

## NGO: Sustainable Research and Action for Environmental Development (SRADev)

Country: Nigeria

Project: Impact Assessment of Electronic Waste Handlers and Livelihood in Lagos, Nigeria

SAICM GPA activity numbers: 2, 47, 78, 81, 87, 105, 106, 225



Global System for Mobile Communications (GSM) technician at work Photo: Mr. Leslie Adogame

Nigeria is currently a recipient of an ever-growing flow of used electronics. Over 400,000 second hand computers, three quarters of which cannot be re-used, are imported monthly. In Lagos, thousands of businesses are devoted to processing obsolete computers, mobile phones, and televisions. The industry employs tens of thousands of people, mostly in small, family-run workshops. The poorest people, in many cases children, are put to work breaking apart the used electronics. Without safety measures, they are exposed to highly toxic substances, including mercury and lead, among others.

In 2009, Sustainable Research and Action for Environmental Development (SRADev) therefore undertook a project to study the effect of electronic waste on waste handlers in Lagos. SRADev first carried out a preliminary baseline survey; gathering data through literature review, visits to electronic waste (e-waste) trading sites, and consultations with stakeholders such as the Lagos State Environmental Protection Agency and Waste Management Authority, Computer and Allied Products Dealers Association of Nigeria, Nigeria Ports Authority and Customs Service, and Electronic Traders' Unions. During these site visits and consultations, SRADev was able to determine e-waste's point of entry into the country, distribution chain, end of life and ultimate disposal. This information was later printed onto a banner that was used to educate people.

After gathering the relevant information and documenting e-waste handling through photographs, SRADev organized an awareness-raising workshop for varied stakeholders. Fifty-eight participants attended, including representatives from government ministries and the private sector, as well as recyclers, peasants, waste-pickers, scavengers, e-waste vendors, journalists and students. The workshop provided an overview of the outcome of the baseline survey; shared evidence that used electronic equipment causes health and environmental problems; highlighted best environmental practices for environmentally sound management of e-waste; and outlined the state's recycling plan.

As a result of the workshop, there was increased opportunity for collaboration amongst stakeholders and knowledge of preventative and protective measures that can be used to avoid future toxics exposure and escalate safe handling of e-waste.

Additionally, the project helped overall to identify the activities involved in the e-waste business as well as the level of exposure to risk by those involved in the informal sector. Awareness about the dangers of e-waste was raised among all key stakeholders, as well as the understanding of appropriate measures to be adopted in order to achieve environmentally sound management of chemicals in Nigeria. Such measures include the identification of institutional gaps and policy weaknesses that can hinder sound management of chemicals, and also the necessity to provide sufficient knowledge-based information to key sectors to consciously drive forward the process. It is envisaged that this project assisted, to a large extent, the efforts to enact an e-waste bill in Nigeria.

