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Tulong keeps garment-making green by using what would be thrown away

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According to Mark Heiman, president of Tulong, the typical cotton-garment manufacturing process works something like this: A subsistence farmer in a developing nation plants genetically modified cotton seed. While growing, the foliage is showered with a steady diet of chemical fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides, which have a nasty habit of tainting nearby waterways. Ever thirsty, the plants gulp fresh water that might otherwise be used to grow food. Extensive energy is then expended to harvest, ship, process and prepare the cotton for use in garments.



Now, toss about a fifth of the finished material straight into the trash.

“When patterns are cut and garments are made, about 15 to 20 percent of the actual cotton fabric goes straight into the waste stream,” explains Heiman. “We recapture this cutting room waste for use in our Repair The World® brand apparel.”

In a mechanical process called garnetting, the recycled cotton fabrics are reduced to fiber state and blended with polyester thread made from post-consumer PET plastic bottles. The finished material is used to make sustainable casual clothing for men and women. Tulong’s first products are expected to be available in spring of this year.

Tulong, headquartered in Loveland, currently employs four full-time staffers. As fulfillment orders pick up, additional administrative and sales employees will be added. Heiman also estimates that 25 new jobs will be added to the garment production facilities it uses in South America.

The name Tulong comes from the Filipino word for “help.” Heiman says that the company adheres to the “triple bottom line” approach to business. “While we are a for-profit company, a portion of that profit goes back to developing nations in the areas of education, healthcare and microfinance — the kind of things that help people become self-sufficient. This is the true definition of sustainability.”

Source: Mark Heiman, Tulong

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<http://www.tulongllc.com/press-room/hivelocitymedia-com>