



A Just Transition towards Circular Economy

How UNEP and partners put people in the center of the transition

UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

- We work with countries around the world in developing the global environmental agenda
- Our work areas include, but are not limited, to the following:



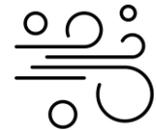
Oceans & seas



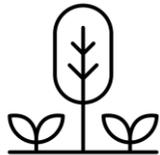
Waste



Green economy



Air



Biosafety



Climate change



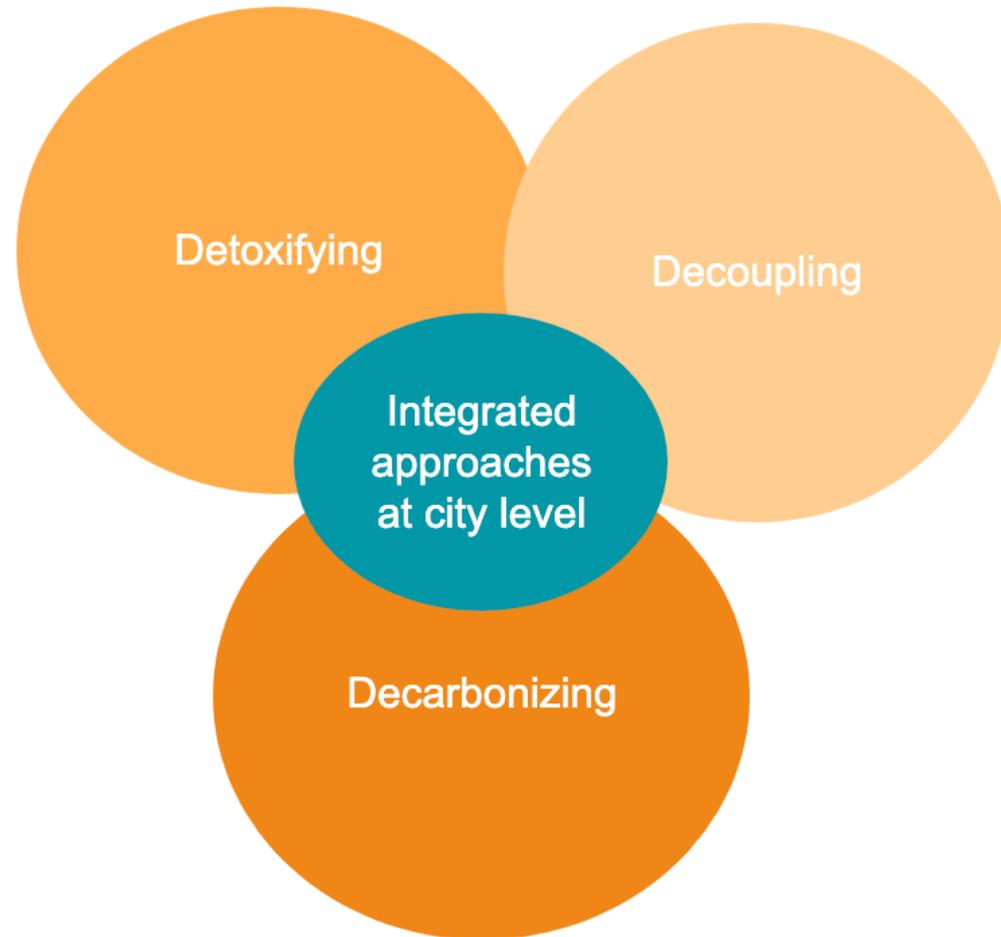
Education & environment



Forest

UNEP's Work at City Level: approach and suite of circular economy solutions

- Circular economy and resource use (focus on jobs)
- Circular energy systems
- Circular buildings supply chain
- Food systems and food waste



A hand is shown in the foreground, reaching out towards the right. The background is a clear blue sky with some light, wispy clouds. The hand is positioned on the left side of the frame, with fingers slightly curled. The overall tone is bright and positive.

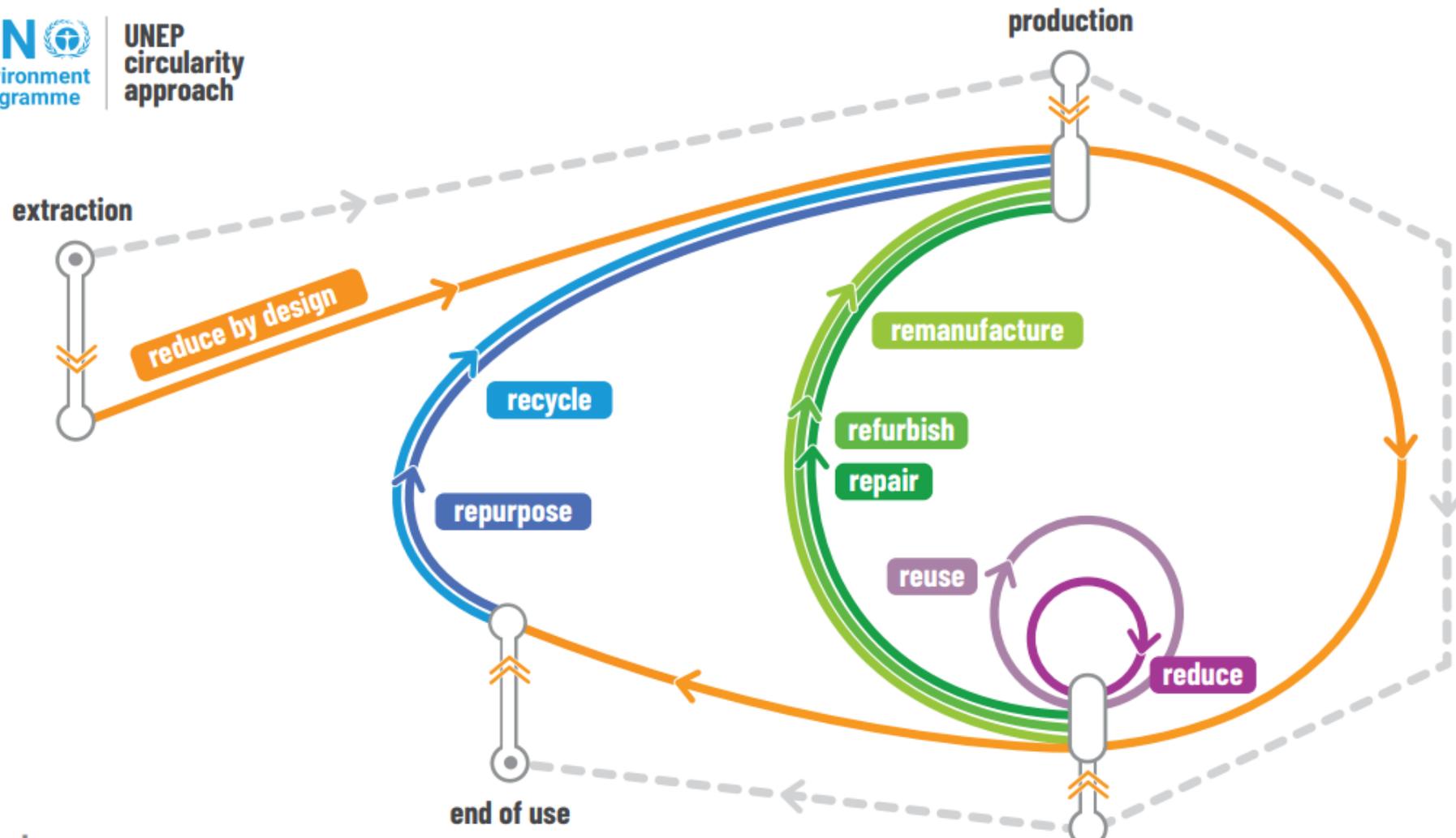
What is a circular economy?

- "In a circular economy, the value of products, materials and resources is maintained in the economy for as long as possible, and the generation of waste is minimised" (EU Commission, 2015).
- 
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UNEP & Circular Economy

- Inspired by nature
- The entire value chain matters
- Decoupling natural resource use from economic activity
- Economic paradigm shift





Circular economy processes

- yellow Guiding principle
- blue Business to business
- green User to business
- purple User to user
- grey Linear economy model

Circularity requires creativity and cooperation among all value chain actors

Everyone involved should work together:

- businesses, at all stages (raw material production or extraction, brands, retailers, waste management)
- governments
- research institutions
- finance sector
- civil society
- individuals

Behavioral change of all those actors is required to achieve transformation

Create **innovative solutions** throughout the value chain

Chemicals of concern need to be kept away or easy-to-separate from recycled streams

Plan the transition to circular business models, ensuring **nobody is left behind**, especially in the informal sector

Circularity
needs to be
inclusive
to trigger the transition
from a "winners vs.
losers" to a "win-win"
situation not only for
the conservation of the
environment but also the
well-being
of all

Businesses **increase revenues and create new customer value** as resource efficiency benefits multiply across the entire value chain

Government invest in cost-efficient solutions to address the **climate crisis** and the risks posed on **citizens' health**

Jobs are improved, switching to greener, more equitable and sustainable economies

Wildlife and ecosystems are preserved as it requires the extraction of fewer resources and helps to better manage pollutants and wastes

Circular practices need to support more responsible consumption at a global level, and help to **avoid further inequalities** among societies, such as a world divided into consumers of "first-hand" and "second-hand" products



Our work on cities and a
circular economy



UNEP & Circular Economy in Cities

- Urban Metabolism as basis for our thinking of the transition from a linear to circular Economy
- What benefits implementing circular economy at the city level?



\$380 billion annual net material cost saved



Rethink supply chain through urban metabolism



Inclusion of the most vulnerable groups for a just transition





There is a need to connect circular economy, jobs, and a just transition

In 2018, UNEP looked at 2000 indicators of over 30 indicator frameworks that self-identified as linked to circular economy. Our research showed that while **many cities wanted well-being at the center** of their circular economy plan, **none of the indicators measured it.**



How do we get people **to use** circular economy approaches?

In our work on circular economy, we are confronted by limited data gathering and data management capacity around the world

How can we simplify such a process?



For effective circular economy approaches, we need to take into consideration the qualitative elements – our users and the environment where its going to be used



Focus on circular economy jobs



Why circularity in cities with jobs as pivotal indicator?

- Jobs are important to cities. Opens doors.
- Since we are tracking people, it provides a 'solution' to the difficulty of measuring inputs/outputs vis a vis city boundaries
- It provides insight to societal indicators and well-being.



STEP 1 CREATE NATIONAL PROFILES
USING GLOBAL OPEN SOURCE
DATABASES
(EXIOBASE, EORA, ILO)

**STEP 2: PLUG IN
LOCAL EMPLOYMENT DATA**

STEP 3 DOWNSCALE NATIONAL DATA

**STEP 4: DERIVE HIGH POTENTIAL
CIRCULAR ECONOMY SECTORS**

Simplified Data Gathering

Rank the sectors that have the greatest potential in your city for a circular policy intervention



How is this useful in the long-term?

- The **city typology** will allow **benchmarking** among cities of the same economic cluster. Cities of the same cluster can also share data. Data from a city in Africa for example, after applying microsimulation, can be used as **proxy data** for a city in Asia.
- The tool, when applied in-depth in the city, can be used for **scenario planning** and determining the potential impacts of city policies. It can also be used to determine how many jobs can be transitioned and thus make the **economic argument for a circular economy transition**.



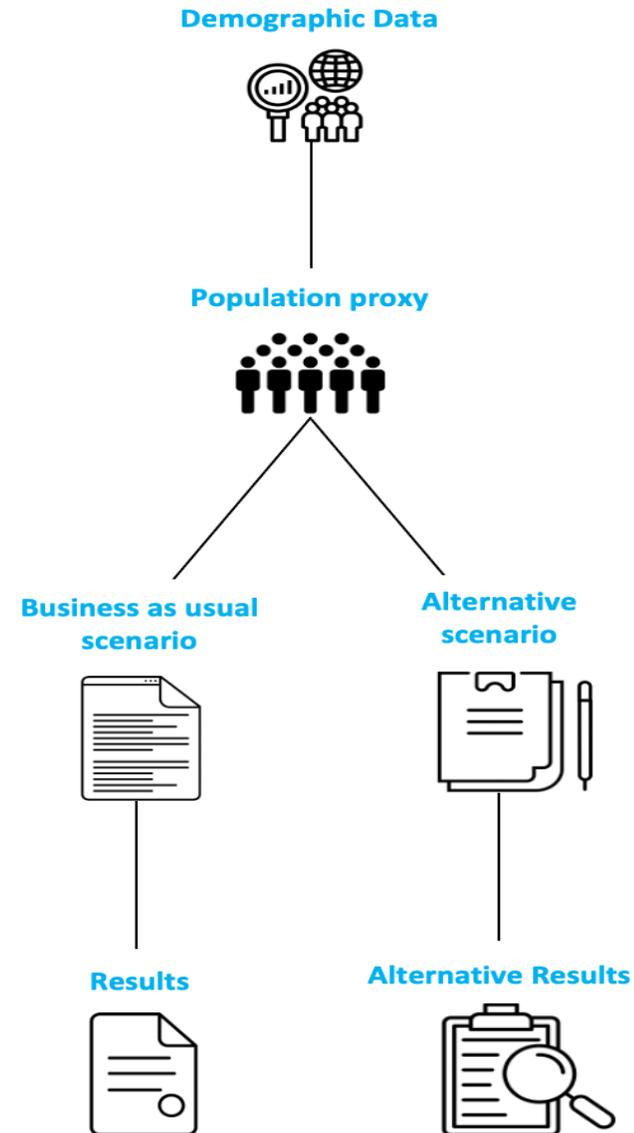
Building Back Better in a post COVID-19 World

- The discussion of jobs has become even more important post COVID around the narrative of build back better. We would like to connect better with UNEP's priorities around SCP and digital transformation.
- It is especially relevant in the global South, where there is a growing but vulnerable middle class, a high number of unemployed youth, and where the informal economy has a bigger share.



Our Ambitions

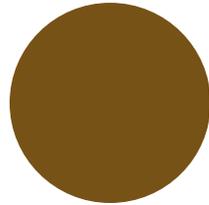
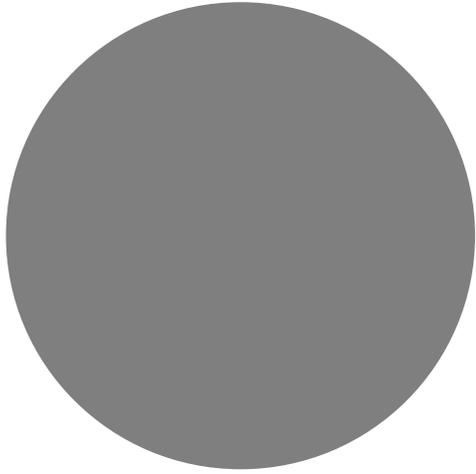
- Enable **scenario planning** to determine effects of circular policies & provide **evidence** for a just transition
- **Simulation output** to assess the impact of selected policies on **city consumption** and **job distribution**





CONCLUSION

- Circular economy is an opportunity for cities
- Technological interventions are not a 'silver bullet' to change our economy – in the end we need a paradigm shift



Visit the **UNEP circularity platform**
<https://www.unenvironment.org/circularity>

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