

Environmentally Sound Disposal and Recycling of E-Waste in Ghana

Supporting Ghana to introduce a sustainable E-Waste Management System

Background

In recent times, growing prosperity and population growth in Ghana have contributed to an increased demand of electrical and electronic equipment in the country. Changing consumption patterns have resulted in Ghana currently being one of the main importers of used electrical and electronic equipment worldwide. This does not only bridge the digital gap with developed countries, but it also contributes to an increase in the volumes of waste electrical and electronic equipment (e-waste) in the country. Although e-waste is known to contain valuable fractions, the improper treatment of its hazardous fractions can pose threats to both the environment and human health and safety.

Opportunities & Challenges

While the collection rate of e-waste in Ghana is about 95%, both collection and resource-recovery are almost exclusively informally organized. The practice of treating Waste from Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) in the informal sector still entails considerable risks to the health of the population and the environment and hampers commercially viable private sector approaches. Informal e-waste recycling sites operated by scrap dealer Associations have long been the main destination for the collected material in Ghana. On the contrary, private sector initiatives in the treatment of e-waste have been developed only sporadically and are largely confined to business or institutional clients. Although local recycling companies are improving their capacities, they are still faced with low amounts of e-waste material due to a lack of interfaces with the informal scrap collectors.

Project name	Environmentally Sound Disposal & Recycling of Electronic Waste (E-Waste Programme)
Commissioned by	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Project region	Nationwide
Lead executing agency	Ministry of Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI)
Duration	02/2020 – 01/2023
Other partners	Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA) E-Waste Roundtable Association (EWROTA)

The e-waste challenge in Ghana has been recognized by the Ghanaian Government and several legal instruments have been established since 2016. Key indicators such as the sound policy frameworks of Act 917 as well as the collection of the Eco-Levy place Ghana as the forerunner in terms of sustainable e-waste management in Africa. This and other measures aim to improve the regulatory framework, establish a sustainable recycling economy and support the growth of a thriving private sector.

Objective

To support the national e-waste strategy, the Technical and Economic Cooperation Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Ghana and the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany gave rise to the Environmentally Sound Disposal and Recycling of Electronic Waste (E-Waste Programme) in 2016.



L.: Informal collection in Ghana contributes to collection rates of up to 95% of the country's e-waste

R.: After collection, most dismantling and sorting happens on informal recycling sites



L.: Piles of e-waste on an informal recycling site in Accra

The Programme for technical cooperation is currently in its second project phase, commissioned by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and implemented by "Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH" in partnership with the Ghana Ministry of Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI). The project is part of a programme being implemented jointly with KfW Development Bank. The objective is to improve the conditions for sustainable management and disposal of electronic waste in Ghana.

Our Approach

Policy Advice

Using technical, process and organizational aspects, the objective is to support MESTI in executing its coordinating function in the sectoral dialogue around WEEE management. This approach includes strengthening MESTI in their efforts to involve public institutions, the private sector, NGOs and research institutes and providing technical advice on the formulation of an E-Waste policy. Additionally, a key element is to enhance the capacities of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to regulate and enforce legal regimes concerning the activities and installations for WEEE management in the country. Further training measures on regulatory instruments and technical applications for WEEE management will upskill the personnel of MMDAs throughout the country.

Private Sector Support

The aim is to support the private sector actors to further increase their capacity to treat e-waste along the recycling chain. Stakeholders like the E-Waste Roundtable Association (EWROTA) and other formal recycling companies in Ghana are supported in their advocacy work for sustainable e-waste management and the development of sustainable business models. This will also include innovative business models for products and services to harness the potential for digitalization. The output will upgrade the competencies of personnel of SMEs engaged in WEEE management in finding technical and organizational solutions and developing innovative products and services in the sector. Overall, it will improve the private sector participation in policymaking for WEEE management to allow the private sector to play a crucial role in introducing sustainable e-waste management in Ghana.

E-Waste Recycling Sites

Informal scrap dealers are an important economic motor for e-waste and scrap recycling in the country. The high rates of collection and resource recovery are largely contributed by informal entrepreneurs. To improve environmental health and safety measures in the sector and promote good practices on informal recycling sites in Ghana, the Programme is working closely with scrap dealer associations across the country. This approach encompasses technical concepts and infrastructure support for the setup of sustainable recycling sites, basic and advanced technical training courses on an individual level and measures to create interfaces connecting the knowledge and resources of the informal sector with the capacities of formal recycling companies. Support measures for scrap dealer's associations include institutional capacity development and close involvement in the national stakeholder dialogue for e-waste management in Ghana.

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Registered offices Bonn and Eschborn, Germany

E-Waste Project
GIZ Country Office
7 Volta Street | Airport Residential Area
Phone +233 302 760 448

giz-ghana@giz.de
www.giz.de/ghana

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Text

Veronika Johannes

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Head of Programme:

Cornelia Stolzenberg
cornelia.stolzenberg@giz.de