

Circularity in Africa: Fashion and Textiles Workshop



Josphat Igadwa Mwasiagi



Michelle Goddard



Tracey Gilmore



Pretty Ndlovu



Alex Musembi



Elmar Stroomer



Moderator

Radhia Mtonga

African Circular Economy Network Zambia

Based in Lusaka, Zambia, Radhia holds a Bachelor's degree and Honors in Economics. She's passionate about the role that the circular economy has to play in a sustainably developed future. Radhia has already made a significant impact in the emerging CE driven industry sector by co-founding the Ulubuto Recycling Initiative in addition to being a judge at the Afri-Plastics Challenge.



Case Study

Revoven

Speaker:
Esethu Cenga
South Africa

Rewoven is an early stage startup/textile recycling pilot based in Cape Town, South Africa. Rewoven aims to divert textile waste from landfill by facilitating the reuse and recycling of those fibres. Rewoven also sells recycled textile waste, recycled fibre and 100% recycled fabric; all made from textile waste that has been diverted from landfill. The main vision of the start-up is to help create a circular economy in the African clothing industry, one that is embedded strongly in social and environmental sustainability.

African Workshop Series

As a co-host of the **World Circular Economy Forum 2022** (WCEF2022), the **African Circular Economy Network** (ACEN) is running **Preparatory Workshops** based on the African Circular Economy Alliance (ACEA)'s five big bets. These workshops aim to create an enabling environment for the transition to a circular economy and to create momentum toward the main forum and **African Studios** taking place in 2022.

Session Summary

There are inspiring circular initiatives in the Fashion and Textile industry in Africa. Still, the transition to circularity is hindered by wicked problems experienced on the continent. In this session, panellists and participants discussed these challenges and explored how entrepreneurs can navigate their way to a successful circular business.

Participants from SMEs, private and international organisations, as well as industry experts, entrepreneurs and some government representatives, attended the workshop and gave their inputs.



Circularity in Africa: Fashion and Textiles Workshop

South African SME, **Rewoven**, presented their case study on how they are bridging the gap between fashion and sustainability.

The session started with commentary on the realities of fast fashion brands dominating the African market, the masses of b-grade secondhand clothing flooding the continent, and the need for secondhand clothing as an affordable source of clothing for Africans. A discussion ensued on the fashion and textiles story that needs to be rewritten.

Panellists discussed some barriers including overproduction, skills acquisition, access to raw materials, competition with “new clothes”, and circular economy jargon used in the African context. The concern was raised that cotton is cheaper and easier to grow than recycled cotton, making it difficult for circular fashion brands to compete with large commercial brands.

“Get a mentor who can guide you and shift your thinking... we need mentors to take us to another level and discuss the roadmap for our businesses”

- Alex Musembi

Resources and Case Studies:

- African Circular Economy Alliance Report: **The Five Big Bets for the Circular Economy in Africa**
- Ellen MacArthur Foundation Report: **Circular Economy in Africa: Examples and Opportunities in the Fashion and Textiles industry**
- **The Clothing Bank** is empowering women by implementing circular principles and keeping garments at their highest value
- **Africa Collect Textiles** is supporting local communities by enabling a circular economy for textiles and footwear
- **Ecofitext** specialises in eco-fibre production and earth-friendly textile products from agricultural waste of banana trees grown by local farmers
- **The Or Foundation** is a justice-led circular economy initiative running educational and awareness programmes in Ghana

Solutions, including the need for EPR regulations to initiate life cycle assessments and end-of-life management of garments, were then discussed. Participants further stressed the importance of collaboration and technology to build a successful circular business in the Fashion and Textiles industry in Africa. The session was closed with participants discussing the feasibility and impact of alternative materials, such as hemp and vegan leather.

Full Recording