CENTRE FOR GLOBAL AFFAIRS & PUBLIC POLICY
CGAPP

Report on

International E-waste Day

12th to 20th October, 2023

Organised by Centre For Global Affairs and Public Policy as a participant of IEWD of WEEE Forum

Introduction

Electronic waste is one of the fastest-growing waste streams in the world. The growth of the ICT sector in tandem with faster obsolescence is leading to the discarding of electronics. Today, India is the world's third-biggest e-waste generator, producing over 3.23 million metric tonnes of e-waste per year, behind the US and China. India's e-waste generation has risen nearly 43 per cent between FY18 and FY20.[1]

According to a survey conducted by Cerebra Green and MAIT, 50% of Indians hoard no-longer-in-use electronic devices in their homes. 50% of the respondents hoarded a minimum of 2 or more no-longer-in-use electronic items at home. About 30% hoarded 3-4 electronic items that should have been discarded and 20% of the respondents hoarded over 5 defunct devices. Around 68 % of participants in the survey said that they did not consider local waste collectors as a viable option to dispose of e-waste, a view which was supported by the waste collectors themselves as 72 % of them don't collect e-waste in their areas.[2]

This hoarding behaviour is detrimental to the circularity of electronics and leads to the loss of crucial metals and other resources from the supply chain. This puts pressure on the mining industry in particular and creates procurement challenges for recyclers. Hoarding is majorly happening due to a lack of information on disposal, data safety, future reuse, sentimental value and inadequate disposal facilities. Communication and awareness campaigns are crucial in bridging the data gap. Information on the harmful effects of hoarding and ways of disposal have to be the focus of our awareness campaigns in multiple cities across India.

[1] E-waste Management in India-CII
[2] Survey by MAIT and Cerebra Green

Agenda

City	Dates	Partner	Activity
Delhi	12-16th October	Haritma Environment Society at Hansraj College	Awareness and collection drive with students and Households
Hyderabad	15-17th October	ISDC and Goodebag	Awareness and collection drive with students and businesses
Bangalore	12-20th October	Indian Youth Climate Network and Reupyog	Awareness Drive with Repair shops along with consultations

Delhi Chapter

Awareness Session

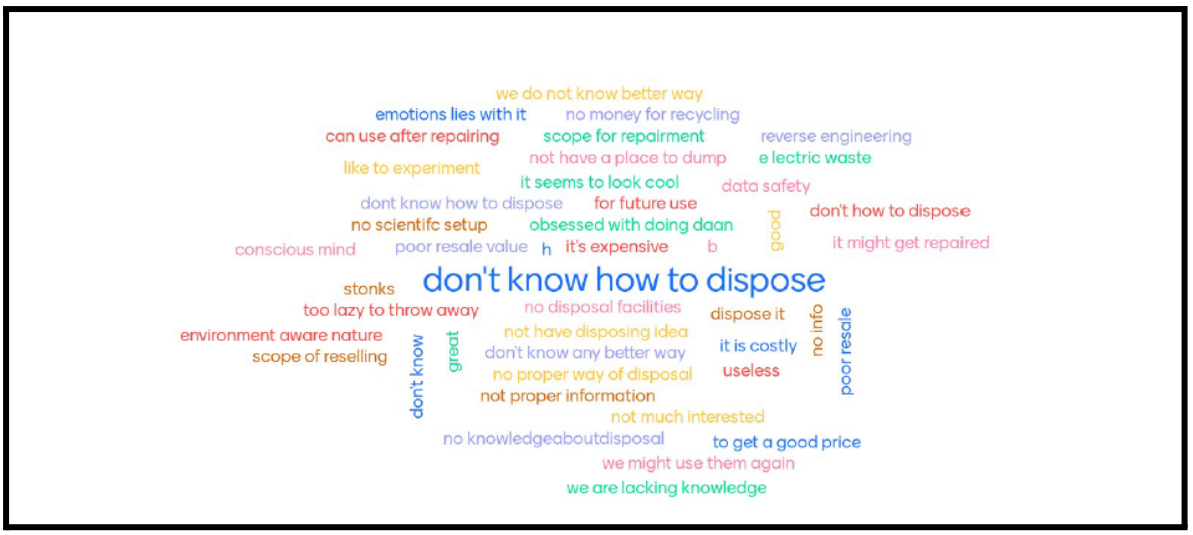
Haritma Environment Society of Delhi University in collaboration with CGAPP conducted an awareness session on E-waste. The session focused on the issue of invisible e-waste, its potential and disposal. The session was followed by a four-day collection drive on the college campus, nearby colonies and commercial spaces.

Awareness session in Haritma Eco-Club

Inspired by the study conducted by UNITAR and the WEEE Forum, CGAPP also conducted a survey among the students to understand their hoarding habits.

Insights from the survey-

Why do they hoard e-waste?	• Don't know ways to dispose of • Might use it in future • Data safety
What is the E-waste you could remember lying in your house?	• Phone • Chargers • Headphones



Snapshot of the responses received

Collection Drive

Students from Haritma set up boxes on their campus to facilitate donations and did aggressive messaging to nudge peers to donate or sell. They collected 3 kg of e-waste from students. The waste was composed of headphones, mouse, remotes, chargers, cooler motors, wires and cables.

They also reached out to households and commercial places offering them value for their waste. The households responded positively by booking their waste pickups directly with our recycling partner, Epsilon. This exercise has made the community aware of hoarded waste and given them access to the recycler. Bridging this information gap was a crucial exercise.

Donation boxes at Hansraj College

Hyderabad Chapter

Awareness Session

Integrated Sustainable Development Council conducted an awareness drive in schools and with businesses at T-HUB.This drive covered a varied audience from children as young as five to people in their sixties. Everyone was made aware of the issues of E-waste and the health effects associated with it. Under this model, children are to act as mascots of change for their households and businesses to bring change in their disposing practices.

Awareness Session in School

Akshay Deshpande from ISDC at T-Hub

Collection Drive

Goodebag, a producer responsibility organisation, led the collection activities covering over 200 households. They received a tremendous response and collected over 200kgs of e-waste along with 136kgs of plastic waste. E-waste mainly consisted of wires, monitors, fans and Wi-Fi routers. The collection drive was a relationship-building exercise with the community and has motivated citizens to proactively dispose of the waste in the future.

Wires and Wi-Fi routers form a major chunk of household waste

Waste collection by Goodebag

Bangalore Chapter

Awareness Drive and Consultation

In collaboration with ReUpyog, IYCN conducted a two-week-long e-waste sensitization campaign involving 50 local repair shops in Bangalore. The objective of this initiative was to understand the challenges faced by the repair industry and to promote sustainable practices within the e-waste management ecosystem. The shopkeepers were made aware of the importance of discarding end-of-life electronics to the registered recyclers.

Laptops- most repaired Electronics

Questions Asked	Responses from Repair Shops
Items which come in the most for repair	Macbooks, iPhones, Smartphones of premium brands, Laptops, Printer and Gaming consoles
Items discarded the most	Older Laptops and phones
Items most difficult to repair	TWS, Motherboard

Key Takeaways on challenges faced by the repair industry-

- **High Repair Costs Lead to Discarding:** Customers are often compelled to discard their devices rather than repair them due to the high cost associated with repairs. This trend contributes to e-waste proliferation and is an area of concern for sustainable practices.

- **GST on Second-Hand Products:** The imposition of Goods and Services Tax (GST) on second-hand electronic products (equivalent to new) discourages businesses from purchasing them. This policy hinders the potential for a circular economy and extends the lifecycle of electronic devices.

- **Claiming Input Tax Credit:** Small businesses claim Input Tax Credit on the GST paid when purchasing new products or components. This provides an opportunity to save on tax liabilities by offsetting the GST paid against their GST liabilities. It can help in reducing the overall cost of doing business. The same facility isn't available for renewed electronics.

- **Depreciation as a Tax Benefit**: Small businesses also take advantage of depreciation benefits on new products. The decrease in the value of electronic products over time can be accounted for as a loss, which in turn can reduce taxable income. This practice allows small businesses to save on taxes and potentially reinvest in their operations. Businesses can't do the same with refurbished products.

- **Authorized Service Centers Warranty Denials:** Many customers bring their electronic devices to local repair shops when they face difficulties with authorized service centres. These service centres sometimes refuse to honour warranties promised at the time of purchase, leaving customers with no choice but to seek third-party repair services.

- **Lack of Manufacturer Support:** As new technology and devices are continually introduced to the market, the repair industry faces a considerable challenge. Manufacturers often provide limited support and training to repair technicians on how to fix these cutting-edge products. As a result, local repair shops must invest significant effort and resources into learning how to repair and service new technology effectively

- **Inadequate Spare Parts:** Many repair shops reported difficulties in obtaining necessary spare parts for electronic devices. The lack of access to genuine and affordable spare parts poses a significant challenge for technicians attempting to repair electronic equipment.

- **Unrepairable Components:** A considerable number of electronic components are designed to be unrepairable or replaceable only by authorized service centers. This limitation further restricts the ability of local repair shops to extend the lifespan of electronic devices.

- **Cash Transactions Prevail:** The repair industry in Bangalore largely operates on cash transactions with individual customers. This prevalence of cash-based dealings can make it challenging to implement transparent business practices and sustainability initiatives.

- **Lack of Warranty:** The absence of warranties for repaired electronic devices is a common concern for customers. The lack of warranty options deters some individuals from opting for repair services.

- **Lack of Skilled Workers**: The shortage of skilled technicians in the repair industry was identified as a significant challenge. Adequate training and skill development opportunities are essential to address this issue.

Import Reliance:

1. High Demand for Electronic Devices: India is a large consumer of electronic devices, including laptops. As a result, there is a constant demand for used and refurbished electronic products to fulfil various market segments. This demand isn't being fulfilled by the domestic market.

2 . Lack of a Formal Collection System: The absence of a structured system for collecting, refurbishing, and redistributing used electronic devices in good condition has led to a heavy reliance on imports by this “Grey Area Market”. While there is a substantial pool of discarded electronics within the country, a formalized standard process for collecting and repairing these items remains underdeveloped.

3. Recent Import Bans: The repair industry in India has been severely affected by recent import bans on certain electronic devices. These restrictions have disrupted the supply chain and caused uncertainty for businesses relying on imported second-hand products.

Recommendations:

Facilitate Spare Parts Access: Local and national authorities should work with manufacturers to ensure that spare parts are readily available and affordable for repair technicians.

Encourage Domestic Refurbishment: Promote the establishment of local refurbishment and recycling centres to facilitate the reintegration of used electronic devices into the market. This can help reduce reliance on imports.

Incentivize Repairs: Implement policies that promote repair and refurbishment, such as reduced taxes or incentives for businesses engaging in repair services

Create a Transparent Business Ecosystem: Transition to digital and transparent financial transactions to promote trust and accountability within the repair industry.

Advocate for Circular Economy Policies: Address GST issues on second-hand products and repairs to stimulate the growth of a circular economy for electronic devices.

Consumer Education: Educate consumers about the benefits of repair, including potential cost savings and environmental impact.

Advocate for Consumer Rights: Protect the rights of consumers whose warranties are denied unfairly by authorized service centres.

Skill Development and Training: Encourage manufacturers to invest in training programs and resources for local repair technicians to keep them updated on new technology and address the shortage of skilled technicians in the repair industry. Alternatively, seek partnerships with technical schools and organizations that provide training on the latest technology.

Knowledge Sharing: Promote knowledge sharing within the local repair community. Establish networks and forums where repair shops can exchange information and experiences related to the repair of new technology.

Build a Platform for regular feedback on e-waste policies & practices: Allowing all stakeholders to come together on a single platform, will facilitate the identification of gaps in the current e-waste management chain, and also permit the identification of opportunities where different sectors can address each others' e-waste issues.

Way Forward

Centre for Global Affairs and Public Policy aims to address the information gap and lack of awareness related to e-waste disposal while providing an ecosystem which facilitates responsible disposal. In pursuit of this CGAPP will -

1. Conduct awareness and collection drives on a regular basis with its various partners across Indian cities. These will include cities where we have already facilitated such exercises, as well as new cities. The drives will be an exercise to engage the community and drive behaviour change.

2. Facilitate connections of PROs and recyclers with communities to channel proper disposal. This will build on the awareness drives by providing communities with an easy alternative to change their e-waste disposal practices.

3. Organise stakeholder consultations with recyclers, refurbishers, PROs, Informal aggregators, government, producers and recycling equipment manufacturers. These consultations are aimed at understanding the roadblocks of the sector, finding gaps and designing interventions.

4. Propose policy recommendations to facilitate systems change in the field of e-waste management.

5. Support startups and businesses in market expansion, and access to knowledge and technologies.

6. Ecosystem creation for the informal sector, which integrates them with the e-waste management system and provides them inputs for responsible and efficient disposal practices related to e-waste management. Not only does this have the potential to improve the returns informal sector stakeholders get from the process, but also to ensure that leakage of materials from e-waste is minimised as the informal sector handles the process more efficiently.