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Growing the repair economy to promote circular innovation
across African and Indian Ocean Developing Island States

Executive statement

Innovation is required to grow the circular economy across the AIODIS both with the general objective reducing unsustainable resource use, emissions, and waste, as well as overcoming the challenges of insularity in doing so. The role of Intellectual property (IP) in this is to incentivize innovation, but not to promote early product disposals and replacement by enabling restriction of repair information or parts access. Regarding the complexity around the mobilization of the IP right across African and Indian Ocean Island states, prioritize promoting the institution of non-IP right to repair provisions.

Key message and regional commitments

The African and Indian Ocean island states platform should aim for the following regional commitments to promote the repair economy:

Commitment 1:

African and Indian Ocean island states ministerial endorsement of repair economy promotion.

Commitment 2:

Convene an African and Indian Ocean island states repair economy conference for policy makers, to learn from international experience, to exchange regional learnings and to build partnerships.

Commitment 3:

Initiate a campaign to kickstart in-country/national repair associations across the AIODIS.

Commitment 4:

Initiate a regional consumer awareness campaign on the benefits of product and parts lifespan extension through repair vs wasting and replacement.

Commitment 5:

Establish an African and Indian Ocean island states repair economy stakeholder exchange platform leveraging off successful examples in the EU and ASEAN.

Current situation

- To encourage innovation at individual or firm-level in the absence of deep and expansive innovation ecosystems, the diffusion of technology is required to overcome social inequities.
- This can be done by encouraging the lifespan extension of technology-embedded products and their parts through repair-type activities (i.e., reuse, repair, refurbishment, remanufacturing, and repurposing) rather than replacement.
- AIODIS governments can promote repair-type activities by:
 - facilitating better organisation and formalisation of independent repairers,
 - educating consumers on the benefits of repair,
 - promoting greater availability of repair information and parts, and,
 - promoting access to repair and fabrication equipment and facilities.
- Repair-type activities have the potential to contribute >1.5% of GDP to African and Indian Ocean Island states, reduce waste (e.g., from automotive, e-waste, clothing and textile, medical devices, household appliances, renewable energy generation, fisheries, and construction), promote economic competitiveness and domestic value addition, youth and women employment.
- Once repair activities gain pace it will create demand for higher level policy and regulatory reform (e.g., green design, consumer rights, competition regulation, trade, and fiscal remedies, expedited patent approvals for green technology, more open company level IP strategies, education, and Research & Development) to support repair and circular innovation further.

- Such interventions are escalating rapidly globally as repair economy promotion have gained popularity and relevance over the last two decades, with the US, EU and South Africa being the leading examples.

National policy and engagement

- Cabo Verde is the only country that has initiated IP reforms concerted for innovation and competitiveness, but this will not necessarily induce circular innovation without further measures such as repair economy promotion.
- In Mauritius, both business and government have endorsed circular economy frameworks that recognize the role of repair-type activities, but engagement around further support interventions that could generate future policy and regulation reform now need to follow.
- Seychelles are pursuing regulation to limit the importation of poor quality (and therefore less repairable) technology embedded goods but have financial regulations and licensing regimes that restrict repair-type activities, while e-waste burgeons, and landfills are becoming greater hazard risks.
- São Tomé and Príncipe and Maldives have both benefited from significant recent investments in renewable energy generation, which has created a new waste stream that could be addressed through repair promotion.
- Household and independent repair is popular in Madagascar and could be leveraged to promote on-shore competitiveness and value addition, but the poor quality of technology-embedded product imports and the lack of repair information and parts hamper repair economy promotion.
- Comoros, Guinea-Bissau and São Tomé and Príncipe all have large informal sectors to leverage and large negative trade balances to mitigate (i.e., by reducing demand for new built-up imports) through repair economy promotion.

Partnerships

In addition to existing own contributions from African and Indian Ocean Island states and existing World Bank funding partnerships, further partnerships funding and cooperation partnerships should be pursued with:

- The Global Environmental Facility and associated programs such as the International Waters Learning Exchange and Resource Network
- The EU's European Circular Economy Stakeholder Exchange Platform and their beneficiary, the ASEAN Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform

National commitments

Individually, the governments of the African and Indian Ocean Island states should strive for the following national level commitments:

Commitment 1:

Official nomination of a lead government department on repair economy promotion

Commitment 2:

Lead departments should pursue engagement with repair economy stakeholders with the view to establishing national repair associations.

Commitment 3:

In consultation with repair economy stakeholders, formalise the identification of key product sector/ waste streams for repair promotion.

Commitment 4:

Collaborate with repairers on national consumer awareness campaigns to popularise repair and repair careers, provide information on how to access repair services or dispose of products at end of life so their parts can be salvaged for repair.

Commitment 5:

Task national repair associations with forming information exchange partnerships with repair associations internationally and community-based promotion of repair through initiatives such as Repair Cafes (free community meeting events to learn how to repair common items)

Commitment 6:

Pursue improved access to repair, fabrication, and digitally enabled equipment through the establishment of community-based Fabrication Laboratories (FabLabs)

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References/Further information

Accueil | Commission de l'océan Indien (commissionoceanindien.org)

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