

The Circular Economy: BRINGING HUMANS TO THE CENTRE



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MINERAL LAW
IN AFRICA



BRINGING HUMAN BEINGS TO THE CENTRE OF THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY

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Introduction

- Circular economy gained unprecedented momentum as a pathway towards sustainability
- Essential to achieving SDGs & Paris Agreement
- Eliminates waste out of the process
- Previously focused on making material flows more sustainable - Social aspect, at most, only considered in terms of its potential impacts on employment
- Missing social dimension in traditional linear model
- Public & private sector recognising opportunity to drive social change in tandem with economic transformation that puts people at the centre.
- Growing trend towards human-centred circular supply chains and economies

Human-Centric circular economy model

- **Def:** An economy that serves human wellbeing
- Advantage of the circular economy is its potential for job creation. Although this is an effort to put human beings at the centre, it needs to be improved

Proposals to improve existing efforts:

1. Expanding circular economy could create multiple new jobs - can address labour market gaps and regional unemployment
2. Design poverty out of the system
3. Stakeholders to ensure people want to engage and embrace proposed changes through a new human-centred circular economy model
4. Change in perspective from seeing people as customers but more as human beings & a resource e.g. being included in corporate and government policymaking processes.
5. Change in perspective from seeing waste as part of the economy into seeing the economy being built on environmental and human interests
6. New way of measuring value - focus on creating circular value e.g. no GHG emissions, no environmental damage etc
7. Corporations be more involved in alleviating poverty
8. Focus on social needs before economic needs
9. Circular approach to the labour market can make employees more productive over their working lives & enhance productivity
10. Keeping valuable resources circulating in economy supports market for secondary products – creates jobs in areas of high unemployment



International legal and policy framework supporting the circular economy:

- Policy role in enabling/constraining transition to circular economy
- Policy initiatives being put in place - linked to broader agendas related to green growth and regional development
- Governments & international institutions driving forces in promoting a human-centred circular economy transition and creating enabling environment for it to thrive. Examples;
- **European Green Deal (2019)**- circular economy one of EU's key priorities,
 - A new **EU Action Plan for the Circular Economy (2020)** - one of the main blocks of the European Green Deal. Announces initiatives targeting promoting circular economy processes
 - **EU Action Plan for the Circular Economy (2015)** - circular economy will be key cornerstone of future EU industrial policy
 - **Basel Convention (1989)** - Criminalises cross-border movement of hazardous waste (E-waste is classified as such)

Key areas to consider in integrating circular economy into national developmental agendas across Africa

- **Elaborate policy and regulatory framework** needed to support circular economy
- **Green financing mechanisms** i.e., opportunities and challenges that available in green financing in Africa-
- **Awareness-raising and knowledge-sharing**
- **Ensuring access to sustainable markets**

African Context



- **Circular economy relatively new concept** - offers opportunities to deliver on more inclusive economic growth, includes job opportunities and positive environmental practices, for sustainable growth
 - An effective circular model for Africa must **emphasise green innovations and job creation**
 - Continent face economic & climate change-related risks - circular economy can help alleviate
 - Requires collaboration
 - Adoption of sustainable consumption and production practices **crucial to achieve sustainable development.**

Legal and Policy Measures to encourage the circular economy across Africa:

- **Agenda 2063 (AU) & SDGs**
- South Africa's **Post-Covid Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan** includes a green economy component, of which the circular economy is key
- **Extended Producer Responsibility Regulations** are set to be published
- South Africa's Circular Economy Strategy is being drafted
- AfDB is establishing **Africa Circular Economy Facility** to support circular economy practices
- **Waste Recovery Platform** (Ghana) connects stakeholders and facilitates partnerships to administer waste management data and reduce policy implementation gaps.

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