

THE TONLE COMPANY

DESIGNING THE FASHION OF THE FUTURE IN CAMBODIA

The [Tonlé company](#) based in Phnom Penh (Cambodia), created in 2008 and directed by the designer Rachel Fallar, is mentioned by the UN Environment website as one of the enterprises already designing the fashion of the future.

The company uses surplus fabric from mass clothing manufacturers to create high quality, zero-waste fashion collections.

The [UN Alliance for Sustainable Fashion](#), created in March 2019 by 10 different organizations of the United Nations to promote projects and policies changing the path of fashion, highlights the urgency to reduce the negative environmental and social impact of this industry, turning fashion into a driver for improving the world's ecosystems and the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

[The Tonlé website explains that fashion factories](#), valuing profit over the environment, waste huge amounts of materials by cutting inefficiently, throwing out unusable pieces of fabric or excess fabric that simply doesn't meet that season's tastes. All the Tonlé fabrics are recycled materials and components from these factories. A few of components including buttons and beads are made by other local Cambodian organizations who also follow fair trade practice

By choosing this structural option in its mission, the company represents an innovative economic and environmental solution within the fashion industry, which can be reproduced in other contexts. Using materials which are part of the waste generated by the clothing industry that is usually dumped in landfills or burned, Tonlé reduces the massive CO2 emissions, consumption of water as well as reduces pesticide used in agriculture, and chemicals used to dye fabrics.

Furthermore, the Tonlé company has adopted a wide range of qualified [production practices](#) ensuring that each piece has the smallest environmental footprint and the maximum social benefit, while providing a beautiful garment.

Zero waste. The company adopts a strategy to a 100% zero-waste fashion combining a creative design in the use of available fabrics with the generation of garments from remaining materials. The designers work with the production team to plan collections that incorporate even the tiniest scraps into original looks. The remaining strips are cut even smaller and sewn into *yarn* to be woven into clothing and accessories. This production process



leaves 2-3% waste and the smallest scraps are mixed in with recycled office paper and rice to make the Tonlé hang tags and promotional materials.

Handmade production. The company focuses on the work done by hand in many aspects of the production process, making it more sustainable, saving the use of complex machineries and electricity. The handmade production of the yarn from the fabrics and its use for garments, accessories and jewelry products, the production and use of natural dyes, the ecologic packaging are some examples of this strategy. The company estimates that although these processes are both difficult and time consuming, they allow to create unique and very beautiful products, as is also demonstrated by their great commercial success.

Use of natural dyes. The company makes extensive use of natural and non-toxic colors in the production process. All the natural dyes are inert, non-toxic, and 80% come from edible materials like soymilk and lemon. This choice avoids the harmful effects of current dyes for people who will wear clothes, for the people working on them as well as the ground and water they are often dumped into.

Ecologic packaging. The company ships all the products in bags made from 100% recycled materials, and the hang tags are made with recycled cardboard that is hand printed with the logo. For wholesale, the company doesn't pack the products in individual plastic bags, preferring to group sizes and colors together. The workshop also makes and uses tote bags of recycled materials in its market shopping trips, and stores the fabrics in re-usable totes made from rice sacks.

Social impact. The Tonlé company provides the best employment opportunities for the team of designers and workers. In particular, Tonlé employs 30 people in the Phnom Penh workshop, earning fair wages and benefits. Team members are trained in many aspects of the production and have the opportunity to rise up into management positions. A weaving cooperative in northern Cambodia, partner of the company, employs 20 artisans, most of whom are full time staff, working on Tonlé's exclusive textile designs.

The Tonlé company is recognized as an industry pioneer for an ethical and sustainable approach to fashion and the brand is featured in numerous press magazines. The company has a retail boutique in San Francisco [and sell its products to over 100 retail partners around the world.](#)

According to the data provided by the study [A new economy redesigning fashion's future, of the Ellen Mac Arthur Foundation](#), and reported by [The Asean Post Platform](#), the Tonlé company has diverted more than 16,000 kg of materials from landfills, reduced 495,000 kg of CO2 from entering the atmosphere – which is equivalent to keeping almost 33,000 cars off the road for a day, and reduced consumption of almost 200 million liters of water.

Tonlé's success is based on the vision and work of this extraordinary enterprise to create sustainable fashion, but also on the ability of its staff, directed by the designer Rachel Fallor, to create high quality products, which are part of fashion trends and meet the demand of consumers from many different countries and contexts.



To know more

[Tonlé company website](#)

[Tonlé company and photos in Facebook](#)

[UN Environment.org website](#)

[Tonlé collections](#)

[Article in theaseanpost.com](#)

[Tonlé in thekindguide.com](#)

[Article in thechicecologist.com](#)

[Article in kickstarter.com](#)

[Article in remaker.world](#)

[Article in aim2flourish.com](#)

[Article in textilesartscenter.com](#)

[Article in fashionatingworld.com](#)

[A new economy redesigning fashions future - Ellen Mac Arthur Foundation](#)

