

World Shoe Opens First Factory in Ghana

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Nigeria-founded social enterprise group World Shoe has launched a new factory in Ghana with the aim of manufacturing Africa's first antimicrobial, environmentally conscious footwear products.

The facility's opening represents a collaborative effort between World Shoe and public, private and civil service sectors in Ghana, according to the company. At peak capacity, the factory will produce over five million affordable, hygienic shoes each year to serve both African and international markets.

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The footwear produced in Ghana will be a part of an integrated collection of healthcare services designed to address public health and sustainability mandates, World Shoe said. The shoe's design provides comfort and breathability in a range of climates and weather conditions, and protects against disease through a durable antimicrobial EVA foam. According to World Shoe data, soil-transmitted helminths (STHs) are among the most common neglected tropical diseases in the world, with more than 1.5 billion people infected when exposed to contaminated soil.

The footwear foam is also infused with a biodegradation accelerator that speeds up the shoe's breakdown at end of life, ensuring that it addresses public health needs as well as environmental impact.

"More than half a billion people around the world do not have reliable access to quality footwear, leaving them vulnerable to injury and diseases that perpetuate a cycle of poverty," World Shoe Limited president and co-owner Kojo Taylor said. "We believe the new World Shoe factory will demonstrate how African innovation can propel African development and create change on a global scale.

"By creating a model to provide people with affordable, high-quality, eco-friendly shoes, we can support education, health and economic outcomes while protecting the environment," Taylor added.

The factory launch supports President Nana Akufo-Addo and the Ghanaian government's objective of promoting economic investment in the region, while fulfilling the global health mandates laid out in the 2022 WHO Kigali Declaration. Through social service partnerships, the World Shoe project will support the efforts of local charities and health agencies to promote public hygiene and disaster response.

Ghanaian leaders believe the factory's opening could provide a roadmap for Ghana and other countries to create economic development opportunities and jobs, as factory management will be overseen by local talent. "We must do everything to make this initiative succeed as it creates employment for the local community," Honorable Thomas Nyarko Ampem, the Member of Parliament for Asuogyaman Constituency, Akosombo, said. "I'm also excited that this provides a huge import substitution that will help strengthen the local economy."

World shoe founder and Nigerian businessman and philanthropist Manny Ohonme, who now serves as the organization's president, said he experienced the importance of a pair of shoes firsthand, having grown up in poverty. "Shoes give us dignity and allow us to realize our full human potential," he said. "From aid to trade, our goal is to leverage exceptional product design and manufacturing to deliver lasting positive change to people everywhere."

In addition to providing products for the African market, World Shoe aims to see its footwear sold in North America and Europe at a price point that will help it scale its social enterprise and humanitarian efforts. It has already secured 1.5 million orders to date.

“We are creating an African brand for the world,” said vice president of marketing Astor Chambers, a veteran of Nike and Adidas. “We are fusing together a unique, sustainable product design with the ambition of a brand that stands for large scale social good.

“This will appeal to socially conscious consumers everywhere and has the potential to revolutionize how we achieve greater health and economic equity,” Chambers added.

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