

## We must pool our resources to achieve a more responsible future



Harriet Ann Adjabeng, founder of Quinsera

The following conversation will focus our attention on a very important topic from a quite innovative perspective. Harriet Ann Adjabeng is a Ghanaian Fashion writer and researcher specializing in Fashion, working in the area of sustainable development and environmental issues.. She is the founder of [Quinsera](#), a community information centre on sustainable fashion.

**Harriet, you are a fashion writer and researcher specializing in sustainable fashion. Could you tell us more about your work?**

What I do in Quinsera, the community centre that I found, is to advocate for and drive sustainability at the core of the Ghanaian fashion business through the provision of research-focused and women-led novel sustainability information and education. I have explored several national and local platforms to advocate, educate, raise awareness and drive community action towards sustainable practices to protect the environment and climate that is on the verge of destruction.

**You are closely engaged with addressing environmental challenges in Ghana. Can you share what these challenges are with us?**

In my previous position as a Social Responsibility Officer for a well-known fashion brand in Ghana, my role required me to work closely with retailers, head porters, who are usually migrant women workers known as *Kayayeis*, and waste pickers in Kantamanto, West Africa's biggest second-hand market, located in Accra, Ghana. I witnessed firsthand the detrimental effects of the secondhand business model on the environment as well as all parties involved in the supply chain. Accra lacks landfill space for the large volume of clothing waste, consequently, much of it is burned in the open air, swept into the gutters, where it eventually reaches the ocean, or dumped in informal settlements where Accra's most vulnerable citizens, such as the *Kayayeis* (*Female migrant workers*) and waste pickers, reside.

**You already mentioned local communities that are affected by environmental challenges. However, people often consider that environmental policies are in conflict with economic logic and that they may cause economic loss. Is that true having in mind your own experience and how to solve that dilemma?**

It is a common concern that environmental policies conflict with economic logic and may result in economic loss. I can speak to the secondhand business model in Ghana in which I have been involved. Each week, Ghana imports approximately 15 million used apparel items. In 2021, Ghana imported \$214 million (£171 million) of used clothing, making it the world's largest importer, and approximately 30,000 people, the majority of whom are women, depend on this trade for their livelihood.

Failure to resolve the environmental issues generated by the fashion industry can have long-term economic consequences. Climate change, depletion of natural resources, and pollution can negatively impact ecosystems, public health, and infrastructure. These effects can result in economic losses, higher healthcare costs, and the need for expensive remediation efforts.

In devising policies to regulate environmental activities, it is not necessary to deprive people of their means of subsistence. Rather, the policies should develop systems that will regulate activities and contribute to their strengthening. These policies should facilitate long-term planning and risk management. We can make informed decisions and mitigate future uncertainties if we consider environmental factors and potential hazards. This proactive strategy can contribute to the long-term stability and resilience of the economy.

**Can you tell us a positive story related to your work - please share an achievement.**

Since I stepped forward to lead and make a strong case for sustainable fashion in Ghana, through my weekly column, advocacy on social media, and radio discussions, I have helped two emerging ready-to-wear brands to redesign their Fashion business models where sustainability operation policies like Health and Safety of all workers, Waste Reduction & Recycling of deadstock fabrics, Ethical and Sustainable sourcing, Collaborations and Partnerships, Water Conservation (Ajabeng erected a water harvester in their factory that serves as a source of water for major operational activities) and ensuring adherence.



*Harriet Ann Adjabeng, founder of Quinsera*

**Can you share some good practices in terms of advocacy in the field of environmental issues that you have used?**

Partnerships and Collaborations have been the bedrock of all our activities in Quinsera! One individual cannot achieve sustainability on their own; it should be a team effort. We must pool our resources to achieve a more responsible future.