

CHALLENGES FACING ELECTRONIC WASTE (E-WASTE) DISPOSAL IN KENYA

Kenya is among the fastest growing technological countries in the African continent. This has made it a hub for ICT and electronic products. Less than a decade ago, very few Kenyans owned cellphones, fridges or television sets. But in recent years more people have purchased cellphones and those who already had, have discarded their old phones and replaced them with smartphones, smart fridges and smart TV's. According to a recent survey by the communications Authority of Kenya, mobile penetration in Kenya stands at 88.1%.

With more and more people discarding their old electronic gadgets and replacing them with newer and sleeker ones, the question is; how is this electronic waste (E-Waste) being discarded?

E-Waste or **Waste** Electrical and **Electronic** Equipment (WEEE) - is the term used to describe old, end-of-life or discarded appliances using electricity. It includes computers, consumer **electronics**, fridges etc which have been disposed of by their original users.

According to a Paper written by Dr. Ibrahim Otieno (Director ICTC) and Professor Elijah Omwenga *on E-Waste Management in Kenya: Challenges and Opportunities*, the production and use of Electrical and Electronic Equipment (EEE) continues to grow in both developing and developed countries increasing the amount of Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) at its End-of-Life (EoL).

The challenges facing the country in the management of electronic waste include lack of awareness by Kenyans, lack of proper policy and legislative framework including public procurement and disposal Act, inadequate infrastructure for Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) management; high cost of brand new of Electrical and Electronic Equipment (EEE), among others.

The environmental and health effects associated with E-waste include air-pollution for example when computers are burnt they may release hydrocarbons in the air which can cause health issues. There is also water pollution when for example monitors are broken apart and the shell dumped in water. The shell contains chemicals such as lead which could contribute to lead poisoning when people drink the contaminated water.

The paper gives recommendations on how to handle and dispose E-Waste. This includes partnering with private firms through Public-Private-Partnerships (PPP) to build sustainable infrastructure to facilitate an environmentally friendly e-waste management system and provide incentives for consumers to dispose their WEEE,(ii) The government should also promote the informal e-waste sector by providing investors with funding through Constituency Development Fund (CDF), Youth, Women and Persons with Disability (PWD) funds to be used

by Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) to improve their local communities in effort towards WEEE management, (iii)Another serious challenge that is faced by the country is low citizen awareness on the hazards of WEEE and its negative impact on the environment. In order for the government to achieve its objective of effective WEEE management and have a greater impact, it must create awareness and encourage citizen participation through deliberate and specific marketing and campaign strategies geared towards reaching out to citizens.(Iv)The government should also take initiative to amend the public procurement and disposal laws to take cognisance of the emerging environmental and safety issues associated with WEEE management and introduce a more environmentally sound policy. This will ease the burden of e-waste stocks piling in public institutions because of the slow and bureaucratic procurement and disposal processes which do not take cognisance of the emerging challenge of WEEE.

[click here to read the paper](#)

E-Waste Management in Kenya: Challenges and Opportunities. The journal article was published in the Journal of Emerging Trends in Computing and Information Sciences (Vol. 6, No. 12; Pg 661-666)