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Western Africa Sub-Regional Workshop: Waste Management and the Circular Economy

Toward a circular and sustainable textile sector: The trade of used textiles in Ghana

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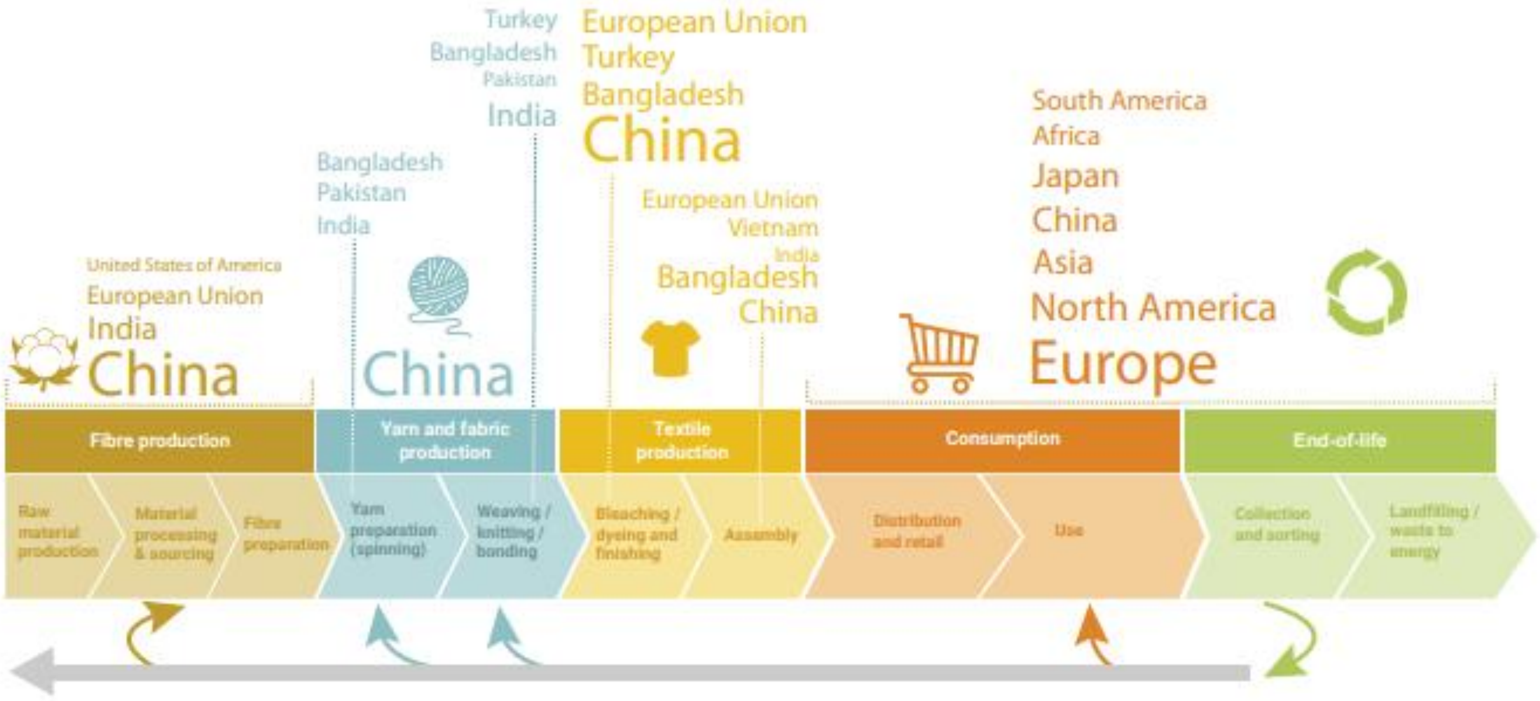
Textiles Sector: A Global Value Chain

- **Textile industry** projected to reach **US$3.3 trillion in 2030**.
- Labor-intensive sector and significant **employment opportunities, over 60% of workers are women.**
- Large number of **SMEs**, drives **industrialization, trade, development** and **social value**



Source: UNEP (2020). Sustainability and Circularity in the Textile Value Chain - Global Stocktaking

1. Textile Market: Global Industry Analysis and Forecast (2024-2030) online here
2. WEF (2020): The textile sector can help countries recover from COVID-19 | World Economic Forum (weforum.org)

Environmental and Social Impacts of the Textile Sector

2-8%

share of the world's greenhouse gas emissions

86 million

Olympic-sized swimming pools of natural water used annually

9%

microplastic pollution in our oceans comes from the sector

Textile workers are at risk of **exploitation, underpayment, forced labour, health risks and abuse**

Women particularly vulnerable: Represent around **68%** of the garment workforce, **45%** of the overall textile sector workforce

UNEP Textiles Initiative:

A System Change in the Textile Value Chain

Shifting Consumption Patterns

Optimizing design, business models and consumer behaviour

Improved Practices

Optimizing practices and behaviour in existing sites, companies and processes

Infrastructure Investment

Investing in shared physical technology and systems

Global Textiles Policy Dialogue:
Building policy coherence across the value chain

- Alongside UNEA-6, governments' representatives of **Ghana**, Netherlands, Türkiye, Tunisia, France and Sweden recognized the urgency of scaling up policy efforts;
- Governments called UNEP to facilitate a **Global Textiles Policy Dialogue to empower governments** to foster circularity across the value chain;
- **Government-led** and **inclusive** to address **circularity in textiles**, including: 1) Shifting consumption patterns, 2) Normalizing circular business models, 3) Adressing production pollution, 4) Discussing on trade of used textiles.

Next steps

- **Knowledge hub**, which collects existing textile policies and best practices;
- **Podcast series** with high-level government representatives on their national policies and needs for international cooperation.
- **Technical/senior officials consultations**, workshop in Nairobi, Kenya to co-create the Terms of Reference of the Global Policy Dialogue on Textiles.
- **First Ministerial convening,** end 2025: Discuss political commitments aligned with priorities

Circularity and Used Textiles Trade Project

Funded by the European Union

UN environment programme

OVERVIEW

- **Multistakeholder engagement** Governments, policymakers, industry partners, civil society, intergovernmental and trade organizations, development agencies, etc.
- **Ghana, Kenya, Tunisia and Pakistan** countries with highest trade flows, mix of value chain structures - i.e. destination countries + transit hubs, etc.
- **Timeline**

October 2023 — April 2026

OBJECTIVES

- Map **used textiles value chains** and **policy and finance landscape** of participating countries
- **Facilitate multistakeholder knowledge exchange and dialogue** among exporting and importing countries to examine and identify potential solutions to enhance sustainability and circularity in the trade of used textiles.

OUTPUTS

- **Framework of a global criteria** to differentiate between used-textiles and textile waste.
- Policy framework with enablers - Trade/fiscal policy, financing, investment, others, to assist countries in improving circularity and sustainability in the trade of used textiles .

Ghana among Largest Importers of SHC

147,049 Tons of **HS 6309** (worn clothing and other worn articles)
UN Comtrade 2023
All Countries Reporting Ghana as Trade Partner for Export and Re-Export

USD 171,325,612 | GHS 1.8 Billion (2023 Average Rate)
UN Comtrade 2023
All Countries Reporting Ghana as Trade Partner for Export and Re-Export

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SHC Industry ~ USD 0.5 Billion in Ghana

- Approximately **2.6 Million - *55 kg Bales*** sold for a median price of **GHS 2800 (USD 180.65)**
  UN Comtrade 2023 and Project Surveys Conducted in November of 2024
  ***Two Bale Price Centroids** Observed: GHS 2573 (USD 171) and GHS 6592 (USD 439)

- Sales and Remanufacturing Processes in Second-hand Market, Boutiques, Online, and Secondary Markets throughout the Country and the West African Sub-Region

- Ghana Exported **USD 977,000 | GHS 11.7 Million** in 2023
- Leading recipients: Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Benin, South Africa & Kenya *(UN Comtrade, 2023)*

Benefits of the Trade of Used Textiles

Between **77% and 91%** of second-hand clothes is sold

In 2022, the sector generated **US$29.5 million** in government revenue through import taxes
(GUCDA, 2024)

Affordable Clothing

Job Creation and Business Opportunities

The Inputs | **“Selection” Process**

Once retailers purchase and open a bale, they begin **the selection process,** identifying **which items have value** to be sold within the local consumer market.

1st Selection	2nd Selection	3rd Selection	4th Selection
like new, on trend, relevant size, durable seams, no stains/tears	*clear signs of wear but not damaged beyond repair, relevant size and relevant style*	heavy wear, requires investment to make (re)sellable unsuitable for tropical climate	*Known locally as “A3ei” or “the under”. Clothing that is not sellable and may be unwearable, includes non-clothing or mis-sorted items*

96% of respondents find on average **5 garments per bale** are new/unworn that are slashed either **sometimes** or **all the time**

Used Textiles Value Chain
Stocktake from the Kantamanto Market

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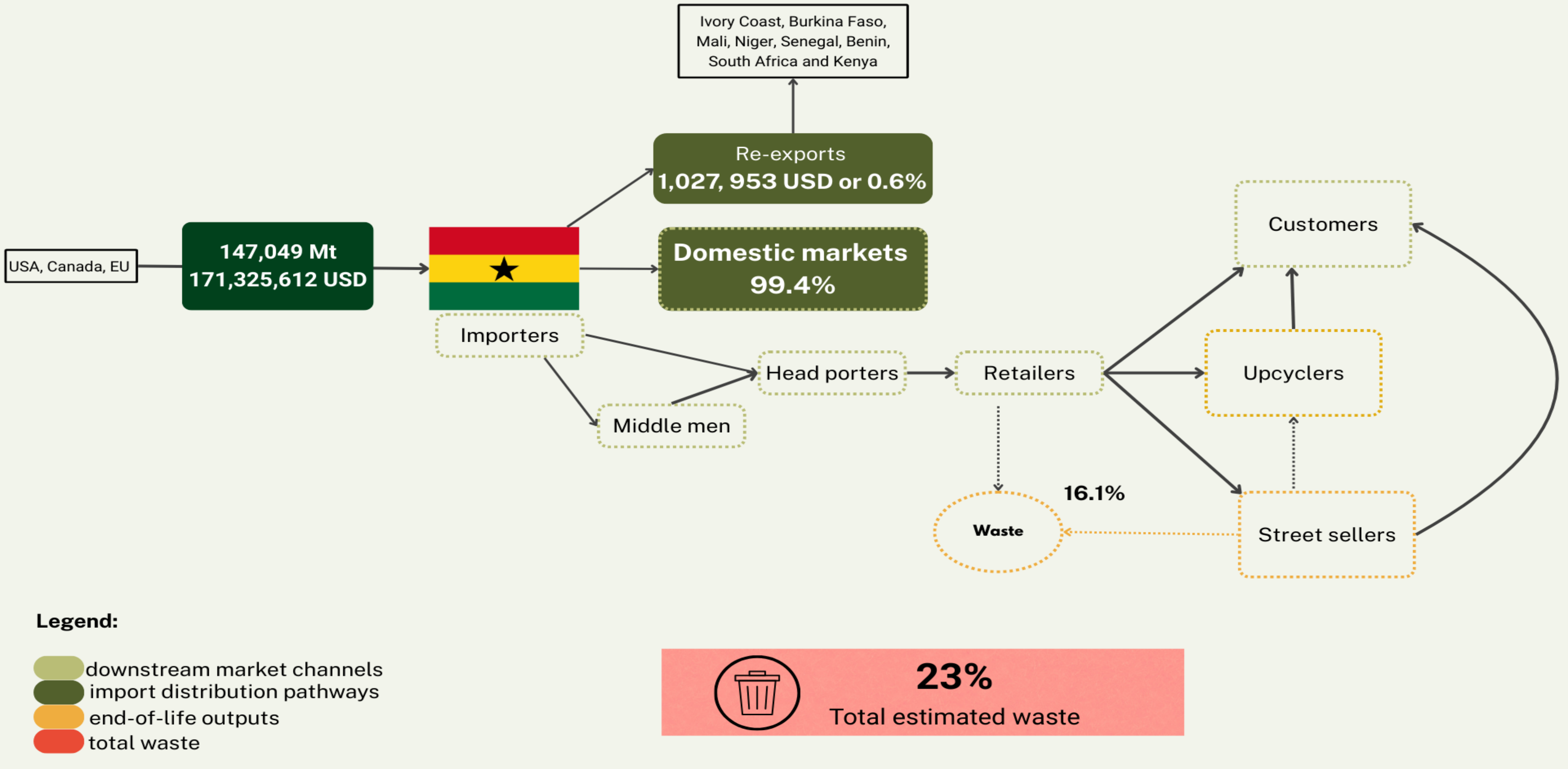


Challenges | **Sold & Waste**

9.24% - 22.96% of the average bale is **unsold, waste.**

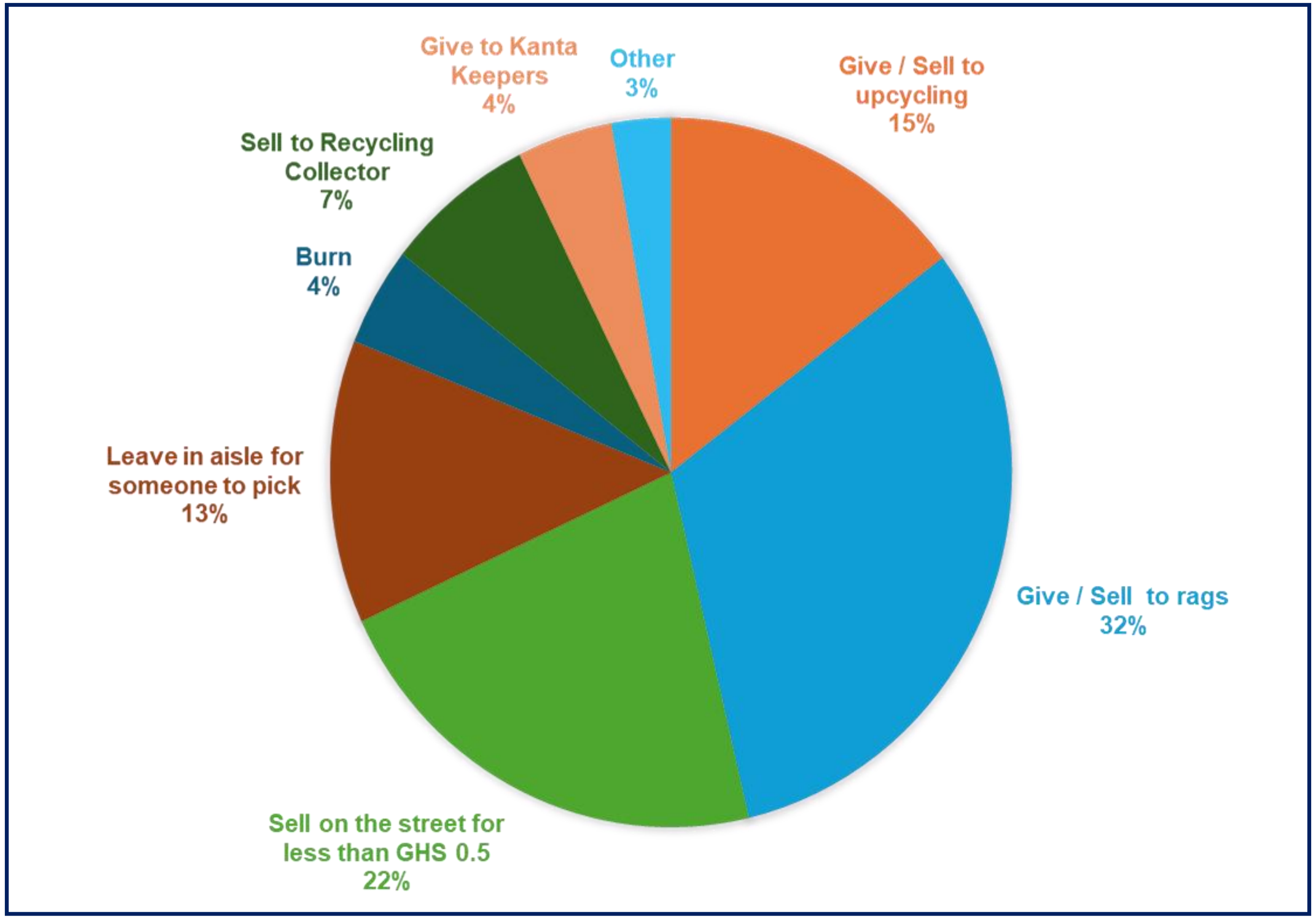
Additional **22%** of the average bale is **sold as follows:**
For direct reuse (21.9%)
To upcyclers (24.5%)
To street sellers (52.2%)
Discarded (1.2%)

for **such low value** that
in **some cases,** it could be considered waste.

~ 31- 45% is low value to no value for the resale economy.
Median 4th Selection Price = GHS 3 | USD 0.19

Challenges | **Practices of handling waste**

83.72% of retailers report holding onto an item for **two weeks or less** before **considering it waste.**



Challenges | **Working conditions**

Images: The Or Foundation, Kantamanto Market, January 2nd 2025

The way forward: Opportunities and enablers

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Sustained and inclusive economic growth

- Improved transparency through:
  - Mandating comprehensive bale labels
  - Digital orders for visibility items purchased
  - Feedback management system between importers and retailers
- HS code evolution to support customs inspection: distinct/lower customs fees for intermediary input material vs ready to reuse.
- EPR systems coupled with financing mechanisms to soundly manage unsold and textile waste in Ghana.
- Fiscal incentives, e.g. tax reliefs, supportive of upcycling and remanufacturing initiatives and approaches.
- Trade agreements facilitate export of remanufactured goods to support a steady supply of circular textile products.
- Mechanisms and infrastructure for systemic environmentally sound and economically viable management of unsold and textile waste.

Enhancing environmental, social, and community welfare

- Enforcement of national labor and environmental standards along the value chain and trade of used textiles.
- Customs fees reinvestment to enhance workplace safety and security, waste and pollution management systems, etc.
- Access to affordable financing schemes and mechanisms to market stakeholders.
- Insurance schemes to protect retailers and businesses from unforeseen shocks and value chain disruptions.

THANK YOU

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