



CONTRIBUTION TO ITU STUDY GROUP2 6/2 « ICT and the Environment » By African Civil Society on Information Society

The African Civil Society on Information Society (ACSIS) represents the interest of the internet users across the African countries and in the diaspora. We welcome the opportunity to contribute to the work of International Telecommunication Union (ITU) study group 2 that is seeking contribution on electronic waste. We found this call very interesting and ready to contribute to the research of the ITU Study group.

ACSIS is proud to have more than organizational members across Africa and in the diaspora. And as a network of academics, private and civil society and internet end-users, we represent a broad section of global internet community.

We appreciate every stakeholders who are directly involved in this study of an electronic waste. We believe electronic waste management should be given the highest priority by employing proactive measure and be part of planning stage of electronic manufacturer. During the promotion of electronic products, we hereby propose that such promotional or advertisements should as matter of urgency clearly display symbol of responsible disposal of such products properly across all documents related to electronic products/devices as well as dedicate at the least a well-informed page on disposal of such materials specifically. And this should be clearly stated in the manual for every electronic materials.

An estimated 1.9 million tonnes of electrical and electronic waste are reportedly generated annually in Africa. The continent of Africa has been a dumping ground for electrical and electronics due to high rate of demand and consumption of end of life technological products. The fact remains that the electronic waste trade value chain to the developing countries still largely the major source of e-waste to Africa.

Currently in Africa, the e-waste discussion is limited to the few elite and generally not among the top discussions or priority of stakeholders at the moment. Few stakeholders that are pushing for e-waste management received little to no support which could be as a result of perception and the limited resource that is particular to Africa. This is to say

that knowledge about electronic waste material composition and effect on health and environment is still hidden with few canvassing effort.

Awareness is key to e-Waste:

Due to low awareness and lack of coordination and action by the regulatory body has given the continual informal procession of e-waste in the developing countries. There is unbalance approach that has affected focus with regards to digital development in the developing countries due to huge population that are still unconnected and lack access to desktop computer and mobile phone. Bridging of digital divide has left the developing countries porous for accumulation of used electronic devices which can either be repair or non usable.

For instance, in Lagos, Nigeria, Ikeja, Ladipo and Alaba, have been the main spot for where used and non repairable electronic junks are assembled for redistribution. It is at this point that scavengers rummaging through the e-waste without knowingly releasing harmful chemical to the environment.

Lack of Political will in Africa:

Another impediment to the development of electronic waste is the lack of political will in Nigeria which is common to other developing countries. There is no interest by those who are in the political position to drive the management of e-waste as this would not translate into immediate benefits, therefore, it's off their radar.

The e-waste wave is a development that is unplanned for and met the continent unprepared. As a result of sudden embracement of digitization to spur and enhance the economy without adequate research and proper legislation has left a significant impact on the standards and regulations of the importation and consumption of electronics materials to the point of recycling.

End-Users Disposition:

Another factor that is worth considering about E-waste is the disposition and reaction of the users. Some Africans if not all will prefer to sell their unused and unusable electronic devices to the recycler which does not go down well with the recycler or some recycler expect the users to pay to recycle their unusable items, but instead, most end-users will prefer to discard the bad electronic devices in the garbage instead of paying for its recycling.

As long as there is demand for new and high speed technological products, E-waste management will become a lucrative venture and attract many players.

Benefits of e-Waste:

Considering the amount of E-waste generated in Africa, if properly harness, it will definitely contribute to the reduction of unemployment rate and healthy environment. Electronic management phases from collection to processing could employ thousands of unemployed.

Dedicated e-Waste recyclers in Africa is very abysmal presently and if optimised will reduce potential damage to natural infrastructure via water, land, and air pollution,

which could result from the disposition of electronic waste (e-waste) by instituting stringent practices for the responsible management, disposition and tracking of e-waste.

In addition, adoption of or localisation of K-12 educational outreach materials on e-Waste topics for use by educators and students, according to [Lockheed Martin](#).

Challenges of e-Waste in Africa:

Therefore, looking through the lense of E-waste value chain in Africa, there exist challenges of regulations, infrastructure, equipment and technical know-how of recycling electronic waste.

Prioritising e-Waste for Africa:

In order to prioritise the e-Waste for Africa, it has become imperative to re-engineer the electronic waste value chain through the participation of various stakeholders to meet Africa electronic waste issues and challenges as forementioned.

Additionally, enforcing electronic disposal and collection policy in Nigeria, for instance, has seen an opposition of incoordination among regulatory bodies, and for its implementation.

The informal processor of electronic waste should be seen as an avenue for investment while training and equipping them with necessary information and tools to process electronic waste according to the international standard, should be seen as a matter of urgency.

This contribution was written by Remmy Nweke, Vice President ACSIS Abdou Mfopa ACSIS Cameroun, Akinremi Peter Taiwo, ACSIS Regional Coordinator West Africa, and Dr. Chris Prince Udochukwu Njoku, Chairman of RITCHE Africa ACSIS Nigeria

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