



Coalition Roadmap 2021

Circular Economy in Africa

Co-pilots of the coalition: ICLEI-Africa, African Circular Economy Network, Women Engage for a Common Future, Veolia

This 2021/2022 roadmap aims to stimulate a dynamic logic on the way to the next [Climate Chance - Africa Summit](#) where the new targets can be presented as well as concrete examples (in annex) that can influence the revision of the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) scheduled for COP26 in November.

I – WHERE ARE WE NOW?

An introduction to the Circular Economy

The Circular Economy Model is a model of economic development, that in its most basic sense, aims to reduce waste and keep reusing materials. The idea is to de-couple economic development from the use of limited and finite resources, by re-orienting economic systems to:

- Design out waste and pollution,
- Keep materials and products in use,
- Regenerate natural systems.¹

This is markedly different from our current paradigm of a linear economy, which moves in a single direction, where higher growth and development automatically entail higher consumption of resources. Projections show that shifting from a linear approach of “take, make and dispose” to a circular system is estimated to have as much as USD 4.5 trillion potential for economic growth by 2030.² Shifting to such a circular model would not only have the economic benefits of reducing productions costs, creating more jobs and fostering innovation, but would also help in restoring and regenerating the natural environment, fighting climate change through the mitigation of GHG emissions, and contribute to the overall health of people and the planet.

The local authorities network ICLEI has identified 4 characteristic principles of circular economy – **regenerate, substitute, virtualize, and restore** – which have been framing the reflections of this coalition on the work to be done.

In the context of Africa, circular economies present a unique opportunity. Africa has been practising circular principles for years, and applying these with new and emerging ideas has the potential to help the continent improve livelihoods, social and demographic

¹ [Ellen Macarthur Foundation](#), n.d.

² [OECD](#), 2020.



indicators, and leapfrog to a more sustainable economy. It is also particularly important in the post-Covid recovery phase, to “trigger new market opportunities.”³

Local and non-state actors have an extremely important role to play, acting as catalysts in raising awareness and implementing circular economy principles in local communities. More concretely, the potential for a circular economic model in Africa can be understood through the lens of the following sectors:

-Circular Economy in Cities and the built environment

Cities have a key role to play in the transition to a circular economy, being hubs of population concentration, consumption, transportation and waste generation. At the same time, they also act as arenas for change through municipal policies on buildings, transport, waste, and the local economy at large. This is particularly relevant in the context of Africa, where the process of urbanisation is on the rise and set to continue. Circular built environments envisage buildings and settlements that are built with recyclable materials, use renewable energy and other elements of green design.

-Circular Economy of Water

There is also a lot of potential to apply circular economy principles in water systems management, across processes like production of potable water, agriculture, fisheries, and industrial processes, but also in regeneration and restoration of natural capital. It is important to frame the circular economy approach in water as part of an integrated water-waste-energy approach, stressing the importance of waste-water recycling.

-Circular Economy of Food Systems

Agriculture and food systems are of utmost importance as the economic mainstay of millions, and for food security. A circular food system would make better use of the scarce resources, increasing the resource efficiency of agricultural inputs and increasing productivity, and reducing any possible losses along the food supply chain.

-Circular Economy and Electronics

Although there have been improvements in e-waste management in Africa, there is a long way to go in terms of investing in specialised recycling facilities and pressuring producers to take more responsibility. There is potential to promote the reuse of product components, and to extend product lifetimes through better maintenance.

-Circular Economy, textiles and fashion

This is perhaps the “newest” sub-sector of circular economy in the continent, with circular economy solutions having the potential to drive the future of the textile industry, through responsible production, transparent value-chains, longer lifetimes for clothing, and an up-and-coming market for upcycled or second-hand clothes.

-Circular Economy and Waste

As seen from all the afore-mentioned sectors, waste really forms the core of the circular economy, through its reduction, reuse and recycling. Thus, any application of

³ [World Economic Forum](#), 2021.



circular economy principles would involve not only reducing the creation of waste in the first place, but also intensive waste management strategies, right from reducing single-use plastic and landfill waste, to recycling all that can be recycled, and moving to solutions like waste-to-energy.

-Circular Economy and Energy

In relation to the previous sectors, the energy sector is also a key sub-sector of the circular economy – indeed, renewable forms of energy are crucial to any viable circular model. There are several benefits to be reaped from waste-to-energy projects, and the promotion of biogas, organic coal, and similar initiatives. These options would also help expand access to energy and clean fuels in Africa.

It is thus evident that circular economy is a broad subject, covering several sub-sectors, each of which require a unique and dedicated approach. While there is a lot of work to be done, this roadmap aims to kickstart the adoption of the circular economy model, at the level of local governments and non-state actors in Africa, through the exchanges and contributions of the members of this coalition.

II – WHERE DO WE WANT TO GO?

In order to get the momentum going around a circular economy in Africa, and encourage a wider adoption of the principles of regeneration, substitution, virtualisation and restoration at the local level, the following initial objectives can be identified for this coalition:

1. Creating awareness about the circular economy model and its benefits, for the environment, economy and people, and popularising practices of reduce, reuse and recycle starting at the household level; initiating conversations and campaigns, at the individual and household levels, about responsible consumption, and lengthening the lifecycles of products. At the level of enterprises, initiating changes in product and production cycle designs, in order to reduce waste and increase efficiency. At the municipal level, encouraging waste management and recycling strategies.
2. Creating synergies between various actors and stakeholders at the local level to enable circular systems, recognising that a shift to the circular economy entails cooperation between various sectors and the breaking down of silos.
3. Encouraging local recycling of waste, through citizen or civil society initiatives, from waste collection drives to small-scale recycling plants for various materials, and promoting the sale and use of products made of recycled materials across all sectors of consumption.
4. Disseminating local and indigenous knowledge and practices, and raising awareness on these, which already follow principles of circularity. These can be



combined with newer innovations that make use of the advantages of the digital revolution.

5. Sparking more partnerships between small-scale projects to strengthen overall impact and encourage knowledge sharing, exchanges of best practices and networking.

III – HOW DO WE GET THERE? ***Open to consultation***

Without a 100% dedicated facilitator for this coalition, the strengthening of its dynamics relies mainly on the **will of its members**. This roadmap sets the basic objectives of this coalition from here on out, and we have the virtual opportunity to agree on the next priorities according to the needs of the members.

As such, it is proposed to target two or three actions to be included in the 2021/2022 Roadmap to be realistic and to be able to measure progress.

- **Action 1: Disseminating information**

Since 2019, a mailing list circular.economy.af@climate-chance.org was set up to promote exchanges between coalition actors. Climate Chance regularly shares relevant information on the circular economy and circular practices in Africa. At present, the mailing list counts over 300 members and is mainly run by the Climate Chance team. Coalition members are strongly encouraged to share any information that could be useful to other members.

- *A newsletter (monthly or bi-monthly) co-authored by coalition members highlighting recently published good practice from the sector on mapping, funding opportunities, calls for projects, training opportunities, interesting events, etc.*

- **Action 2: Creating a network of actors**

We propose that coalition members continuously map interesting actors, best practices, high impact, scalable and replicable projects in Circular Economy. Climate Chance could promote these initiatives through its [Cartography for Action](#), the [Climate Library](#), publications in the [Observatory's Synthesis Reports](#) or social media posts on Climate Chance's pages. These projects will also be promoted through our Portal of Action, and more broadly, they will be able to inspire the community of non-state actors that are part of the coalition. To share a project, [simply fill in this form](#).