

AFIA

Los Angeles, United States Kpando, Ghana

Meghan Sebold

Year Founded:

2010

Organization type:

for profit

Project Stage:

Scaling

Budget:

\$50,000 - \$100,000

Website:

<http://www.shopafia.com>

Twitter:

<https://twitter.com/afiameghan>

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/shopafia/>



- [Fair trade](#)
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- [Income generation](#)
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- [Design](#)
- [Economic development](#)
- [Poverty alleviation](#)
- [Sustainable development](#)
- [Intercultural relations](#)
- [Tolerance](#)
- [Indigenous cultures](#)
- [Racial equality](#)
- [Women's issues](#)
- [Arts & culture](#)
- [Conscious consumerism](#)
- [Ethics](#)
- [Transparency](#)

Project Summary

Elevator Pitch

Concise Summary: Help us pitch this solution! Provide an explanation within 3-4 short sentences.

AFIA is a sustainable women's clothing line inspired by the layers around us. Our fabrics are handpicked in Ghana's markets and sewn by women's cooperatives in Ghana and in downtown LA. Through a beautiful product, we connect worlds and inspire human connection and empathy.

WHAT IF - Inspiration: Write one sentence that describes a way that your project dares to ask, "WHAT IF?"

What if we could see the humanity/inhumanity behind everything we wear?

About Project

Problem: What problem is this project trying to address?

It has been a rough week for humanity. The violence across the world and the feedback surrounding it has created in me "kuebiko:" a state of exhaustion summoned by acts of senseless violence. What do we do? We try to create as much beauty as possible and insert personal connections in the hopes that we won't be able to commit such barbaric acts towards each other. More specifically, I connect women in Ghana with our mainstream through fashion.

Solution: What is the proposed solution? Please be specific!

It would be easy to project AFIA just as a fair trade, sustainable clothing line that alleviates poverty & supports women's economic growth. But I want to dig deeper as I think those projections perpetuate disparities and power structures. AFIA is not a charity. What is most important to me with AFIA is connecting my world to Ghana's and sharing a culture that has profoundly influenced my way of living. From Ghanaians I have learned about celebrating life, honoring the elderly, healthy body image, early childhood attachment, & rhythm! Through a fashion product, I project Ghana's stories & wisdom out to the world to reframe perceptions of the developing world. I would like to expand to include more underrepresented cultures also.

Awards

Innovation USA Award from the Ethical Fashion Forum, Daily Candy Finalist for Small Business

Impact: How does it Work

Example: Walk us through a specific example(s) of how this solution makes a difference; include its primary activities.

When I land in Ghana I get to the fabric market as soon as possible - small, family owned shops with floor to ceiling fabric. I only buy the brands printed in Ghana- there are many imitations. I split the clothing production between my favorite seamstresses/seamsters in the very poor but vibrant arts market, the women's cooperative in Kpando, Ghana, and women's run factory that can produce in bulk. All stages of the process directly impact the Ghanaian economic development at a personal and visible level.

Impact: What is the impact of the work to date? Also describe the projected future impact for the coming years.

The women I work with in Ghana have a better understanding of what buyers and the market demands here in the US so they know how to think of product development, quality control, and duplication whether AFIA is there or not. I have brought designers such as Edun to factories there that have a much higher capacity to produce than I have. I have spoken at Princeton and FIT on production in Africa as a strategic and ethical business move.

Spread Strategies: Moving forward, what are the main strategies for scaling impact?

AFIA needs funding to scale up and to bring on people who can dedicated their time to its growth. A sustainable business must also sustain its team, not just the people that the business impacts. We need a centralized space in Ghana to go through a proper hiring process of seamstresses, build a healthy community workspace, and to streamline the manufacturing process. We also need a marketing team here in the US, as sales drive the existence of the company.

Sustainability

Financial Sustainability Plan: What is this solution's plan to ensure financial sustainability?

The challenge is getting enough funding to build a strong foundation, rather than scraping with my personal contribution. "Need money to make money."

Marketplace: Who else is addressing the problem outlined here? How does the proposed project differ from these approaches?

Edun, Osei Duro, Studio189. I am good friends with Osei Duro and we work as a team. Edun has a much bigger financial base than AFIA and so can have more impact. The difference is that I am on the ground- I know the culture and the people and can navigate that world very well to successfully fuse the developing world with the developed. True grit. Studio189 is a replication of AFIA but they have a celebrity as the face of it.

Team

Founding Story

I studied abroad in Ghana, and my thesis was on the textile industry, which went from being one of the largest grossing industry to a minor player. There are only 4 companies in Ghana that still manufacture there, because they have been wiped out by competition with cheap, imported imitation prints and Dutch waxes that only incorporate Ghanaians as consumers. I found the abundance of skilled seamstresses, where as in the US sewing is a dying art. I saw how I could use fashion as a way to support the Ghanaian textile industry and wealth of skill through a fusion product. AFIA means born on Friday in the Twi language of the Ashanti.

Team

Due to funding, I have worn all hats. I funded the first collection from a crowdfunding campaign. It's been a very bootleg operation. To build a team, I need funding to appropriately compensate people for their time and talents. My seamstresses/seamsters in Ghana are always looking forward to my return with another AFIA project.

Value Chain: Where does your work fit into the apparel value chain? [check all that apply]

Raw Materials, Manufacturing, Consumption.

Your Role: What is your relationship to the apparel industry? [check all that apply]

Advocate/Organizer, Brand Representative, Designer, Sourcing Manager / Supply Chain Manager.

Target Population: What stakeholder groups do you engage or empower in your work? [check all that apply]

Designers, Factory Workers, Factory Owners, Trading Companies, Women.

● **Intervention Focus: What are you trying to achieve / influence? [check all that apply]**

Conscious Consumerism, Labor Rights (i.e. Collective Bargaining, etc.), Gender Equality, Physical Working Conditions, Transparency.

Lever for Change: Select up to 3 ways your work is helping to transform the industry.

Advocacy, Capacity Building, Organizing, Standards, Training.

Is your project targeted at solving any of the following key barriers?

Sustainability is Not Yet in the DNA: Fast Fashion's Current Model Disincentivizes Value-Driven Economies.

Does your project utilize any of the innovative design principles below?

Disrupt Business as Usual: Target Key Players Who Can Influence the Bottom Line, Transform the Chain into a Web: Link Unlikely Sectors that Open New Pathways to Sustainability.

Innovation Inspiration: When you first conceived of your project, did you think of it as applicable to the apparel industry?

yes

If you answered "no" to the previous question, which industry was your project originally aimed at transforming?

● Replicating in the Apparel Industry: If your project didn't initially target the apparel industry, how are you specifically tailoring it to do so now?

Are you nurturing or inspiring others to be changemakers? If so, how?

I have atleast a phone call a week with those starting up their own product design initiatives in developing countries.

● Tell us about the partnerships that enhance your approach. How have you collaborated with others in the industry to increase your impact?

The West African Trade Hub has been an excellent partner. I would like to collaborate with the United Nations.

Source URL: <https://www.changemakers.com/fabricofchange/entries/afia>