

Ghana's second-hand TEXTILES circular economy roadmap (2025-2030)

A practical, justice-led plan to make Kantamanto safer, keep more clothing in use, turn textile waste into value, and replace dangerous work with dignified circular livelihoods.

STARTING POINT IN THE MAPPED SYSTEM

Ghana is already doing circularity at a remarkable scale. The issue is that the work is being done under unsafe, underfunded, and unfair conditions. Kantamanto keeps millions of garments moving through resale, repair and upcycling, but it also absorbs the cost of low-quality clothing that arrives with little responsibility from the countries and brands that send it.

Ghana imported about 147,000 tonnes of second-hand clothing in 2023. In Kantamanto, at least 57% of garments are resold, repaired, upcycled, or remanufactured, but around 29-43% of bale contents leave retailers as waste from their perspective.

Waste moves quickly from market problem to community problem: open burning, clogged gutters, Old Fadama dumpsites, Korle Lagoon and Jamestown beach. Citizen monitoring recorded 4,275 textile tentacles along 7 km of coastline, with some microfibre readings up to 100 times higher than those in comparable urban studies.

The system is powered by people, especially women and youth. Around 76% of Kantamanto's workforce are women or young people; about 1,300 kayayei work there daily, often carrying 55 kg bales for US\$0.30-1.00 per trip.

The market itself is fragile. Four major fires have hit Kantamanto since 2013, including the January 2025 fire that destroyed thousands of stalls. Rewiring, fire lanes and safer structures are not cosmetic upgrades; they are the foundation for circular work.

WHAT CHANGES BY 2030



Kantamanto becomes a safer circular marketplace: certified electricity, fire lanes, a clinic and fire post, wider aisles, in-store storage, solar power, and waste systems that support repair, sewing, sorting, and material transformation.



Dangerous head-carrying is replaced by dignified logistics, regulations, and training pathways that move women and girls into skilled circular roles rather than forcing them to carry loads heavier than their bodies can bear.



Textile waste is separated early and treated as material for fibreboard, T-shirt yarn, shredding, disassembly, fibre-to-fibre trials, repair and upcycling - not as something to burn, dump or wash into the sea.



Customs and finance begin to reflect reality: second-hand textiles are not just consumer goods, but inputs for reuse, repair and remanufacturing, with levy/EPR mechanisms helping fund the infrastructure Ghana needs.

KEY METRICS AT A GLANCE

Metric	Baseline	Target
Kantamanto safety	6,913 stalls rewired; fire lanes/upfit still needed	Full upfit by 2030
Kayayei transition	~1,300 daily; 299 already transitioned	80 women/year into skilled roles
Waste recovery	29-43% of bale content regarded as waste	100% segregated collection by 2030
Beach remediation	30+ tonnes/week removed at Jamestown	Clean and maintainable by 2027
Circular finance	No dedicated import/EPR fund	10% HS6309 levy + GA-EPR channels

PRACTICAL PILOTS (EVIDENCE FOR SCALE)

Pilot	Purpose	Proof point
Kantamanto upfit demo	Use the 80-stall site to test safe structures, fire access, electricity, storage and wider aisles.	Model informs full market upfit.
Dignified logistics + Mabilgu	Train and transition kayayei while preparing regulation on age, load limits and pay floors.	80 women/year transition target.
Kanta Keepers sorting	Scale segregated textile collection from pilot level to whole-market participation.	100% participation by 2030.
Tide Turners clean-up	Remove and document waste from Jamestown beach and link material to reuse/recycling trials.	30+ tonnes/week removed.
Material transformation lab	Commercialise Cassboard, Tarn, shredding, disassembly and fibre-to-fibre pathways.	16 jobs created; sales/throughput tracked.

TIMELINE, STEP BY STEP

Foundation and trust: Complete the market-wide census, restore certified electricity to fire-affected stalls, operate the 80-stall demonstration site, strengthen Kanta Keepers, transition 20 women per quarter, maintain 30+ tonnes/week clean-ups, and start household textile collection pilots.



2026-2027

Rules and business models: Establish cooperative ownership of a sorting centre, advance head-carrying regulation, issue customs guidance for circular textiles, develop Shredder-as-a-Service and Disassembly-as-a-Service, and build demand for fibreboard and Tarn.

2025-2026

Scaling and market integration: Complete the full Kantamanto upfit as funding allows, expand circular products and fibre-to-fibre markets, replicate through Kumasi, Tamale and Awutu Senya, and use a regional Producer Responsibility Organisation to channel EPR-type funds.

2027-2030

FINANCING AND SCALING



Known cost signals show the scale: over GHS3 million for post-fire rebuilding materials; around USD 1 million for safe electrification and 1,000+ fire extinguishers; USD 500,000 for the 80-stall demonstration site; and upwards of USD 70 million for the full Kantamanto upfit.

Funding should blend donor and public support, philanthropic and voluntary EPR funds, municipal investment, financial institutions, and circular enterprise finance for women- and youth-led SMEs and cooperatives.

The proposed long-term mechanism is Globally Accountable EPR: a floor fee of USD 0.50 per garment, with at least 29.5% for reuse, repair, upcycling and recycling operators, and at least 10% for environmental remediation.

HOW PROGRESS STAYS VISIBLE

- Track what workers can recognise: stalls safely powered, fire lanes opened, kayayei transitioned, tonnes collected, garments sorted, products sold, beach waste removed, training completed, income changes and funds reaching cooperatives.
- Do not measure circularity only by tonnes. Measure whether the work becomes safer, whether women and young people earn more securely, and whether waste stops moving from market lanes into communities and the ocean.

STRENGTHS TO BUILD ON

- Kantamanto already recirculates garments at a level that most formal systems cannot match: around 3,000 upcyclers transform roughly 2 million unwanted garments each week.
- Kanta Keepers, Tide Turners, Mabilgu, the Material Technology and Transformation Lab, tailors, repairers and women-led groups are already proving that community-owned circularity can work.

WHAT SUCCESS SHOULD FEEL LIKE

The roadmap succeeds when a trader can open a bale without fearing debt, a kayayo no longer has to carry 55 kg through narrow lanes, a tailor can turn low-value cloth into a product people want to buy, and Jamestown fishers no longer pull clothing waste from the beach. Ghana is not just receiving the world's unwanted clothes; it is showing how repair, reuse and justice can become real infrastructure.