



Safe Work in E-waste Management: ILO Fundamental Conventions, Safety and Child Labour

By Kelvin Sergeant

Sustainable Enterprise Development Specialist

ILO- DWT- South Asia

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The E-Waste Problem



The Growth of E-waste



- Population growth,
- Urbanization
- and a rising middle class have led to e-waste becoming the fastest growing stream of waste in the world and there is no sign that the growth of e-waste will slow down

E-Waste Growth



- The growth in e-waste is amplified by growing demand for electronic and electrical equipment.
- It has been estimated that by 2020, approximately 50 billion devices will be connected to the internet.
- That is more than six times the number of people on the planet today.
- This demand is fuelling a competitive and dynamic global electronics industry, which in 2010 was estimated to employ 18 million women and men globally.

Some Country Statistics



- Although it is not clear in all cases how they have been produced, the following national estimates provide an insight into employment in e-waste:
- In China, 690,000 women and men were estimated to be working as collectors or recyclers
- In Serbia, 5,000 to 8,000 workers have been estimated to collect e-waste.
- In Argentina, 34,000 people were estimated to be working in the e-waste value chain in 2016
- In Nigeria, up to 100,000 people work in the e-waste economy.
- In South Africa, the 62 member companies of the e-Waste Association of South Africa employ 5,324 workers.
- In Dhaka, Bangladesh, an estimated 60,000 people work in e-waste.
- In New Delhi, India, there are between 10,000 and 25,000 informal e-waste workers.

E-Waste hazardous and Harmful



- This stream of waste is highly complex, toxic and hazardous and negatively affects workers and the environment. Only 20 per cent of e-waste is formally recycled

Decent Work Challenges in E-Waste



- Decent work challenges however exist:
 1. from the extraction of raw materials,
 2. to the manufacturing of electrical and electronic products,
 3. through to the management of e-waste

E-Waste problems



- When e-waste is poorly managed, as is the case in many countries, it poses a severe threat to human health and the environment. Workers handling e-waste, their families and those living near disposal sites could be exposed to hazardous substances when no appropriate measures are taken.
- Workers handling e-waste have no voice, no bargaining power

Labour and Employment Issues



- E-waste in general is labour intensive, low earnings and unregulated work in most countries
- Workers are usually poor and marginalized
- Fundamental principles and rights at work are ignored
- What about Core Labour Conventions?
- Collective bargaining non existent
- Absence of trade union or workers' organization representation



Informality and Child labour



- Most of the work to manage e-waste in developing countries takes place in the informal economy in poor conditions,
- with limited opportunities for enterprises to grow and for workers to organize and improve their livelihoods,
- and the work is sometimes carried out by **children**.
- there are reports that in some countries that the work carried out by children is in contravention of the ILO's Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182).





- Article 3(d) of ILO Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour, 1999 (No. 182), specifies such labour as:
- including “work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children” (ILO, 1999).
- Working as a waste picker is considered hazardous as child workers jeopardize their health, chance of normal development, and even their lives, when performing such tasks.
- Working with e-waste recycling is, by its nature and circumstances, likely to harm the health, safety and morals of children, and the conditions in which the work is carried out exert an extremely negative impact on a child’s health status.

What can we do?

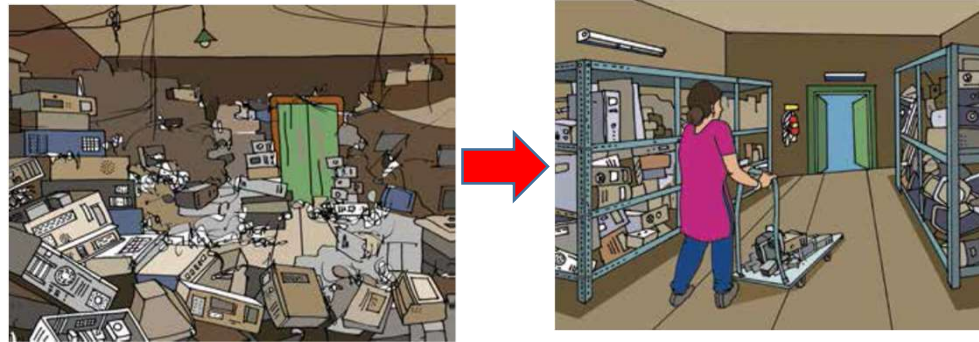


- With the right infrastructure,
- regulations,
- incentives,
- policies and processes in place to manage e-waste in ways that advance decent work and protect the environment,
- E-Waste has the potential to fuel the generation of sustainable enterprises and the creation of decent employment opportunities.
- This would be a significant step towards inclusive growth and decent work, more sustainable production and consumption,
- and achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

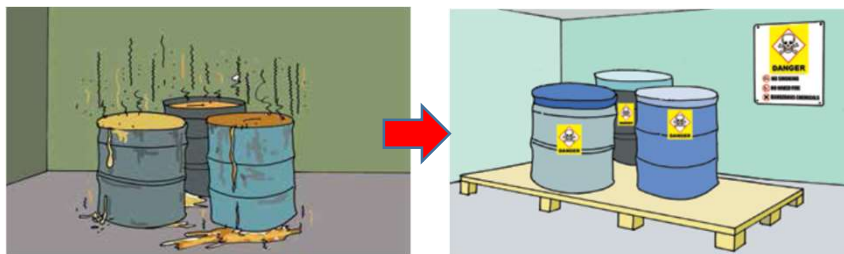
Focusing on simple, low-cost solutions as a first step



Sample 1 Clear passageway for safe transportation of materials



Sample 2. Safe storage of chemicals

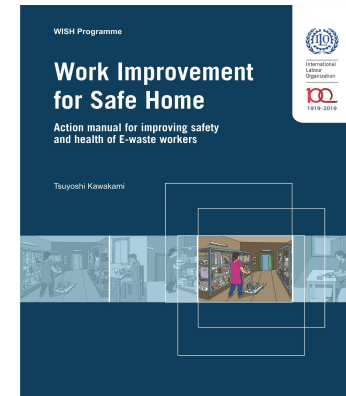


Sample 3. Do not burn e-waste materials.



ILO/IFC Cooperation

- Participatory safety & health training to E-waste workers in New Delhi -



IFC International Finance Corporation
Creating Markets, Creating Opportunities



Risk-assessment by using an action checklist



Group discussion for identifying action areas

The way ahead

- Reach grassroots e-waste workplaces for direct intervention and training.
- Start with simple, practical solutions.
- Link safety and health to productivity.
- Recognize E-waste workers as important partners for environmental protection.



Clear Policies from ILO



- Governments should increase and promote investment in waste management infrastructure and systems at all levels, as appropriate, to manage the rapidly growing flows of e-waste in ways that advance decent work.

ILO Policies



- Governments have the duty to adopt, implement and enforce labour laws and regulations to ensure that the fundamental principles and rights at work and ratified international labour Conventions protect and apply to all workers engaged in the management of e-waste

ILO on E-Waste Policies



Governments, together with employers' and workers' organizations, should:

- Develop and implement coherent policies, strategies and measures to:
- Collect data, generate knowledge and raise awareness on decent work in the management of e-waste;
- Promote the culture of and protect the safety and health of all e-waste workers and improve their working conditions through labour inspection and other measures;
- Support the formalization of enterprises, cooperatives and workers in the informal e-waste economy;
- Extend the coverage of social protection to e-waste workers and their families;
- Promote cooperatives and other social and solidarity economy organizations and enterprises in the e-waste sector;
- Create an enabling environment for micro, small, medium and large enterprises that provide sustainable services and products along the e-waste value chain and that enhance productivity growth.

Social Dialogue and Just Transition



- Governments and employers' and workers' organizations should engage, as appropriate, in all forms of effective social dialogue at all levels to advance decent work in e-waste management
- Support a just transition towards environmental sustainability in e-waste management.
- Green Jobs should be promoted.

Informality and Waste



The ILO Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy Recommendation, 2015 (No. 204)

- provides guidance to governments, employers and workers on how to promote employment and income opportunities
- and social protection for the millions involved in the transition to the formal economy,



- A key challenge in formalizing e-waste management will be transforming existing networks of e-waste management to improve the safety and health, working conditions and rights of workers while ensuring that existing livelihoods are preserved and improved

India's E-Waste Policy



- India's first specific e-waste legislation came into force in May 2012 and was implemented at the state level by State Pollution Control Boards. In 2016, the legislation was revised and EPR became a federal responsibility.
- Producers are now required to set up a deposit-refund system to incentivize consumers to return electronic and electrical equipment.
- Producer responsibility organizations were introduced to assist manufacturers in complying with the EPR legislation.
- Research has shown, however, that a general lack of awareness of the e-waste legislation and a lack of capacity to implement it has undermined its effectiveness in practice.
- It is estimated that between 60 and 85 per cent of the country's e-waste continues to be handled by workers in the informal economy.

E-Waste Management Key to Achievement of SDGs

