

The Or Foundation



theor.org
Organization Website



stopwastecolonialism.org
Campaign Website

About The Or Foundation

We are a **public charity** in the USA and a registered charity in Ghana that has been operating in both countries since **2011**.

Headquartered in Accra and working at the intersection of environmental justice, education and fashion development, our mission is to catalyze a **Justice-Led Circular Textiles Economy** grounded in **Community Ecological Care**. Our team of **over 100 people** works in solidarity with and **in service to the Kantamanto Market community**. Our programs and projects aim to bring forth **ecological prosperity** and to **inspire citizens** to form a relationship with fashion that extends beyond their role as consumer.

The “Or” stands for **choice**, other and alternative. At every level our initiatives are **founded on the belief that the best resistance is an alternative**.

The Or Foundation's Goals

Make Korle Lagoon Swimmable



Upfit the Infrastructure of Kantamanto Market to Make it a Safer & More Dignified Environment to Work and Shop.

End Overproduction and Overconsumption



Eliminate Dangerous Headcarrying from Kantamanto.



Make EPR Policies and other Legal Mechanisms Work for the Benefit of Kantamanto and Communities Like It.



Develop New (circular) Business Models, Tools, Materials, Products and Services that Create Living Wage Jobs.



Our Operational Focal Points

Community Education & Economic Empowerment (C3E)

Our work links ongoing research, education programs and community organizing activities to tangible economic benefits, **building collective power** with Kantamanto community members.

Through our programs we **provide technical, vocational and on-the-job skills training opportunities for community members** to foster and develop alternative pathways of socio-economic agency. Delivering a comprehensive **Internal Business Training Curriculum** and engaging in deep community organizing, we break barriers of financial access and political action in order to deliver tangible, sustainable and inclusive **empowerment for the community driving the world's largest reuse market**.

Ecosystem Health Services (EHS)

Our team of **citizen scientists work in partnership with leading research institutes around the world** to develop a detailed understanding of the environmental interactions between pollutants, weather systems and local ecologies, including humans and animals. We operate **two laboratories in Accra, where we perform microscopy to image and quantify microplastic fiber pollution and ecological remediation**. Our effort to remediate the pollution we track includes beach cleanups through which **we remove over 30 tons** of textile and other waste on a weekly basis under an agreement with the Accra Metropolitan Assembly. We also operate a community-based ecosystem restorer machine that is turning pollution into clean water through nature-based methods. In addition, we provide **free health screenings and services to the Kantamanto community**.

Material Technology & Transformation Lab (MTTL)

We have developed the methodology and community infrastructure to buy unsold post-consumer textiles that would otherwise become waste - collecting, sorting, transporting, storing and processing clothing waste at **industrial scale, along the waste hierarchy** of most efficient use. In addition to ongoing product development, we are **commercializing** several material, technological and product **transformation pathways**. Critical to this work is **ensuring community benefit via local ownership, technology development and job creation**.

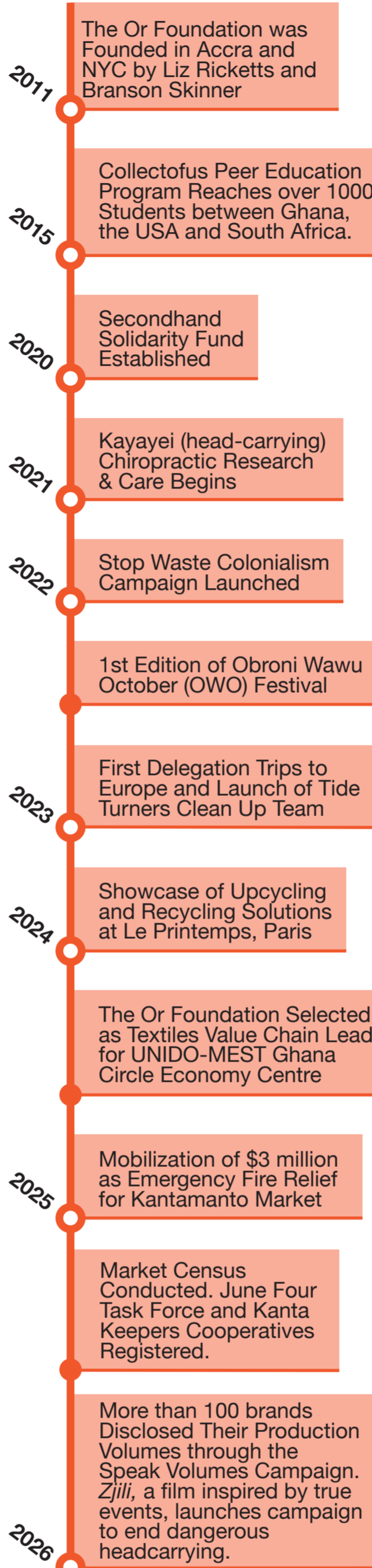
For Public Consumption (FPC)

We drive **inclusive policy making** through campaigns like **Stop Waste Colonialism** and by enabling Kantamanto community members to participate in **global dialogue**.

By designing **systems to sell upcycled, recycled and remanufactured products**, we are able to **extend our advocacy efforts through marketing and retail partnerships** that support the prosperity of Kantamanto and other global secondhand clothing markets.

Core to our efforts is the promotion of a new **textiles EPR (Extended Producer Responsibility)** program that acts as a just-transition tool through **Global Accountability**.

The Or Timeline



About Kantamanto

Located in the **heart of Accra**, Ghana, Kantamanto is home to the **largest second-hand clothing market in the world**.

Consisting of **30,000 people within the market ecosystem**, Kantamanto works to successfully **resell, repair and upcycle around 25 million garments per month**, making it the largest reuse and upcycling economy in the world, representing over **USD 500 million** of annual economic activity.

Our data indicate that ~40% of an average bale opened in Kantamanto will be regarded as waste by secondhand retailers. Even if garments are rewearable, due to deteriorating product quality, increasing operational costs and rising production volumes driving secondhand retailers and remanufacturers into debt, many rewearable garments are unsellable.

On January 1st 2025, **60% of the market burned**, affecting 10,000 people. Over the course of the year emerging from the fire, The Or Foundation supported the creation of new associations to build a brighter future for the market: Kantamanto Obroniwawu Businesses Association (KOBBA), Kantamanto Women's Association (KWA), and Kantamanto Upcyclers Association (KUA).



Recent Key Figures

- 18+** Independent Jobs Created through the Material Technology and Transformation Lab
- 1,000 kg** of Daily Sorting & Fiber Processing Capacity
- 2 Million+** kg of Waste Removed from Accra's Beaches
- 200+** Trucks of Waste Collected in and around Kantamanto Market.
- 3 Million+** People Reached Online
- 1** Feature Film Produced About The Causes, Conditions and Effects of Dangerous Headcarrying
- 4000+** OWO Attendees Engaging with Upcycling to Date
- 9,218** Recipients of Direct Fire Relief
- 6,913** Stalls Rebuilt as Part of Fire Relief
- 80** Fire-Safe Stalls Demonstration Site Built
- 300+** Patient Health Checks & Outreach
- 6124** Market Members Registered with NHIS
- 3** Multi-Stakeholder Sessions Hosted in Partnership with UNEP & UNIDO
- 3** Market Associations Formed
- 36** Incubation & Training Participants
- 7** Program Graduate Seed Grants
- 299** Women Accompanied out of Dangerous Headcarrying

