters are responsible for checking the quality of each operator in the sorting. This is done by physically checking 2.000 units per day (approximately 15% of production).

The manager is then responsible for checking the work of the chief sorters, by spot checks and by focusing on issues from feedback from own stores or wholesale agents.

7. SALE OF SORTED TEXTILES

Sales of sorted textiles from the sorting facilities take place either through Humana's own local retail stores or as wholesale to buyers. In Malawi, sales to own retail stores accounted for 32% while wholesale accounted for 68%.



Warehouse sorted textiles . DAPP Malawi.
Photo: Tatyana Naeva.

8. WASTE FROM IMPORTED TEXTILES

Textiles exported to Africa ending up as waste have been a major issue that has attracted much attention in recent years. This is a topic that must be taken very seriously, and allegations should not be taken as fact without being thoroughly investigated.

8.1. Unintended content

Imported textiles to the DAPP/ADPP sorting centres are claimed to be sorted by the exporter before export. "Original from collection" is not exported to these sorting centres according to information from both exporters and importers. However, mistakes can happen in the pre-sorting, which can result in waste or damaged textiles that are not reusable in the African market. The extent of such mistakes should be very low. All sorting facilities in Europe have good routines for controlling their sorting processes.

Audits that Mepex carries out at sorting centres in Europe support the statement that second-hand textiles are pre-sorted before export to Africa. Information received in this project through both documentation and interviews also supports this. However, we cannot fully verify this information as we have not been physically present at the sorting facilities in Africa. The work on this report nevertheless gives us no cause for concern.

8.2. Appropriateness

Another factor is whether there is a market in Africa for the exported textiles. This is not about the presence of waste or damaged items but rather whether the sorting process in Europe aligns with the needs of the recipient country's market. If not, even perfectly usable textiles may become unsellable and ultimately end up as waste.

This topic has been a key focus in the interviews conducted. According to the responsible persons in the DAPP/ADPP organizations is that virtually all textiles are saleable in the markets they serve. They also claim to have close contact with customers through their own stores and through close contact with their customers. This gives them necessary information to adapt the sorting and sales processes according to the customer preferences.

Reports on the yield from the sorting show that a lot of work is put into a very detailed sorting into specific qualities. Textiles with low sales value and demand are given in donations and emergency aid through specific channels. Only a very small proportion is classified as waste.

8.3. Treatment of waste from sorted textiles

As shown in Table 6, the waste sorted out in Humana's African sorting centres is about 0.4% (36,5 tons) and about 0.5% (53,5 tons) are sorted for donations and emergency aid. Although the proportion of waste is small, it is still not insignificant and can contribute to an environmental problem if is not treated in an environmentally sound manner.

On this question we have not succeeded in uncovering the whole story. We are told that a significant portion of waste that is not textiles are reused or recycled locally. It is explained that this is a sought-after material that can be utilized with great creativity. This applies to packaging materials. Nevertheless, we must assume that damaged textiles or non-sellable textiles ends up as waste from the sorting process.

We are told that the waste that cannot be recycled is delivered to local waste collection points, but we have not come across any description or documentation of these treatment solutions. A report¹ covering the waste treatment situation in Malawi give evidence that the environmental standard in Western countries is far from implemented in Malawi when it comes to waste treatment. It is therefore strong indication that the treatment of waste does not meet our expectations in terms of environmental impact.



¹ TNO 2021 P11723. Development of a waste stream-specific roadmap for the circular economy of Malawi. (summary in chapter 11 Annex)

9. MANAGEMENT OF HUMANA'S SORTING CENTRES IN ANGOLA, GUINEA BISSAU, MOZAMBIQUE AND MALAWI

The African sorting centres are largely organised in a similar way to similar sorting centres in Europe. Routines for reception, sorting and control routines are described earlier in the report.

At the sorting centre in Malawi, which is the largest of the four covered in this report (45% of the imported textile volume), there are a total of 76 employees, of whom 53 are women and 23 are men.

The employees have one-year contracts with the possibility of extension. This is standard procedure in the applicable countries. We are informed that the employees pay, regardless of their role, are above tariff and what is normal for similar work. Additional remuneration according to position and a possibility of bonus for employees in the production process.

In these African countries it is common to work 5.5 days a week. At sorting centres organised by HPP workers have 47.8 hours/week. All employees get breakfast, lunch and refreshments at work, health insurance and a transport allowance as a benefit, that is paid out bi-weekly to their bank accounts. Reasons such as stable employment, welfare benefits and above-average wages makes it attractive to work for sorting facilities operated by HPP. On average, employees stay for five years, and the average age is 36.

Humana's sorting centres have employees (see table 1) in several different specified roles. Cleaning, kitchen, cashier and dispatch of goods, are examples of roles that are not directly involved with the textiles. Otherwise, there are sorters, fine sorters, those who transport the textiles inside the sorting area, bale presses, weight registration, as well as quality control, production manager and centre manager.

Not just anyone can sort the clothes, shoes and textiles. It requires thorough and long training before one can sort quickly and correctly.

10. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This report shows that the Humana's sorting centres and sales organizations for second-hand textiles in the four African countries are in many ways on a par with their counterparts in Europe when it comes to the management of the business, requirements for imported and sorted qualities, and focus on maximum utilization of the textiles. This is in strong contradiction to several of the claims that are made about the export of textiles to Africa.

We have identified some areas for further improvement:

1

Improve waste treatment documentation.

In the debate about the export of textiles to Africa, the question of irresponsible waste management is a main argument against this export. On this question we have not succeeded in uncovering the whole story. Although the documentation this report indicates that the proportion of waste is small, it is not insignificant and can contribute to an environmental problem. We are told that a significant portion of waste that is not textiles is reused or recycled locally. When it comes to non-reusable waste, we are told that this is delivered to local/municipal waste treatment, but we have not come across any description or documentation of these treatment solutions for this specific waste. When it comes to waste treatment in Malawi in general, there is strong evidence that it is not up to general standards in western countries.

2

Gather data on defects in imported textiles.

The documentation shows that there are precise requirements for the quality of textiles to be exported, including that waste (non-textiles) and unusable textiles should not occur. However, we lack better documentation of deviations from these requirements that are discovered upon receipt in the African sorting centres, and what countermeasures are taken against the exporters in question. Registered quality deviations in imported shipments should be recorded.

3

Assess information on the volume of unsold textiles in wholesale and retail.

An important question related to textile waste in Africa is whether the exported textiles are in demand and saleable in the African market. Unsaleable textiles will have a risk of ending up as waste. This report shows that there are communicated quality requirements for imported textiles. These requirements have been developed based on local market knowledge. However, we lack more knowledge about the extent of textiles that are not saleable. We understand that unsaleable textiles from Humana's own local stores are returned and handled at sorting facilities. When it comes to wholesale, such knowledge is not communicated to us.

11. APPENDIX

11.1 TNO 2021 P11723. Development of a waste stream-specific roadmap for the circular economy of Malawi.

Summary of report with help from AI.

Waste management in Malawi faces significant challenges due to inadequate infrastructure, weak regulatory enforcement, and rapid urbanization. The country's waste disposal systems are underdeveloped, leading to widespread environmental and public health issues. Most waste is either openly dumped or burned, with minimal recycling or formal waste collection services in place. Municipalities struggle with waste management due to limited funding, technical capacity, and lack of public awareness regarding proper waste disposal practices.

Status

The waste management sector in Malawi is characterized by poor collection and disposal mechanisms. Only a small fraction of municipal solid waste is collected, primarily in urban centers such as Lilongwe and Blantyre. Rural areas, which constitute a significant portion of the population, lack formal waste management services entirely. Landfills, where they exist, are largely unregulated and operate as open dumpsites without proper environmental safeguards. The informal sector plays a significant role in waste recycling, but it remains inefficient and uncoordinated.

Environmental Challenges

Malawi's waste management deficiencies contribute to severe environmental problems. Open dumping leads to land and water pollution, as waste often finds its way into rivers, lakes, and groundwater sources, posing risks to drinking water quality. The widespread practice of open burning releases harmful pollutants, including dioxins and particulate matter, which degrade air quality and pose respiratory health risks. Additionally, plastic waste is a growing concern, as it accumulates in the environment and disrupts ecosystems, particularly in aquatic habitats.

Climate change further exacerbates these problems, as increased flooding events worsen waste dispersion and contamination. Without urgent interventions, Malawi's waste management issues will continue to undermine environmental sustainability and public health.

Conclusion

Addressing waste management challenges in Malawi requires a multi-faceted approach, including stronger policy implementation, investment in waste collection infrastructure, and public education initiatives. Enhancing recycling programs and integrating informal waste pickers into the formal economy could also improve efficiency and reduce environmental impact. Urgent action is necessary to prevent further environmental degradation and protect public health.