

# How fast fashion choices in the the UK are causing an environmental catastrophe in Ghana

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YnKEJprS3xM>

This is where clothes we throw away end up. Thousands of tonnes of rubbish polluting someone else's country. Each one of these rotting garments was once purchased by a shopper on the other side of the world. They're sent here for the second hand clothes market but there's now so much clothing waste here. Ghana's system's at breaking point. "We are having serious challenges with waste that is coming from Europe and elsewhere. But our headache is the full container loads that are coming on a daily basis and they are basically rubbish".

They shouldn't be rubbish, historically, Ghana has a vibrant and important second hand clothes industry. Tailors here are renowned throughout Africa and the industry remains economically important. But increasingly imported clothing bails disappoint the sellers.

"So this is all from the UK is it?" "Yes, it's from the UK". Jana has to throw much of it away. A single mother, she can barely make a profit. "It's no good, their rubbish is too much."

So to be clear, you bought this today and it's all rubbish.

It's the same for Issac. He has to throw half the stock away. Businessman David Adams says the quality of much of the imported clothes is an insult.

"We don't need a white man's pity. What we need is for them to give us good quality clothes. One or two cut the bill but most of them are junk. Most of them are faded or torn. We can't use them, some of them stinks."

The market is saturated with imported garments that won't sell. Some come from UK charity shops, many come direct from UK retailers. By the end of the day, the discards pile up.

And in the middle of all this mayhem, are thousands and thousands of single use throw away t-shirts, from music festivals, from marathons, hen nights and for graduations. All now for sale or, probably, pretty much for landfill.

This is Accra's nearest official rubbish dump. It's now closed, it can no longer cope with the around 50 tonnes of clothing waste a day. Now places like this, informal dumps, are multiplying. Liz Foreman is here to study the environmental impact of fast fashion. "What brands have you found?"

“We’ve found pretty much everything, H and M, Adidas, Nike, Gap and this is an M and S bag.”

The UK sends more clothes here than any other country.

“We’ve completely devalued what clothing is, clothing is now disposable and I don’t know how we come back from treating it like a plastic bag or a plastic bottle.”

“Is this the result of the choices that we make in the global north?”

“Yes, this textile mountain is an environmental catastrophe, it’s here where people live.”

The streets here are littered with the remnants of our fast fashion choices. It’s on their land, and in their sea. We don’t want the rubbish our throw away culture leaves behind but nor does Africa. – Penny Marshall, News at 10, Ghana.