UGANDA
COMMUNICATIONS
COMMISSION

FAQ

UCC Pilot Project on ICT E-Waste Collection

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THE UGANDA COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION PILOT PROJECT ON ICT E-WASTE COLLECTION

The Uganda Communications Commission (UCC) is rolling out an ICT e-waste collection pilot project. This initiative aims to create awareness, establish efficient collection systems, and ensure environmentally responsible disposal of ICT e-waste.

Below is key information about the ICT e-waste collection pilot project, intended to provide the public with a clear understanding of its objectives and how to participate.

1. What is the ICT e-waste collection pilot project?

The ICT e-waste pilot project is an initiative aimed at addressing the growing global challenge of e-waste arising from usage of Information and Communication technology (ICT) equipment. This project aims to develop an effective framework for the collection, handling, and management of ICT e-waste, with a focus on creating scalable and replicable models for wider implementation.[1]

1. E-waste also referred to as "Any discarded, obsolete or non-functional electric and electronic equipment, including devices, components, peripherals and their assemblies"

2. Why is Uganda Communications Commission (UCC) interested in ICT e-waste disposal?

The mandate of UCC is to regulate and extend communication services across Uganda. ICT devices are vital to the communications ecosystem but also generate significant electronic waste (e-waste), which is now the fastest-growing waste stream worldwide. Uganda faces several challenges in managing ICT e-waste, including limited public awareness, data security concerns, and inadequate infrastructure, among others.

To address these challenges and in line with its advisory role under E-waste Management Policy for Uganda, UCC is conducting the ICT e-waste collection pilot project. The goal is to explore how ICT e-waste can be safely and sustainably collected through collaborative efforts, paving the way for effective, long-term solutions to mitigate the environmental, social, and health impacts of e-waste in Uganda. The results of this pilot project shall inform the development of appropriate regulatory frameworks to guide the sustainable management of e-waste in Uganda.

3. Why is the safe disposal of ICT e-waste important?

Safe disposal of ICT e-waste prevents the release of hazardous chemicals, preserving ecosystems and protecting living organisms. It enables the recovery of valuable materials such as gold, silver, copper, and rare earth elements, conserves natural resources, and supports the growth of recycling industries, creating employment opportunities and fostering green jobs.

On the other hand, improper disposal of ICT e-waste poses significant risks to both the environment and living organisms. Toxic substances such as lead, mercury, cadmium, and arsenic are released, contaminating soil, water, and air. This contamination disrupts ecosystems, harms plants, animals, and compromises human health. People exposed to these toxins face serious health problems, including neurological damage, respiratory illnesses, and cancers. Moreover, polluted ecosystems lead to a loss of biodiversity and disruptions in food chains, threatening the ecological balance.

4. How does this pilot project align with existing national and global e-waste disposal frameworks?

This pilot project is in line with Uganda's E-Waste Management Policy and the National Environment Act, which guide the country's approach to managing e-waste. It supports the implementation of these frameworks by raising awareness, promoting safe disposal practices, and testing collection methods.

Regionally, the project aligns with the East African Communications Organisation (EACO) E-waste Management Strategy (2022–2027) and the African Telecommunications Union (ATU) Guidelines (2020), which encourage sustainable e-waste management across the region.

Internationally, the project adheres to global instruments, guidelines and standards such as the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their disposal, and International Telecommunication Union (ITU) guidelines, contributing to a comprehensive and sustainable e-waste management system at national, regional, and global levels.

5. What are the main objectives of this pilot project?

The main objectives of the ICT e-waste collection pilot project are:

- Increase public awareness and consciousness about safe disposal of ICT e-waste.
- Develop and test efficient e-waste collection models.
- Reduce environmental and health risks from ICT-related waste.
- Gather data and insights for policy improvement and scaling ICT e-waste collection nationwide.
- Enhance collaboration between the different agencies and stakeholders in the ICT e-waste collection ecosystem.
- Explore commercial and investment opportunities for recycling and reuse to promote a circular economy.

6. What is the geographical scope and duration of the pilot project?

This phase of the pilot project will be implemented in three districts: Kampala, Wakiso, and Mukono, for a period of 35 weeks.

7. Who are the different stakeholders in this pilot project?

The ICT e-waste collection pilot project is being implemented through a collaborative effort involving multiple stakeholders:

- The Ministry of ICT and National Guidance (MoICT&NG) to provide policy oversight and overall technical support as the parent ministry.
- The Uganda Communications Commission (UCC) serves as the project lead and primary funder.
- The National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) to ensure compliance with the National Environment Act and relevant regulations, while also offering expertise in environmental education to build stakeholder capacity for effective e-waste management.
- Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) and related local governments to align the project with urban development strategies and contribute expertise in urban planning, waste logistics, and community engagement.
- Luwero Industries Limited (LIL) to oversee and support effective collection, storage, and management of ICT e-waste. This includes providing the necessary infrastructure and ensuring data security and sanitization for government devices.
- Project Implementing Partners to support UCC in the successful execution of the pilot project.
- Consumer Advocacy Groups to support public awareness initiatives, promote responsible consumer behaviour, and foster engagement in the e-waste collection process.
- Other stakeholders, including additional partners and entities to support the project activities.

8. What kind of equipment or devices can be disposed of through this project?

All ICT devices, accessories and parts that are no longer functional, including computers, laptops, mobile phones, telecommunications equipment, TV monitors, radio, receivers, cameras, batteries, cables, keyboards, mice, printers, scanners, networking equipment, routers, modems, etc.

9. Why does the project focus only on ICT e-waste?

As the regulator of communication services, UCC facilitates the safe use and safe disposal of ICT devices, such as phones, computers, routers, and TVs, which are critical for delivering these services. Unlike larger household appliances, such as refrigerators, cookers, and washing machines, which have longer lifespans and greater reusability, ICT devices experience shorter replacement cycles and faster turnover due to rapid technological advancements, fragility, high obsolescence, and evolving consumer demands.

Focusing on ICT e-waste aligns with UCC's role under the E-Waste Management Policy for Uganda, providing technical expertise in managing ICT-related e-waste. Additionally, this targeted approach allows UCC to gain valuable insights that will inform future strategies for broader e-waste management, contributing to sustainable waste management practices across the country.

10. How can I tell that my device is due for disposal?

You can tell that your device is due for disposal when:

- It does not turn on or operate properly even after charging or replacing batteries.
- Its performance has significantly declined such that it struggles to perform basic tasks or cannot be fixed with software updates or repairs.
- Its physical components such as screens or buttons are broken or non responsive.
- It is not repairable, or its replacement parts are unavailable or obsolete.
- The cost of repairing it is very high.
- It can no longer meet your needs. You have kept it for long, having replaced it with a newer device.

11. How can I participate in this pilot project?

You can participate in this project in the following ways:

- Bring your ICT e-waste to designated drop-off points and encourage friends, relatives and neighbours to do the same.
- Share information about the project within your community.
- Join the e-waste campaign and education programs and support environmentally friendly disposal practices.
- Champion the cause of safe ICT e-waste disposal in all possible ways.

12. Does the ICT e-waste collection pilot project involve any cost for disposing of e-waste?

No. There will be no payment required for disposing of your device through the ICT e-waste collection project. However, by participating, you will be able to safely dispose of devices you no longer need, helping to protect the environment and recover valuable resources. Additionally, you will avoid exposure to health risks associated with hazardous materials or substances from improper disposal.

13. Does improper disposal of ICT e-waste expose people to Radio Frequency Electromagnetic Fields (RF EMF) radiation?

No. Improper disposal of ICT e-waste does not contribute to RF EMF radiation. RF EMF exposure occurs when ICT equipment, such as mobile phones or base stations are in use or powered on.

The ICT e-waste collection project focuses on the safe disposal and recycling of these non-functional devices to mitigate environmental and health risks. While both e-waste and RF EMF radiation can affect public health and the environment, they are distinct issues and are addressed through separate initiatives.

14. How is this pilot project related to the fight against counterfeit devices?

This pilot project aligns with efforts to combat the proliferation of counterfeit or fake devices. Such devices are often manufactured using untested and hazardous materials, which, if not safely disposed of, pose significant environmental and human health risks. Additionally, their poor-quality results in shorter lifespans, leading to increased e-waste generation.

Under the “SIMU KLEAR Campaign,” UCC is working to discourage the use of counterfeit mobile ICT devices, including phones, through a phased approach, with safe disposal as a key component.

15. What happens at the end of this pilot project?

At the end of this pilot, the insights gained will help identify logistical, technical, and stakeholder challenges, allowing us to find solutions before scaling up. These findings will guide the Government, e-waste management stakeholders, and the private sector in designing a replicable, sustainable, and efficient e-waste collection framework. The results will also contribute to developing a nationwide strategy for managing e-waste, improving practices and infrastructure across the country.

16. Who can I contact for more information about this pilot project?

For more information about the ICT e-waste collection pilot project, please contact UCC through:

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