

green know ledge

for fashion lovers



IN SUSTAINABILITY WE TRUST

WORLD OF WOOL

Make wool, not war! The Wool Alliance puts the spotlight on animal welfare, proving that knitwear can still work in harmony with nature.

DUE DILIGENCE

Transparency, traceability, living wages – progress is finally being made. Also highly anticipated: the German Supply Chain Due Diligence Act that comes into effect in 2023.

DENIM TASKFORCE

Collaboration over competition, especially when it comes to sustainability goals – an opinion shared by Andrew Olah, founder of Kingpins and the Transformers Foundation.

FEMALE FORCES:

Women in the Ethiopian textile industry

→ BY MINA SCHMIDT

When Mekiya Hussien was asked what she wanted to be when she was older, she would always answer, “a lawyer”. Although she didn’t end up becoming one in the end, she is still representing the people whose voices often go unheard. Because Hussien is not only Head of Maintenance at the Desta garment factory in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, but also chairperson of the workers union there. It isn’t exactly an easy job, especially for a woman. “Not everyone accepted me right away,” she explains. But over time she has learnt how to assert herself as a leader and get her message across – with competence and sheer perseverance.

Around 1,000 workers in over 40 countries are employed in the Solidaridad Network, working to ensure that success stories like Hussien’s become more common. To make supply chains fairer and more sustainable, the non-governmental organisation enables farmers, miners and workers to earn a better income and work under more sustainable production conditions.

From the bottom up

In Ethiopia, a country with a fast-growing, young population and a large textile sector, Solidaridad is supporting textile factories with a project called Bottom Up!. Together with the Danish Ethical Trading Initiative and MVO Nederland (which supports businesses that buy, manufacture or invest abroad) and supported by the European Union, their goal is to improve not only production processes but also social and ecological standards. The project places particular emphasis on the working conditions of female textile workers, which is a major issue in the textile industry at large: in Ethiopia alone, 80% of the textile workforce are women.

In the textile factories, most of the women carry out jobs like sewing, ironing and packaging – and some of them, like Mekiya Hussien, manage to rise up in the ranks. Although they meanwhile earn the same as their male co-workers, Kalayu Gebru, Project Manager at Solidaridad Ethiopia, cites structural problems between the genders as one of the reasons why it’s so important to strengthen the position of women in the workplace: there is a systematic gender discrimination that, in the long-term, creates a pay gap between men and women.” This is where the Bottom Up! project comes in: ‘capacity building’ and ‘empowerment’ are keywords when it comes to supporting the women. The Gender and Soft Skills package educates female workers on their rights – and responsibilities – in the workplace and shows them how to stand up for their own needs. Hussien also took part in one of these training sessions – as well as workshops on women in leadership positions and health and safety in the workplace. ▶▶

SOLIDARIDAD

An international non-governmental organisation with over 50 years of experience. Their mission is to develop solutions that help make communities more resilient. Since starting out in Latin America, the organisation has now also set its sights on promoting sustainable supply chains, working in more than 40 countries worldwide.



PHOTO: SOLIDARIDAD