



SHAPING INDIA'S CIRCULAR FUTURE: A POLICY CALL TO ACTION

A SYSTEMS MOMENT FOR A SYSTEMS TRANSITION

India's development goals are speeding up. As we enter a new phase of economic growth in the Amrit Kaal, people are looking more closely at how sustainable this growth is. With the country projected to double its urban population by 2047, demand for materials is increasing. Industrial sectors are diversifying, and infrastructure expansion is at its highest level ever. However, this growth comes with challenges. India is the third-largest producer of e-waste, loses nearly 40% of its food after harvest, and is expected to produce over 2 million tonnes of solar waste by 2050.

To tackle these issues, we need to go beyond isolated environmental efforts and create a shared vision that fits with our development goals. The circular economy (CE) offers just that vision. It allows us to rethink our systems – not only to recycle but also to regenerate; not just to improve, but to design better from the beginning. It changes the focus from solutions that address problems at the end

to innovative approaches in design, procurement, production, and ownership.

This op-ed highlights key challenges across sectors and points out early signs of a systemic change. The future depends on linking these signals into a national framework for circularity – something India cannot delay any longer.

IN INDIA, AMBITION IS NOT THE ISSUE. EXECUTION IS

India's development goals are not held back by a lack of ambition – but by a gap in execution. We are making bold strides toward growth, yet our systems often fail to match our intentions. Bridging this disconnect is no longer optional – it is urgent.

We are electrifying mobility quickly, yet we lack a clear policy for reuse of EV batteries. We've become one of the largest textile producers, but we struggle to track where waste garments go. Solar power is growing rapidly, but there is no national plan for managing the millions of tonnes of solar

waste expected by 2030. This is not just about our commitment to sustainability. It's about our ability to create systems that reflect our intentions. The circular economy (CE) is not just a trendy term. It represents our next development framework. At Vivek PARC Foundation, we view CE not as an environmental project, but as India's plan for climate-smart growth, inclusive jobs, and industrial strength. This is why we are stepping up as Policy Partner for the **India Circular Economy Forum (ICEF2025)**. It's time to stop talking about ideas and start building effective structures.

The **India Circular Economy Forum (ICEF2025)**, convened by the **International Council for Circular Economy (ICCE)**, is India's flagship multi-stakeholder platform for advancing the circular transition across policy, industry, and innovation ecosystems. Scheduled for 30-31 July in Gurugram, **ICEF2025** will bring together leading voices from ministries, businesses, research institutions, city leaders, and civil society to co-create actionable pathways across 10 high-impact sessions. With its focus on sectoral depth, data-driven dialogue, and policy-oriented outcomes, **ICEF2025** aims to shift the narrative from fragmented interventions to a systems-thinking approach toward circularity. As Policy Partner, Vivek PARC Foundation anchors the

policy research, survey-driven insights, and post-event recommendations for implementation.

OUR VISION AND THE POWER OF PARTICIPATION

At Vivek PARC Foundation, we believe that a resilient circular economy must be rooted in lived realities. This is why we've designed a participatory process for **ICEF2025** that goes beyond one-way dialogue. Our pre-event surveys – linked to each of the ten focus sessions – are a structured opportunity for professionals across sectors to inform policy thinking, even if they cannot physically attend the forum.

This approach matters. We recognise that not all stakeholders – especially those in public administration, MSMEs, or regional institutions – may be able to travel for a two-day event. Yet, their experiences, insights, and ground-level observations are critical to shaping policy that is both aspirational and implementable. These surveys will not only guide panel discussions but also become the foundation for session-wise policy briefs to be released post-event.

Each session represents a real opportunity to influence India's circular transition at the systemic level. If you're reading this, your voice can be part of that shift.

FROM SECTOR SILOS TO SYSTEM SOLUTIONS



India's transport sector, for instance, has surpassed 3 million EVs, backed by policies like FAME II. However, the circular dimensions of transport remain underdeveloped. Battery reuse standards, rare earth recovery systems, and second-life protocols are either fragmented or absent. Without these, we risk shifting emissions from tailpipes to landfills.

We invite you to share your policy insights for Session: Circular Mobility



In electronics, EPR legislation exists but implementation is partial. More than 90% of India's e-waste is handled by the informal sector, with no formal pathways to skilling, infrastructure access or traceability.

Contribute to policy thinking for Session: Circular Electronics





In construction, over 150 million tonnes of debris is generated annually, but less than 1% is formally recycled. We are sitting on untapped circular value worth billions. From low-carbon cement to recycled aggregates, the built environment can become a test bed for regenerative infrastructure.

Help shape Session:
Circular Construction



Fashion, too, is a paradox. As one of the world's largest producers of textiles, India is also seeing a surge in fast fashion waste. Without traceability, design regulation, or reverse logistics, the sector risks falling behind global benchmarks.

Engage with Session:
Circular Fashion



PLANNING FOR CIRCULARITY, NOT JUST WASTE



Circularity in cities cannot be achieved by urban planners alone – it requires collaboration from architects, engineers, policymakers, and citizens. If you've worked on or envisioned local systems that regenerate rather than deplete, your ideas belong in this conversation.

Share your insights for Session:
Circular Cities



Too often, circularity is misunderstood as enhanced recycling. But recycling alone cannot solve material overuse, nor can it unlock the economic multipliers of circular design. In urban India, the majority of waste flows are linear. Land use policies, zoning norms, and infrastructure tenders do not yet mandate material recovery or modular design.

Support Session:
Urban Waste Management



ENERGY, FOOD & WORKFORCE: FROM COMPLIANCE TO IMPACT



As India expands renewable capacity, managing the lifecycle of solar panels, wind turbines, and storage systems becomes critical. With over 180 GW already installed, policy frameworks for post-use collection and recycling remain weak or non-existent.

**Share recommendations for Session:
Renewable Energy & Circularity**



Despite strong agricultural production, we face both hunger and high food waste. Circularity in food means cold chains, aggregation centres, composting, and food rescue networks. Our recent work on the National Sugarcane Policy 2024 reflects our interest in value chain circularity from field to shelf.

**Add your voice to Session:
Circular Agriculture & Food Systems**



Less than 1% of vocational training programmes in India cover CE-related competencies. This not only limits circular scale-up but also risks excluding the informal sector from the green transition.

**Support future-ready skilling for
Session: Circular Workforce**



India's CSR mandate has unlocked over ₹1.25 lakh crore in the last decade. However, CE is still a minor share of CSR and ESG funding. The transition to impact-driven metrics offers a critical opportunity to reframe funding strategies toward regenerative models.

**Contribute to Session: CSR for
Circular Economy Impact**

THE ROLE OF ICEF2025

The **India Circular Economy Forum (ICEF2025)**, hosted by the **International Council for Circular Economy (ICCE)**, is a vital gathering platform. The Vivek PARC Foundation is contributing to the policy research and engagement as a Policy Partner.

Each session provides a chance not only to discuss but also to collaboratively design India's circular economy strategy. We are exploring several pilot projects focused on workforce training, circular procurement evaluations, and reverse logistics systems as part of this effort.

Event Registration Link- <https://www.townscript.com/e/india-circular-economy-forum-2025-440204>

A CALL TO COLLABORATE

At Vivek PARC Foundation, we're building the policy scaffolding – through surveys, stakeholder consultations during the event, and post-event briefs. Our pre-event surveys are collecting insights from professionals across India. After the event, we will submit ten policy briefs based on each session, reflecting feedback from stakeholders, the

global context, and ways to implement strategies.

Our commitment doesn't end on 31st July. Beyond the event, we will publish session-wise policy briefs, initiate city-level pilot frameworks in collaboration with urban bodies and develop white papers that integrate international CE learnings with India-specific implementation models. These outputs will be shaped by pre-event survey inputs, live dialogues during **ICEF2025**, and focused stakeholder consultations led by our team. We are here to shape actionable roadmaps, co-create pilots, and frame the CE agenda in partnership with ministries, industries, ULBs, and communities.

We do not seek the circular future because it sounds appealing. We want it because it works.

We invite you – policy thinkers, entrepreneurs, civil society leaders, and sector experts – to shape this journey with us. Let's not just design a better India. Let's design an India that is better by design.

– By **Mrs Amaraja Kulkarni**

*Head – Environment and Sustainable Development Division
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