



**ACE Africa**  
Accelerating Circular Economy in Africa

# Building Capacity for Circular Economy Innovation Series

*Session 3: Leveraging Partnerships for Circular Development*

POST EVENT REPORT



# April 2022 | 14h00-15h15 SAST

The third session, titled 'Leveraging Partnerships for Circular Development' is part of a six series of events titled 'Building Capacity for Circular Economy Innovation'. The session focused on how to forge partnerships and with whom to achieve circular economy transition. Transforming towards a circular economy requires the collective efforts of stakeholders. Establishing strategic partnerships by identifying areas of complementarity for collaboration can maximize impact. Mobilizing resources and political commitment for tangible actions are key to overcoming barriers. The session held on April 5, 2022, and was co-convened by ICLEI Africa and African Circular Economy Network as part of the ACE Africa Action and Learning Events.

Panellists for the session included Yame Nkgowe (Founder, Sustainable Cities Africa) and Brett Cohen (Director, The Green House). Paul Currie (Associate Director: Urban Systems, ICLEI Africa) gave the welcome and introductory remarks to set the tone.

The session began with a zoom shower where participants shared keywords on what it takes to build meaningful partnerships. The predominant responses included network, time, cooperation, and transparency.

In his contribution to the session, Yame Nkgowe shared his reflection on 'Partnerships for Circular Development: Lessons from Botswana'. He discussed the importance of contextualising where we are now and where we need to go when thinking about circular economy innovation and capacity, partnership, and ecosystem building. He highlighted the need to distinguish between whether "we want to see change or we want to change." He reiterated that we all have a part to play as we are aiming to express the African narrative. He noted that circular economy entities and accelerators emerge out of necessity to identify and unravel issues with circularity in an African context. He further highlighted the importance of building partnerships to contextualise sustainable cities in an African context and to understand it deeper, noting that there is no need to develop ideas on your own; with collaboration you move faster and gain access to deeper networks. To conclude his reflection, Yame added that the African Circular Economy Network is in a state of readiness to develop a circular economy roadmap for Botswana.

Brett Cohen gave a presentation on 'The Potential of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)'. He presented the extended producer responsibility (EPR) as a tool that could be used to help support the circular economy. The policy is designed to make manufacturers accountable for end-of-life impact of products and encourage design for recovery or repurposing. He explored a few policy interventions under EPR which include product take-back, deposits/refund, advanced disposal fees, upstream tax, subsidies, and minimum recycling requirements. He provided examples of EPR policy on the African continent and noted that South Africa and Kenya recently introduced EPR legislation. He noted that EPR requires coordinated action at all levels including decisions on global standards, national legislation, and on-the-ground action. To conclude his presentation, Brett highlighted opportunities for global collaboration

and further provided opportunities for SMEs in relation to EPR and opportunities in the circular economy.

In the panel's reflection on each other's inputs/presentation, Yame noted that Botswana is not in a strong position to implement an instrument such as the EPR, as the country is landlocked and imports everything. It has a low manufacturing base and therefore the ability to influence the design or what goes into a product is limited. In Brett's reflection on Yame's presentation, he noted that voluntary partnerships are indicative that the circular economy is a multifaceted concept. He further highlighted that the combination of building voluntary co-creation opportunities and legislation could help guide the management of certain issues, and ensure that high-resource intensity/energy/hazardous materials are managed through a legislative process to close loops.

Paul Currie opened the floor up to the participants, to ask questions or share their experiences. Responding to a question from the audience on whether enough is happening on awareness-raising and infrastructure to support these policies and mechanisms, Brett responded that the product suppliers are responsible to create awareness, and if the product falls under the EPR legislation, awareness needs to be created on the product's recovery. In some instances, a group of product suppliers pay a producer responsibility organisation (PRO) to be responsible for the implementation of the EPR legislation.

Responding to a question from the audience on what type of knowledge sharing platforms work and the facilitation of these platforms while retaining the contextual perspective of the circular economy, Yame responded that many initiatives exist but it's a matter of how they get the attention they deserve. He mentioned that platforms such as the African Circular Economy Network, the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, and ICLEI Africa are doing great work in terms of knowledge sharing around circular African cities. He further highlighted the questions of how to cluster knowledge sharing and how to partner with large-scale platforms to share the local perspective and knowledge as critical in leveraging partnerships for circular development.

The session ended with a vote of thanks by the facilitator.