

THREADS OF TRANSITION

DESIGNING A FAIRER FUTURE FOR CLOTHING



INDEPENDENT PUBLIC-INTEREST INFORMATION DESIGN STUDY
PUBLIC DATA ONLY / NO CONFIDENTIAL COMMERCIAL INFORMATION

NIVEDITA NASHINE

A REAL PUBLICATION BUILT FROM PUBLIC EVIDENCE.

This independent study synthesizes published evidence on the environmental and employment dimensions of the textile and garment value chain. It is an information-design exercise, not commissioned research and not an evaluation of any named company.

01 EVIDENCE

Published UNEP, ILO and World Bank sources.

02 BOUNDARY

Global sector-level findings; no confidential factory, buyer, supplier or worker data.

03 INTERPRETATION

Recommendations are the designer's synthesis of the cited evidence.

04 LIMITATION

Different sources use different sector definitions and reference years; figures should not be combined as a single statistical series.

DISCLOSURE

No UN, ILO or World Bank logo is used. Source citation does not imply endorsement.

A FAIR TRANSITION CONNECTS MATERIALS, WORK, MARKETS AND ACCOUNTABILITY.

01 MATERIALS

Lower-impact fibres and safer chemistry matter, but absolute production and waste also shape outcomes.

02 WORK

The sector supports tens of millions of jobs. Transition plans must include worker voice, skills, safety and income.

03 MARKETS

Purchasing practices, product durability and take-back systems influence what suppliers can change.

04 ACCOUNTABILITY

Shared definitions, traceable handoffs and public indicators turn ambition into operational decisions.

SCALE CREATES BOTH IMPACT AND LEVERAGE.

2-8%

of global greenhouse-gas emissions attributed to textiles (UNEP).

92M t

of textile waste generated globally each year (UNEP).

8%

of textile fibres in 2023 came from recycled sources (UNEP).

94M

garment workers globally, according to ILO's sector overview.

~60%

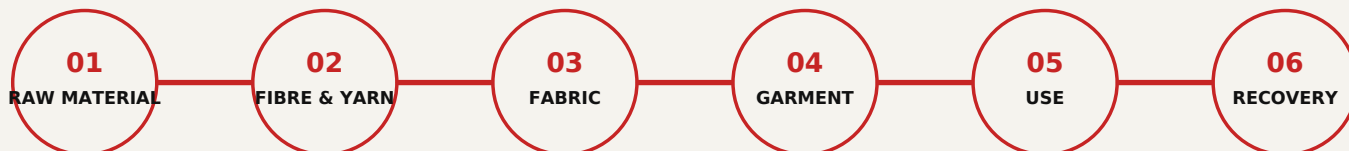
of garment workers globally are women (ILO).

75%

of garment-sector workers are employed in Asia (ILO).

Figures are source-specific snapshots and should not be treated as a single harmonized dataset.

A GARMENT CROSSES SYSTEMS, NOT JUST BORDERS.



TRACEABILITY QUESTIONS

ORIGIN

Where did the fibre and chemistry originate?

HANDOFF

What information survives each transaction?

WORK

Who performs the work and under what conditions?

END USE

Who owns collection, sorting and next-life routes?

JOB CREATION IS NOT THE SAME AS EQUITABLE PROGRESSION.

~60%

OF GARMENT WORKERS GLOBALLY ARE WOMEN.

42M

WOMEN GARMENT WORKERS ARE EMPLOYED IN ASIA.

75%

OF ALL GARMENT WORKERS ARE EMPLOYED IN ASIA.

A JUST-TRANSITION SCORECARD

01

VOICE

Worker representation and grievance channels

02

SAFETY

Safe work, freedom from harassment and effective remediation

03

SKILLS

Access to training for changing processes and technologies

04

INCOME

Wages, working time and resilience during change

World Bank research on global value chains cautions that women are often concentrated in lower-value-added roles and may face lower pay and poorer conditions. Progress therefore requires attention to job quality and advancement, not participation alone.

THE SYSTEM IS EXPANDING FASTER THAN CIRCULAR CAPACITY.

PRODUCTION

DOUBLED

2000-2015

USE DURATION

-36%

over the same broad period

RECYCLED FIBRE

8%

share in 2023

WASTE

92M t

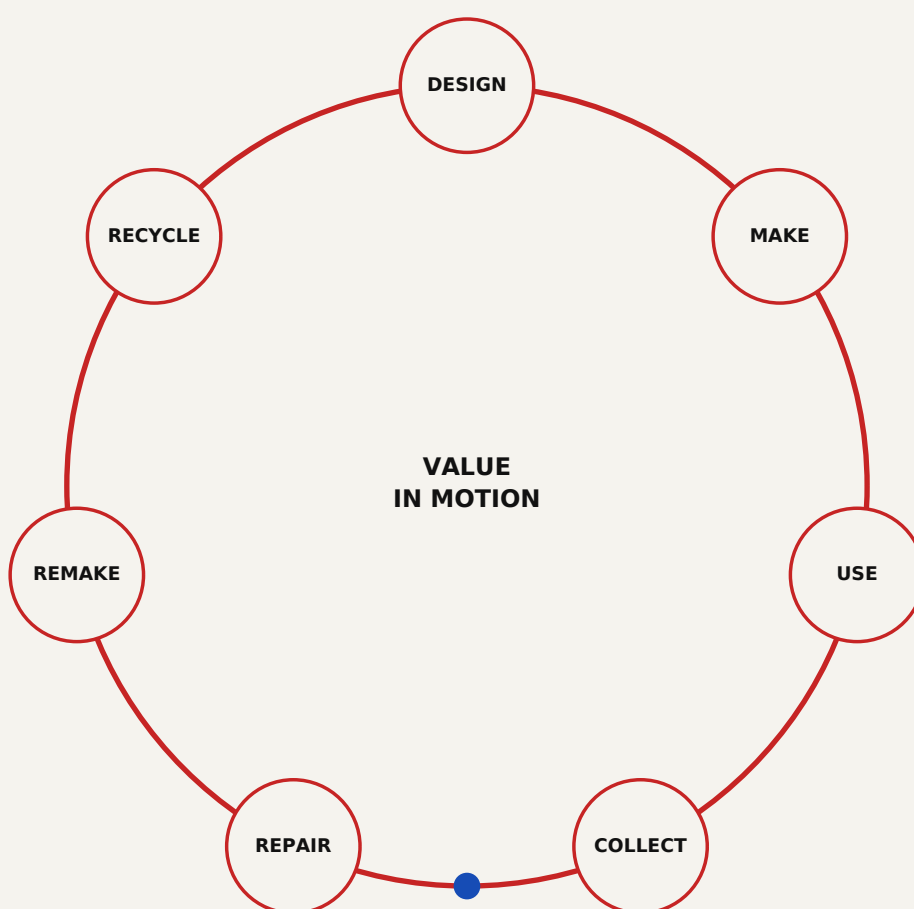
generated annually

DESIGN IMPLICATION

Material substitution alone cannot resolve growth in throughput. The evidence points toward longer use, repair, collection, sorting, recycled inputs and business models that preserve value.

Source: UNEP, 2025. Production and use-duration figures are reported by UNEP from partner research.

THE LOOP ONLY WORKS WHEN EVERY HANDOFF WORKS.



- 01** Shift consumption patterns and increase product use.
- 02** Improve practices, chemistry, durability and working conditions.
- 03** Invest in collection, sorting, repair and recycling infrastructure.

MOVE FROM COMMITMENT TO COORDINATED ACTION.

01 TRACEABILITY

Define product and supplier data that must survive each handoff.

MEASURE: COVERAGE / COMPLETENESS / CORRECTIVE ACTION

02 WORKER VOICE

Build participation, grievance and remediation into transition programmes.

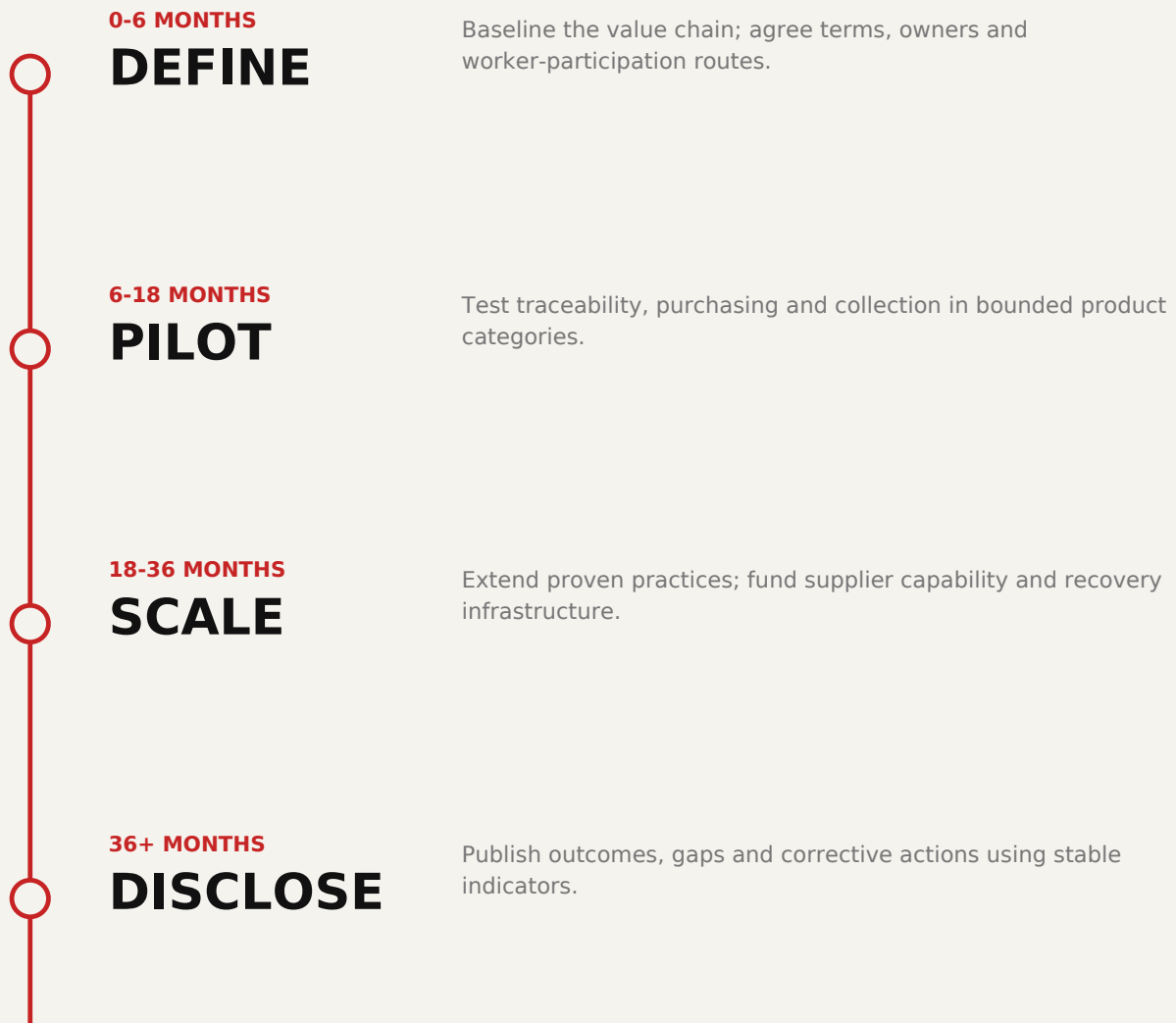
MEASURE: REPRESENTATION / RESOLUTION / ADVANCEMENT

03 CIRCULAR INFRASTRUCTURE

Coordinate collection, sorting, repair and recycled-material demand.

MEASURE: CAPTURE / REUSE / RECYCLED INPUT

SEQUENCE THE WORK SO AMBITION SURVIVES DELIVERY.



MEASURE OUTCOMES, NOT INTENTIONS.

01 MATERIAL

- Recycled input share
- Hazardous chemistry controls
- Product durability

02 WORK

- Worker voice
- Safety and remediation
- Skills and progression

03 FLOW

- Traceability coverage
- Collection capture
- Repair and reuse

04 ACCOUNTABILITY

- Supplier capability
- Corrective-action closure
- Public disclosure

Indicators should be disaggregated where relevant, accompanied by definitions and collection methods, and interpreted alongside qualitative worker feedback.

TRANSPARENT SOURCING IS PART OF THE DESIGN.

01 UNEP (2020) Minimizing fashion's environmental footprint

<https://www.unep.org/annualreport/2025/stories/minimizing-fashions-environmental-footprint>

02 UNEP (2020) Unsustainable fashion and textiles in focus for International Day of Zero Waste

<https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/press-release/unsustainable-fashion-and-textiles-focus-international-day-zero>

03 UNEP (2020) Sustainability and Circularity in the Textile Value Chain: A Global Roadmap

<https://www.unep.org/resources/publication/sustainability-and-circularity-textile-value-chain-global-roadmap>

04 ILO How to achieve gender equality in global garment supply chains

<https://webapps.ilo.org/infostories/en-GB/Stories/discrimination/garment-gender.html>

05 ILO (2025) Advancing decent work in supply chains: textiles and clothing

<https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2025-03/Advancing%20Decent%20Work%20in%20Supply%20chains%20-%20Decent%20Work%20Challenges%20and%20>

06 World Bank Global Value Chain Development Report 2019

<https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/384161555079173489/pdf/Global-Value-Chain-Development-Report-2019-Technological-Innovation-Supply-Chain>

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