

Independent Evaluation of “Accelerating Better Cotton Initiative to Mainstream Sustainable Cotton Production & Uptake”

Submitted to C&A Foundation

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Executive Summary

BACKGROUND

C&A Foundation commissioned Universalialia to conduct an independent evaluation of "Accelerating Better Cotton Initiative (BCI) to Mainstream Sustainable Cotton Production & Uptake" ("Accelerating BCI..."). BCI is funded as part of C&A Foundation's Sustainable Raw Materials programme. The evaluation took place between July and November 2019.

The evaluation draws on document and key informant reviews to assess the extent to which the grant-specific work of BCI met its objectives. It documents missed opportunities and provides recommendations to enhance learning and inform actions of similar projects.

The three-year grant, ending 31 December, 2019, was valued at €1.5 million. This amount represents about 6.5% of the total operating budget of BCI for the same time period (i.e. €23 million).

Findings from this evaluation are organised below under the following headings: Relevance, Engagement with Stakeholders, Effectiveness, Sustainability and Scalability, and Efficiency. Conclusions are summarised with the help of a table, and are followed by recommendations, included in full. *Readers are invited to consult the report in its entirety.*

RELEVANCE

Niche

The C&A Foundation grant's design was highly appropriate for BCI in 2016 in a number of important ways. The choice of focus areas was adequate to fill strategic gaps related to building

retailer/ brand membership and cotton uptake, to supporting implementation of a revised Better Cotton Standard System (BCSS) and to strengthening national embedding. Its design flexibility allowed for growth, scale and depth in support of delivery. The grant put more staff and resources across the three sub-goals to increase BCI's strategic presence, elevate service contact and delivery, and add in specialist skills not already on board.

Strategic Alignment

The project featured a high degree of alignment between the design of the "Accelerating BCI..." project and C&A Foundation's strategies in support of sustainable cotton. That said, for many, it is the BCI programme as a whole, not the grant that was recognised to be in alignment. This is because staff away from headquarters (HQ) and BCI partners did not distinguish the "Accelerating BCI..." project from the wider work of BCI.

The work of BCI was found to coalesce the efforts of a wider grouping of stakeholders, including implementing partners (IPs) and supply chain actors. These entities are attracted by the coherence offered in the combination of the Better Cotton Standard, farmer level capacity development, a flexible chain of custody arrangement, and an active focus on building consumer demand and uptake that in turn finances BCI's efforts to intensify the drive toward sustainable cotton.

ENGAGEMENT WITH STAKEHOLDERS

BCI routinely assesses the stakeholder landscape and has developed positive, collaborative relationships with a variety of actors from the

production to the consumer end of the cotton supply chain. Among IPs, BCI members, government and industry stakeholders, and among partners, BCI is widely seen as knowledgeable, responsive and mission focused.

EFFECTIVENESS

Brand/ Retailer Recruitment

After three years, growth in retailer and brand membership has exceeded the grant target by a significant margin. With increased staffing assigned to the effort, the organisation has broadened the range of interactions it has with prospective members and intensified support offered during onboarding. Further, it has introduced a training/ orientation process to help newly recruited brands/ retailers acquaint their supply chain actors with BCI's chain of custody arrangements. BCI is also showing a reduction in the time required to steward a prospective member to a paid one purchasing Better Cotton.

New membership is essential to continue growth in uptake. As the recruitment push continues, there is pressure to adapt the message and the approach to attract buyers in new markets (both geographic and sectoral).

Membership Uptake

As with recruitment, membership uptake has exceeded grant expectations.

Growth begets growth – not wanting to be left behind is a motivator for some brands. At the same time, telling the better cotton story in a compelling way to brands and customers is challenged by limitations that must be imposed on the claims. Not being able to guarantee to customers that their product is made of sustainably sourced cotton, and not yet being able to trace cotton to source in a reliable way are

two key constraints in what is described as a risk averse marketplace.

Training Modules and Tools

Activities under the grant have established a "breakthrough" understanding of the participation of women and men in better cotton production and of the possible pathways leading to improved gender equality in BCI. This has manifested in, among other things: new ways to understand gender roles in cotton production; farm level training materials; an analysis of ways BCI can track progress with sensitivity to gender dimensions; and an organisational analysis with recommendations to be considered as a part of BCI's strategic planning.

BCI, through the grant, has delivered on its commitments to produce tested, modularised, multi-media content for revised standards on water stewardship (BCSS Principle #2) and on biodiversity enhancement and land use (Principle #4). At the time of writing, the modules have been tested in multiple settings and rolled out to those in training roles at the farm level. Evidence related to farmer capacity development are expected to show after at least one growing season. By all accounts the knowledge products provide BCI, IPs and facilitators with a firm foundation for further adaptation to address language, culture, gender and operational scale considerations. They are also designed to support continuous learning; a feature that is to be tested through evaluation.

National Embedding

Through the C&A Foundation grant there has been useful supplementary support for the development of BCI's Embedding Strategy and its Monitoring and Evaluation Framework. A modest outlay of staffing and travel resources have enabled outreach and dialogue in identified (sub) national jurisdictions.

Progress is evident on this programming component, considered key in the drive toward sustainable cotton. The uniqueness of each country setting, institutional flux and high staff turnover and endlessly shifting national policies regarding the production and export of cotton make this a complex and fraught programming component for BCI.

Assessment of Grant Added Value to BCI

The C&A Foundation budget allocation to BCI represented about 6.5% of the estimated total operating budget for the three-year contracting period. Most, i.e. 60% of this was used to support sub-component 1, Membership Recruitment, and Uptake.

Personnel knowledgeable about the grant credited C&A Foundation for providing much needed staffing and consultant support as well as funds for travel and stakeholder engagement, and for doing so with scope to adjust on the go.

SUSTAINABILITY AND SCALABILITY

Sustainability

Based on an analysis of three factors contributing to sustainability – the duration of the grant, the extent of exit strategies in place, and the amount of co-funding and leverage achieved – the grant's results are likely to be sustained over time, i.e. beyond C&A Foundation funding.

A review of the C&A Foundation's overall grant-making found that the most sustainable grants have been at least 27 months in length. At 36 months, the "Accelerating BCI..." grant coincides with this threshold.

The entire scope of the grant addressed functions of BCI that are integral to its mission, mandate

and the achievement of BCI's 2020 objectives. Exit strategies, then, were not really a feature of this grant.

Regarding leverage, additional funds were in fact leveraged through activities supported by the grant. The data suggests that funds were mostly secured through accelerated membership and uptake (sub-goal 1); additional funds were generated to support the production of the modules under sub-goal 2.

The timing of the grant, coinciding as it does with the formulation of BCI's 2030 strategy, also has a bearing on the sustainability of those grant funded activities deemed successful. Achievements and lessons learned under the grant are grist for discussion in the formulation of the plan.

Scalability

The grant has made a significant contribution to the scaling up of BCI's membership and uptake activities. The modularised training materials already have, and will continue to shape producer level improvements on a wide scale and with new infusions of sustainable cotton training content addressing ecological ethics and gender equality. Also, efforts toward national embedding are proceeding, though understandably, with varied results from country to country.

Organisational Sustainability

Grant activities, mostly through increased membership and uptake, have contributed to the expansion and strengthening of BCI's presence in the field of sustainable cotton. They have also contributed toward BCI's longevity. At the same time, the acceleration experienced over the past three years has put the organisation's staff and systems under pressure, which stands to compromise performance if left unchecked.

EFFICIENCY

Adherence to Efficiency Measures

On the whole, the grant was implemented in an efficient manner, employing a range of efficiency measures centred on rationalising staff time and travel. Following a protracted inception phase, the project proceeded apace and has been implemented on schedule and just slightly over budget as a result of additional spending in sub-goal 1.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL)

The project met the MEL requirements in terms of outputs, namely reports and products, in accordance with the agreed upon schedule. Monitoring reports submitted to C&A Foundation included reflections on challenges and mitigation measures, unintended results, recommendations and lessons learned.

Reporting against outcomes occurred for sub goals 1 and 3, but not for sub-goal 2 (Deepening the BCSS – module development). Here, the targets and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) were situated at too high a level and too long a range for the “Accelerating BCI...” grant itself. Overall, BCI was unable to report against more than half of the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) listed in the contract document.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

Conclusions are referenced to an evaluation rubric set out in Appendix VII and explained in

Appendix III . The table below summarises the score on a five-point scale. It is followed by a series of concluding thoughts and linked recommendations.

Evaluation of the Project as per the Rubric

RELEVANCE	EFFECTIVENESS AND RESULTS	EFFICIENCY	LIKELY SUSTAINABILITY
Fully Relevant (5)	Quite Effective (4)	Quite Efficient (4)	Mostly Satisfactory (4)

On Relevance...

The C&A Foundation funded “Accelerating BCI...” project coincided well with some pressing needs at BCI to scale up its membership and uptake, to roll out some fresh content aligned to revised Better Cotton Standards, and to put additional weight behind the organisation’s efforts to embed the BCSS within a strategic selection of countries.

At the same time, the identity of the grant and its expectations to accelerate the mainstreaming of BCI in certain areas were known to only a few. A design adjustment favouring strategic management at the project level might have yielded some additional “acceleration” dividends.

Recommendation 1: To maintain the good funding practice of this engagement, any future funding partnerships should be founded on an equivalent level of strategic alignment between BCI and the funding organisation. Both grantee and grantor should ensure alignment between themselves and other partners.

Recommendation 2: To the extent that the subject matter affects them, partners, IPs and country partners should be aware of grant details and funding breakdown of overall budgets and ready to share the risks therein. C&A Foundation should consider having mid-term reviews to ensure issues such as strategic alignment with partners are taken into account and functioning, and that grant use remains aligned with both organisations’ strategic objectives.

On Effectiveness and Results...

The value of the grant was relatively small as compared to the total operating budget of BCI, but the added value was considerable across all three sub-goals and particularly so in sub-goal 1 on brand recruitment and uptake. In 2019, then, BCI finds itself making good progress towards its 2020 targets and is better positioned to cover its operating costs from fee revenue.

Recommendation 3: In continuing its membership and uptake drive, BCI should pay attention to three factors widely described by stakeholders as strategic challenges: adapting its value proposition and recruitment approach for new market frontiers (geographic and sectoral); telling a compelling, evidence based Better Cotton story to consumers and others in the supply chain; and reducing brand/retailer concerns about traceability and verification in a mass balance supply chain model.

On Efficiency...

Cost saving strategies have saved time and money. For the most part, the grant spent within its means.

To understand the magnitude of the grant's contribution to BCI over the past three years, the evaluation has relied as much or more on anecdotal input as on the presence of performance measurement and financial data. The outcomes and metrics associated with those expectations were calibrated less to a project and more to BCI programme scale. As such, there may have been missed opportunities for those managing grant activities to optimise the acceleration work that was done. There is a lesson here to guide the design and delivery of future strategic interventions.

Recommendation 4: With each project introduced, BCI and C&A Foundation (or other funding partner) should make a determination over whether a comprehensive project level MEL system is required to ensure optimal, results-focused management within the larger BCI

programme. And where there is merit in tracking the results of a project separately from those of the organisation, responsibility for the project design and its accompanying MEL be assigned to managers closely associated with the mandate.

In designing a project level MEL system, those in charge should develop outcomes and associated metrics that are Specific, Measurable, Actionable, Relevant, and Timebound (SMART). Outcomes should be within the sphere of the project's influence to realise within the given timeframe, and nested within BCI's larger programme outcomes framework. Those in charge should specify how they will analyse, act on and learn from the outcomes data produced. They should also specify a periodic review and remediation process, inclusive of the funding partner, to ensure MEL arrangements generate adequate results information for management, reporting and learning.

On Likely Sustainability...

Across the three sub-goals, the gains made by the project are likely to be sustained beyond C&A Foundation funding. In all instances, the products (e.g. the modules, the memberships and the frameworks), the alignments (related to the country level institutionalisation of Better Cotton), and the capacities (related to cotton uptake, farm level production, and institutional impetus to address gender equality) are integral to BCI's continuing mission and mandate. Scale up activities remain important in 2019, and will be needed to reach BCI's soon to be released 2030 objectives.

At the same time, a new imperative has come to the fore. The growth that has been achieved by BCI, to date, has outstripped capacities in the organisation to manage effectively. This is not news to BCI; the evaluation is aware of initiatives in play to address strains on Information technology (IT) and Human Resources (HR) systems and to deploy new staff. But drawing from expressions of concern heard during the key informant interviews, the evaluation cautions

that measures to address system deficiencies or staffing gaps may not be sufficient to equip BCI for the future unless supported by a shared, refreshed understanding of what BCI, the institution, should look like in the 2020s.

Recommendation 5: In the wake of the acceleration and growth experienced over the grant period, BCI should design a strategic and comprehensive plan to structure its efforts towards organisational robustness. Such a plan would articulate the driving values, organisational architecture, core competencies, network relationships, systems requirements and financing needed to support BCI's 2030 agenda.

Recommendation 6: With regard to sub goal 1 (recruitment and uptake) and 3 (national embedding), BCI should identify resourcing requirements and revenue streams, post-grant, to continue the mainstreaming/ sustainability drive in these two programming areas.

Acronyms

Abrapa	Brazilian Cotton Growers Association
AED	Agriculture Extension Department
AWS	Alliance for Water Stewardship
BCI	Better Cotton Initiative
BCSS	Better Cotton Standard System
BSR	Business for Social Responsibility
CmiA	Cotton made in Africa
Cotton SA	Cotton South Africa
CRDC	Cotton Research and Development Corporation
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FAQs	Frequently Asked Questions
GIF	Growth and Innovation Fund
HCV	High Conservation Value
HCVN	High Conservation Value Response Network
HQ	Headquarters
HR	Human Resources
IAM	Mozambican Cotton Board Institute
IDRC	International Development Research Centre
IOA	Institutional and Organisational Assessment
IP	Implementing partner
IPM	Integrated Pest Management
IR	Inception Report
IT	Information Technology
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
MyBMP	My Best Management Practices
OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development - Development Assistance Committee
SAN-JFS	Sociedade Algodoeira do Niassa JFS
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Actionable, Relevant, and Timebound
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
ToT	Training of Trainers
UFE	Utilisation-Focused Evaluation

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1 Introduction

Universalia is pleased to submit to this report C&A Foundation for the independent evaluation of "Accelerating Better Cotton Initiative to Mainstream Sustainable Cotton Production & Uptake" ("Accelerating BCI..."). The C&A Foundation provided support to the Better Cotton Initiative (BCI), as part of its commitment to making the cotton industry work better for every person it touches, and indeed be a force for good. BCI is funded as part of C&A Foundation's Sustainable Raw Materials programme. The evaluation assesses the extent to which the grant-specific work of BCI met its objectives, documents any missed opportunities, and provides a focused set of recommendations and lessons to enhance learning and inform actions of similar projects. The three-year grant, ending 31 December 2019, was valued at €1.5 million. This amount represents about 6.5% of the total operating budget of BCI for the same time period (€23 million).

The scope of the evaluation was confined to three areas of activity as agreed in the Inception Report (IR).

- **Scaling up BCI's proven model of market transformation** by building the existing member base and driving the procurement of Better Cotton produced at the farm level. These activities represented about 69% of the total grant allocation and relate specifically to:
 - Retailer and brand recruitment
 - Targeted support services aimed at removing roadblocks to retailer/brand uptake
- **Deepening the impact of the Better Cotton Standard System (BCSS)**. Activities under this area represented about 23% of the total grant allocation and relate specifically to:
 - Improving gender equality and female empowerment in cotton producing areas
 - Moving from water efficiency to holistic water management plans and water stewardship
 - Biodiversity (agreed upon through an addendum, November 2018)
 - Strengthening BCSS's safeguard on land use change
- **Lobbying governments and national or state institutions to embed the BCSS** into local and national regulations. Activities under this area represented 8% of the total grant allocation, and related specifically to:
 - Defining the "embedding" process
 - Strategy development
 - Relationship development

The report provides findings under the following major evaluation criteria:

- Chapter 3: Relevance
- Chapter 4: Engagement with Stakeholders
- Chapter 5: Effectiveness
- Chapter 6: Sustainability and Scalability
- Chapter 7: Efficiency
- Chapter 8: Conclusions and recommendations, including lessons learned

Chapter 2 provides an overview of the evaluation's methodology.

2 Methodology

This chapter summarises the methodology used in this summative evaluation. It re-iterates the objectives from the evaluation Terms of Reference (ToR), and thus it: highlights scope and design; outlines tasks associated with data collection, analysis, and reporting; and lists limitations faced in carrying out the study. The evaluation design is set out in full in Appendix III .

2.1 OBJECTIVES

Informed by the ToR (see Appendix XIII) and aligned with discussions with BCI staff and stakeholders, the evaluation's objectives were to:

- Examine the overall effectiveness, sustainability and (progress towards, and likelihood of) impact in accelerating BCI's C&A Foundation supported work;
- Assess factors (in design and operations) that have contributed to or impeded achievement of results, allowing to learn from successes as well as failures;
- Assess the extent to which the management of this work can be deemed 'fit for purpose'; and
- Distil actionable and strategic recommendations and lessons from the findings to feed into future C&A Foundation and BCI operations.

2.2 DESIGN

The team developed an evaluation inquiry matrix based on key questions set out in the ToR (see Appendix IV for the Evaluation Matrix). Functioning as an evaluation "roadmap", the matrix linked the key questions to subsidiary questions, to data sources (primary and secondary) with a reference to the methods to be used. Lines of inquiry were organised around four criteria aligned to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development - Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) criteria. These are as follows:

- **Relevance, Design and Fit** – an examination of alignment between the "Accelerating BCI..." and:
 - The work normally associated with transforming systems and practices to drive sustainable cotton;
 - The vision and mission of BCI and C&A Foundation;
 - The targeting of actors for building an influential member base among retailers and brands;
 - The gaps addressed in the cotton supply chain; and
 - The appropriateness of design in relation to purpose.
- **Effectiveness and Results** – an appraisal of:
 - Actual against planned outcomes;
 - Constraints on and enablers for the achievement of results;
 - Stakeholder engagement throughout;
 - The scalability of results; and

- The relative contributions and interactive effects of the major components of the “Accelerating BCI...”.
- **Sustainability** – an analysis of:
 - The likelihood of sustainability on specific aspects of “Accelerating BCI...” results; and
 - The factors that have contributed to, or hindered sustainability.
- **Efficiency** – an assessment of:
 - The conversion of input costs to outcomes, along with the policies, tools and strategies used to contain costs;
 - The ability of the “Accelerating BCI...” to stay on schedule, meet expectations, manage for results and learn from experience; and
 - The extent to which the “Accelerating BCI...” leveraged resources for impact.

To address the questions, the evaluation team drew on the following forms of inquiry: **theory based** – an examination of the causality that links grant activities and results; **contribution analysis** – questions seeking to understand the added value to BCI performance traceable to the grant; **institutional/organisational analysis** – questions relating to implementation of grant activities with a view to scalability and the likelihood of sustainability; and **systems analysis** – an examination of the interactive effects between the various BCI stakeholders that can be traced at least in part to grant activities.

2.3 DATA COLLECTION

Data collection was undertaken through a document review and semi-structured interviews. Documents consisted of grant agreement files, financial and narrative reports, and specific documents related to the activities and deliverables supported by the grant. A list of documents reviewed is set out in Appendix VI .

Semi-structured Interviews were conducted in July and August with 41 key informants from across several stakeholder groups. Interviewees were selected from a larger list developed in consultation with a core group of BCI and C&A Foundation staff. The breakout of key informants by type is as follows:

- 15 BCI staff
- 9 Industry level actors
- 11 Partner organisations (Implementing Partners [IPs], partners and consultants)
- 4 C&A Foundation staff
- 2 others

A list of key informants is set out in Appendix V .

2.4 ANALYSIS AND REPORTING

Using the qualitative analysis platform Dedoose, the team organised the data collected under key categories set out in the evaluation matrix. This enabled a rapid triangulation of data sources by key question. On the basis of this analysis, the team prepared a preliminary videoconference with BCI staff for the purpose of validating and elaborating upon the findings herein. This draft was the basis for a second

findings workshop that included BCI and key C&A Foundation staff. In this iteration, the evaluation team advanced a set of conclusions and recommendations for discussion. The conclusions were guided by a rating system that was agreed to in the Inception Phase. This final report has been prepared on the basis of the feedback obtained.

2.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE EVALUATION

Four factors have constrained the team in addressing the evaluation ToR. All are notable but none were significant so as to seriously compromise evaluation findings and the development of conclusions and recommendations.

- The team had limited key informant exposure (~40) given the diverse working contexts of BCI.
- Many key informants had limited knowledge of the grant and its contribution.
- The magnitude of the grant allocation, by sub-goal, in relation to the total outlay of resources could not be established beyond anecdotal commentary.
- The Performance framework for the project was not calibrated for the grant contribution, but rather for the relevant programme results toward which the grant was expected to contribute.

3 Relevance

This chapter examines the extent to which the “Accelerating BCI...” design, embedded within BCI, filled gaps in the global drive toward sustainable cotton and, as such, addressed needs and root causes, and leveraged resources. It also addresses the extent to which the grant aligned with the mission and vision of C&A Foundation and BCI.

3.1 NICHE

Finding 1: The design of the grant was appropriate for BCI in 2016. The choice of focus areas was adequate to fill existing gaps related to building uptake, supporting implementation of a revised BCSS and strengthening national embedding. Its design flexibility allowed for growth, scale and depth in support of delivery.

By all accounts, BCI is the most significant actor driving toward sustainable cotton, globally; this by virtue of its ambitious sustainability vision and comprehensive programming scope, its scale of operation and its

BCI Proposal to C&A Foundation (2016):

The ultimate goal of BCI is to generate transformative, long-term and mainstream change from field to retail outlet.

[...]

The opportunity is still largely untapped as recruitment to date has not been especially strategic, and there are many global partners still to bring on board.

vast stakeholder network that connects farmers to intermediary supply chain actors, to retailers and brands. Respondents described BCI’s unique ability to add “leverage and scale” (market transformation), and to focus on continuous improvement and collaboration with 'benchmarked standards' which can be sold as Better Cotton. By engaging the value chain as a whole, they suggested, BCI can offer a relevant business model for trading Better Cotton, and build scale through growth.

Following an intense period of focus on developing the supply dimensions of BCI (including the IP network), the “Accelerating BCI...” project was turning attention toward the task of building demand and uptake to create the conditions (including the financial resources) for disseminating the BCSS and embedding Better Cotton in

national cotton sectors. Accordingly, BCI designed the grant to deepen and increase actions – to improve BCI’s campaign to increase brand and retailer recruitment and uptake, to add in the planned improvements to the BCSS, and to help the organisation define and initiate national embedding processes in select countries.

Emphasis in the grant design on building Retailer and Brand membership was seen as appropriate by most interviewees. One BCI in-country staff reflected that the gap was in BCI recruitment and bringing in more brands. Sourcing teams were needed to generate uptake by linking to supply chains, filling the gaps between brands, spinners, knitters, and by helping brands with transaction recording.

Key informants indicated that practical aspects were critical: specifically, more staff and resources organised in

“

The proportions of the grant were right, in hindsight. If you don't have the membership and the uptake, the rest doesn't matter as much.

- BCI staff person

”

teams working with members on uptake and membership as well as with in-country partners. This is where the grant enabled reinforcement of existing systems and addressed a need felt by staff and partners. One staff member suggested these aspects of BCI had not previously had enough emphasis. Another noted that there had been a lack of knowledge on board. Country partners pointed to the increased visits by country managers as a gap filled.

It is clear from responses, as well as in the reports, that the C&A Foundation grant was designed to address sustainability challenges in cotton production, by allowing the development of new training modules and tools, by strengthening the quality and reach of training, and in so doing, by filling capacity gaps particularly where government funding is low or declining. In India, for example, a staff member illustrated BCI's gap-filling role as follows:

"BCI now reach(es) out to research institutes with IPs, to reach 3,000 people to play the role of field facilitator. Further development of partnerships and greater access to experts and knowledge is needed to reach two million farmers. We actually need 3,500 field facilitators on the ground."

In these early days of the grant, it was thought that the development of modules on gender, water and high conservation value (HCV) in particular would widen the scope of the programme and address new needs.

Key informants were largely positive about the grant's albeit modest contribution toward national embedding, as it would help countries to either benchmark standards or develop policies to embed more sustainable cotton production. With increased contact between BCI and country partners and more uptake from more supply chain partners, there would, they felt, be a greater likelihood of BCI cementing its goal of increasing ownership of Better Cotton among governments and national organisations.

Overall, perceptions of the importance of the sub-goals vary according to roles played and locations where informants were based. For example, HQ staff focused on data driving uptake, field people focused on helping farmers make positive change. That said, the sense of relevance of the project's overarching goals is evident. Repeatedly, in interviews, actors in the supply chain situated their own interest within the context of the idea that they were part of a larger process connecting sustainable cotton to a consumer marketplace. One spinner commented, for example, that he trusted that BCI was improving conditions at the farm level and getting the story to the consumers at the other end.

“

National embedding came from the recognition that if governments do not recognise value and take ownership, we will always remain a third-party actor.

- BCI staff person

”

3.2 STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

Finding 2: There was high alignment between the design of the “Accelerating BCI...” project and C&A Foundation’s strategy for the Sustainable Raw Materials programme. This alignment has also coalesced the efforts of a wider group of stakeholders which has, in turn, formed a basis for pooled effort in delivery.

The evaluation queried the grant’s strategic alignment with BCI and C&A Foundation; these are clearly in place. However, there is also an emerging alignment among other stakeholders.

Consistent with the narrative in the BCI proposal to C&A Foundation (see box), staff felt there was alignment to C&A Foundation's Sustainable Raw Materials programme vision and purpose. This sentiment is consistent with a C&A Foundation staff observation that mission alignment from the start is critical: "(Experience) has reinforced our thinking that when there is mission alignment you achieve much more, and you achieve it more efficiently."

“

Many buyers are looking for sustainable cotton. Many would like to associate with BCI. [...] BCI is a programme, not a certification. It is much more flexible, as it uses mass balancing.¹ Organic and Fair Trade have some certifications – these put rigidities into place. And cost.

- Industry actor

”

Respondents noted that with mission alignment, brands are more likely to champion uptake and push each other to do more. In this regard, a field staff person underlined how the project design had facilitated more visits from brands and outside staff and stakeholders to countries; something also mentioned by partners in national embedding and from some IPs. In this vein, supply chain actors also mentioned the importance of demand to get them to back BCI, and to use BCI cotton.

Commitment to the promotion of sustainable cotton is accentuated with the (increased) presence of BCI staff, according to IPs and actors in the supply chain. At the same time, BCI staff reported that the grant has helped them to develop partnerships and scientific collaborations particularly on topics pertaining to the BCSS. "BCI is slowly becoming aware of the importance and significance of gender", noted one strategic

BCI Proposal to C&A Foundation (2016):

BCI's success in transforming cotton production worldwide, by developing Better Cotton as a more sustainable mainstream commodity, will overall contribute to the C&A Foundation's aspiration of creating a fair and sustainable apparel industry in which everyone can thrive.

Many respondents from outside BCI and C&A Foundation pointed out that being part of a coherent push toward sustainable cotton gave them additional impetus to be involved. This was particularly the case for those providing input into new areas of the BCSS, or into national embedding activities.

“

BCI is extremely important to [our brand]. It is the biggest contributor to our goals. [...] We are also working with organic and recycled cotton, but organic cotton is niche and will likely remain so.

- Brand

”

¹ As BCI explains it, "Mass Balance encourages supply chain actors to buy and use more Better Cotton in a cost efficient manner, as it does not require complexities that result in costly physical segregation along the supply chain. Mass Balance functions much like renewable energy. If you purchase renewable energy credits, a power line is not run, from say, a wind farm directly to your house. Rather, the credits are proof that a certain amount of renewable energy has been added to the existing power grid. This energy might not be powering the lights in your house, but nonetheless, your purchase ensures that greener energy is added to and pulled from the power grid. In this way, by committing to sourcing Better Cotton, brand members can be assured that they are supporting more sustainable cotton production regardless of where that cotton ends up". (see [BCI Fact Sheet, 2017](#))

partner in describing an observed coalescing of concepts under the widening and deepening scope of the BCSS. A similar comment was made about the new emphasis being placed on HCV.

Finding 3: Recognition of the “Accelerating BCI...” project, as a discrete project within BCI overall, was limited to only a few. As relevant and strategically aligned as it was, the implementation of the grant was not always grounded in the pursuit of strategic alignment with partners. As such, BCI lacked some planning and management tools to focus on the grant’s actual contribution to BCI performance across identified sub-goals.

Through stakeholder interactions, it was clear that some staff away from HQ and most external stakeholders were unfamiliar with the “Accelerating BCI...” and its particulars. For them, the grant was blended within the sub-goals to which they were attached. One staff person explained that, “had we known it was a discrete grant with a budget and some particular expectations attached to it, we might have acted on it differently”.

It is, of course, not clear anything would have been done differently had there been more awareness, but the knowledge gap means it cannot be known if anything different might have happened. For example, one national embedding partner said he was “not so familiar with grant documents”, but there was some consultation with BCI and he did review the updated Principles and Criteria. Another National Embedding partner was only aware of the project grant through contact with BCI staff, he said in interview, and not of the overall project. This lack of awareness was most marked for National Embedding partners, while one country partner raised a concern that the new Principles and Criteria did not really acknowledge their reality.

4 Engagement with Stakeholders

This chapter examines the extent and quality of BCI's engagement with relevant actors and stakeholders under this grant arrangement, specifically the IPs, BCI's members and partners, C&A Foundation, and governments and industry organisations relevant to national embedding.

4.1 STAKEHOLDER LANDSCAPE KNOWLEDGE

Finding 4: BCI rightly assessed – and continually assesses – the stakeholder landscape and has developed positive, collaborative relationships with a variety of actors.

BCI has developed and implemented strategies in order to assess the stakeholder landscape. For instance, in order to keep up with the retailer and brand landscape, a BCI staff explained that the organisation attends closed door meetings, multi-stakeholder group meetings, and industry association events. BCI also organises large scale events such as cotton conferences and yearly IP symposiums. These are opportunities for information sharing among IPs, partners, and external stakeholders. BCI is also part of the ISEAL Alliance where they learn about the application of sustainability standards across a range of commodities, and interact with users of standards as well as related experts².

“

During my interactions, never did I wonder why “these guys” were there, why BCI was wasting its time with them. [...] From what I saw, they are engaging with the right actors – and they are always asking themselves this question.

- Partner

”

4.2 RELATIONSHIP WITH MAIN STAKEHOLDER CATEGORIES

Among the different stakeholders consulted, perceptions of the relationship with BCI were, overall, very positive and revolved around the notion of partnership. The common characteristics of these relationships are mutual trust, a deep engagement in sustainable cotton from all counterparts, and the perception that BCI is providing a useful service. In terms of BCI's attributes, those that favoured the most the development of positive and fruitful relationships were the organisation's commitment to continuous improvement, its reliance on a collaborative approach, and its responsiveness.

The stakeholder categories are disaggregated below.

² ISEAL is the global membership organisation for credible sustainability standards. See: <https://www.isealalliance.org>

4.2.1 IPs

IPs, among others, described the relationship between BCI and its IPs as symbiotic, flexible and professional. Many used the phrasing “true partnership”, some described an orderly yet cordial approach to collaboration. IPs and BCI staff commonly recognised an interdependence on each other based on trust and with opportunities for co-creation and feedback. While certain IPs had felt disconnected from the Secretariat in earlier years, they expressed satisfaction towards the improvements made in this regard and towards the level of sharing among IPs, national teams and the Secretariat.

4.2.2 Members

Retailer and Brand members showed appreciation for BCI’s collaborative style and its approach based on continuous learning. They did, however, suggest challenges on the horizon, notably as BCI increases its engagement with secondary markets (for instance China, Turkey, India). In those markets, as one BCI staff person put it, “the appetite for sustainability isn’t the same [as for primary markets]”. They suggested that such a change in membership composition would likely have implications on how BCI builds relationships with retailers and brands. Other noted challenges relate to member accompaniment and the maintenance of quality standards as the membership base continues to grow. Members also pointed to an increasingly pressing need for retailers and brands to be provided with suitable communications related to BCI farmer impacts so that they can “tell the story” of Better Cotton in a compelling way.

4.2.3 Partners

Partners who participated in this project (HCV Response Network [HCVN], Alliance for Water Stewardship [AWS], Business for Social Responsibility [BSR] – external consultants are also included) unanimously named BCI as a helpful, supportive and understanding organisation. They described their relationship with BCI as positive, with potential to last over time. Both the project team at BCI and the partners expressed hope for further collaboration in the future. Maintaining and deepening such relationships is highly likely, considering that BCI is part of the same networks as certain partners and that project team members are in regular contact with each other on a professional basis.

4.2.4 C&A Foundation

C&A Foundation staff members expressed appreciation for their relationship with the project team at BCI, and reciprocally. The relationship was described as positive, transparent and proactive. On both sides staff have used words such as “trust” and “engagement”.

4.2.5 Governments and Industry Organisations

Stakeholders both within and outside BCI agree that while the work to build relationships with governments as well as with industry organisations (e.g. Cotton Australia, Cotton South Africa [Cotton SA]) has begun, it needs to be further developed. According to monitoring reports, main challenges faced in this regard were: personnel changes within governments as well as within BCI country teams, economic constraints facing

governments and industry organisations, underestimation by partners of the level of effort to lead BCSS implementation, and perception by stakeholders in some countries that BCI's financial model is unfair. An increase in regional presence over the last few years has been foundational to the embedding process according to key informants involved in this sub-goal. Yet, they suggest, more needs to be done strategically. Initiating and deepening relationships with governments and industry organisations is a key focus area for BCI into the future.

5 Effectiveness

This chapter examines the extent to which the “Accelerating BCI...” grant’s results match with targets, and that actions geared at systemic change have been enabled. It examines the extent to which the project has built upon the full range of activities underway at BCI.

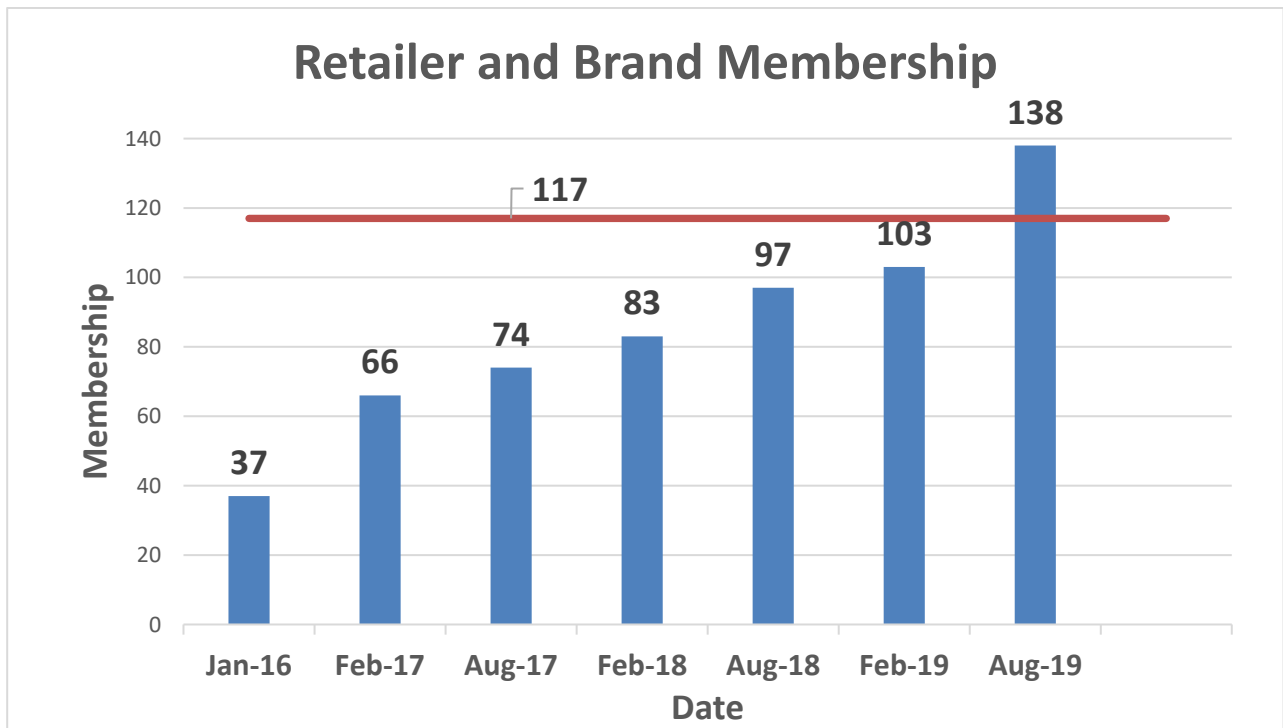
5.1 MEMBERSHIP AND UPTAKE

Finding 5: After three years, growth in retailer and brand membership has exceeded the grant target.

BCI and C&A Foundation agreed that accelerating the uptake of Better Cotton by retailers and brands was labour intensive and of sufficient strategic importance to justify an allocation of more than two-thirds of the total grant amount – i.e. €1.035 million. Three quarters of this amount was used to cover salary and consultant fees for recruitment and engagement roles. The balance was to cover the development of materials and the organisation of events in targeted countries.

Expectations were to “substantially grow the retailer member base” and to deliver high quality training to retailer and brand buying teams and suppliers with a view of speeding up procurement. The upward trend in membership is shown in Exhibit 5.1 below.

Exhibit 5.1 Retailer and Brand Membership Growth between 2016 and mid-2019



Prior to the grant, BCI had a membership base of 37 retailers and brands. By the close of the contract, membership had risen to 138, approaching a four-fold increase. Staffing and travel support to refine approaches and materials, and the organisation of recruitment and on-boarding meetings, peer-to-peer workshops, speaking events and field trips have dramatically increased exposure. Face to face interactions have improved the quality of BCI's engagement with retailers and brands. This was clearly evident to BCI staff throughout the organisation and also reflected in the comments of brands on the receiving end of these interactions.

In interviews, brand members and BCI staff involved in membership activities made the following observations:

- A range of motivations are leading brands to commit (or not) to membership including one or more of the following: a deep seated commitment to source sustainably; a desire to stay abreast of the competition; concern about budget bottom lines in what is widely described as a highly competitive environment.
- There is a mix of large and small brands with a noted increase in the number of smaller entities coming on board.
- Increasingly, brands and retailers come to BCI spontaneously – recruitment has generated its own momentum.
- Larger societal/ consumer characteristics influence brand/ retailer decision-making on membership – consumer consciousness about sustainable fashion is greater in European and North American retail markets than is the case in Asian markets (though several key informants also noted a deepening consciousness on a global scale, mainly on account of the climate crisis).

Concerns were raised about the lower volumes of Better Cotton procured by smaller brand members and the higher transaction costs incurred through managing multiple membership agreements. However, staff also observed that these factors are offset, at least in part, by the breadth of exposure to Better Cotton that comes with broad based brand participation. As one person noted, "the higher the number of brands, the more likely it is that BCI is represented in the shop windows along the high street".

Finding 6: The time required by BCI to steward a prospective brand/ retailer member from expression of interest to membership and uptake has been reduced in the past three years.

“

One-to-one engagement is key – remote engagement doesn't cut it. Prior to 2016, a key recruitment tool was a weekly webinar serving as many as ten companies from as many counties; we were not well prepared to deal with the vagaries of language, bandwidth, or cultural differences.

- BCI staff person

”

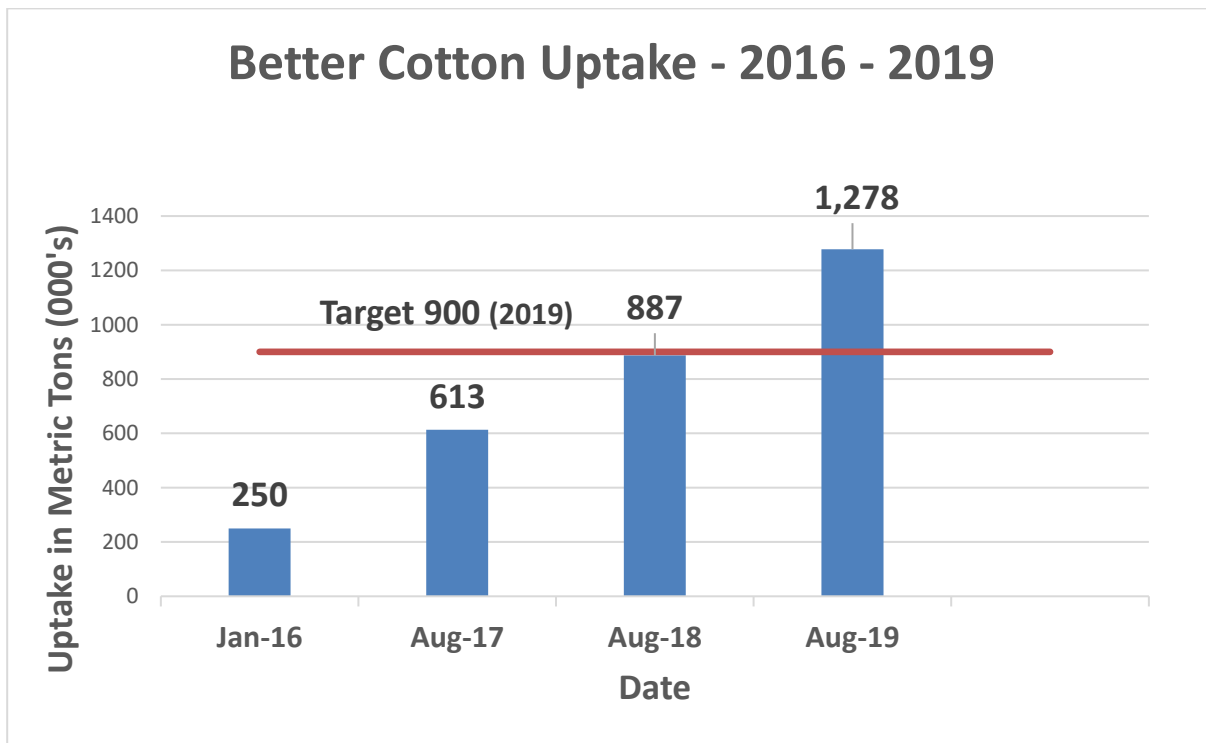
BCI staff estimate that prior to the grant, it would take on average more than a year to convert brand interest to membership. Among 22 new recruits in 2017, 11 began sourcing cotton the same year (50%). Among 17 new recruits the following year, ten began sourcing the same year (59%). Prior to the grant, it frequently took a year or more to steward a brand/ retailer toward uptake. The addition of account managers, more direct engagement with C-suite contacts in prospective companies, the introduction of new and refined engagement activities and tools were given as the key contributing factors. All brands interviewed echoed the importance of the personal touch, not just to recruit but also to manage the relationship once sourcing had begun (noting that with staff rotations, robust engagement can still be very important to keeping the relationship strong).

Recruitment planning and acceleration trends aside, staff pointed to natural limits on BCI's ability to influence brands/ retailers. Some sit on the invitation to join BCI, while they weigh their options. Considerations warding against membership include: uncertainty about the value proposition given BCI's inability to guarantee under the mass balanced model the actual presence of sustainably grown cotton in the firm's clothing products; the cost of membership (volume based fees); traceability and the reputational risk of being associated with controversies that might occur along the supply chain; mixed messages from peer brands about the predictability of pricing in the Better Cotton supply chain; and the prospect of becoming associated with an alternative sustainable cotton initiative with perceived advantages over BCI.

Finding 7: Better Cotton uptake has exceeded grant expectations.

Uptake trends are shown in Exhibit 5.2 below. The graph shows that an increase in membership has translated into an increase in uptake. Prior to the grant, uptake was at 250K metric tons per year. By all accounts, supplier training has been instrumental to this growth in procurement. Initially, actors in the supply chain were unsure of the chain of custody arrangements under a mass balance model. The need for a roll out of training was anticipated in the design of the grant.

Exhibit 5.2 Better Cotton uptake between 2016 and mid-2019



Key observations on uptake made by brands, suppliers and BCI staff are set out below:

- With an uptick in brand inquiries over the past two years, manufacturers have had to alert their own supplier networks and seek advice from BCI on observed tendencies among actors in the supply chain to add charges.

- With time, leading BCI member brands have established reliable supply chain arrangements for the transfer of Better Cotton credits, but the field of supply chain actors is vast and the need for capacity development continues.
- Uncertainty remains among some brands and retailers over the conversion rates to be used to determine the volume of Better Cotton sourced into brand/retailer supply chains as a percentage of their total cotton footprint.
- New membership is essential for continued growth in Better Cotton uptake as many of the larger brands reach their procurement targets in 2020 and have limited growth potential thereafter. Expansion options mentioned included: new geographies with their own brands/retailers (e.g. China and India), and new manufacturing sectors (e.g. health, hospitality) that use significant amounts of cotton.
- The BCI claims framework has helped to establish what brands and retailers can say to their consumers about Better Cotton, but there is an opacity to the story that can be told and a communications challenge ahead for BCI.

“

I went to my supplier network; no knowledge. BCI provided training so that we could negotiate with them. They needed to understand how Better Cotton is different from organic, pricing-wise.

- Manufacturer

”

Factors Helping and Constraining Progress on Retailer/ Brand Membership and Uptake

Helping

Enduring/deepening customer interest in sustainable solutions (some markets)

Demonstration effect of a lead group of high-profile brands reaching toward their Better Cotton procurement targets

Refined system of recruitment and onboarding

Absence of constraints on product choice; no extra production costs

Increasing familiarity with the Better Cotton chain of custody in the supply chain

Constraining

Inability of brands to identify the “benefit” of Better Cotton directly with the product

Risk aversion in a highly competitive fashion marketplace

Concerns about traceability, verification and reputational risk

Lingering concerns about upcharges and ambiguities regarding conversion rates

5.2 TRAINING MODULES AND TOOLS

5.2.1 Gender

Finding 8: Activities under the grant have established a “breakthrough” understanding of the participation of women and men in Better Cotton production and of the possible pathways leading to improved gender equality within BCI.

As part of sub-goal two, the grant set aside €99K to “improve gender equality in cotton producing communities”. Recognising that the work to be done was foundational, activities were to be mostly focused on research and on the development of a gender training module targeted toward those involved in cotton production.

To this point, BCI had not officially dedicated staff time toward gender programming. The bulk of the funds was to be split evenly between staffing costs at BCI and consultant fees. While modest in size, this part of the grant was critical to the progress that has been made. Funds have been used to:

- Prepare an analysis of women in cotton production;
- Develop a more inclusive definition of cotton “farmer”;
- Analyse barriers to training for women;
- Assess Better Cotton Principles, Criteria & Measurement;
- Design and deliver a gender training module (Training of Trainers [ToT] and online versions);
- Collect good practices supporting Gender mainstreaming;
- Prepare a set of recommendations for BCI.

As yet, BCI cannot as yet substantively claim results against the expected outcomes for this sub-goal. Evidence of *change in the inclusion of women in IP training* (the first outcome) and in the *design and delivery of IP programmes and services* (the second outcome) are at least a year away from coming to fruition as the roll out of the training module has only recently occurred at the farm level.

Regarding the first outcome, a pattern of inconsistent gender disaggregated reporting has historically made it difficult to obtain an actual picture of women and men’s participation in training. Those close enough to observe the work done to date point out that the task of defining the “cotton farmer” – to recognise wives in many instances as “co-farmers” – has broadened the scope of perceived eligibility to participate in training. They note, for example, that using the new understanding of “cotton farmer/ worker” in the design and delivery of initial trainings in some settings has led to women comprising as much as a third of those present. Barriers to mixed gender training exist in some settings.

Regarding the second outcome, stories showing the efficacy of women in non-traditional roles, or of women and men sharing decision-making, were collected by the consultant team. Some accounts are anecdotal

“

We have realised through the research that we have underestimated the contribution of women to cotton production.

- BCI personnel

”

and illustrative of observed trends, others are more detailed and, as such, instructive to those wishing to emulate gender aware practices. Either way, key informants noted, these accounts of gender sensitive practice cannot be offered up as examples of service improvements stemming from the activities of this gender equality initiative.

Evaluation encounters with BCI staff, IPs and supply chain actors yielded a range of opinion about the role of women in cotton production that is consistent with the findings of the gender consultant team. Some individuals are ambivalent or outrightly resistant toward the idea that women should occupy roles outside those traditionally assigned. In contrast, the team encountered IP staff with a considerable depth of experience integrating gender equality at the farm level. The findings underline the multidimensional nature of the work ahead, encompassing a range of tasks that includes exposure and awareness raising, individual and organisational skills development, and the development of resource networks from which to draw appropriate expertise.

Reports of positively received gender ToT sessions were reinforced in a couple of conversations with (BCI or IP) participants. One such participant shared that his views were opened to see how the participation of women and men can improve decision making in the home and productivity at work.

Brand commentary on BCI's exploration of the gender dimensions of cotton production include mentions that it is new to BCI and relevant not just at the farm level but to the whole supply chain and throughout the organisation. One key informant noted that paying attention to women's empowerment is part of what is needed to come to grips with a range of ethical challenges in the supply chain including forced labour. And, from a different angle, one informant suggested that bringing out the story of women's empowered in cotton may help to convey the bigger story of Better Cotton to fashion consumers.

“

We have special training for women cotton pickers [...] encouraging leadership in other programmes.

- IP Informant

”

Factors Helping and Constraining Progress on Gender Equality in BCI

Helping

Institutional awareness of SDG commitments and obligations on international organisations to address them

Emergent senior leadership commitment at BCI

Interest of C&A Foundation in supporting this work

Retailer and Brand interest in filling out the Better Cotton story with a gender perspective

Presence of IPs and others with gender mainstreaming experience

Constraining

Variance in perception – within BCI, IPs, PUs, and along the supply chain – over the need to address the topic; cultural factors influencing perception

The range of cultural variances to be factored into the training module to make it workable in BCI countries

Inconsistent tracking of training numbers

The insufficient time available to make a dent on IP services

5.2.2 Water Stewardship and Land Use (HCV and Biodiversity)

Finding 9: BCI has delivered on its commitment to produce tested, modularised, multi-media content for revised standards on Water Stewardship (Principle 2) and on Biodiversity Enhancement and Land Use (Principle 4).

In the BCSS Standards Review process (2015-17), the Standard Setting and Review Committee recommended: a) shifting from an initial focus on water efficiency to a more holistic water governance approach (Principle 2), and b) the introduction of a standard process for assessing the impacts of proposed conversions of land for cotton production (Principle 4). In the assembly of the C&A Foundation grant, an allocation of €246K was made to develop modules and tools to support the roll out of these revisions. In November 2018, BCI requested a no cost adjustment to the grant to accommodate the development of a third module that introduces biodiversity as it pertains to cotton production (also part of Principle 4). As was the pattern across the sub-goals, the bulk of funding was used for staffing and consultant support. The balance (about a third of the allocation) was spent on IP engagement, content development and engagement with the Standards Committee.

Outcome indicators and targets were identified in the grant agreement for the roll out of the new training materials. Their formulation assumed sufficient time in the grant period for the modules and tools to be developed, introduced and cascaded to farm level. As well, they were referenced not just to the grant contribution, but to the entire level of effort invested by BCI in this area of programming. Given the end time on the grant agreement, there simply hasn't been the time required to as yet see the ground level changes that are expected.

At this stage, then, BCI is unable to report progress against the outcome indicators for the modules developed. Contributing factors also include: delays in finalising the (Water) standard; the length of time required to coordinate with partners involved in module design and testing; the quantity and diversity of the inputs to be harmonised into the modules; and the timing of the decision to request inclusion of the biodiversity component.

The status of module development in July 2019 was as follows:

- Consultation on Principles and Criteria completed in line with industry standard;
- Content field tested;
- Modules and tools developed (including online versions); and
- ToT process implemented with BCI staff and IPs.

Roll out at the farmer level has been underway in the 2019-2020 season. Outcome data related to the uptake of the training content is forthcoming.

Interviews with BCI field staff, consultants and IP staff training participants corroborate BCI reporting. The water and land use module content was found to be adaptable, well organised and clearly presented. One consultant commented on how adherence to being context adaptive led the training team to use a range of water resource mapping techniques (including GPS in one location and drawing in the sand in another). The same consultant observed the coherence of the water and HCV modules.

Early observations made of the delivery of the training content include the following:

- Cost savings (and improved margins) already achieved from the learned water efficiency practices and from reduced reliance on pesticides have given BCI farmers confidence in the BCSS.
- As expected, the enlargement in scope from water efficiency to water governance has shifted attention from the individual farmer to the community and to the variety of interdependent roles required for effective resource management.
- By introducing the principles of biodiversity, farmers are exposed to new conservation tools; they are, for example seeing birds as assets rather than as pests.

“

The module was easy to understand and well delivered, modules are very detailed. Lots of opportunity to network and talk more broadly with IP and BCI colleagues about production unit roll out. Left feeling ready to pass on content to field managers.

- Field partner participant of five-day training on the Revised Water Principle

”

While in agreement that the modules represent a solid foundation for training, key informants also indicated a need to further adapt content for local conditions – geography, climate, scale of farming operation, literacy levels, legislation and culture. The HCV assessment tool is highlighted in this regard, as a result of its ground-breaking use with smallholder farmers. Concern was also raised about the dangers of simply overwhelming farmers with too much content.

“

You need to make sure that what country teams present to IPs is really fit for purpose, otherwise they could just discard it altogether.

- BCI Staff

”

From this point on, BCI expects to work with its country teams to remove, add or adjust content to ensure that the modules are appropriate. In the same vein, BCI expects to introduce more climate change and gender equality content – including references and case study material into the modules as cross-cutting themes.

Key informants familiar enough with the grant suggested that while BCI would likely have found the resources internally or externally to develop the training materials (and, indeed have found such for other modules), the time required to do so would have caused an uncomfortable gap. BCI would have had a new set of standards and a longer time without a systematic way of introducing them.

5.3 NATIONAL EMBEDDING

Finding 10: There has been useful supplementary support for the development of an Embedding Strategy and a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework. Staffing resources have enabled outreach and dialogue in identified (sub)national jurisdictions; progress is evident toward targets. Strategic partnerships have been formed between national entities and BCI and benchmarking and embedding initiatives are underway.

BCI's 2020 strategy committed the organisation to strengthen relationships with national and sub-national partners to ensure continuity of the programme. At the time of the grant, work on this sub-goal was in its nascent stages with little direct experience yet in place on which to build. The organisation was still developing its action plan, which would provide the criteria for determining "embeddedness".

A grant allocation of €120K was made to support this facet of BCI programming. Three quarters of the allocation was used to boost staff time in Geneva and in four countries (China, India, Pakistan, and the US). The balance was used to support travel and meeting costs.

The outcome envisaged in the grant document was a shift in the number of countries from two to six in which the BCSS could be said to be nationally embedded. Understanding that the process of embedding is complex, lengthy, and at the edge of BCI's sphere of influence, progress markers were suggested. Three such markers were outlined to indicate progress being made:

- Level of demonstrable evidence of strong domestic support from a diverse representation of cotton stakeholders;
- Presence of a national-level Strategic Partner, endorsed by BCI, that is implementing all aspects of the BCSS (or a BCSS-recognised equivalent standard);
- The degree to which the BCSS has been fixed or set as the predominant approach to cotton production at a national level.

While welcomed, resources provided under the grant were modest in comparison to total outlay for BCI's national embedding activities. They have mostly been used for:

- Guidance on the National Embedding Framework;
- Talks in forums;
- Country stakeholder meetings; and
- Use of monitoring tool to conduct baseline assessments.

There is progress to report under the sub-goal, though the specific contribution of the grant is difficult to establish. Reports to C&A Foundation have not referenced the progress markers set out above. Instead they have referenced targets more closely aligned with the definition of "embeddedness" that is outlined in the National Embedding Framework. Based on reports and stakeholder conversations:

“

The grant has helped us keep the discussions going.

- BCI Staff

”

- Cotton SA are working to re-benchmark to the updated Principles and Criteria.
- Australia and Brazil have strategic partnership relationships with BCI. Cotton Australia's myBMP standard programme has been successfully benchmarked, while in Brazil, the ABR standard is being re-benchmarked to the revised BCSS.
- In Hubei province in China, the Agriculture Bureau has embedded the Better Cotton Principles and Criteria into its local sustainable cotton production guidelines. Similar efforts are in play in the provinces of Shandong and in Xinjiang. In the latter, political tensions have slowed progress.
- In Pakistan, the Pakistan Central Cotton Committee has integrated the BCSS on projects in Punjab and Sindh in connection with the Agriculture Extension Departments (AEDs) of those provinces.
- The Israel Cotton Production & Marketing Board has drafted its own national level standard system that will then be benchmarked with the recently updated BCSS.
- The Government of Mozambique has embedded BCI Principles and Criteria into their national regulations. BCI has supported the Mozambican Cotton Board Institute (IAM) in the development of national standards, however progress is hampered by financial and organisational constraints.
- BCI is engaged with the US National Cotton Council regarding benchmarking the BCSS with a new national standard system currently being piloted – the US Cotton Trust Protocol. This remains a work in progress.
- Four counties are self-funded in their implementation of the BCSS; Pakistan and Mozambique are being supported externally.

Overall, staff estimate that substantive progress on national embedding has been made in five countries, up from the baseline of two.

Factors Helping and Constraining Progress National Embedding

Helping

With the framework in place, there is clarity on definition of "national embedding" and ways to measure progress

The volumes of Better Cotton grown and the magnitude of training provided is attracting positive attention (in select countries)

There is good compatibility of national standard systems with BCSS, and therein mutual advantages through benchmarking

Increased staff presence at a country level has made it possible to advance the discussions.

Constraining

Unique industry-government configurations – country to country

Institutional flux and frequent personnel changes

Shifting national policies and priorities vis-à-vis cotton

5.4 ASSESSMENT OF THE GRANT'S ADDED VALUE TO BCI

Finding 11: The grant gets "across the board" high marks for amplifying impact within BCI.

For reasons pertaining to BCI's accounting systems, it was not possible to compare the size of grant contributions to total outlays, by sub-goal. However, it is known from the contract documents that the project budget represented about 6.5% of the estimated total operating budget for the contracting period.

Most key informants who knew specifically about the grant, pointed to the staffing and consultant expertise that was made possible through the contribution of €1.5 million. Having additional personnel on hand personalised brand recruitment and embedding discussions, made supplier training possible, and enriched IP-Country Team interactions.

More specifically, membership recruitment was greatly amplified by the design and delivery of member recruitment meetings. Historically, these were attached to industry events. With the grant, the number of such events rose from three in 2017, to 27 in 2018, to 43 half-way into 2019. The pattern is similar with onboarding meetings that engage different staff teams (including C-suites) of companies right after their induction as members. In 2017, there were 44 such events. That number doubled a year later, and half-way through 2019, it promises to be at the same level. Since 2016, BCI has started peer-to-peer workshops and study tours, as well.

In the Better Cotton supply chain, Brands have been able to draw on BCI's support in delivering supplier training in response to actor unfamiliarity with the mass balance chain of custody model. Since late 2016, when the training was introduced, the number of sessions have climbed considerably. In 2017, there were 21 such training events; a year later there were 86, and to the mid-point of 2019 there have been another 27. Exhibit 5.3 shows the participant reach trends for membership recruitment and uptake.

Exhibit 5.3 Participant Counts for Membership and Uptake Activities

EVENT	2017	2018	2019 (TO JULY 31)
Member Recruitment	98	682	322
On-boarding	869	1,936	1,438
Supplier Training	608	3,370	1,045
R&B Peer Workshops	108	167	81

Source: BCI staff

The supplier training itself was mentioned for the critical role it played in conditioning chain of custody expectations and arrangements for a cohort of retailers and brands. Relatedly, BCI's growth in scale has itself generated increased momentum according to one BCI staff person. This can be seen in the brands that are spontaneously coming forward with inquiries, the governments coming forward with inquiries and gestures of support for Better Cotton and the development of the BCSS, and the behaviour of some suppliers who have become proactive in selling their readiness to supply Better Cotton credits.

The gender assessment, recommendations and training, all activities of the grant, were noted for sparking the gender equality conversation among BCI stakeholders at the production unit, IP, BCI country team levels, and corporately. The evaluators heard how the gender work carried out under sub-goal 2 is likely to resonate through future gender trainings at the producer level, through the more disciplined collection of

gender disaggregated data, through the future inclusion of gender equality content in the modules of several Better Cotton principles, and in BCI's own 2030 strategy development.

Finally, BCI staff and consultants pointed out that the funds set aside for module development have allowed BCI to develop its process and source its expert inputs for consultation, pilot testing, the modularisation of training content and the roll out of training. In so doing, it has reinforced BCI's commitment to continuous improvement planning, informed the development of the Better Cotton Training Institute, and set itself up for subsequent revisions of the BCSS. It has also attracted interest, created or deepened partnerships, and attracted additional funding support from outside organisations with complementary mandates.

“

I am very happy with the level of partnerships that we developed, with everyone that we engaged with there is further engagement planned.

– BCI staff associated with module development

”

6 Sustainability and Scalability

This chapter discusses the extent to which the grant's results are likely to be sustainable over time, based on three contributing factors: the duration of the grant, the extent of exit strategies in place, and the amount of co-funding and leverage achieved. Elements of grant design is another factor specific to this grant. The chapter then analyses the potential for scalability of project activities. Finally, the contribution of the grant to BCI's organisational sustainability is discussed, in terms of field building, and of partnerships and core support.

6.1 SUSTAINABILITY OF RESULTS

Finding 12: Based on the key factors for sustainability, the grant's results are highly likely to be sustained over time, i.e. beyond C&A Foundation funding. The timing of the grant, coinciding as it does with the formulation of BCI's 2030 strategy, also has a bearing on the likely sustainability of those grant funded activities deemed successful.

6.1.2 Duration of the Grant

A review of the C&A Foundation's overall grant-making demonstrates that the foundation's most sustainable grants have received at least 27 months (2.25 years) of support. The "Accelerating BCI..." grant lasted three years and is therefore on the mark in terms of duration for optimal sustainability.

6.1.3 Exit Strategies

While the inclusion of an exit strategy is typically considered an important factor of sustainability, an analysis of all three streams of work stemming from this grant's support revealed that an explicit exit strategy was not necessary, given the purpose and structure of the grant. In the first sub-goal, the grant supported activities integral to a BCI core function. In the second sub-goal related to deepening BCSS impacts, the project was composed of discrete preparatory activities – module development, ToT, and a roll out strategy. These were meant to be developed by the time the grant closed thereby enabling farmer level capacity development over the coming years. Exit strategies were not needed for this stream of work either. In the third sub-goal, the grant constituted a small part of BCI's efforts towards national embedding. As with the first sub-goal, the grant was supporting activities integral to a BCI core function. Under the global strategy and with core funding, such efforts are meant to continue and to gain in importance following grant closure.

6.1.4 Co-funding and Leverage

C&A Foundation defines co-funding as resources mobilised and secured at grant approval, and leverage as resources committed during implementation and ex-post. In the grant agreement, BCI committed to using this grant to leverage additional resources, and to providing detailed information on co-funding and

leveraged resources in annual monitoring reports. No evidence was found of leverage or co-funding in monitoring reports. However, C&A Foundation reports that BCI successfully secured three times the amount in funds than was expected (€4.9 million, compared to an expected leverage of €1.7 million). These came through contributions from brands and other donor organisations. The data suggests that these sums were mostly secured through accelerated membership and uptake (sub-goal 1). Stakeholders pointed towards two specific cases of partners that decided to invest some of their own funds in order to increase resources for sub-goal 2, because they believed in the importance of the topics (water stewardship, and gender).

6.1.5 Elements of Grant Design

The first stream of the project, membership and uptake, was designed as a self-perpetuating model that would eventually lead to BCI's costs being covered and even surpassed by membership fees. The work accomplished under this sub-goal has generated a considerable increase in membership and volume-based fees that go a long way toward covering the costs of this programming component.

The second sub-goal, namely the training modules and tools, is also considered sustainable. These have been designed as dynamic, living documents, meant to be usable at least until the next revision of the standard in five years. Then, they will need to be adapted in order to reflect eventual modifications of the principles and criteria. Based on stakeholder interviews and a review of relevant documents, there are at least four characteristics supporting the sustainability of the modules and their roll out:

- They are based on the notion of continuous learning and are designed to be continuously enriched with new materials;
- They are generic enough to be adapted to different contexts;
- They are adapted to small, medium and large holders; and
- The topics, by their very nature, are bound to be relevant for an extended period of time.

Regarding the third sub-goal, national embedding, the grant constituted a small part of efforts made by BCI in this area. There is not enough evidence to conclude on the magnitude of its contribution beyond anecdotes provided by staff and strategic partners. The commentary indicates, however, that grant funding gave BCI additional leadership and field presence that remains important in the ongoing effort to secure ownership of BCI at a country level.

The timeframe of the project has, for the most part, been optimal for the outputs and outcomes of the grant across all three streams to feed into the conception of BCI's Strategy 2030. As field data pertaining to the roll out of the training modules becomes available, the results story of the grant will be even more complete. Both the Final Monitoring Report of the project and multiple BCI staff members indicated that the contribution of the grant result into the 2030 strategy was planned and would be achieved. This would represent an example of good practice in ensuring the sustainability and the amplification of grant results.

6.2 SCALABILITY

Finding 13: The grant made a significant contribution to the scaling of membership and uptake. The materials produced have contributed to shaping the discourse around sustainable cotton and to spreading notions of ecological ethic and gender equality at a very large scale. The process towards national embedding has been making progress albeit with mixed results to date

Scalability is defined by C&A Foundation as the extent to which the grant's results have effected, or are likely to effect, wider systemic change. Each of the three sub-goals is discussed individually below, in terms of their progress and contribution to scaling BCI work.

6.2.2 Sub-goal 1: Accelerated, increased uptake of Better Cotton by retailers and brands

The grant has made a significant contribution to the scaling of membership and uptake: it has increased BCI's capacity for scaling and helped the organisation expand its reach within the field of cotton. The work is not complete, as most informants point out. More members and more uptake (currently at about 20% of global cotton production) are required to reach any kind of "tipping point" in the drive to making Better Cotton

the predominant way of producing cotton worldwide. Increasingly, there are doubts that 30% will be that sustainability threshold as earlier anticipated. Nevertheless, for now, BCI is progressing towards this goal. The tools and methods employed during the grant have been necessary, but most feel they will need adaptation as BCI plies the secondary markets of the world for brands and retailers, and moves its search beyond fashion and apparel into other sectors using cotton. As stated by various BCI staff members, this area of work should be a priority for BCI toward 2030.

Final Monitoring Report (August 2019):

This global demand for Better Cotton provides smallholder farmers opportunities to access global markets. The large and influential member-base means BCI can drive transformational change by establishing Better Cotton as a responsible mainstream commodity.

6.2.3 Sub-goal 2: The impact of the Better Cotton Standard System is deepened

The training modules and tools make operational the BCSS revised principles and criteria for farmer level capacity building. They constitute a tool for BCI to reach what is soon to be five million farmers worldwide³, as per the organisation's objective for 2020. All BCI countries must apply the new guidelines on gender, water stewardship, biodiversity management plan and land use change starting either in cotton season 2019-2020 or 2020-2021, depending on the topic. As a result, the training materials will

“

The focus on gender, as of now it does not exist in organic cotton.

- C&A Foundation Staff

”

³ These 5 million farmers would represent 30% of global cotton production.

contribute to shaping the discourse around sustainable cotton and to spread notions of ecological ethic at a very large scale.

Gender equality is another topic now being integrated into the discourse as well as into the way BCI operates and delivers programmes. It is also becoming a topic of trainings for farmers worldwide.

This project also has potential for wider systemic change beyond BCI. As some stakeholders external to BCI highlighted, there is a likelihood that some of the agenda-setting and outputs generated through the grant will serve as inspiration for other standards and international organisations.

In one example, the ISEAL Gender Working Group for Sustainability Standards has allowed BCI to exchange and share with peers working on different sustainability standards and other multi-stakeholder initiatives.

“

The idea is that BCI should be owned by governments and they push for adoptions, so it is no longer a private sector initiative. Maybe this should get more focus. It happened with some governments, but now it is time to accelerate that piece.

- External stakeholder

”

6.2.4 Sub-goal 3: The BCSS is embedded into local and national regulations

Progress on national embedding in five identified countries is considered a much-needed outcome towards transferring ownership of Better Cotton to external entities. However, the results so far are “extremely context specific”, as mentioned in the project’s Final Monitoring Report. Stakeholders within and outside BCI pointed to this area of work as one that has not yet led to systemic change. It is a key area of focus for future BCI work in order for the organisation to increase the depth of its presence at a country level.

6.3 ORGANISATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY

Finding 14: Grant activities, mostly through increased membership and uptake, have contributed to the expansion and the solidification of BCI’s presence in the field of sustainable cotton. They also contributed towards BCI’s longevity. However, the increase in membership has put the staff and the organisation’s systems under pressure.

6.3.2 Field Building

Grant funding has directly contributed to building the field of sustainable cotton, where BCI is the lead actor internationally. Mostly through the first sub-goal but also through the third one, the grant has contributed towards the expansion and the solidification of BCI’s networks of retailers and brands, governments and industry organisations.

6.3.3 Partnerships and Core Support

BCI and C&A Foundation have shared a multifaceted relationship that rests on membership in BCI, participation in BCI's governance and a history of professional interactions in cotton-related networks. By all accounts, the partnership is solid and long-lasting: it represents a commitment over time. This grant can be considered an important moment in the relationship: it is the first grant from C&A Foundation to BCI, followed by another one in 2019 dedicated to BCI's Growth and Innovation Fund (GIF), that funds BCI's programmes. As the "Accelerating BCI..." grant funded the Secretariat's activities, as opposed to the GIF, elements of the grant can be referenced as core support. Nearly 90% of the grant allocation was used for staffing (about a third of which was used for external consultants).

The grant has contributed to the organisation's longevity with the attention it has paid to the recruitment and uptake sub-goal. Such efforts have contributed to widening BCI's membership and increasing its uptake, thus fostering the organisation's financial self-sufficiency due to the growth in membership and volume based fees. At the same time, the increase in membership and uptake has put pressure on the organisation, both in terms of systems and staff, leading to some concerns about its robustness. According to various BCI informants as well as certain members, the team is now spread very thin and systems are reaching their limits. In particular, Human Resources (HR) systems are stretched, systems to handle legal and reputational aspects need improvement, a comprehensive strategy on digital transformation is needed, and communications and traceability are growing concerns for brands and retailers.

Staff recruitment has resumed and accelerated in order to meet the organisation's needs. While applauded, overall, a cautionary note made by several staff is that staffing up can only be considered part of the solution. Thoughtful analysis of organisational constraints and emergent opportunities is also required to ensure staff and consultant talent is utilised to the full and supported with systems that save time and increase the potency of BCI's information flow and communications.

“

The organisation needs to evolve and not organically as it seems to be doing now but with a robust plan.

- BCI staff

”

7 Efficiency

This chapter discusses the project's use of resources as well as its Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) systems.

7.1 ADHERENCE TO EFFICIENCY MEASURES

Finding 15: On the whole, the grant has been executed in an efficient manner: following a slow start, the project increased its pace and was implemented largely as planned. The project produced high value-for-money.

The project had a slow start mostly on account of the time required to bring consultants on board and to align schedules with BCI staff colleagues. A Council decision to intensify the consultation process on the water module and complications fielding the pilot activities on the modules were also factors in the pace of implementation. Staff rotations in the membership and uptake team factored into the pace of work in that sub-goal part-way through the contract. The speed of implementation quickened as the project progressed, and in the end, project implementation occurred largely as planned. Reflecting on the various deployment challenges the project faced, staff and consultants both mentioned that in some instances the planning lacked detail and foresight, leading to scheduling conflicts.

In the end, the grant led to the creation of four modules instead of the three that were initially planned. The project team requested a reallocation of funds to C&A Foundation as there were underspent funds from the water and land use modules and "due to significant increased financial contribution" from a partner and funder, as per the request for budget reallocation. As a result, the module on biodiversity was added to the project's outputs. The project overspent in certain areas, mostly in the first sub-goal. The shortfall of about €106K was found from other BCI sources, according to the Financial reporting from August 2019.

The project used a combination of strategies to increase efficiency:

- **Blocking time for the grant in project staff schedules:** Those staff directly involved with the project had time blocked in their schedules specifically for this grant. This practice contributed to making and maintaining this project as a priority. As such, it stands out for its role in distributing grant related responsibilities and thereby warding against dilution of effort where tasks run the risk of "falling through the cracks".
- **Rationalising and assigning offsite work to colleagues already on mission:** Staff members, at times, asked colleagues to represent them at meetings or events in a bid to manage workloads and travel costs.
- **Resorting to external resources when there was a lack of bandwidth and/ or skills internally:** The development of training modules and tools was outsourced to partner organisations and consultants. While this required accompaniment from the BCI team, it allowed BCI to draw in additional expertise and work to timelines that would have been unachievable by BCI staff alone.
- **Selecting pilot countries for the training modules based on a purposive sampling methodology:** The methodology considered what would be an optimal representation of BCI programming

settings. Criteria for the choice of five countries included: farm size, the prevalence of rainfed versus irrigated land, the degree of mechanisation, and farmer capacity. The project team endeavoured to maximise the applicability of the modules as a hedge against an overly exhausting process of national level adaptation later on.

- **Preparing materials to address Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs):** BCI anticipated and thus prepared the materials that brands and retailers would typically request before making uptake commitments. This preparation enabled BCI to strategically resort to either prepared materials or to face-to-face interaction, depending on the situation.

7.2 MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING

Finding 16: The project mostly met Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning requirements, however BCI was unable to report against more than half of the Key Performance Indicators listed in the contract document. In most instances, the indicators themselves pointed to changes beyond the grant's sphere of influence.

7.2.1 Results Alignment Dimensions

At the outcome level, BCI's practice of reporting against outcomes was varied; and that in some areas, the project did not show achievement of targets as per its logframe (see Table 7.1).

Reporting against outcomes occurred for sub goals 1 and 3, but not for sub-goal 2 (Deepening the BCSS – module development). Here, the targets and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) were situated at too high a level and too long a range for the "Accelerating BCI..." grant itself. They were drawn from a higher programme level vantage point and were meant for use in tracking results that would be expected one or two years beyond the end of the grant. Using the indicators and targets set for the water governance module as an example, it was not possible to report on the ratio of producers compliant with the water plan criteria, seeing that the modules were only just being rolled out as the 2019-2020 cotton season got underway.

For sub-goal 3 (National Embedding), the KPIs were not granular enough to monitor progress beyond counting countries meeting high level embeddedness criteria. As a consequence, the project team resorted to extensive narrative in its reporting to explain the complex nature of engaging governments and national/state level institutions in "embeddedness" related dialogues. The metrics for sub-goal 3 effectively masked the complexity of the national embedding process, unique as it is country by country, limiting the richness of the reporting and the understanding of BCI's progress (and the grant's contribution) in the sub-goal.

“

[The indicators] were impact indicators whereas we were at the output level. Normally those indicators are the result of full implementation after several years.

- BCI Staff

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Table 7.1 KPIs, Results and Monitoring Status for "Accelerating BCI..."

SUB-GOAL	INDICATOR	TARGET	RESULTS (08-19)	MONITORING STATUS
1. Accelerated, increased uptake of Better Cotton by retailers and brands	# of retailers and brand members recruited	117 retailers and brands	138	Reporting
	Time gap between initial contact and conversion to membership	12-18 months		Eliminated from reporting (08-17)
	Total procurement of Better Cotton by retailer and brand members	900K MT	1,269K MT	Reporting
2. The impact of the Better Cotton Standard System is deepened	# of women farmers and workers who participate in training activities	20%	Female farmers: up to 11% Female workers: up to 47%	Uneven reporting: either in percentage, in absolute numbers, or not at all
	# of new, better adapted services/activities implemented by IPs	20	Launched a global training module in March 2019	No reporting
	% of producers who comply with the water plan criteria	90%		No reporting
	% of producers who indicate implementing activities that qualify under collective action of the water plan	40%		No reporting
	% of relevant partners' staff qualified on the water measurement module	90%	100% (02-19) – based on sampled countries	Reporting once
	% of land conversion that is compliant with new BCI criteria	75%		No reporting
	3. The BCSS is embedded into local and national regulations	# of countries in which organisations and institutions have taken leadership of managing the BCSS	6	6
5				
# of countries in which organisations and institutions leading BCSS have a mandate from the governments or associations representing the cotton industry		6	6	Reporting
# of countries in which organisations or institutions leading BCSS are financially independent from BCI		6	5	Reporting

7.2.2 Data Collection Dimensions

Data collection arrangements for MEL varied depending on the sub-goal of the project, revealing the lack of a comprehensive and centralised data collection plan for the whole grant.⁴ The first and third sub-goals relied on BCI-wide data, and the data that was provided tracked BCI's progress on the sub-goal rather than the grant's contribution to that progress. For instance, the number of members recruited was tracked through BCI's monitoring systems and reflected BCI's progress, to which the grant contributed; it did not track the increase in membership due to C&A Foundation funding. In the absence of workable outcomes

Tracking Outcomes at a Project and Programme Level – Practice Considerations for Results Based Management

1. Broadly speaking, outcome claims should be referenced to changes that lie within the sphere of influence of the implementer, given the budget and the time available. Indicators and targets should be calibrated accordingly.
2. Programme or organisational outcome claims are, by definition, grander than project outcome claims. The resources available to a programme – people, allied organizations, and funds - are greater than they are to a project and, sometimes, time frames extend longer than they do for a project.
3. Nested within a programme, a project might resemble the scope of the programme with less resources, it might represent the scale and intensity of the programme but in only one locale, or a single component of the programme suite of activities in multiple locales. Whichever the scenario, the nature of that nested relationship is to be understood.
4. An agreement is usually needed between the funder and the grant recipient on whether there is enough to be gained managing for results at both project and programme level. There are many factors to consider relating to the size and complexity of the undertaking. For the project funder, it might have to do with the funder's and/ or the organisation's need to understand the contribution being made in the project to the programme whole.
5. There is a discipline to nesting outcomes and their metrics between project and programme level. Keeping point 1, above in mind, outcome claims at a project level can often relate to a programme level output. Such is the case with BCI module development supported under the grant. Arguably, the C&A Foundation grant outcomes for sub-goal #2 should have related to the launch of the modules, nothing more. And the project logic model addressing the modules should have focused more on the performance details associated with creating and launching quality knowledge products. A project outcome such as this would fit in a programme logic model as an appropriate output/ immediate outcome leading to the ground level changes in capacity that will become evident after a growing season. Sometimes though, outcome level changes at a project level may simply relate directly to outcome level changes at a programme level – it is dependent on the nesting arrangement. Such is the case with sub-goal 1. Here the C&A Foundation grant resources were added generally to the pot of resources needed for recruitment and uptake. As such, the outcome indicators made sense. What is obscured in this instance is how much of the actual performance on the indicator was "purchased"/ supported with the grant money.
6. Without a project level measurement framework, project evaluations can still occur that are reliant on what is often called theory-based evaluation and/or contribution analysis. What is important in this scenario, however, is that project performance not be measured and then judged against programme level targets.

⁴ While the grant agreement with C&A Foundation presents main evaluation milestones, it does not specify data collection methods or means of verification.

indicators for the second sub-goal, project staff simply provided qualitative updates pertinent to activities and results pertinent to the grant (e.g. commentaries on progress towards the field testing and launching of a module).

Overall, the data used in reporting may or may not have been specific to the acceleration provided through the grant depending on: a) the level of awareness among staff of how grant funds were used, and/or b) the magnitude of the grant's contribution to the total work done under the sub-goal. Progress measured on the gender equality sub-goal, for instance, could reasonably be related directly to the grant. By contrast, progress measured under the National Embedding sub-goal could not. In the box, above, the evaluation sets out some practice considerations on the formulation of performance or results frameworks at a project and programme level.

7.2.3 Results Management Dimensions

As described to the evaluators, there has been no practice for reviewing and adjusting the logframe and its metrics through implementation. Issues with the monitoring framework and challenges in meeting milestones can be traced to a disconnect between the BCI staff members who defined the project's KPIs and targets from their senior management perspective, on the one hand, and the team members mandated to implement and manage project activities, on the other.

Regarding the availability of data, there was little to support a results management approach. Project management produced a limited amount of evaluative documentation related to project activities. One project staff person noted, "For each project we had activity plans [...]. It was more to monitor progress on activities and planification. But there was pretty much all we had." In the recruitment area, the staff team struggled to find a compelling way to measure the efficacy of some recruitment activities, preferring instead to track at a less granular level the progress of retailer/brand prospects along the pathway toward membership. Another BCI staff explained that a majority of surveys conducted during key events related to the grant, such as peer-to-peer meetings, member recruiting meetings and BCI field trips, were lost with the closing of the email marketing service (Constant Contact).

With parts of the logframe metrics calibrated inappropriately for the grant and the project team hampered in the use of the activity level evaluation data, MEL data was of limited service to management, though with important exceptions. In at least two instances, project management decisions were driven by MEL data, and particularly financial monitoring data:

- In August 2018, grant supported activities related to gender equality underwent an acceleration of pace as a result of narrative and financial data indicating activities were behind schedule and targets. A baseline assessment on women in cotton production was ordered.
- At the end of 2018, BCI and C&A Foundation agreed to reallocate funds to develop a module on biodiversity. This resulted from a growing awareness of need and a forecasted underspending in the land use and water components of the project.

7.2.4 Results Reporting Dimensions

The project met the MEL requirements in terms of outputs, namely reports and products, in accordance with the agreed upon schedule. C&A Foundation staff have commended BCI for the clarity, promptness and transparency of its reporting.

Monitoring reports submitted to C&A Foundation include reflections on challenges and mitigation measures, unintended results, recommendations and lessons learned. At times, in their sections dedicated to retrospective narrative, the reports stray from describing what has happened and what has resulted to describing what is planned for subsequent reporting periods. That said, the evaluators found the reports to be rich with insight on the progress of grant activities within the larger spheres of BCI despite the issues outlined above.

Finally, while the proposal to C&A Foundation included a risk matrix, it was not directly reported against at any point over the course of the project. It is possible that it served as a reference when the team faced challenges and sought mitigation measures, but if that was the case, the evaluators did not see any record of such.

8 Conclusion and Recommendations

8.1 CONCLUSIONS

Conclusions are referenced to evaluation rubric set out in Appendix VII . Exhibit 8.1 summarises the score on a five-point scale. It is followed by a series of concluding thoughts and linked recommendations.

Exhibit 8.1 Evaluation of the Project as per the Rubric

RELEVANCE	EFFECTIVENESS AND RESULTS	EFFICIENCY	LIKELY SUSTAINABILITY
Fully Relevant (5)	Quite Effective (4)	Quite Efficient (4)	Mostly Satisfactory (4)

8.1.1 On Relevance...

The C&A Foundation funded “Accelerating BCI...” project coincided well with some pressing needs at BCI to scale up its membership and uptake, to roll out some fresh content aligned to revised Better Cotton Standards, and to put additional weight behind the organisation’s efforts to embed the BCSS within a strategic selection of countries. The grant enabled BCI to deploy staff and consultant talent in appropriate places supplied with budget support. Overall, its design met the needs of the times at BCI. At the same time, the identity of the grant and its expectations to accelerate the mainstreaming of BCI in certain areas were known to only a few. A design adjustment favouring strategic management at the project level might have yielded some additional “acceleration” dividends.

8.1.2 On Effectiveness and Results...

The value of the grant was relatively small as compared to the total operating budget of BCI, but the added value was considerable. After three years, retail and brand recruitment and uptake have exceeded grant expectations. Here the grant contribution has been decisive. Modularised training content on gender equality, water governance, land use and biodiversity have been successfully cascaded to production unit level in pilot countries, as planned. Here too, the contribution has been substantial, and particularly so for the gender equality work. The actual effectiveness of this farmer level capacity development work will become apparent over the next growing season or two, as outcome data flows in. BCI has also increased its focus on the complex task of embedding the BCSS at country level with progress showing against expected results. Here the grant’s (relatively modest contribution) has been helpful mainly in extending BCI’s presence in country level dialogues. In 2019, then, BCI finds itself making good progress towards its 2020 targets and better positioned to cover its operating costs from fee revenue.

8.1.3 On Efficiency...

Cost saving strategies were used to save time and money and, for the most part, the grant spent within its means.

To understand the magnitude of the grant's contribution to BCI over the past three years, the evaluation has relied as much or more on anecdotal input than on the presence of performance measurement and financial data. The outcomes and metrics associated with those expectations were calibrated less to a project and more to BCI programme scale. As such, there may have been missed opportunities for those managing grant activities to optimise the acceleration work that was done. There is a lesson here to guide the design and delivery of future strategic interventions.

8.1.4 On Likely Sustainability...

Across the three sub-goals, the gains made by the project are likely to be sustained beyond C&A Foundation funding. In all instances, the products (e.g. the modules, the memberships and the frameworks), the alignments (related to the country level institutionalisation of Better Cotton), and the capacities (related to cotton uptake, farm level production, and institutional impetus to address gender equality) are integral to BCI's continuing mission and mandate. Scale up activities remain important in 2019, and will be needed to reach BCI's soon to be released 2030 objectives.

At the same time, a new imperative has come to the fore. The growth that has been achieved by BCI, to date, has outstripped capacities in the organisation to manage effectively. This is not news to BCI; the evaluation is aware of initiatives in play to address strains on Information Technology (IT) and HR systems and to deploy new staff. But drawing from expressions of concern heard during the key informant interviews, the evaluation cautions that measures to address system deficiencies or staffing gaps may not be sufficient to equip BCI for the future unless supported by a shared, refreshed understanding of what BCI, the institution, should look like in the 2020s.

8.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

8.2.1 Relevance

Recommendation 1: To maintain the good funding practice of this engagement, any future funding partnerships should be founded on an equivalent level of strategic alignment between BCI and the funding organisation. Both grantee and grantor should ensure alignment between themselves and other partners.

Recommendation 2: To the extent that the subject matter affects them, partners, IPs and country partners should be aware of grant details and funding breakdown of overall budgets and be ready to share the risks therein. C&A Foundation should consider having mid-term reviews to ensure issues such as strategic alignment with partners are taken into account and functioning, and that grant use remains aligned with both organisations' strategic objectives.

8.2.2 Effectiveness

Recommendation 3: In continuing its membership and uptake drive, BCI should pay attention to three factors widely described by stakeholders as strategic challenges: adapting its value proposition and recruitment approach for new market frontiers (geographic and sectoral); telling a compelling, evidence based Better Cotton story to consumers and others in the supply chain; and reducing brand/retailer concerns about traceability and verification in a mass balance supply chain model.

8.2.3 Efficiency

Recommendation 4: With each project introduced, BCI and C&A Foundation (or other funding partner) should make a determination over whether a comprehensive project level MEL system is required to ensure optimal, results- focused management within the larger BCI programme. And where there is merit in tracking the results of a project separately from those of the organisation, responsibility for the project design and its accompanying MEL be assigned to managers closely associated with the mandate.

8.2.4 Likely Sustainability

Recommendation 5: In the wake of the acceleration and growth experienced over the grant period, BCI should design a strategic and comprehensive plan to structure its efforts towards organisational robustness. Such a plan would articulate the driving values, organisational architecture, core competencies, network relationships, systems requirements and financing needed to support BCI's 2030 agenda.

Recommendation 6: With regard to sub goal 1 (recruitment and uptake) and 3 (national embedding), BCI should identify resourcing requirements and revenue streams, post-grant, to continue the mainstreaming/ sustainability drive in these two programming areas.

8.3 Lessons Learned

The evaluation of C&A Foundation's work with Better Cotton Initiative (BCI) holds important lessons for the foundation as it further develops its partnership-based grant-making for systems change and pursues its intent on transforming the fashion industry into a force for good. These are highlighted below under the headings: Partnership; Scaling Up; Organisational Development; and Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL).

8.3.1 Partnership

In selecting and supporting partners in the field of Sustainable Raw Materials, C&A Foundation would do well to work with those organisations that share the foundation's primary purpose (i.e. "mission alignment"), and that adopt and situate their engagement in a systems change approach. Such organisations, like BCI, are typically ambitious in their vision and multi-faceted (even comprehensive) in their programmatic scope. They are organisations that understand the strategic importance of working

with networks that nurture connections among and between farmers, intermediary supply chain actors, retailers and brands, as well as citizens and consumers.

Not all partners choose to intervene in systems at multiple levels. Working with partners that do provides added value and heightened potential for transforming the fashion system. At their best, these organisations of the global North and South intervene at grassroots, national, regional and global levels, and use a variety of strategic levers such as training, standards setting, convening, institutionalisation, standards setting, and public discourse in mutually reinforcing ways to foster transformative change.

The foundation should also identify and cultivate financial and non-monetary ways to further support its partners' partners, as it endeavours to build the field of systems "changemakers", and to develop yet greater focused capacity and likelihood of transformation. Through its interactions with partners, the foundation should cultivate the much-appreciated values of "transparency", "proactivity", "engagement", "reciprocity", and "trust".

8.3.2 *Scaling Up*

C&A Foundation works with a diversity of partners, each operating with different levels of maturity. Assisting them on their growth trajectory is a hugely valuable role the foundation should continue playing, as demonstrated in this "Accelerating BCI..." project. In working with partners like BCI, the foundation is able to support the scaling up of projects and functions that support systems change work – for example, functions that stimulate interest and buy-in among stakeholders, that convene and spark interactivity between actors, that enable the setting of and referencing to standards, that build technical or managerial capacities, and that deliver quality products/ services to address needs and opportunities. Identifying and working with organisations that either have a clear strategy and plan for scaling up their efforts or need one to strengthen their potency is a highly relevant way to support systems change.

8.3.3 *Organisational Development*

Calibrated as it was to the organisation's operational and strategic programming needs of the time, C&A Foundation support to BCI not only accelerated Better Cotton but also strengthened BCI's own organisational capacity to deliver on its mandate. Starting out a partnership agreement with this in mind sets that stage for a double benefit that offers both impact and sustainability dividends.

That said, the case of BCI also provides a parallel cautionary tale wherein the success of the acceleration achieved has, in turn, stretched organisational capacity challenges further and in new ways. The lesson here is that it is important that core support, like that provided to BCI, be provided in a timely way then monitored so that it remains commensurate to the needs of partner organisations. Of course, consideration is required of the foundation's ability to provide such support without creating problematic institutional dependency.

8.3.4 Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

This project's mixed experience in using MEL offers up insights for future practice. In an ideal world, an MEL system would service an accountability function while also generating data to drive management and learning. In systems change projects – a 'sensemaking' function can help managers and teams navigate among the moving parts in their organisational and programming landscape. To set up and run such a system requires forethought and dedicated resources both on the grantee and grantor side of the investment. It requires clarity on: a) the vantage point(s) being used to track progress – i.e. whether it is organisation, programme, or project, b) on the results logic commensurate with that vantage point, c) on the most important indicators and the means of tracking them, d) on the routines for doing so and for using the information at multiple levels, and e) on the means by which the MEL itself can be adjusted dynamically to remain a useful accountability, management and learning tool.

Whatever the vantage point decided upon for MEL, what is critical is that the results logic be in proportion to the time available, the experience and expertise of people in implementation roles, and the financial (and other in kinds of) resources on hand. "Stretch" outcomes are important – they muster creativity. But there needs to be shared understanding over their plausibility; the outcome claims should be within the sphere of control and influence of those in implementation roles.

8.3.5 Additional Guidance

The insights presented are distilled from the evaluation as a whole. They are ideally considered in light of the analysis and recommendations presented in the evaluation report.

Readers are encouraged to consult the report in its entirety.

Appendix I List of Findings

- Finding 1: The design of the grant was appropriate for BCI in 2016. The choice of focus areas was adequate to fill existing gaps related to building uptake, supporting implementation of a revised BCSS and strengthening national embedding. Its design flexibility allowed for growth, scale and depth in support of delivery.
- Finding 2: There was high alignment between the design of the "Accelerating BCI..." project and C&A Foundation's strategy for the Sustainable Raw Materials programme. This alignment has also coalesced the efforts of a wider group of stakeholders which has, in turn, formed a basis for pooled effort in delivery.
- Finding 3: Recognition of the "Accelerating BCI..." project, as a discrete project within BCI overall, was limited to only a few. As relevant and strategically aligned as it was, the implementation of the grant was not always grounded in the pursuit of strategic alignment with partners. As such, BCI lacked some planning and management tools to focus on the grant's actual contribution to BCI performance across identified sub-goals. .
- Finding 4: BCI rightly assessed – and continually assesses – the stakeholder landscape and has developed positive, collaborative relationships with a variety of actors.
- Finding 5: After three years, growth in retailer and brand membership has exceeded the grant target.
- Finding 6: The time required by BCI to steward a prospective brand/ retailer member from expression of interest to membership and uptake has been reduced in the past three years.
- Finding 7: Better Cotton uptake has exceeded grant expectations.
- Finding 8: Activities under the grant have established a "breakthrough" understanding of the participation of women and men in Better Cotton production and of the possible pathways leading to improved gender equality within BCI; .
- Finding 9: BCI has delivered on its commitment to produce tested, modularised, multi-media content for revised standards on Water Stewardship (Principle 2) and on Biodiversity Enhancement and Land Use (Principle 4).
- Finding 10: There has been useful supplementary support for the development of an Embedding Strategy and a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework. Staffing resources have enabled outreach and dialogue in identified (sub)national jurisdictions; progress is evident toward targets. Strategic partnerships have been formed between national entities and BCI and benchmarking and embedding initiatives are underway.
- Finding 11: The grant gets "across the board" high marks for amplifying impact within BCI.
- Finding 12: Based on the key factors for sustainability, the grant's results are highly likely to be sustained over time, i.e. beyond C&A Foundation funding. The timing of the grant, coinciding as it does with the formulation of BCI's 2030 strategy, also has a bearing on the likely sustainability of those grant funded activities deemed successful.
- Finding 13: The grant made a significant contribution to the scaling of membership and uptake. The materials produced have contributed to shaping the discourse around sustainable cotton and

to spreading notions of ecological ethic and gender equality at a very large scale. The process towards national embedding has been making progress albeit with mixed results to date

- Finding 14: Grant activities, mostly through increased membership and uptake, have contributed to the expansion and the solidification of BCI's presence in the field of sustainable cotton. They also contributed towards BCI's longevity. However, the increase in membership has put the staff and the organisation's systems under pressure.
- Finding 15: On the whole, the grant has been executed in an efficient manner: following a slow start, the project increased its pace and was implemented largely as planned. The project produced high value-for-money.
- Finding 16: The project mostly met Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning requirements, however BCI was unable to report against more than half of the Key Performance Indicators listed in the contract document. In most instances, the indicators themselves pointed to changes beyond the grant's sphere of influence. .

Appendix II List of Recommendations

- Recommendation 1: To maintain the good funding practice of this engagement, any future funding partnership be founded on an equivalent level of strategic alignment between BCI and the funding organisation
- Recommendation 2: To the extent that the subject matter affects them, partners, IPs and country be aware of grant design and budget details and ready to share in the risks therein
- Recommendation 3: In continuing its membership and uptake drive, BCI pay attention to three factors widely described by stakeholders as strategic challenges: adapting its value proposition and recruitment approach for new market frontiers (geographic and sectoral); telling a compelling, evidence based Better Cotton story to consumers and others in the supply chain; and reducing brand/retailer concerns about traceability and verification in a mass balance supply chain model.
- Recommendation 4: With each project introduced, BCI and C&A Foundation (or other funding partner) make a determination over whether a comprehensive project level MEL system is required to ensure optimal, results focused management within the larger BCI programme. And where there is merit in tracking the results of a project separately from those of the organisation, responsibility for the project design and its accompanying MEL be assigned to managers closely associated with the mandate
- Recommendation 5: In designing a project level MEL system, those in charge develop outcomes and associated metrics that are SMART. Outcomes should be within the sphere of the project's influence to realise within the given timeframe, and nested within BCI's larger programme outcomes framework. Those in charge should specify how they will analyse, act on and learn from the outcomes data produced. They should also specify a periodic review and remediation process, inclusive of the funding partner, to ensure MEL arrangements generate adequate results information for management, reporting and learning
- Recommendation 6: In the wake of the acceleration and growth experienced over the grant period, BCI design a strategic and comprehensive plan to structure its efforts towards organisational robustness. Such a plan would articulate the driving values, organisational architecture, core competencies, network relationships, systems requirements and financing needed to support BCI's 2030 agenda
- Recommendation 7: With regard to sub goal 1 (recruitment and uptake) and 3 (national embedding), BCI identify resourcing requirements and revenue streams, post-grant to continue the mainstreaming/sustainability drive in these two programming areas

Appendix III Methodology

UNDERSTANDING OF THE MANDATE

The C&A Foundation is positioned as a corporate foundation of the fashion and apparel retailer C&A. C&A Foundation developed a new vision and mission in 2011, crafting a fashion industry focused strategy in 2013. With its 2014/15-2019/2020 strategy in place, C&A Foundation has become highly focused and intentional about positioning itself to intervene in this USD 3+ trillion industry, addressing some of its key value chain, labour, community, gender, environmental and overall issues.

Intent on advancing its strategy, C&A Foundation has provided support to BCI, as part of its commitment to make the industry work better for every person it touches, and indeed be a force for good. BCI is funded as part of C&A Foundation's Sustainable Raw Materials programme.

The Sustainable Raw Materials programme focuses on transforming systems and practices to drive sustainable cotton by:

- Uniting the industry by funding Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives;
- Working with farmers to help them overcome the barriers to growing sustainable cotton.

BCI aims to address the environmental and social challenges and negative impacts facing the vast majority of small-holder cotton farmers. These include, but are not limited to, the improper use of pesticides and fertilisers, child labour, and inefficient irrigation techniques. These are issues that threaten the human rights and health of farmers and the communities in which they live, while also threatening biodiversity, soil health, and water quality and quantity.

Considering this, BCI sought funding from C&A Foundation to support their work in driving towards mainstreaming the production of sustainable cotton in three strategic areas set out in Section 2.2. The grant received by BCI is for EUR 1.5 million over three years from 16 August 2016 to 31 December 2019. The grant amount represents about 6.5% of BCI's budget (calculated over three years to 2018).

EVALUATION DESIGN AND OVERALL APPROACH

The Evaluation's Objectives and Scope

The current evaluation of BCI, commissioned by the C&A Foundation, focused specifically on the "Accelerating BCI..." project grant. The evaluation aimed to assess the extent to which the grant-specific work of BCI met its objectives, document any missed opportunities and provided a focused set of recommendations and lessons to enhance learning and inform actions of similar projects.

Informed by the ToR and aligned with discussions with BCI staff and stakeholders, this evaluation's objectives were as follows:

- Examine the overall effectiveness, sustainability and (progress towards, and likelihood of) impact in accelerating BCI of its C&A supported work;

- Assess factors (in design and operations) that have contributed to or impeded achievement of results, allowing to learn from successes as well as failures;
- Assess the extent to which the management of this work can be deemed ‘fit for purpose’; and
- Distil actionable and strategic recommendations and lessons from the findings to feed into future C&A Foundation and BCI operations.

Regarding scope, this evaluation encompassed:

- Activities to mainstream the production of sustainable cotton in three strategic areas:
 - Scaling up BCI’s proven model of market transformation by building the existing member base and driving the procurement of Better Cotton produced at the farm level. These activities represent about 69% of the total grant allocation and relate specifically to:
 - Retailer and brand recruitment
 - Targeted support services aimed at removing road blocks to retailer/brand uptake
- Deepening the impact of the BCSS. Activities under this area represent about 23% of the total grant allocation and relate specifically to:
 - Improving gender equality and female empowerment in cotton producing areas
 - Moving from water efficiency to holistic water management plans and water stewardship
 - Biodiversity (agreed upon through an addendum, November 2018)
 - Strengthening BCSS’s safeguard on land use change
- Lobbying governments and national or state institutions to embed the BCSS into local and national regulations. Activities under this area represent 8% of the total grant allocation, and relate specifically to:
 - Defining the “embedding” process
 - Strategy development
 - Relationship development

Utilisation-Focused and Participatory Evaluation

For this mandate, Universalialia adopted a Utilisation-Focused Evaluation (UFE) approach.⁵ UFE prioritises the usefulness of the evaluation to its intended users, which reflects the ToR’s requirements in terms of providing learning, informing decisions, and improving performance.

This is a well-tested evaluation approach that increases the relevance and utility of recommendations and their uptake. Tailored participatory and iterative processes with key stakeholders are vital to a UFE and match our approach, mindful of the resources available for this mandate.

Within the realm of UFE, the team drew on the following forms of inquiry and analysis to generate evaluative insight on the “Accelerating BCI...” project:

- Theory based – to examine results against planned outcomes (i.e. as per the project logframe);

⁵ Patton, Michael Quinn. (2008). *Utilization-Focused Evaluation*: 4th edition. Thousand Oaks, Ca: Sage Publications

- Contribution – to understand the extent to which C&A Foundation grant support influenced progress toward planned outcomes (i.e. as per the project logframe); and
- Institutional and Organisational – to examine BCI’s relevant operational aspects, including those related to efficiency, performance measurement, scale up, and engagement with partners and other stakeholders under the grant.

The evaluation maintained a learning orientation involving the appropriate participation of key stakeholders throughout the evaluation – in design discussions, data collection, the discussion of emerging findings, and in commentary related deliverables. Contributions from BCI stakeholders increased the quality of each evaluation step, leading to relevant and useful recommendations.

Evaluation Matrix

The evaluation team relied on an evaluation matrix to structure and guide data collection and analysis for this assignment. A draft of the matrix was circulated to relevant BCI staff during the Inception Phase. It was then refined on the basis their feedback and the team’s own enhanced understanding of the “Accelerating BCI...” project. See Appendix IV for the matrix.

Additional Studies

The evaluation team has simultaneously been undertaking three additional studies for C&A Foundation, namely:

- Overall Effectiveness Evaluation of the C&A Foundation;
- Mid-Point Evaluation of the CanopyStyle initiative;
- External Evaluation of the Pilot of “MaterialWise”.

Insights, findings and recommendations from the BCI evaluation have been and will be used, where relevant, to inform these analyses and the overall work of Universalialia’s evaluation team.

METHODOLOGY

Summative Assessment

This mandate was primarily summative in nature. As such, the evaluation provided a summative assessment of the extent to which the “Accelerating BCI...” project met its objectives. It also provided an assessment of the key programmatic and operational factors that enabled and inhibited its ability to meet objectives.

The overall study was examined through altered and expanded OECD-DAC criteria. The team used several forms of inquiry and analysis for the evaluation. These are described below.

Theory-based Inquiry

Through a theory-based inquiry of the “Accelerating BCI...” project, the team examined the causality between activities carried out under the grant and the results obtained. This included, to the extent possible:

- A validation of outcomes reported against project targets
- Analysis of factors that have constrained and enabled progress, including
 - Programmatic/context specific factors
 - Operational factors within the sphere of BCI itself

As shown below, the “Accelerating BCI...” project log frame includes 11 outcomes, each with associated activity and output expectations, outcome baselines and targets, and a rendering of assumptions and risks. These were the point of reference for the theory-based inquiry. Sub-questions are included in the evaluation matrix to address performance against outcomes expectations.⁶

Exhibit III.1 “Accelerating BCI...” Outcomes, by Sub-goal

Sub-goal 1: Accelerated, increased uptake of Better Cotton by retailers and brands	3 outcomes
Sub-goal 2: The impact of the BCSS is deepened	
Gender Equality	2 outcomes
Moving beyond water efficiency to water stewardship	2 outcomes
BCSS’s safeguard on land use change is strengthened	1 outcome
Sub-goal 3: The BCSS is embedded into local and national regulations	3 outcomes

Contribution Analysis

As the project name suggests, funds supplied by the C&A Foundation were used to accelerate BCI’s performance under the three sub-goals listed above. Regarding activities to increase brand/retailer uptake, to deepen adherence to better cotton standards, and to embed those standards in regulations, grant monies represented variable proportions of BCI staff positions and covered costs for specific activities. These activities include consultant, training and event costs and costs associated with travel and meetings. According to the budget presented in the C&A Foundation grant agreement, grant income between 2016 and 2018 was to be at a 1:7 ratio with income generated mostly through retailer and brand memberships, user fees, and through the member Volume Based Fee. Further, C&A Foundation funding was to represent about half of expected grant income. In assessing progress against outcomes, the evaluation was therefore challenged to understand the contribution made by the project overall and under each sub-goal.

Drawing from the practice known as Contribution Analysis, the team posed questions that teased out the significance of various grant supported activities. A range of scenarios was possible. Activities or BCI staffing roles made possible under the C&A Foundation grant might have shown to have been instrumental to outcomes achievement; or, their effects might have been indecipherable. The [counterfactual question](#) was

⁶ Note: As agreed upon in a no cost amendment (November 2018), BCI reallocated unused funds in the Land Use and Water components for the development of an additional module on biodiversity.

helpful in this regard. Where appropriate, the team asked, “what would have happened in this situation if grant resources (staffing, third party consultant resources, expense budgets) had not been in play?”. In some cases, responses were based on professional appraisal; in others, responses were drawn from empirical experience with BCI or analogous settings. BCI baseline data gave useful insight here. Sub-questions were included in the evaluation matrix to address contribution effects.

Institutional and Organisational Analysis

This evaluation assessed BCI’s project related engagement with brands and retailers, partners and other stakeholders. It looked at management and governance activities pertinent to the implementation of the C&A Foundation grant. The study also examined operational performance at BCI with a view to understanding the extent to which the grant elevated the likelihood of BCI progressing towards delivery of scalable and sustainable outcomes within the cotton supply chain. For this task, the evaluation team referenced Universalialia’s Institutional and Organisational Assessment (IOA) framework. This tool was developed together with Canada’s International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and the Inter-American Development Bank.

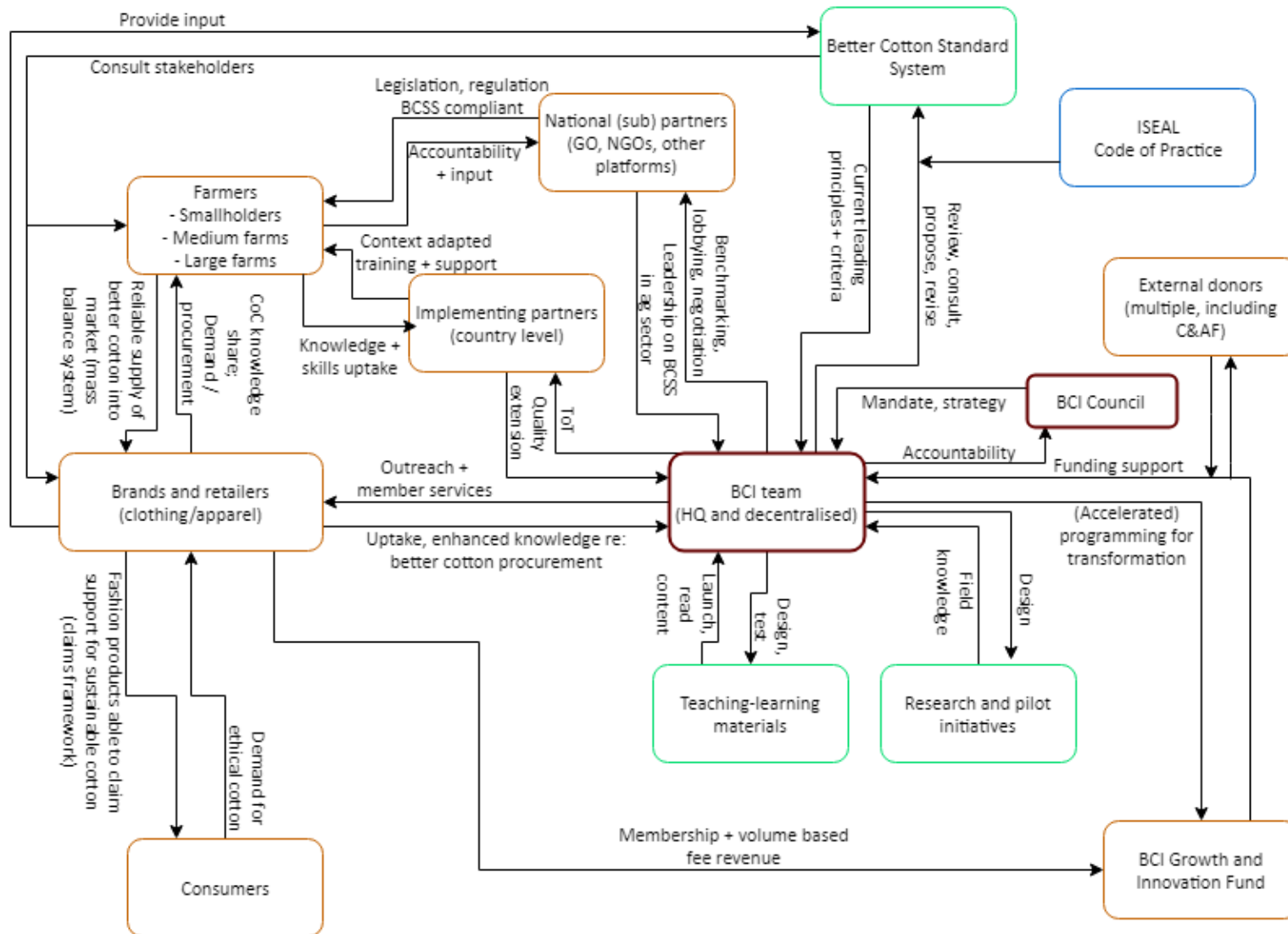
The IOA framework was referenced as the team: i) developed an understanding of the workings of BCI’s management, processes, functions, and governance arrangements, as related to work supported by the grant; ii) reviewed adherence to the organisation’s values and guiding principles in the conduct of its grant-related operations; iii) examined the larger industry context and its bearing on the use and utility of the BCI offering.

Use of a Systems Perspective

The organisational ecosystem within which BCI operates is complex with many independent, moving parts. A systems perspective of BCI’s work supported a theory-based inquiry and a contribution analysis. On the basis of documents reviewed and preliminary interviews held during the inception phase, the team mapped its understanding of the array of actors in, and adjacent to the cotton supply chain; their needs and preferred/expected yields as well as their receptivity to BCI interventions. This systems map helped the evaluation team pose questions and interpret responses about the actual interactive effects of the “Accelerating BCI...” project on BCI and of BCI on the supply chain as a whole. It linked the micro (interventions supported through the grant) to the macro (vision 2020 shifts). Sub-questions in the evaluation matrix were informed by this system sketch.

In the diagram, BCI is differentiated from the other actor nodes, in brown. The green boxes highlight tools and processes that have been core in the implementation of the “Accelerating BCI...” project. The arrows between the nodes attempt to capture the basis of the transactions sought/preferred – the needs and yields of the relationships among them, from BCI’s perspective.

Exhibit III.2 Draft Systems Map Highlighting "Accelerating BCI..." Activities within BCI's Operating Environment



Development of Protocols to Guide Interviews

The evaluation matrix served as the foundation for drafting key interview protocols. These protocols were matched to each key informant group.

Development of Preliminary Findings and a Validation Round

The evaluation used key informant interviews and a review of documents to address the sub-questions in the evaluation matrix. The team derived findings by triangulating the evidence collected from different sources.

On the strength of their analysis of the "Accelerating BCI..." performance under the C&A Foundation grant, the team presented preliminary findings to BCI (and C&A Foundation) for validation and elaboration. As part of this discussion, the team engaged BCI on the implications of the findings for the organisation's Theory of Change (ToC) for BCI's work to mainstream sustainable cotton production and uptake. On the basis of this discussion, recommendations regarding refinements to the ToC and more broadly were made as part of this draft evaluation report.

Specific Methods

Data collection was undertaken mainly through qualitative methods, as follows:

- **Document, report and monitoring data review** were conducted based on all existing documents and data held by BCI that are deemed of relevance to the evaluation. Documents collected and reviewed include:
 - Grant agreement documents
 - Financial and narrative reports
 - General BCI documents
 - Documents related to each sub-goal
 - Contextual documents
- **Semi-structured Interviews** were conducted with key informants from across several stakeholder groups. Interviewees were selected with the support of core BCI and C&A Foundation staff.

Key informants were selected through purposive sampling to find a range of stakeholder experience (progress, success stories, challenges encountered, lessons to share) and to provide the evaluators with a "back story" for each individual/group selected. This helped the interviewer tease out the nuances of each key informant story. BCI made introductory approaches to identified key informants and prepared back stories on each for the evaluation team.

The Rating System

See Appendix VII for details on the rubric system.

Data Analysis and Report Preparation

The team conducted a ToC analysis, content analysis (including rubric/rating analysis), and cost-effectiveness analysis. The analysis and synthesis followed these steps:

- **Cross-referencing and Triangulation:** As data was gathered using different methods from different sources, validity was ensured through cross referencing and triangulation (i.e. pursuing a convergence of multiple data sources).
- **Validation of Findings:** The team undertook a Findings Meeting with BCI. This served as an important touchpoint for the evaluation team. Preliminary findings were presented, discussed, validated and elaborated upon in dialogue with BCI and C&A Foundation.
- **Report Preparation:** Following preparation and submission of the Draft Report, BCI will have the opportunity to provide written feedback to the evaluation team. This will be captured in a response matrix and integrated into the Final Report. The Final Report will then serve as the basis for a two-page Learning Note that provides an abstract of the evaluation findings and a rendering of lessons learned.

The process outlined above is expected to increase the accuracy, robustness, reliability, value, and user-orientation of evaluation findings and recommendations.

Appendix IV Evaluation Matrix

CRITERIA	KEY QUESTIONS	SUB-QUESTIONS	INDICATORS	DATA SOURCES	DATA COLLECTION METHODS
Relevance	1.1 To what extent are the "Accelerating BCI..." strategies and objectives aligned to transforming systems and practices to drive sustainable cotton?	1.1.1 In what ways does the "Accelerating BCI..." reinforce existing systems and practices driving sustainable cotton? Where, across the sub-goals, is this most pronounced?	Consistency of "Accelerating BCI..." with existing systems and practices (including systems within the wider BCI family such as My Best Management Practices (MyBMP) and Brazilian Cotton Growers Association (Abrapa), Cotton made in Africa (CmiA), and outside, such as e3, or organic and Fairtrade, as well as conventional Integrated Pest Management (IPM) – especially those of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO))	Documents BCI Staff Brands and Retailers Partners /key stakeholders	Document Review Interview Interview Interview
	1.2 To what extent are the "Accelerating BCI..." strategies and	1.2.1 In what ways does the "Accelerating BCI..." reinforce BCI's vision and mission?	Consistency of "Accelerating BCI..."	Documents BCI Staff	Document Review Interview

CRITERIA	KEY QUESTIONS	SUB-QUESTIONS	INDICATORS	DATA SOURCES	DATA COLLECTION METHODS
	objectives aligned with C&A Foundation and BCI's vision and mission?	1.2.2 In what ways does the "Accelerating BCI..." reinforce C&A Foundation's vision and mission?	with statutory documents	Documents C&A Staff	Document Review Interview
	1.3 How well does it address underlying needs and their root causes, and leverage strengths and opportunities?	1.3.1 How consistent is "Accelerating BCI..." to the changes required to achieve more sustainable cotton?	Perceived match between impediments to achieving sustainable cotton and the activities carried out under the "Accelerating BCI..." grant	Documents BCI Staff Brands and Retailers	Document Review Interview Interview
		1.3.2 To what extent can the "Accelerating BCI..." link attention paid to gender equality, water governance, safeguards on land use change to improvements to the BCSS?	Evidence of causal link between interventions in these three areas and improvements made to the BCSS Perceptions of the relevance of areas of intervention to improvements in the BCSS	Documents BCI Staff Partners/key stakeholders	Document Review Interview Interview
		1.3.3 To what extent has the "Accelerating BCI..." project read the policy landscape within BCI countries, identified the most appropriate actors and engaged constructively with identified governments?	Evidence of sound political/policy landscape analysis in identified countries	Documents BCI Staff Partners/key stakeholders	Document Review Interview Interview

CRITERIA	KEY QUESTIONS	SUB-QUESTIONS	INDICATORS	DATA SOURCES	DATA COLLECTION METHODS
	1.4 What specific, existing gaps were filled by the "Accelerating BCI..." in transforming systems and practices to drive sustainable cotton?	1.4.1 Prior to launching the "Accelerating BCI...", what were predominant patterns of interaction in the Better Cotton supply chain vis a vis i) uptake and sourcing, ii) review and improvement of the BCSS, and iii) national level embedding (especially with regard to benchmarking)?	Pre-Post comparison of supply chain dynamics	Documents BCI Staff Brands and Retailers	Document Review Interview Interview
		1.4.2 How has that pre-initiative patterning of interaction in the value chain changed since 2016?			
		1.4.3 What changes in the patterning of interaction since 2016 can be traced to the "Accelerating BCI..."? What cannot?			
	1.5 To what extent was the "Accelerating BCI..." design (including strategy and time for implementation) appropriate in achieving the intended objectives?	1.5.1 What aspects of the "Accelerating BCI..." design stand out for the leveraging that was achieved?	Perceptions of the appropriateness of the choice of activities and the level of resourcing in pursuit of project objectives	Documents BCI Staff Brands and Retailers Partners/key stakeholders	Document Review Interview Interview Interview
		1.5.2 Are there any aspects of the "Accelerating BCI..." design that have failed to "leverage" improvements to the extent envisaged?		Documents BCI Staff Brands and Retailers Partners/key stakeholders	Document Review Interview Interview Interview

CRITERIA	KEY QUESTIONS	SUB-QUESTIONS	INDICATORS	DATA SOURCES	DATA COLLECTION METHODS
Efficiency	2.1 To what extent has the "Accelerating BCI..." been executed in an efficient manner?	2.1.1 Is the relationship between "Accelerating BCI..." costs and outcomes reasonable based on relevant benchmarks ⁷ known to C&A Foundation?	Comparison of cost/outcome with benchmark data (to the extent that relevant comparators exists)	Documents C&A Foundation - contacts BCI Staff	Document Review Interview Interview
		2.1.2 What efficiency seeking policies, tools and strategies have been used? What have produced the greatest dividends, to date?	Comparison of actual to planned efficiency measures Evidence of cost savings	Documents BCI Staff	Document Review Interview
		2.1.3 Has the "Accelerating BCI..." met the requirements (reports, products, milestones, impacts) on time as set out in the Implementation Monitoring & Evaluation and Disbursement Schedules?	Consistency of actual delivery with contract expectations	Documents BCI Staff C&A Foundation - contacts	Document Review Interview Interview
		2.1.4 Where targets have been missed, to what extent are the reasons related to: a) the appropriateness of the targets themselves; b) contextual factors that unexpectedly hindered progress?	Analysis of Variance – patterns of response across team members	Documents BCI Staff	Document Review Interview
	2.2 To what extent has the "Accelerating	2.2.1 In each outcome stream of the log frame, what has been learned to date about	Patterns of needs and yields related to	Documents BCI Staff	Document Review Interview

⁷ Benchmarked programmes are programmes within the BCI network (CmiA, MyBMP, Abrapa) which are considered equivalent to the BCI standard or are preparing for benchmarking.

CRITERIA	KEY QUESTIONS	SUB-QUESTIONS	INDICATORS	DATA SOURCES	DATA COLLECTION METHODS
	BCI..." been cost-effective?	leveraging the contributions/ commitments of others to enhance impact?	transactions, by workstream		
	2.3 Did the "Accelerating BCI..." track outputs and outcomes in a credible, systematic manner? If yes, how?	2.3.1 To what extent have the "Accelerating BCI..." outcomes and their indicators linked to data collection instruments and data collection routines?	Coherence of results-based planning and management arrangements Comparison of BCI arrangements to "effective practices"	Documents C&A Foundation BCI Staff	Document Review Interview Interview
		2.3.2 In pursuit of outcomes, are precursor outputs identified within each outcome stream and assigned to teams/individuals?			
	2.4 What mechanisms (formal or informal) have been put into practice to capture and use results, experiences and lessons (allowing for adaptive management)?	2.4.1 By what process does the "Accelerating BCI..." assess and manage risk?		Documents C&A Foundation BCI Staff	Document Review Interview Interview
		2.4.2 To what extent does the flow of data: a) guide management, b) inform donor reporting and external communications, c) enrich team learning at BCI?			
		2.4.3 What examples exist showing how monitoring data has caused BCI to alter operations and programming supported by the "Accelerating BCI..." grant?			
Effectiveness and Results	3.1 What were the results of "Accelerating BCI..."?	3.1.1 Against the outcome targets set out in the grant logframe, what progress has	Comparison of planned to actual outcomes	Documents BCI Staff	Document Review Interview

CRITERIA	KEY QUESTIONS	SUB-QUESTIONS	INDICATORS	DATA SOURCES	DATA COLLECTION METHODS
	Did it meet the outcome targets as per the logframe?	been made from relevant baselines?	Validation of selected indicators by stakeholders through interviews	C&A Staff Brands and Retailers Government Reps Strategic Partner Reps Partners/key stakeholders	Interview Interview Interview Interview
	3.2 What external and internal factors as well as challenges and risks have influenced the implementation, successes and failures? And why?	3.2.1 In scaling their model of market transformation, in developing their BCSS and in their lobbying efforts, what have proven to be the most significant <u>constraints</u> on progress? How has BCI addressed these?	Perceptions of constraining and enabling effects affecting activities and results within each goal area under the grant	Documents BCI Staff Brands and Retailers Government Reps Strategic Partner Reps Partners/ key stakeholders	Document Review Interview Interview Interview Interview
		3.2.2 In scaling their model of market transformation, in developing their BCSS and in their lobbying efforts, what have proven to be the most significant <u>enabling</u> influences? How has BCI taken advantage of these influences?			
	3.3 Did the "Accelerating BCI..." sufficiently involve/engage with relevant actors and stakeholders? If so, how?	3.3.1 What can be learned about how BCI: a) assessed its actor/ stakeholder landscape? b) kept its assessment current? c) set the parameters and tone for the engagement? d) addressed the relationship issues that arose?	Actor/stakeholder perceptions of the quality of engagement BCI has with them	Documents BCI Staff Brands and Retailers Government Reps Strategic Partner Reps Partners/key stakeholders	Document Review Interview Interview Interview Interview

CRITERIA	KEY QUESTIONS	SUB-QUESTIONS	INDICATORS	DATA SOURCES	DATA COLLECTION METHODS
	3.4 What are the drivers (both positive and negative) that influenced the transformation of systems and practices to drive sustainable cotton?	3.4.1 What components of the "Accelerating BCI..." are scalable?	Availability of evidence to point toward scalability options	Documents BCI Staff Brands and Retailers Government Reps Strategic Partner Reps Partners/key stakeholders	Document Review Interview Interview Interview Interview
	3.5 What should the initiative do to scale and sustain these in the future?	3.5.1 What leveraging opportunities – financing, technology, partnering, etc. were/are there for BCI to build on the scalable components of this initiative?	Stakeholder perceptions of need/opportunity		
		3.5.2 How should BCI position itself to take advantage of these opportunities?			
	3.6 How effectively is this particular project contributing to wider system shifts and long-term industry transformation?	3.6.1 How important have the defining features of the "Accelerating BCI..." been to cotton industry transformation: Scaling brand participation? Enhancing the better cotton standard? Lobbying governments to embed Better Cotton Standards System?	Perceptions of the "systems" change potency of defining features (selected as appropriate for the actor/stakeholder)	Documents BCI Staff Brands and Retailers Government Reps Strategic Partner Reps Partners/key stakeholders	Document Review Interview Interview Interview Interview
3.7 To what extent does the "Accelerating BCI..." amplify the effects of other	3.7.1 What other projects internal to BCI (or Benchmarked projects) independent of the "Accelerating BCI..." are identified	Listing of independent projects within the BCI ecosystem, with justification	Documents BCI Staff Brands and Retailers	Document Review Interview Interview	

CRITERIA	KEY QUESTIONS	SUB-QUESTIONS	INDICATORS	DATA SOURCES	DATA COLLECTION METHODS
	projects? What amplifies or limits its effectiveness and impact?	as instrumental to its success, positively or negatively? How so?		Government Reps Strategic Partner Reps Partners/key stakeholders	Interview Interview
		3.7.2 What have been the "Accelerating BCI..." best moments in leveraging benefits such as influence, resources, or good will?	Listings of highlights – where smallish actions have yielded disproportionately large effects (relationship changes, investment, influence, etc.), by actor		
		3.7.3 Overall and within each sub-goal area of the project, name the scenario that would have occurred without the "Accelerating BCI..." grant in place?	Perceptions about the likely course of events had the grant not been there to support those activities or processes?		
Sustainability	4.1 What are the main factors that promoted and/or reduced the sustainability and results of the "Accelerating BCI..."?	4.1.1 What sustainability scenarios need to be reached for BCI and partners to say that the "Accelerating BCI..." has been successful?	Level of agreement on sustainability thresholds	Documents BCI Staff Brands and Retailers Government Reps Strategic Partner Reps Partners/key stakeholders	Document Review Interview Interview Interview
	4.2 To what extent are those results likely to be sustained after the C&A Foundation funding ends?	4.2.1 What actual and potential funding support exists for BCI beyond that provided by C&A Foundation? To what extent is BCI tapping into that?	Alignment of donor strategy with understanding of donor landscape	Documents BCI Staff Brands and Retailers Partners/key stakeholders	Document Review Interview Interview Interview

CRITERIA	KEY QUESTIONS	SUB-QUESTIONS	INDICATORS	DATA SOURCES	DATA COLLECTION METHODS
		4.2.2 To what extent are brands, retailers and producers willing to contribute? And what strategies are in place to engage these actors as financial contributors in the campaign?	<p>Range of commitment types, for brands/retailers, others in the supply chain</p> <p>Case examples of progressive commitment</p> <p>Stakeholder perception of the cost of the existing fees and funding mechanisms (e.g. volume-based fee)</p>	<p>Documents</p> <p>BCI Staff</p> <p>Brands and Retailers</p>	<p>Document Review</p> <p>Interview</p> <p>Interview</p>
	4.3 What were the missed opportunities?	4.3.1 In retrospect, could BCI have achieved more in general and within each goal area by doing things differently?	Retrospective assessment on critical programming and organisational moments where "big" decisions were taken	<p>Documents</p> <p>BCI Staff</p> <p>Brands and Retailers</p> <p>Partners/key stakeholders</p>	<p>Document Review</p> <p>Interview</p> <p>Interview</p> <p>Interview</p>

Appendix V Stakeholders Consulted

LAST NAME	FIRST NAME	ORGANISATION	TITLE / POSITION
Abney	Daren	Better Cotton Initiative	Membership Engagement and Marketing
Ahmad	Shafiq	Better Cotton Initiative	Country Manager
Anjum Ali	Muhammad, Dr.	Agriculture Extension Department, Punjab, Pakistan	Director General
Augareils	Eliane	Better Cotton Initiative	Monitoring and Evaluation Manager
Baruah	Rajeev	Better Cotton Initiative	Country Manager
Bruford	Graham	Better Cotton Initiative	Training and Assurance Manager
Chester	Anita	C&A Foundation	Head of Sustainable Materials
Delgado	Manuel	Sociedade Algodoeira do Niassa JFS (SAN-JFS)	Managing Director
Dent	Mark	Alliance for Water Stewardship	Training Development Manager
Fong	Sandra	Better Cotton Initiative	Grants and Fundraising Coordinator
Jauregui	Carla	Better Cotton Initiative	Head of Fundraising
Jean	Gregory	Better Cotton Initiative	Standards and Learning Manager
Jooste	Tobie	Cotton SA	Business Information Manager
Kapur	Neeraj	Impulse International Ltd	Head - Technology & Sourcing
Kowitz	Rick	Cotton Australia	myBMP Manager
Kumar	Ravi	GTN Group	DGM Marketing
Lum Young	Paula	Better Cotton Initiative	Senior Membership Manager
Martin	Cristina	Better Cotton Initiative	Programme Coordinator
McClay	Alan	Better Cotton Initiative	CEO
Minhas	Sidra	External consultant	Gender Expert
Morgan	Hayley	Better Cotton Initiative	Programme Coordinator
Mull	Savi	C&A Foundation	Senior Evaluation Specialist
Parida	Sabita	External consultant	Gender Expert
Poti	Lakshmi	C&A Foundation	Programme Manager
Rahman	Mahbubur, Md.	Epyllion Knitex Ltd	Merchandiser

LAST NAME	FIRST NAME	ORGANISATION	TITLE / POSITION
Rando	Laurie	Macy's Merchandising Group	Director of Color R&D/Production
Rati	Fernando	ABRAPA	Sustainability Manager
Roy	Sumit	WWF India	Associate Director
Rye Olsen	Dorte	Bestseller	Sustainability Manager
Saleem	Iqra	Agriculture (Extension and Adaptive Research), Punjab, Pakistan	Agriculture Officer Extension
Saral	Kerem	Better Cotton Initiative	Senior Supply Chain Manager
Scholtz	Olivia	HCVRN	Senior Project Manager
Sinha	Iphshita	C&A Foundation	Programme Manager
Staafigard	Lena	Better Cotton Initiative	Chief Operating Officer
Staxäng	Lisa	BSR	Manager
Townsend	Phil	Mark & Spencer	Technical Lead - Environmental Sustainability & Technical Services
Ud Din	Nawab	WWF Pakistan	Project Coordinator for BCI in 2 districts
Vardhan	Harsha	H&M	Global Environment Manager
Williams	Allan	Cotton Research and Development Corporation (CRDC)	General Manager, R&D Investment
Zanini	Yasmin	Better Cotton Initiative	Grants Officer
Zia	Shahid, Dr.	Lok Sanjh Foundation	Managing Director

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Appendix VII Rubric

The evaluation team used rubrics that reflected the requirements of C&A Foundation's ToR, together with a 5-level performance scale which deepened C&A Foundation's Good/Adequate/Poor rating system to allow for further delineation of performance. The system was deployed based on four main criteria. This examination uncovered key insights into BCI's programmatic work and operations, and is in line with the IOA framework presented above.

Five varying levels of performance were identified with descriptions according to each criterion. The assessment of the grant as per the rubric is presented in Exhibit 8.1.

CRITERION / DEFINITION	LEVEL	DESCRIPTION OF PERFORMANCE
Relevance Extent to which "Accelerating BCI..." strategies align to the transformation of systems and practices that drive sustainable cotton; extent to which they align to the BCI and C&A Foundation vision and mission; extent to which they address root causes, leverage strengths and opportunities, and fill gaps.	Fully Relevant (5)	"Accelerating BCI..." objectives are exceptionally well-designed and fully aligned with the priorities of BCI, its members, implementing partners, and other relevant beneficiaries.
	Mostly Relevant (4)	"Accelerating BCI..." objectives are well-designed and well-aligned with the priorities BCI, its members, implementing partners, and relevant beneficiaries. In addition, the approach to executing the project mostly reflects the values, vision, and mission of BCI.
	Adequately Relevant (3)	The majority of the "Accelerating BCI..." objectives are adequately designed and aligned with the priorities of BCI, its members, implementing partners, and relevant beneficiaries. In addition, the approach to executing the project adequately reflects the values, vision, and mission of BCI.
	Partially Relevant (2)	Some of the "Accelerating BCI..." objectives are aligned with the priorities of BCI, its members, implementing partners, and relevant beneficiaries, but much of the design of the project seems to favour other priorities (<i>which can happen when working in partnerships</i>). The approach to executing the initiative is out of alignment with Canopy's values, vision and mission.
	Completely Irrelevant (1)	None of the "Accelerating BCI..." objectives have been specifically designed or aligned to address the priorities of BCI, its members, implementing partners, and relevant beneficiaries.
Efficiency Extent to which activities and outputs have been carried out with the appropriate human resources, in a	Highly Efficient (5)	All programmed activities and delivery of envisaged outputs significantly ahead of plan, using appropriate human resources and vastly exceeding value-for-money expectations.
	Quite Efficient (4)	All programmed activities and outputs have been delivered ahead of plan, using appropriate human resources and achieving notable value-for-money.
	Efficient (3)	Programmed activities and outputs have been delivered according to plan, using the appropriate human resources and delivering the anticipated value-for-money.

CRITERION / DEFINITION	LEVEL	DESCRIPTION OF PERFORMANCE
timely and cost-effective manner. ⁸	Moderately Inefficient (2)	Most of the programmed activities and outputs have not been fully completed, using less than optimal human resource allocation, without delivering the anticipated value-for-money.
	Completely Inefficient (1)	Only a few or none of the programmed activities and outputs have been fully completed, with a seriously inadequate human resource allocation, without delivering value-for-money at all.
Effectiveness and Results Extent of results as compared with targets; extent to which actions geared at systemic change have been enabled; the extent and quality of engagement with relevant actors and stakeholders; the extent to which the "Accelerating BCI..." project has built upon/leveraged other initiatives; the extent to which the grant has helped BCI become scalable as a contributor to wider systemic shifts and industry-wide transformation.	Highly Effective (5)	Performance (likely to) vastly exceed outcomes targets with strong evidence of systems change, robust engagement with actors and stakeholders, and synergy with relevant other initiatives.
	Quite Effective (4)	Performance (likely to) exceed outcomes targets at least in some areas, evidence of systems change and change potential, constructive engagement with actors and stakeholders, and synergy with relevant other initiatives.
	Effective (3)	Performance (likely to) meet outcomes targets in most areas, evidence of systems change potential, constructive engagement with actors and stakeholders, and cooperation with relevant other initiatives.
	Somewhat Ineffective (2)	Performance (likely to) meet outcomes targets in a few areas, little evidence of systems change to date, reasonable engagement with actors and stakeholders, and communication with relevant other initiatives.
	Completely Ineffective (1)	Performance (likely to be) well short of outcomes targets, no evidence of systems potential, poor engagement with actors and stakeholders, and little communication with relevant other initiatives.
Likely Sustainability Extent to which "Accelerating BCI..." results are likely to continue after funding ceases; the factors bearing on sustainability and the extent to which BCI is managing for sustainability.	Exceeds Expectations (5)	Benefits generated by BCI under the "Accelerating BCI..." project have been, or will likely be, significantly scaled up in terms of geography and/or the addition of further aspects, compared with those achieved during the lifetime of the initiative.
	Mostly Satisfactory (4)	Most of the "Accelerating BCI..." benefits have persisted, or are likely to persist, beyond the project at comparable levels to those achieved during the lifetime of the initiative.
	Sustainable (3)	Evidence of continued benefits, or likely continued benefits, beyond the lifetime of the project Planned succession strategies have been implemented or are likely to be implemented.

⁸ This rubric was adapted for this evaluation. It formerly included "the extent to which targets have been realistically set, given scale of operations" and "the appropriateness of monitoring systems to track outputs and outcomes credibly and systematically". These dimensions are discussed in the report but were not assessed as part of the rubric.

CRITERION / DEFINITION	LEVEL	DESCRIPTION OF PERFORMANCE
	Possibly Sustainable (2)	Further support would be needed to assure continued benefits beyond the lifetime of the project.
	Not Sustainable (1)	No evidence that benefits are continuing or are likely to continue beyond the lifetime of the "Accelerating BCI..." project and/or the intended benefits are now obsolete and/or intended benefits have been outweighed by subsequent negative impact.

Appendix VIII Additional Information – Relevance

“The effect of the grant has been to help us focus. We want to transform a system, we are always at the risk of trying to do too much with too little resources. This grant, which was developed based on dialogue, helped us focus more. It was not imposed on us. It did not bring us towards everything that we could do, but kept us in line with what we should do.”

- BCI Staff

“The other outstanding issue is learning from the IPs, us being involved. We have a collaboration with BCI, as BCI learns on what works and what doesn't, we learn as well and take that to other standards. We are maintaining this relationship. For us it is very important not to have one-off project, on which we lose ownership at the end of the day.”

- Consultant

“The gap was BCI recruitment and bringing in more brands. The sourcing teams were needed to help uptake through work on the ground linking to supply chains and filling the gaps between brands, spinners, knitters, and by helping brands with transaction recording.”

- BCI Staff

“BCI now reach(es) out to research institutes with IPs, to reach 3,000 people on the ground. Further development of partnerships and greater access to experts and knowledge is needed to reach two million farmers – we actually need 3,500 people on the ground.”

- BCI staff

“(experience) has reinforced our thinking that when there is mission alignment you achieve much more and you achieve it more efficiently.

- C&A Foundation staff

“BCI is slowly becoming aware of the importance and significance of gender.”

- Service provider

“Had we known it was a discrete grant with a budget and some particular expectations attached to it, we might have acted on it differently.”

- National Partner

"The gap was BCI recruitment and bringing in more brands. The sourcing teams were needed to help uptake through work on the ground linking to supply chains and filling the gaps between brands, spinners, knitters, and by helping brands with transaction recording."

- BCI staff

"Directly aligned with membership and uptake – drivers of the whole BCI. [some] 70% of grant went in to this subgoal."

- BCI staff

"There was a consensus in BCI Pakistan that it was relevant. It helped training farmers. Water management is not only efficient use of water, but also the sense of water stewardship in the whole water irrigation system. It changed the farmers' concept of water conservation."

- IP Staff

"Local action by partners has also helped deliver this programme, even when no direct funds came from the grant."

- National embedding partner

"We are very critical in terms of BCI, Some principles must adapt to our reality."

- National partner

"HCV is about protecting things that matter, it is a best practice in agricultural context. So, it was aligned. It fits exactly with their standards and their indicators, it makes sense to train around that."

- External partner/stakeholder

"There was a consensus in BCI Pakistan that it was relevant. It helped training farmers. Water management is not only efficient use of water, but also the sense of water stewardship in the whole water irrigation system. It changed the farmers' concept of water conservation."

- National Partner

Appendix IX Additional Information – Effectiveness

Membership Recruitment and Uptake

“BCI has to weigh the importance of being on all high streets around the world vs being with a few large brands that will bring the uptake but reduced high street coverage. The small brands do give the appearance that BCI is everywhere on the high street – they do help raise the profile of BCI. They come on board easier – first year cost is the barrier.”

- BCI staff

“Marketability of BCI not strong until recently. The claims framework is helping. Brands starting to use it.”

- Brand

“New brands getting on board; the personal touch is important - might be helping the conversion time. Large lagging companies. It is all about the c-suite, sustainability teams need to have top echelon on board. Securing budgets is no small matter; trading climate is getting tougher; brands have to be cautious about phasing their journey.”

- Brand

“Brands and retailers need lots of support, particularly for tasks like doing initial cotton uptake calculations. We have staff and materials support that we wouldn’t have had.”

- BCI Staff

“With grant, have been able to interact with members and prospective members in small groups; this is critical.”

- BCI Staff

“One to one engagement is key. If a champion chokes on critical questions asked then lose trust, credibility really quick; important to create safer spaces to get things going. Prior to 2016 - weekly webinars - 120 companies for 10 countries - who knew what language, internet, cultural barriers at play in this scenario.”

- BCI Staff

"In the last while BCI has been engaging with more of a personal touch. This is important to get the story through to successive cohorts of brands/retailers. As you get beyond 60 or 70 members you are in new recruitment territory. These are companies that are not necessarily leading in sustainability field."

- Brand

[Compelling arguments?] "Not sure all are convinced; they are joining because of peer pressure. All are talking about it, have different industry forums, want to be part of it and learn more. Lots more forums more recently. They are curious and want to understand and learn but don't necessarily want to jump in."

- Brand

"In getting uptake it is all about working with the vendors in the supply chain. The supply chain has matured and is working reasonably well. Supply chain has become more aware of BCI used to doing it for other customers. Lead brands are paving the way."

- Brand

"The application of conversion rates is lacking firm guidelines [re: converting lint into a final product]; it seems that each retailer has their own approach, and this is causing confusion for suppliers."

- Brand

"The quality of the messaging about farmer benefit/capacity is quite "NGO" like - long videos, heavy narrative - overall not fit for consumer audiences. There is a question here about whether it is possible to do better telling the story about farm level sustainability. I certainly don't want to come up with dumbed down messaging. Customer tolerance/interest for BCI narrative is low. Organics have a much easier time of it. Yes, we have hang tags for better cotton, but who is looking at the information on the website?"

- Brand

"Hesitancy related to the Mass Balance Model – the potential cost and what exactly would be buying with the membership and VBF. We can't put a label on the product that tells the customer the cotton in the shirt is better cotton. Part of the backdrop to this that every penny has to be carefully justified in current business environment."

- Brand

"We have had a fair number of smaller brands joining and their volumes are not that big. We do have a plan, the membership team are mapping out the targets, looking at things a bit more restrictive in terms of time given to small brands."

- BCI staff

"Global lead brands are leading on many sustainability files - they have sustainability DNA already and don't need convincing in the same way. With leaders there are followers - slowly coming along. And there are additional companies in China, India, other countries that don't really subscribe to sustainability arguments. They are harder to convince."

- Brand

"Face-to-face interaction when making a sale of 100 K EUR or 1.4 mill K EUR is essential. It is also essential for cross functional on-boarding after recruitment, and STPs in brands supply chains. BCI typically did not travel for these types of meetings but they are essential and must go on to continuing being successful. We attend meetings with C suite [a cluster of a corporation's most important senior executives] on occasion to make the case for joining BCI. Some of this work is simply not effective by Skype."

- BCI Staff

"Supplier base exploded as brand membership went up and brands started calling on the members and suppliers to deliver them better cotton. The base didn't understand the Chain of Custody."

- BCI Staff

"Yes, when mass balance system came in - confusion. Yes, Supplier Training has cleared up confusion - for example, related to pricing. Trouble is, from where [spinners] sits, we are not always sure exactly which brands are in the market. Here, would like more support from BCI, if possible. They have the information and the means to bring us all together - one on one introductions, more info on the website [e.g. brand performance]."

- Supplier [spinner]

"Before there was not much awareness and no customers asking for Better Cotton, so we were not checking though there were seminars. I only started taking serious notice Oct last year."

- Supplier

"BCI guided suppliers through [supplier training] training so that we could negotiate with them".

- Supplier

"People needed to understand difference with organic. It is not about the cotton per se, it is about the farmers - cotton is same but the initiative has this focus on how to produce in a better way."

- Supplier

"Quality of Supplier Training good, both content and delivery. We need to increase the frequency of these trainings. In India, there is a huge number of buyers/suppliers."

- Supplier

"Currently have 10 brand retailer customers around the globe. Started with one brand in 2015. – had three in 2016 buying Better Cotton. Now six to seven are buying it. As compared to organic cotton and Fair Trade, BCI is number #1 in importance [volume in sales]."

- Supplier

"Attended supplier training programme in India and Bangladesh. Content was "lucid". Delivery was very clear. Support materials (lecture notes) have been useful for reference. Follow up questions have been addressed promptly."

- Supplier

"Now, some suppliers are using it as a marketing tool. They don't earn anything extra by promoting better cotton - they are simply wanting to attract new better cotton customers. The big brands have ambitious targets and to meet them they lead their own supplier training".

- Brand

Gender

"Gender is traditionally women occupy very limited role in the supply chain. With social media there is some breaking down of these gender roles. The recent gender training was very helpful; I understand concepts more clearly than before. I was confused before [mixing gender and sex in my mind]. I believe that women and men should share roles, sees application of this thinking at home, with staff and in training."

- IP

"This activity [number of women participating in training] highlighted that the current categories, although they are changing, were not recognising the labour contribution of women on farms. It was a good result [good as in useful]. It was an unintended result. It was something we were then able to highlight for the researchers who did the baseline. They did a small analysis of our standard, of the language we use and how maybe the language we use led to these numbers."

- BCI Staff

[Ethical challenges] "Organisations need to be more focused child labour, forced labour, empowerment of women, small holder farming [sustainable]. Brands may have more of an advocacy role here. There is an important "female" connection throughout the supply chain. There is a compelling/marketable human story to be told [said with care that is not be handled in an exploitative way]. Gender will be on the agenda for BCI. There is huge interest in the paper presented to Council."

- Brand

"It is incredibly helpful to have partners like C&A, encourage us to go deeper on certain topics [modules]."

- BCI Staff

"Some of these things depend on leadership. At the same time as this has happened, we have had a new director of implementation who joined, she was surprised at the content we had about gender, notably within the standard. She took a real leadership role in moving the activities of the grant forward and organising some activities beyond those of the grant. The SDGs were another point where BCI was reminded of the increasing emphasis in the development community on gender equality."

- BCI Staff

"The gender issues have been brought up for a long time. It makes our work important in terms of empowerment. Now, we work with women farmers and men can also participate in trainings. We are encouraging our staff to bring in more women farmers. We have a special training for women cotton pickers. We are encouraging them to take the lead in our other programmes, for instance our mobile health clinic."

- IP

"It was business as usual. It needed a trigger to start. As an implementer for the agriculture projects, when you are implementing you only care about production enhancement. The rest doesn't matter, until there is pressure from outside. Often people are not aware of all those other areas [gender, water stewardship, etc.]. Without the funding, it is hard to mobilise."

- Consultant

"There are partner organisations who are excellent at integrating gender, others for whom it is new. It is not like it is uniform."

- Consultant

Module Development

"Mozambique, there were five pilot test countries. Mozambique was a bit different from the others, dry land as opposed to irrigation. Quite a wide range of expertise. Smallholders, rural areas. Tajikistan was more organised. Wide range between drawing a map in the sand and using GPS. The methodology we employed was meant to work for them all. Drawing on their knowledge, based on continuous learning, taking them wherever they are."

- Consultant

"I got training in the revised water principle from BCI (country staff, IPs) in April this year. It was about five days in length. Module content was easy to understand and well delivered. The modules very detailed. There was good opportunity to network and talk more broadly about farm level programming strategy with IP and BCI colleagues. I left feeling ready to pass content on to field managers and did first training in May."

- IP

"Replicated training over about as many days that included his 11 field managers and the field managers of another two projects. So, 35 to 40 in a training. Key challenge areas in trainings included: insect control, helping farmers go beyond thinking only about yields (how to motivate to consider bigger picture considerations). An old pattern has been for farmers to believe in the application of pesticides and in the indiscriminate use of water. But once they see the economics of conservation, they get it quickly. "

- IP

"Even though training was done in May (2019) can already see evidence of uptake in sample mapping carried out (focus groups and field visits) done by field managers. Issues coming out related to the keeping water quality up [avoiding contamination] - some exploration of irrigation water as potential source of drinking water."

- IP

"We are doing BCI since 4-5 years. Every year we have new farmers, you need to introduce BCI to them, and you continue with old farmers. How to motivate farmers to come to the meeting? Old farmers don't want to come again, they say they got it. With the new principles, there are new things to learn. With the new modules, we call the farmers and ask them to draw the village in the ground, we are glad to see everyone participate. It brings people together. Also, for my team, they have new things to teach. They are more motivated to go to the field. A new thing to show."

- IP

[On country adaptability] "It is happening, we are in the learning phase. It will take 1-2 years all in all for the modules to be ready."

- IP

[Biodiversity] “Most of the concern was that producers needed clarity, they were told to preserve biodiversity and manage water properly, but there was no guidance on how. Now our teams on the field know what the challenges are. It is an adaptation period. There is still a need to adjust, that is a natural result of pilot project outcome. We need to go through national adaptation. Situations are much different from a country to another. There is a need to streamline and adapt the trainings.”

- BCI Staff

“Large number of learners, the farmers are part of communities and share the learning with farmers outside of BCI. The concept is spreading faster than we expected. When we speak of water stewardship, the whole village is engaged. That is really helping us to get the farmers as a community, leads to more effective trainings, farmers learn from each other. Very positive contribution of these modules, particularly water stewardship and biodiversity. Farmers always used to think of birds as a risk to their crops – it is a bit true for grain crops, but they can be very useful to control pest for cotton and they present no risk at all for cotton.”

- IP

“If we had realised at the time of the standard review process the importance of those topics, we would have worked with BCI core budget, but I don’t think we would have had the same sort of flexibility and resources. Perhaps we would have been late by 1-2 years, trying to find the budget for it.”

- BCI Staff

“If you have the standard revision without the tool, you would have had many people confused out there! There is just so much you can do when trying to convey information through a written document on its own. The tools and the trainings make the standard alive, it ensures proper implementation.”

- Consultant

[HCV training] “There has been some confusion on the application of the new tools. Some clarification from a technical person is needed.”

- IP

“It might be premature to speak of results. The tool and training will be used. Next year’s IP symposium will be under the topic of biodiversity. The tool itself needs to be adapted, IPs and country teams need to make the tool relevant to their farmers in their countries. How do we get the adaptation right? That will be covered by the symposium next year, it will be an opportunity to check how it is implemented.”

- Consultant

“The only thing that we always argue is that all the training material needs to be designed in a way so it is more clear for farmers, with less explanations. More practicing, more images, less text. We are not yet at the point of improving them (modules), that will be when we sit down with the farmers and get their feedback, and then with the field team.”

- IP

“Engagement might fickle if we have too many modules. Biodiversity and water stewardship relies on big concepts. There is a fear that if you have so many modules, you might lose some engagement.”

- IP

“Did not have modules before - before it was up to implementing partners to develop their own training – there were side decks and other collections. Creation of modules was a first attempt to formalise the collection. Also Led to discussion around development of a training academy. Creation of modules that could be online.”

- BCI staff

“Sometimes it has been difficult to coordinate with partners. On water it was a tri-partite project, sometimes you have dependencies to make the project progress. Like for any project, when you have dependencies on other stakeholders, it can be a bit slower than you expected. If we were to start over again, I would plan things a bit differently. I would take the time to plan.”

- BCI Staff

National Embedding

[National embedding] “Grant funds have helped keep the topic on the table - keep engagements going. The challenge is that personnel in government/institutions and at BCI are constantly changing. The embedding framework helps to establish how we measure.”

- BCI Staff

“The addition of the M&E framework has helped define what embedding is, the first step of a strategy for national embedding. The C&A Foundation grant helped representation and stakeholder meetings and the framework development. Embedding priorities are different by country. Outcomes are partially achieved but BCSS has not yet been fully embedded in any country.”

- BCI Staff

"It is up and down due to turn over, we develop links with a government and then it changes and we have to start over again. We were happy to be there. But in recent years the government has really deprioritised cotton, so we don't want to be there if it goes against the government. It undermines the business case for us."

- BCI Staff

[Without grant?] "Less engagement with stakeholders [less flexibility]. The grant has helped with travel, meetings, the M&E framework, but it all might have happened anyway, just more slowly."

- BCI Staff

"Since 2016, the support is the same but more interest grows, especially in growing Southern African region and market [Mozambique] with a country manager there [Mozambique]"

- Strategic Partner

"All the changes that have been happening are at IP/partner levels (India). Now, BCI has got the numbers to easily negotiate with the government. More can be done on this side. The timing is ripe for more engagement with the governments."

- IP

Appendix X Additional Information – Sustainability and Scalability

“Overall digital transformation / data / IT strategy: so far we are doing fragmented projects in BCI – very painfully I might add – but which needs sorting if BCI would have to continue of its current growth path.”

- BCI Staff

“We have generated membership and uptake as expected but this has put pressure on the organisation. The volume of work is right at the edge of staff capacity to keep up with. There is more work than time. It’s not just a problem of staffing. Systems are needed to manage the workflow.”

- BCI Staff

“The standard was approved in 2018. There was a period of transition over the last cotton production season. Now we are in the full application of the new standard. During the transition, producers were not controlled on the new standards. Now they are applied. All countries need to apply the new guidelines on water stewardship, on biodiversity management plan and on land use change [using the modules].”

- BCI Staff

“They are the largest programme in cotton, in comparison if you look at sustainability in other sectors, BCI is responsible for putting sustainability in cotton on the map. They are already 22% of the cotton production in the world. For a single initiative to be at that level is impressive. To my knowledge, this is unique. It was a system designed for scale and it has achieved that in a short period.”

- C&A Foundation Staff

“Talking to friends who work in textile and/or gender, I realised that many people are looking for the BCI principles – incorporating gender into that will influence not only producers and partners, but also other INGOs. The replicability and scalability are also there.”

- Consultant

“There is a clear trend upward – mass balancing is easy and attractive – it is now about traceability and assurance that the system is actually developing sustainable cotton on the ground. Retailers really need to know this and to pass this on to their customers. There has to be a good story told.”

- External Stakeholder

“This is a learning phase, the modules will be adapted but the core of the modules will remain the same as long as the principles remain the same. The modules can inspire people outside of BCI, the world is moving towards more sustainability. Standards are popular. These modules could also be adapted and applied to other crops.”

- IP

“Even though numbers are going up its important to see continued growth particularly in secondary markets (China, India). The question is, how to encourage other brands like this – these outfits are not that visible in the sustainability space and their customers, not so sustainability minded. This may have implications on the messaging. [...] More broadly, it is important to focus on embedding – getting government buy in to the idea that we should be sourcing/consuming more sustainable cotton.”

- Retailers and brands

Appendix XI Additional Information – Efficiency

Efficiency

“The value-for-money was good. The amount of work was designed based on the amount of funding, we did the most with what we had. [...] [The project] became a key part of my work, part of my schedule was blocked out. We discussed the results at different levels of meetings. The outcomes have been discussed at the Council.”

- BCI Staff

“At the beginning we were quite late, we were putting things in place and struggled a bit with project management. Launching the activities took a while. Then within three years we could stick to the original plan. At the beginning we didn’t spend any money, everything was compressed in the second year. We were still at project design phase.”

- BCI Staff

“Time management could have been better, in terms of efficiency. There were so many other things going on, the workplan has to be very clear. We work in different locations, so we have different schedules. Having a clearer workplan would have increased efficiency. [...] When you work with different teams in different places, it is always better to have a very clear workplan, with deliverables set.”

- Consultant

“The value-for-money is very high, if BCI puts money for implementation [of the gender strategy]. It is BCI’s first even gender strategy. Having a structured approach to gender is very, very important and timely for them. The time and effort that they put into thinking about this, the grant money that went into that was very well used.”

- Partner

MEL

“While a systematic satisfaction survey was not provided for all event types, these were used on a random basis, according to staff capacity and appropriateness of the event. For the key events related to this funding, a majority of the surveys were lost with the closing of the Constant Contact service.”

- BCI Staff

“The mistake we made was the indicators in the quarterly report. They were not good. I should have said something earlier. They were not appropriate. They were impact indicators whereas we were at the output level. Normally those indicators are the result of full implementation after several years. The definition of the monitoring indicators was really a key point, we should have done better.”

- BCI Staff

“The outcomes and targets are set not by the team leads (managers) but higher up in the organisation. In this case of the grant outcomes and target are organisational related more than project related. Practice is changing with team leads having more say on design, targets and reporting. – even going after grant funding.”

- BCI Staff

Appendix XII Additional Information – Engagement with Stakeholders

"I am very happy with the level of partnerships that we developed, with everyone that we engaged with there is further engagement that is planned. We have found some good people."

- BCI Staff

"From a pure grant management perspective, they were very transparent. [...] There were some changes but they were very communicative. It is very comfortable to discuss grant matters with them, they are proactive in communicating."

- C&A Foundation Staff

"BCI has opportunistically gotten a foot in the door in a lot of those national bodies and national governments, but to formalise that some more work needs to be done. One of the principles is on pesticides, pesticides that are banned internationally should not be used in BCI cotton, but how well the law is implemented in BCI countries, that needs to be worked on."

- C&A Foundation Staff

"[The project team at BCI] supported us throughout, they were very helpful and supportive, direct. They were open and understanding [when we faced challenges]. We got the support that we needed in every way. BCI is very supportive of their partners, and also very rigorous."

- Consultant

"BCI is about working together. It makes you feel like you are working like partners, sharing if there is any problem, bringing it up and discussing it. Other partners help BCI be solid. [...] The partnership with BCI is very flexible."

- IP

"We are partners of BCI, and we are part of the standard revision committee. It is a symbiotic relationship. [Our organisation] has grown, so has BCI. We are part of each other's journey. [...] BCI is trying to build a relationship with organisations. BCI is also engaged with some universities. The whole chain has a lot of actors. It is also developing relationship with policy actors, that is where there can be improvement."

- IP

"The engagement with BCI is positive, the collaborative style is notable among members. I see the philosophy of continuous improvement in play at BCI. There are communications challenges in explaining the better cotton and the mass balance system, but the claims framework is coming on stream now – it is helping."

- Retailers and brands

Appendix XIII Terms of Reference

Terms of Reference for the Independent Evaluation of

“Accelerating Better Cotton Initiative to Mainstream Sustainable Cotton Production & Uptake”

C&A Foundation seeks an Evaluation Team for undertaking an external evaluation of the initiative “Accelerating Better Cotton Initiative to Mainstream Sustainable Cotton Production & Uptake”, initiative implemented by Better Cotton Initiative and funded by C&A Foundation.

I. Introduction

C&A Foundation is a corporate foundation here to transform the fashion industry. The foundation work with change-makers all over the world, offering financial support, expertise and networks to make the industry work better for every person it touches. The foundation collaborates with a variety of stakeholders, including NGOs and industry partners, and works closely with smallholder farmers and garment workers. Currently, they are concentrating their current efforts in five key areas: accelerating sustainable cotton, improving working conditions for garment workers, eliminating forced and child labour from the apparel supply chain, fostering a transition to circular fashion, and the strengthening communities where they work. In every programme a specific emphasis is placed on the issues facing women and girls as they are disproportionately affected by the challenges of the apparel industry. C&A Foundation is driven by the belief that despite the vast and complex challenges, collaborative action can make fashion a force for good.

This initiative is funded as part of C&A Foundation’s sustainable cotton programme. The sustainable cotton programme focuses on transforming systems and practices to drive sustainable cotton by:

- Uniting the industry by funding multi-stakeholder initiatives;
- Working with farmers to help them overcome the barriers to grow sustainable cotton.

C&A Foundation is commissioning the evaluation of “Accelerating Better Cotton Initiative to Mainstream Sustainable Cotton Production & Uptake”, initiative implemented by Better Cotton Initiative and funded by C&A Foundation, to arrive at an objective assessment of the extent to which the initiative is meeting its goals, document the missed opportunities and provide a focused set of recommendations and lessons that will enhance learning and inform actions in similar initiatives.

The terms of reference present a brief description of the initiative; scope; objectives and key questions; evaluation methodology; stakeholder involvement; roles and responsibilities; evaluation process; deliverables; audience and dissemination; consultant qualifications and projected level of effort.

The evaluation is required to be submitted to C&A Foundation by 6 September 2019.

II. The Project

The initiative “Accelerating Better Cotton Initiative to Mainstream Sustainable Cotton Production & Uptake” started in August 2016 and is set to continue until December 2019.

Cotton provides livelihoods to millions of people on 5 continents, in many cases serving as the only source of cash income and is a used across several industries. Nevertheless, most of cotton farmers own farms of

less than two hectares, according to WWF. Cotton farming may be associated with negative social and environmental impacts, like improper use of pesticides/fertilisers, child labor, or inefficient irrigation techniques. And these issues threaten human rights and health as well as biodiversity, soil health and water quality and quantity. Therefore, Better Cotton Initiative believes it's important to invest in making cotton production more sustainable.

Considering this, Better Cotton Initiative requested funding from C&A Foundation to support their work in driving towards mainstreaming the production of sustainable cotton focusing on:

- Scaling-up their model of market transformation by building the existing member base and driving the procurement of Better Cotton produced at farm-level by:
 - Extending its reach in the apparel and home textiles sector, whilst developing new sectors for recruitment simultaneously;
 - Implementing outreach activities to increase uptake of Better Cotton;
 - Identifying and solving the key roadblocks that prevent uptake of Better Cotton by retailers and brands.
- Deepening the impact of the Better Cotton Standard System by:
 - Improving gender equality;
 - Moving from water efficiency to holistic water management plans and water stewardship;
 - Strengthening Better Cotton Standard System's safeguard on land use change;
- Lobbying governments and national or state institutions to embed the Better Cotton Standard System into local and national regulations.

III. Scope

The independent evaluation should be a summative evaluation that assesses the extent to which the initiative achieved the intended objectives. The evaluation must also arrive at significant learning on the extent to which the initiative's design and implementation contributed to intended outcomes.

IV. Objectives and Questions

The Evaluation Objectives are to:

- Examine the initiative's overall effectiveness, sustainability and impact in accelerating Better Cotton Initiative;
- Assess factors (in design and operations) that have contributed to or impeded achievement of results, allowing to learn from successes as well as failures;
- Assess the extent to which the initiative is 'fit for purpose';
- Distil actionable and strategic recommendations and lessons from the findings to feed into future C&A Foundation and Better Cotton Initiative operations.

Evaluation Questions:

The specific evaluation questions will include, but are not limited to the following:

Relevance, Design and Fit:

- To what extent are the initiative strategies and objectives aligned to transforming systems and practices to drive sustainable cotton?
- To what extent are the initiative strategies and objectives aligned with C&A Foundation and Better Cotton Initiative's vision and mission?
- How well does it address underlying needs and their root causes and leverage strengths and opportunities?
- What specific, existing gaps were filled by the initiative in transforming systems and practices to drive sustainable cotton?
- To what extent was the initiative design (including strategy and time for implementation) appropriate in achieving the intended objectives?

Efficiency:

- To what extent have the initiative been executed in an efficient manner?
- To what extent has the initiative been cost-effective?
- Did the initiative track outputs and outcomes in a credible, systematic manner? If yes, how?
- What mechanisms (formal or informal) had been put into practice to capture and use results, experiences and lessons (allowing for adaptive management)?

Effectiveness and Results:

- What were the results of the initiative? Did it meet the outcome targets as per the log-frame?
- What external and internal factors as well as challenges and risks have influenced the initiative delivery, results, successes and failures? And why?
- Did the initiative sufficiently involve/engage with relevant actors and stakeholders? If so, how?
- What are the drivers (both positive and negative) that influence the transformation of systems and practices to drive sustainable cotton?
- What should the initiative do to scale and sustain these in the future?
- How effectively is this particular initiative contributing to wider system shifts and long-term industry transformation?
- To what extent does the initiative help amplify the effects of other initiatives? What amplifies or limits its effectiveness and impact?

Sustainability:

- What are the main factors that promoted and/or reduced the sustainability and results of the initiative?
- To what extent are those results likely to be sustained after the C&A Foundation funding ends?
- What were the missed opportunities?

Design: The evaluation design will be primarily based on the review of the existing documents, monitoring data, and reconstruction of the programme theory with appropriate indicators. The programme theory will be empirically tested through collection and review of quantitative data and conducting fieldwork using qualitative techniques. This will establish a logical model of cause-effect linkages by exploring the delivery of results, e.g., using contribution analysis. Reconstructing the programme theory will be a critical first part of the evaluation prior to conducting review of data and fieldwork and will be done through a combination of documentary review and interviews with C&A Foundation's Effective Philanthropy Team, Sustainable Raw Materials Programme Team, and Better Cotton Initiative.

Methodology: The evaluation will be required to employ a mixed-methodological approach to ensure that data can be sufficiently triangulated to deliver aggregate quantitative and qualitative judgments; initiative documents; existing monitoring data; interviews and/or focus groups, etc.

In addition to this, the evaluation team will employ a rating system (Good, Adequate, Poor) that rates the initiative's overall performance. The rating will be developed in consultation with the Effective Philanthropy team at the foundation.

The data analysis will be used to provide critical insight into the implementation and results of the initiative internally and externally and why as well as how the initiative has produced results or not. The qualitative data will be complemented with quantitative data from the monitoring data and/or survey of implementers and key actors. The evaluation will follow, but is not restricted to, the mentioned data collection methods. Attention needs to be paid to triangulating feedback different actors in order to ensure validity.

Review of Monitoring Data, Reports, and Relevant Documents	All monitoring data held Better Cotton Initiative and C&A Foundation and other relevant documents
Semi-structured Interviews and/or Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)	Conducted with retailers, brands, producers, and government representatives; partners and/or key stakeholders. In addition, relevant Better Cotton Initiative and C&A Foundation staff will be interviewed
Sampling	Purposive sampling will be done for identification of the retailers, brands, producers, and government representatives and key stakeholders for surveys, interview and focus groups.

V. Stakeholder Involvement

Stakeholder involvement is critical to the successful execution of the evaluation. The evaluation consultancy is expected to retain independence in coming to judgments about the initiative but employ participatory and collaborative approach providing for meaningful involvement of the following key stakeholders:

- Relevant Better Cotton Initiative staff, both part of management and those involved in this initiative;
- Key staff at C&A Foundation involved with this initiative;
- Retailers and brands;
- Government representatives.

The draft report will be circulated to relevant Better Cotton Initiative and C&A Foundation staff and management for review and comments and discussed in a meeting prior to finalisation.

VI. Roles and Responsibilities

The Evaluation Manager⁹ (João Martinho) at C&A Foundation is responsible for:

- Overall responsibility and accountability for management and delivery of the evaluation up to and including approval of the final report;
- Technical guidance for the evaluation consultants throughout the implementation of the evaluation up to and including participation / observation of field visits;
- Leadership of the evaluation draft report review process including collating comments and facilitating discussion and management responses
- Preparation of lessons note, for external publication.

The Programme Manager at C&A Foundation is responsible for:

- Facilitation of access to initiative related data, all documents, and access to stakeholders (internal and external);
- Reviewing and commenting on drafts of the inception and evaluation report;
- Preparing a programme management response, as and when necessary.

The Programme Manager at Better Cotton Initiative is responsible for:

- Day-to-day assistance to the evaluation consultants including access to initiative data, all documents, and access to stakeholders;
- Reviewing and commenting on drafts of the inception and evaluation report;
- Preparing a partner management response, as and when necessary.

The evaluation consultants are responsible for:

- Conducting all necessary qualitative and quantitative assessments and fieldwork;
- Logistics for their own field work, including travel, scheduling and hosting of focus groups and interviews, compensation for interviewees;
- Day-to-day management of the evaluation;
- Regular formal and informal reporting to the Evaluation Manager;
- Participation in key evaluation related meetings (kick off meeting, inception report meeting and draft findings meeting etc.);
- Production of deliverables (inception report and evaluation report) in accordance with the Terms of Reference and contractual arrangements.

The evaluation consultants will report to João Martinho – Evaluation Specialist, C&A Foundation – on all issues related to the evaluation, contracts, fees, and deliverables and commenting / responses processes.

⁹ The Evaluation Manager is not involved in the management of the initiative or the day to day operation

VII. Evaluation Process

The evaluation will be carried out in conformity with the principles and standards set out in C&A Foundation minimum requirements and policy for Monitoring and Evaluation.

The consultants will prepare an evaluation inception report and work-plan that will operationalise the Terms of Reference. The inception report will be based on initial documentary review and preliminary interviews with different actors.

The inception report and work-plan will address the following elements: expectations of the evaluation; roles and responsibilities within the evaluation consulting team; elaboration of the initiative programme theory, as appropriate; any refinements and elaboration to evaluation questions; methods – qualitative and quantitative and data collection, including possible constraints; outline of the final evaluation report and an evaluation matrix linking questions – methods – data sources and indicators.

The inception report and work-plan will be approved by the Evaluation Specialist and act as an agreement between the consultants and the C&A Foundation on how the evaluation is to be conducted.

The consultants will prepare the draft and final evaluation reports that describe the evaluation methodology, findings, recommendations and key lessons.

If significant differences arise regarding the interpretation of evidence between C&A Foundation and/or Better Cotton Initiative programme management on the external evaluation report, an opportunity will be provided to formulate management responses to the findings and recommendations. This will be published with the final report.

The main activities and evaluation timetable for this consultancy is set out below:

Evaluation Process	Deadline	Responsibility / Participants
Kick off meeting (Geneva, Switzerland)	27 June 2019	Evaluation Specialist, Programme Managers at Better Cotton Initiative and C&A Foundation, Consultant Team
Inception report	12 July 2019	Consultant Team
Preliminary report	9 August 2019	Consultant Team / Evaluation Specialist (facilitator)
Findings meeting (remote)	16 August 2019	Evaluation Specialist, Programme Managers at Better Cotton Initiative and C&A Foundation, Consultant Team
Final report	6 September 2019	Consultant Team

VIII. Deliverables

The evaluation requires the consultant to submit the following deliverables:

- Inception report
- Draft evaluation report
- Findings meeting
- Final evaluation report, not to exceed 25 pages, with a two-page executive summary

IX. Audience and Dissemination

Main audiences for the evaluation will be: C&A Foundation and Better Cotton Initiative. The final evaluation report will be published and disseminated through the C&A Foundation and Better Cotton Initiative websites and social media channels, as appropriate and necessary.

Learning products including a lessons note will be developed after the completion of the evaluation.