

New report urges governments to back the coexistence of used clothing imports and local manufacturing for African growth

New report forecasts 15-year roadmap for Kenyan growth, showing that Mitumba and domestic textile manufacturing are complementary sources of growth.

NAIROBI, NAIROBI COUNTY, KENYA, May 15, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The [Institute of Economic Affairs Kenya](#) and the [Mitumba Consortium Association of Kenya](#) (MCAK) today launched a groundbreaking report titled A Future Look at the Apparel and Footwear Industry in Kenya (2022–2037), commissioned to explore the future of the clothing industry, which also creates a blueprint for uniquely African growth.



Market trader in Gikomba market in Nairobi, Kenya

This evidence-based report is the most comprehensive study of Kenya’s apparel sector to date, concluding that the country’s second-hand clothing trade (Mitumba) and its local apparel manufacturing can coexist and complement each other. Far from being competitors, the two sectors serve different markets. While Kenyan households are hybrid consumers, buying both new and used clothes, as incomes rise, the consumption of used clothes decreases. By 2037, a Kenyan’s average income is expected to double, leading to robust market demand for both sectors as people look to spend more money on clothes.

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*Teresia Wairimu Njenga,
Chairperson of MCAK*

An apparel sector comprising used clothing imports and local production can drive inclusive economic growth, job

creation, and sustainability in line with Kenya’s Vision 2030 and the African Union’s Agenda 2063.

But this relies on a supportive policy regime that boosts both used clothing imports and local production.

The study offers a 15-year roadmap for strengthening Kenya's apparel and footwear industry using advanced economic modelling, consumer survey data, and policy analysis. It highlights that Mitumba is not a threat to Kenya's industrial ambitions but a vital part of a diversified economy that can work not just in Kenya but across the African continent.

"We believe that the future of the apparel sector is about strategic coexistence, not competition," said Teresia Wairimu Njenga, Chairperson of MCAK. "The report offers compelling evidence that second-hand clothing isn't a barrier to the textile industry's growth – it's part of the solution. We can ensure that low-income families can afford quality clothes while expanding local manufacturing. With smart, inclusive policies, both sectors will thrive, fulfilling the promise of Vision 2030 and Agenda 2063."

The report's findings underscore the significant contributions of the

Mitumba trade and its complementary role alongside local manufacturing:

Jobs and Revenue: In 2022, Kenya imported approximately 177,000 tonnes of second-hand clothing, supporting around 2 million livelihoods (many held by women and youth) and generating about Ksh 12 billion in annual tax revenue (≈USD 100 million).

Environmental Benefits: The reuse and upcycling of garments through the Mitumba market significantly reduce textile waste and lower the fashion industry's environmental footprint. By keeping usable clothing in circulation instead of landfills, the second-hand trade advances circular economy goals and aligns with global sustainability efforts to curb waste and pollution.

Lead researcher for the report and CEO of the Institute of Economic Affairs, Kenya, Kwame Owino, said:



Teresia Wairimu Njenga, Chairperson, MCAK



Secondhand clothes market in Nairobi, Kenya

“Our findings make one thing clear: citizens and economies can gain the most when Mitumba and local manufacturing grow together. When we remove needless barriers, the combined strength of these sectors can create more jobs, more consumer choice, and more sustainable growth than if we stifle one in favour of the other. It’s a win-win for our economy and hardworking families relying on affordable clothing. This is about smart policymaking grounded in evidence – leveraging the strengths of each segment rather than picking winners and losers.”

Policy Recommendations: To achieve this balanced growth, the report provides a policy roadmap for Kenya’s government. Key recommendations to allow both Mitumba and domestic production to thrive include:

- Harmonise import rules and enforce quality standards for new and used clothing.
- Support local manufacturers through tax breaks and skills training.
- Promote eco-friendly practices across the industry.

These evidence-based recommendations aimed at policymakers help to chart a path to uniquely African growth in the textiles industry, as countries strive to meet the African Union’s Agenda 2063 for sustainable and inclusive economic transformation. The report emphasises that supportive, well-informed policies, rather than punitive measures, will enable the apparel sector to be a driver of inclusive growth and social welfare.

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