

THE OR FOUNDATION

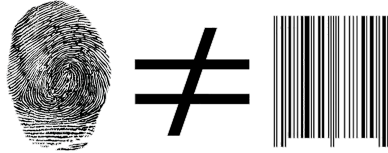
The Or Foundation Advocates for More Transparency Around Clothing Overproduction Impacting Ghana

Accra, Ghana (September 16, 2024) – Ghana-based [The Or Foundation](#) stands against a ban on the global secondhand clothing trade as it issues a call for fashion brands big and small to publish their production volumes. In a billboard campaign launched in New York City's Times Square, The Or Foundation has taken on some of the biggest names in the fashion industry using the slogan "[Speak Volumes](#)," which highlights the lack of transparency around overproduction of clothing as the root cause of the clothing waste that has reached the shores of Accra.

The Or Foundation works in service to and in solidarity with the Kantamanto Market community, including the retailers, tailors, upcyclers and women working as kayayei, with a mission of catalyzing a "Justice-led Circular Textiles Economy" in Ghana. This is a term that the organization coined and defines as "a circular economy that prioritizes the prosperity of communities that have carried the burden of fashion's linear economy."

Kantamanto Market is both a model of circularity and a global wake-up call, making visible the catastrophic impact of fast fashion, a business model defined by volumes over value. The colonial legacy that has led secondhand clothing from the Global North to dominate local markets in Ghana needs to be unwound and the pollution caused by the lowering quality of clothing being produced globally absolutely needs to be addressed, but a ban is not a holistic response to either of these challenges. A secondhand import ban will simply create a gap in the market that will be filled quickly by fast fashion brands, which will defeat the purpose of the ban in the first place by erasing the patterns of creative reuse embedded within Ghana's secondhand trade that are key to eliminating textile waste on a global level and addressing the carbon footprint of new clothing production.

"Waste exists because of overproduction, not because of a lack of recycling technology," **said Liz Ricketts, co-founder, The Or Foundation.** "We are conducting long range environmental and socioeconomic research in conjunction with our direct programming to support the Kantamanto Market community to thrive as a flagship for sustainable fashion, both economically and environmentally. This work informs our understanding of the challenges and opportunities for Ghana, which imports more secondhand clothing than nearly any other country on earth. In terms of the reduction in greenhouse gas emissions when compared to the climate impact of producing the same volume of new clothing, the number of secondhand garments Kantamanto Market is responsible for recirculating every year is estimated to be the equivalent of removing over 500,000 cars from the road, making Kantamanto a climate positive solution. In this regard, the tens of thousands of Ghanaians working throughout the secondhand clothing trade are leaders in sustainable fashion. Collectively they have invented the tools and patterns of reuse that are the true solution to the global textile waste crisis. To future proof Ghana's legacy of sustainable fashion, we need global policies that bring value back to fashion by supporting the emerging



THE OR FOUNDATION

entrepreneurs of the circular textile economy like those based in Kantamanto here in Accra, who work every day to extend the life of clothing, thereby reducing overall production volumes and waste.”

Despite the immense effort of the more than 30,000 people who are estimated to work in Accra’s Kantamanto Secondhand Clothing Market, recirculating globally sourced secondhand clothing throughout the West African region, waste persists due to the overall devaluation of clothing that has led to the excessive quantities and the depleting quality of garments. These economic behaviors of the global fashion industry have driven many Kantamanto Market secondhand retailers into debt according to research conducted by The Or Foundation. The organization runs one of the largest beach cleanup teams in Ghana, which is on a weekly basis responsible for removing an average of over 20 tons of textile and other plastic waste from Accra’s beaches where clothing that has been swept into gutters and the nearby Korle Lagoon is known to wash up after being carried out to sea. Through this work, The Or Foundation has identified thousands of brand tags on discarded clothing in Kantamanto Market and throughout Accra’s beaches. The [tags of brands](#) such as Nike, Marks & Spencer and H&M, along with extensive water and air sampling conducted since 2022, directly link major international clothing brands with environmental pollutants and indicate the source of textile pollution to be fast fashion’s overproduction.

The Or Foundation operates as an ecosystem builder organization within Accra’s Kantamanto Secondhand Clothing Market, providing millions of dollars of support into the market on an annual basis in the form of crisis relief for secondhand retailers and [women working as kayayei](#), fire extinguishers, job training, [material research and development](#), market upfit initiatives, and business incubation programming.

About The Or Foundation

The Or Foundation (pronounced “or”) is a not-for-profit organization working to develop solutions to fashion’s global waste crisis and the communities that are most impacted by it. Based on the ground in Accra, Ghana, home to Kantamanto Market — the world’s largest secondhand clothing market and leading hub for reuse, repair, upcycling, and remanufacturing — The Or Foundation has leveraged its insights and firsthand knowledge to identify and implement innovative solutions, advocate for meaningful international policy change and brand accountability, lead science-backed research initiatives, and provide education and programming. To learn more, visit www.theor.org.