

Digital Toolkit

A Practical Toolkit for Strengthening Women's Economic Participation through Community- Based Textile Recycling

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About This Toolkit

“ *Community-based textile recycling can become a pathway for women to strengthen their economic participation, develop new skills, and create sustainable livelihood opportunities* ”



This toolkit was developed within the framework of the Global Campus Alumni 2025–26 Cross-Regional Activities. It serves as the primary output of the Stitching Justice initiative, which explores how community-based textile recycling can strengthen women’s economic participation while promoting environmentally sustainable practices. Drawing on evidence and experiences from the Bank Pakaian Initiative in Indonesia, the toolkit demonstrates how discarded textiles can be transformed into opportunities for income generation, skills development, leadership, and community engagement. Although grounded in the Indonesian context, the lessons and practical tools presented here are designed to be adaptable across diverse communities facing similar social, economic, and environmental challenges.

We dedicate this toolkit to the women who transform discarded textiles into opportunities for growth, resilience, and economic participation. Their experiences show that community-based textile recycling is not only an environmental response to textile waste, but also a pathway toward greater inclusion, agency, and sustainable livelihoods. This toolkit provides practical guidance for community leaders, civil society organizations, educators, practitioners, and policymakers seeking to create more inclusive and sustainable models of women’s economic empowerment.

Why Women's Economic Participation Matters

Recognising women's informal work as valuable economic contributions.

Creating local economic opportunities through community-based textile recycling.

Strengthening women's economic resilience through sustainable livelihood opportunities.

Strengthening collective action and community collaboration.

Providing a practical model for communities and local organisations.

This toolkit highlights how community-based textile recycling can strengthen women's economic participation while contributing to more sustainable local communities.

- strengthens women's economic participation
- creates sustainable livelihood opportunities
- encourages community collaboration
- reduces textile waste through local action

Rather than introducing entirely new systems, this toolkit builds on existing community knowledge, practical skills, and lived experiences to support women's economic participation through community-based textile recycling. The guidance provided is intended to be practical, adaptable, and relevant for different community contexts.



Purpose and How to use this Toolkit

WHY THIS TOOLKIT WAS DEVELOPED?

Many community-based sustainability initiatives face similar challenges because they:

- overlook local knowledge
- rely on external solutions
- treat communities as beneficiaries rather than leaders

This toolkit encourages a community-led approach that builds on local knowledge, existing skills, and collective participation. Women artisans are recognized as active contributors who bring valuable knowledge, skills, and experience to community-based textile recycling initiatives.

- knowledge holders
- producers
- decision-makers
- innovators

HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT?

This toolkit can be used in multiple ways:

1. As a training guide
 - Facilitators can use the toolkit to introduce community-based textile recycling, women's economic participation, and sustainable livelihood practices through interactive workshops.
2. As a planning tool
 - Organizations can use it to design and implement community-based textile recycling initiatives
3. As a reflection resource
 - Community groups can use the toolkit to reflect on existing practices, identify local strengths, and explore opportunities to strengthen women's participation in community economic activities.

KEY APPROACH FOR THIS TOOLKIT

This toolkit combines:

- Understanding (why the issue matters)
- Action (what can be done)
- Strategy (how to do it effectively)

Understanding the problem: Textile waste and inequality

Why this matters?

Textile waste is commonly discussed as an environmental issue. However, it also affects livelihoods, resource use, and economic opportunities within communities. In many communities:

- clothing is discarded without proper systems for reuse
- textile waste is mixed with general waste
- burning is used as a disposal method
- informal recycling is carried out without protection or recognition

At the same time, the global fashion system encourages:

- overproduction
- rapid consumption
- short product lifespans

This creates a cycle where waste accumulates faster than it can be managed.

Action Step:

Identify how textile waste appears in your community.

Key Actions:

- Observe where unused clothes go
- Identify common disposal methods
- Talk to women about their roles in managing clothing

Helpful Strategy:

Use informal conversations instead of surveys to gather more honest insights.

Guidance:

Observe everyday practices before proposing solutions. Local experiences provide valuable insights into how textile materials are already managed.

Policy Note (Women-Friendly):

Recognize informal labor as valid work. Avoid language that frames women's contributions as helper rather than labor.

The hidden inequality

The burden of managing this waste is not shared equally. Women are often responsible for:

- managing household clothing
- sorting reusable items
- repairing garments
- engaging in informal resale or recycling

However, this work is:

- unpaid or underpaid
- unrecognized
- excluded from policy discussions

Key insights:

The way textile waste is managed reflects social and economic conditions, including how different forms of work are recognised and valued. It reflects:

- unequal labor distribution
- lack of recognition
- limited economic opportunities

Recognizing women as a key actors

Why this matters?

Women play an important role in how clothing and textile materials are used, repaired, reused, and repurposed within households and communities. These everyday activities require practical knowledge, creativity, and decision-making, yet they are often overlooked as forms of economic participation. Their roles often include:

- maintaining clothing
- repairing and extending the use of clothing
- deciding whether clothing should be repaired, donated, repurposed, or discarded
- participating in small-scale production

These roles require:

- technical skills
- time management
- resource awareness
- creativity

Although these activities contribute to household and community wellbeing, they often remain invisible in discussions about local economies and women's work.

Action Step

Map women's existing skills in your community.

Key Actions:

- Identify who can sew, repair, or design
- Identify who has experience selling products
- Identify who is interested in learning new skills

Helpful Strategy:

Encourage open discussion and allow participants to learn from one another's experiences.

Guidance:

Avoid focusing only on professional skills. Everyday practices are equally valuable.

Policy Note (Women-Friendly):

Programs should:

- recognize both paid and unpaid contributions that support community-based economic activities.
- ensure women are involved in decision-making
- provide opportunities for leadership, not just participation

Key insight

When women's existing knowledge and everyday experience are recognized and supported, they can become the foundation of sustainable circular systems.

From waste to resource: building circular mindset

Why this matters

The biggest barrier to circular fashion is not technical, it is conceptual.

If communities see discarded clothing as waste, it is likely to be:

- thrown away
- burned
- ignored

However, if it is seen as a resource, it becomes:

- material for production
- a source of income
- a tool for creativity
- an entry point for community collaboration

Action Step

Introduce the concept of multiple life cycles for clothing.

Key Actions:

- Show examples of repaired or redesigned clothing
- Discuss how items can be reused in different ways
- Encourage participants to think creatively about materials

Helpful Strategy:

Use real objects instead of abstract explanations. Physical examples make the concept easier to understand.

Guidance:

Do not rush this step. If participants do not fully understand the value of materials, later stages (production, pricing, marketing) will be weaker.

Policy Note (Women-Friendly):

Support systems should:

- provide access to tools and materials
- create safe spaces for experimentation
- avoid penalizing trial and error

Key insight

Circular systems begin with a shift in thinking:

- **from disposal → to retention, reuse, and regeneration.**

Understanding environmental impact in daily life

Why this matters

Environmental discussions are often presented in abstract terms such as climate change or pollution, which can feel distant from everyday life. Discarded textiles particularly synthetic fabrics do not easily decompose. When burned, they release toxic fumes that affect air quality. When dumped, they can block drainage systems, contributing to flooding. When washed, they release microfibers that enter water systems.

These impacts are not equally distributed. Communities with fewer resources often experience:

- closer proximity to waste accumulation
- limited access to waste services
- higher exposure to environmental risks

Action Step

Identify how textile waste affects your local environment.

Key Actions:

- Observe whether clothing waste is burned, dumped, or stored
- Identify areas where waste accumulates (e.g., rivers, empty land, roadsides)
- Ask community members about changes in environment (flooding, smell, smoke)

Helpful Strategy:

Encourage participants to share personal experiences rather than general opinions.

For example:

- Have you noticed changes in your neighborhood?
- When does burning usually happen?

This makes the issue more concrete and relatable.

Guidance:

Avoid blaming households. Focus on understanding system gaps, not assigning fault.

Policy Note (Women-Friendly):

Environmental policies should:

- include women's voices in local decision-making
- recognize that women often manage household waste
- ensure safe conditions for those involved in recycling or sorting

Key insight

Textile waste is not only an environmental issue, it is a community health and safety issue. Understanding this helps shift the conversation from cleaning waste to protecting people and environments.

Community mapping: Understanding your local system

Why this matters

Before building any circular system, it is essential to understand the existing local ecosystem.

Many initiatives fail because they introduce solutions without understanding:

- where materials come from
- who is already involved
- what systems already exist
- what barriers are present

Community mapping helps avoid duplication and ensures that new initiatives are grounded in reality.

Action Step

Map your local textile flow.

Key Actions:

- Identify where clothing enters the community (shops, donations, production)
- Identify where it goes after use (waste, storage, resale, repair)
- Identify who is involved at each stage

Helpful Strategy:

Draw a simple visual map with arrows showing:

- flow of clothing
- key actors
- points of waste

This helps participants see connections more clearly than written lists.

Guidance:

Encourage participation from different groups:

- women
- youth
- local leaders

Different perspectives will reveal different parts of the system.

Policy Note (Women-Friendly):

Mapping exercises should:

- include women's unpaid labor
- recognize informal roles
- ensure women's knowledge is documented and valued

Key insight

Every community already has a system even if it is informal, fragmented, or inefficient.

The goal is not to replace it, but to understand and improve it.

Identifying gaps and opportunities

Why this matters

After mapping the system, communities often discover that the problem is not only the presence of waste, but the lack of connection between existing practices.

For example:

- materials exist, but are not collected systematically
- skills exist, but are not organized
- products are made, but not marketed effectively

These gaps represent opportunities for building a circular system.

Action Step

Identify key gaps in your system.

Key Actions:

- Where is material being wasted unnecessarily?
- Which skills are underused?
- Where does the process stop (collection, production, or sales)?

Helpful Strategy:

Prioritize gaps that are:

- easy to address
- low-cost
- community-controlled

Starting small increases the chance of success.

Guidance:

Avoid trying to fix everything at once. Focus on one or two key improvements.

Policy Note (Women-Friendly):

Programs should:

- prioritize women-led solutions
- ensure resources are accessible to women
- avoid creating additional unpaid burdens

Key insight

Solutions do not always require new resources, they often require better coordination of existing ones.

Introducing the circular system approach

Why this matters

A circular system connects different activities into a continuous process.

Instead of treating collection, production, and sales as separate actions, they are linked into a coherent cycle.

This ensures:

- materials are used efficiently
- efforts are not duplicated
- income opportunities are sustained

Core component of the system

A basic community circular fashion system includes:

- collection of textiles
- sorting and classification
- production and redesign
- distribution and sales

Each component depends on the others.

Action Step

Understand how these components connect in your context.

Key Actions:

- Identify which components already exist
- Identify which are missing
- Identify who could take responsibility for each

Helpful Strategy:

Think of the system as a chain.

If one link is weak, the whole system is affected.

Guidance:

Start with a simple system. Complexity can be added later.

Policy Note (Women-Friendly):

Ensure that:

- women are involved in all stages
- leadership roles are accessible
- responsibilities are fairly distributed

Key insight

Circular systems are not defined by individual activities, but by how those activities are connected.

Building a strong collection system

Why this matters

Collection is often underestimated, but it is one of the most critical parts of the circular system.

Without a consistent and reliable flow of materials:

- production becomes irregular
- planning becomes difficult
- income becomes unstable

A strong collection system creates the foundation for all other activities.

Action Step

Develop a structured collection approach.

Key Actions:

- Identify regular sources of textiles (households, markets, tailors)
- Establish collection points or schedules
- Communicate clearly what types of materials are accepted

Helpful Strategy:

Use storytelling and awareness campaigns to encourage participation.

People are more likely to donate when they understand:

- where materials go
- who benefits
- what impact is created

Guidance:

Ensure that collection systems are:

- accessible
- transparent
- easy to use

Avoid overly complicated processes that discourage participation.

Policy Note (Women-Friendly):

Collection systems should:

- not rely solely on unpaid labor
- ensure safe handling conditions
- recognize women's time and effort

Key insight

Collection is not only about gathering materials, it is about building a system of trust and participation within the community.

Sorting as the foundation of value creation

Why this matters

Once textiles are collected, they are not immediately ready for reuse or production. At this stage, materials exist in mixed conditions, some usable, some damaged, some unsuitable.

Sorting is therefore the first critical decision-making stage in the circular system.

Without sorting, the usable materials may be wasted, valuable textiles may be overlooked, production becomes inefficient, time and labor are misused. Sorting transforms a pile of “waste” into categorized resources, each with a clear potential.

Action Step

Establish a clear sorting system.

Key Actions:

- Separate textiles based on condition and usability
- Create categories such as:
 1. reusable (ready to use or sell)
 2. repairable (needs minor fixing)
 3. upcyclable (suitable for redesign)
 4. non-usable (to be safely discarded or redirected)

Helpful Strategy:

- Start with simple categories.
- Over time, refine them as the team gains experience.
- Use visual markers (boxes, labels, colors) to make sorting easier and faster.

Guidance:

Sorting should not be rushed. Careful classification improves:

- product quality
- efficiency of production
- overall system organization

Policy Note (Women-Friendly):

Sorting is often treated as low-value labor.

Programs should:

- recognize sorting as skilled work
- ensure fair distribution of workload
- avoid assigning sorting only as unpaid or invisible labor

Key insight

Value is not created only through production. It begins with the ability to recognize potential in materials.

Understanding value in materials

Why this matters

Not all textiles have the same potential. Understanding material value is essential for making informed decisions about how to use each item.

Without this understanding:

- high-value materials may be wasted
- low-quality materials may be overused
- products may lack durability

Action Step

Assess materials based on potential use.

Key Actions:

- Identify strong fabrics suitable for bags or structured items
- Identify soft fabrics suitable for clothing or accessories
- Identify small pieces for patchwork or decorative use

Helpful Strategy:

Encourage participants to physically handle materials:

- stretch fabric
- check thickness
- test durability
- Hands-on interaction builds intuitive understanding.

Guidance:

Avoid focusing only on appearance. Some materials may look less attractive but have strong structural value.

Policy Note (Women-Friendly):

Provide access to:

- tools (scissors, sewing machines)
- workspace
- lighting and safe conditions

Material assessment requires proper working environments.

Key insight

Material value is not fixed.

It depends on:

- condition
- fabric type
- usability
- creativity in design

Recognizing and organizing women's skills

Why this matters

A circular fashion system depends on human skills as much as material resources.

In many communities, women already possess valuable skills, but these are:

- informal
- unrecognized
- underutilized

Without proper organization, these skills remain fragmented and cannot support a structured system.

Key insight

Skills already exist, the challenge is recognizing, organizing, and strengthening them.

Action Step

Map and organize skills within the group.

Key Actions:

- Identify who can sew, repair, cut, design, or sell
- Identify who is interested in learning
- Assign roles based on both skill and interest

Helpful Strategy:

Avoid assigning roles based only on experience. Allow space for learning and skill development.

Guidance:

Ensure that roles are:

- flexible
- inclusive
- respectful of time constraints (especially caregiving responsibilities)

Policy Note (Women-Friendly):

Skill development programs should:

- provide training opportunities
- support leadership roles for women
- avoid reinforcing traditional gender hierarchies

Building a collaborative production system

Why this matters

Production is often imagined as an individual activity.

However, in a community-based system, production must be collaborative and organized.

Without coordination:

- work may be duplicated
- quality may vary
- timelines may not be met
- participants may feel excluded or overburdened

A structured production system ensures:

- efficiency
- fairness
- consistency

Action Step

Design a simple production workflow.

Key Actions:

Divide production into stages:

- material preparation
- cutting
- sewing
- finishing

Assign responsibilities for each stage

Set realistic timelines

Helpful Strategy:

Start with small production batches. This allows the group to learn and adjust before scaling up.

Guidance:

Ensure clear communication between stages. Miscommunication can lead to wasted materials and time.

Policy Note (Women-Friendly):

Production systems should:

- respect flexible working hours
- accommodate caregiving responsibilities
- ensure safe and accessible workspaces

Key insight

Production is not only about making products. It is about organizing people, time, and resources effectively.

Designing products with purpose and identity

Why this matters

In circular fashion, products are not only functional items.

They represent:

- environmental responsibility
- women's labor
- community identity

Without clear design thinking:

- products may lack consistency
- market value may be low
- the story behind the product may be lost

Key insight

Design adds value not only through appearance, but through meaning and identity

Action Step

Develop product ideas that reflect both function and story.

Key Actions:

- Choose products based on available materials and skills
- Consider local needs and market demand
- Create simple, repeatable designs

Helpful Strategy:

Start with a limited number of product types. This helps maintain quality and build consistency.

Guidance:

Focus on:

- durability
- usability
- simplicity

Overly complex designs can reduce efficiency and increase costs.

Policy Note (Women-Friendly):

Design decisions should:

- involve women artisans
- respect local cultural identity
- ensure that creative contributions are recognized

Product storytelling as a value of creation

Why this matters

In conventional markets, products are often valued based on:

- material quality
- brand reputation
- price competitiveness

However, in circular fashion, especially community-based production, the value of a product is also shaped by its story.

Without storytelling:

- products may be perceived as “second-hand” or low-value
- consumers may not understand the environmental or social impact
- women’s labor remains invisible

With storytelling:

- products gain emotional and ethical value
- consumers understand the purpose behind the product
- artisans’ contributions are recognized

What makes a strong product story?

A meaningful story should clearly communicate:

1. Origin of materials
 - Explain that the product is made from reclaimed or discarded textiles. This highlights sustainability and resource efficiency.
2. Who made it
 - Emphasize the role of women artisans. This connects the product to real people, not anonymous production.
3. Process of transformation
 - Describe how waste becomes a new product. This reinforces the idea of creativity and skill.
4. Impact created
 - Explain how the product contributes to:
 - income generation
 - waste reduction
 - community empowerment

Key insight

A circular product is not just an object. It is a combination of material, labor, and meaning.

Product storytelling as a value of creation

Action Step

Develop a simple storytelling format for all products.

Key Actions:

- Create short product descriptions (1–3 sentences)
- Use consistent language across all products
- Include tags, labels, or digital captions

Helpful Strategy:

Keep stories clear and authentic.

Avoid exaggeration. Real stories are more powerful than idealized narratives.

Guidance:

Ensure that storytelling:

- respects the dignity of artisans
- avoids portraying women as “victims”
- focuses on strength, skill, and contribution

Policy Note (Women-Friendly):

Storytelling must:

- be based on informed consent
- avoid exploitation of personal stories
- ensure women have control over how they are represented

Pricing, value and fair income

Why this matters

One of the most common failures in community-based initiatives is underpricing products.

This often happens because:

- materials are perceived as “free”
- labor is undervalued
- there is pressure to compete with cheap market prices

However, underpricing leads to:

- unsustainable income
- burnout among participants
- reinforcement of economic inequality

What should pricing include?

A fair price must reflect:

1. Material costs

- Even if materials are donated, there are still costs related to collection, cleaning, and preparation.

2. Labor time

- Every hour of work must be recognized.

3. Skill level

- More complex work should be valued higher.

4. Operational costs

- Tools, transportation, workspace, and coordination.

5. Future sustainability

- A portion of income should support growth and stability.

Key insight

Fair pricing is not only a financial issue, it is a human rights issue.

Pricing, value and fair income

Action Step

Develop a basic pricing structure.

Key Actions:

- Track time spent on each product
- Estimate total costs involved
- Set a minimum acceptable price

Helpful Strategy:

Start with simple calculations. Even basic tracking improves awareness of value.

Guidance:

- Avoid comparing prices only with mass-produced products.
- Community-based products offer different value, not cheaper alternatives.

Policy Note (Women-Friendly):

Pricing systems should:

- ensure transparent income distribution
- prevent unpaid labor
- promote financial literacy among women participants

Market access and strategic selling

Why this matters

Production alone does not guarantee income. Without access to markets, products cannot generate value.

Many community initiatives struggle because:

- they rely on limited local demand
- they lack visibility
- they do not have consistent selling channels

Type of market channels

1. Local markets and bazaars
 - Accessible and community-based, but may have limited reach.
2. Social media platforms
 - Expand visibility, but require consistent engagement.
3. Partnerships with organizations or shops
 - Provide stability, but require negotiation.

Action Step

Identify and test different selling channels.

Key Actions:

- Start with one or two channels
- Evaluate which works best
- Build consistency over time

Helpful Strategy:

Use storytelling together with visuals. Photos and narratives increase interest and trust.

Guidance:

- Do not depend on a single market channel.
- Diversification increases resilience.

Policy Note (Women-Friendly):

Market systems should:

- ensure fair agreements with partners
- avoid exploitative pricing pressure
- support women's participation in decision-making

Key insight

Market access is not only about finding buyers. It is about positioning products effectively.

Recognizing and avoiding exploitation

Why this matters

As initiatives grow, they may attract attention from external actors such as brands, organizations, or researchers.

While this can create opportunities, it also introduces risks.

The communities may face situations where:

- their work is used without proper credit
- products are underpriced for external profit
- stories are used for marketing without consent
- decisions are controlled by outsiders

Common warning signs:

- lack of transparency in agreements
- unclear financial arrangements
- pressure to reduce prices
- limited involvement in decision-making
- use of images or stories without permission

Action Step

Establish basic principles for partnerships.

Key Actions:

- define what is acceptable and not acceptable
- ensure clear communication
- document agreements where possible

Helpful Strategy:

Discuss potential partnerships collectively. Group decisions reduce risk of unequal power dynamics.

Guidance:

- If a partnership compromises dignity or fairness, it should be reconsidered.

Policy Note (Women-Friendly):

All collaborations should:

- ensure informed consent
- guarantee fair compensation
- protect community ownership

Key insight

Not all partnerships are beneficial. Some may extract value rather than create it.

Building long-term sustainability

Why this matters

Many initiatives succeed in the short term but struggle to continue.

Common reasons include:

- inconsistent income
- participant fatigue
- lack of coordination
- dependence on external support

Sustainability requires thinking beyond immediate activities.

Key elements of sustainability:

1. Consistency
 - Regular activities (collection, production, sales)
2. Adaptability
 - Ability to respond to challenges and changes
3. Shared responsibility
 - No single person carries the entire system
4. Learning and reflection
 - Continuous improvement based on experience

Action Step

Assess the long-term viability of your system.

Key Actions:

- identify strengths and weaknesses
- evaluate workload distribution
- review income stability

Helpful Strategy:

- Hold regular reflection sessions.
- Learning from experience strengthens resilience.

Guidance:

- Start small, but build strong foundations.
- Scaling should come after stability.

Policy Note (Women-Friendly):

Sustainability strategies should:

- avoid overburdening women
- ensure fair workload distribution
- support long-term capacity building

Key insight

Sustainability is not only about environmental impact.

It is about maintaining a system that continues to function over time.

Understanding the role of partnerships in scaling impact

Why this matters

A community-based circular fashion initiative can begin with local resources and internal collaboration. However, as the system grows, it will inevitably interact with a broader network of actors.

Without partnerships:

- material supply may remain limited
- market access may not expand
- visibility may stay low
- policy support may be absent

At the same time, partnerships introduce complexity. Different actors bring different priorities, expectations, and levels of influence.

Action Step

Identify where partnerships are needed.

Key Actions:

- Determine which parts of your system need external support
- Identify gaps that cannot be solved internally
- Clarify what type of collaboration is required (materials, training, market, funding)

Helpful Strategy:

- Be specific when identifying needs.
- Clear goals make partnerships more effective and balanced.

Guidance:

- Avoid entering partnerships without clear purpose.
- Unstructured collaboration often leads to confusion or imbalance.

Policy Note (Women-Friendly):

Partnerships should:

- recognize women as leaders, not just participants
- include women in negotiation processes
- avoid reinforcing dependency

Key insight

Partnerships are not only about support.

They are about negotiating relationships within systems of power.

Identifying and categorizing stakeholders

Why this matters

Not all stakeholders play the same role in the system.

Understanding these roles helps communities engage more strategically.

Without clear identification:

- important actors may be overlooked
- expectations may be unclear
- collaboration may become ineffective

Main stakeholder groups:

1. Community actors

Women artisans, local leaders, youth groups

→ Provide labor, knowledge, and continuity

2. Institutional actors

Local government, schools, NGOs

→ Provide legitimacy, structure, and support

3. Market actors

Buyers, retailers, businesses

→ Provide access to income and visibility

Action Step

Map stakeholders based on roles.

Key Actions:

- list relevant actors in your area
- define their potential contribution
- identify existing relationships

Helpful Strategy:

- Use simple diagrams to visualize connections.

Guidance:

- Do not assume all stakeholders are equally beneficial.
- Some may require careful engagement.

Policy Note (Women-Friendly):

Stakeholder mapping must:

- include informal actors (especially women)
- recognize unpaid contributions
- avoid prioritizing only powerful institutions

Key insight

Stakeholders should be understood based on what they do within the system, not just who they are.

Analyzing power, interest and alignment

Why this matters

A common mistake in community initiatives is assuming that all support is positive.

In reality:

- some actors have high power but low commitment
- some actors may prioritize profit over fairness
- some partnerships may unintentionally weaken community control

Key dimensions:

- Power

Ability to influence decisions, resources, or visibility

- Interest

Level of commitment to sustainability and community goals

- Alignment

Compatibility with values such as fairness, dignity, and environmental responsibility

Action Step

Assess stakeholders using these dimensions.

Key Actions:

- identify high-power actors
- evaluate their interests
- assess alignment with your principles

Helpful Strategy:

- Discuss assessments collectively to avoid bias.

Guidance:

- Do not prioritize power over alignment.
- A well-aligned smaller partner can be more sustainable than a powerful but misaligned one.

Policy Note (Women-Friendly):

Decision-making should:

- include women's perspectives
- protect community values
- avoid agreements that reduce women's control

Key insight

Effective partnerships require understanding:

- who has power
- what they want
- whether their values align

Ethical engagement strategies

Why this matters

Engagement is not simply about reaching out. It requires a clear strategy to ensure that collaboration is:

- fair
- transparent
- mutually beneficial

Key insight

Communities are not passive recipients of support. They are active partners offering value.

Action Step

Define engagement strategy before initiating partnerships.

Key Actions:

- clarify what you offer
- define what you need
- establish boundaries

Helpful Strategy:

- Prepare simple communication materials:
- short description of initiative
- clear explanation of impact
- examples of products or activities

Guidance:

- Avoid vague agreements.
- Clarity prevents misunderstanding and exploitation.

Policy Note (Women-Friendly):

Engagement must:

- ensure informed consent
- respect community ownership
- guarantee fair benefit-sharing

Practical first steps

Why this matters

Many initiatives fail because they attempt to scale too quickly without strong foundations.

Action Step

Define realistic starting points.

Key Actions:

- begin with a small group
- test simple processes
- focus on one product type

Helpful Strategy:

Pilot activities before expanding.

Guidance:

Growth should be gradual and based on experience.

Policy Note (Women-Friendly):

Ensure early stages:

- do not overburden participants
- allow flexibility
- support learning

Key insight

Small, well-structured beginnings are more sustainable than large, unstable systems.

Monitoring progress and learning

Why this matters

Without reflection, systems cannot improve.

Action Step

Track and review progress regularly.

Key Actions:

- evaluate what works and what does not work
- gather feedback from participants
- adjust strategies

Helpful Strategy:

Use simple tools (notes, discussions, checklists).

Guidance:

Focus on improvement, not perfection.

Policy Note (Women-Friendly):

Monitoring should:

- include women's voices
- recognize challenges openly
- avoid blame

Key insight

Learning is continuous and essential for sustainability.

Reflection and community ownership

Why this matters

Ownership determines sustainability.

Action Step

Encourage reflection and participation.

Key Actions:

- hold group discussions
- share experiences
- celebrate progress

Helpful Strategy:

Use storytelling to reflect on impact.

Guidance:

Reflection strengthens identity and motivation.

Policy Note (Women-Friendly):

Ensure:

- inclusive participation
- respect for all voices
- recognition of contributions

Key insight

When communities feel ownership, they sustain the system.

The messages for readers



Circular fashion is often discussed as an environmental solution.

However, its deeper potential lies in its ability to transform relationships:

- between people and resources
- between labor and value
- between communities and systems

This toolkit has shown that textile waste is not only about discarded materials.

It reflects broader issues of inequality, invisibility, and lack of recognition. At the same time, it reveals a powerful truth.

Women through their everyday practices, skills, and resilience are already shaping sustainable solutions.



Building a circular system is not only about reducing waste.

It is about:

- recognizing dignity
 - creating fair opportunities
 - strengthening community agency
-



Every piece of fabric holds potential.

Every skill holds value.

Every community holds knowledge.

The challenge is not to create solutions from nothing, but to recognize, connect, and strengthen what already exists.

Closing messages

Guidance for Artisans:

Every seam you sew is a practical act of environmental defense. When women control their labor, clean up their neighborhoods, and build independent incomes, they change local systems from the ground up. Take the lessons from this toolkit and shape them to fit your village's daily realities.

Action Steps:

1. Define Your Local Goal: Gather your collective and write down a concrete production and waste-saving target for the next six months on a shared wall chart.
2. Set the Meeting Schedule: Agree on a fixed weekly time where everyone meets to not just sew, but talk about collective management and share challenges.

- **Key Actions:**

Keep your financial records open and viewable to all members. Transparency is what keeps a women's collective strong and prevents misunderstandings over money.

- **Helpful Strategies:**

Do not try to fix every supply or waste issue overnight. Pick one local tailor or market to partner with first, stabilize that connection, and grow when your team is ready.

- **Policy Support:**

Your work directly fulfills your community's basic right to a clean, safe environment. You are doing the work that regional waste departments often fail to do and use that data to claim your seat at local council planning tables.

The Group Reflection

Guidance for Artisans:

Use the simple sheet (attached after this page) during your monthly collective circle to hear from every worker. This is how you ensure the project serves the women, not just the market.

Discussion Questions for the Collective:

1. What is one technical skill I learned or improved this month?
2. Did the income from this month's sales fairly compensate for the total hours I spent sorting, cleaning, and sewing?
3. What can we change in our workshop layout to make the daily work physically safer and more comfortable for older or pregnant members?

• Key Actions:

Pass a physical object (like a spool of thread) around the circle. Whoever holds the thread speaks without interruption, ensuring quieter members are never spoken over by louder voices.

The Group Reflection Sheet (Interactive)

MONTHLY COLLECTIVE CIRCLE REPORT

Month/Year: _____

Collective Name: _____

Facilitator Name: _____

Section 1: Our Environmental & Economic Impact

To be filled out together using the collective's shared ledger and scale log.

Impact Metric	This Month's Number	Notes (Where did it come from / go?)
Total Waste Diverted	_____ kg	<i>e.g., Saved from the village market dump</i>
Total Finished Items	_____ pieces	<i>e.g., 20 tote bags, 15 pouches</i>
Total Collective Income	Rp _____	<i>Total money brought in by sales</i>
Payout Per Artisan	Rp _____	<i>The fair hourly/piece wage distributed</i>

Section 2: The Talking Circle (Share One by One)

Pass a spool of thread around the circle. Whoever holds the thread answers these three questions honestly.

1. My Technical Growth

What is one new sewing, sorting, or design skill I learned or improved this month?

Your Notes: _____

2. Fair Labor & Time Check

Did the payout I received this month truly value the hours I spent cleaning, preparing, and stitching the waste?

Your Notes: _____

3. Safety & Household Balance

Is our workshop layout safe, well-ventilated, and comfortable? Did my work schedule allow me to balance my family/care responsibilities at home without feeling burned out?

Your Notes: _____

The Group Reflection Sheet (Interactive)

Section 3: Collective Action Plan for Next Month

To be agreed upon by an open, equal hand-vote before the circle ends.

Our specific waste-saving goal for next month: _____ kg from ____.

One change we will make to improve our workspace or safety:

Next month's meeting date & time: _____

Signatures of the Circle Participants:

(Every woman signs or leaves a thumbprint to show her voice was heard and included)

_____ 2. _____ 3. _____

_____ 5. _____ 6. _____

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"Fabric can be thrown away, but our collective agency cannot. We repair the environment one garment at a time."



Together for Human Rights

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