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Collaboration of stakeholders in management of e-waste in Kenya

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The demand and use of electronic and electrical equipment has continued to increase in Kenya. Annual generation of e-waste in Kenya was estimated at 11,400 tonnes of refrigerators, 2,800 tonnes of television sets, 2,500 tonnes of computers, 500 tonnes of printers and 150 tonnes of mobile phones. These equipments contain potentially hazardous materials which are harmful to human health and environment. Soils and water samples from hotspot areas had levels of heavy metals that exceeded the international standards. Workers, particularly in the informal sector are exposed to these materials through inappropriate and unsafe handling strategies related to collection, recycling and disposal. Lack of coordinated efforts, poor state of e-waste handling and general unawareness among stakeholders as well as lack of regulatory and policy framework were some of the identified gaps. It was in this context that Kenya Industrial Research and Development Institute (KIRDI) organized a collaborative forum with stakeholders that included service providers, researchers, distributors, regulators, policy makers, manufacturers, public health, environmental advocators, consumer information network, formal and informal recyclers. The program focused on potential health hazards arising from e-waste and strategies to reduce, re-use and recycle these waste streams. Challenges related to mechanism of disposal were identified. This program generated a lot of interest and support among the stakeholders. The major sponsor of this program was Safaricom, a service provider, who further organized related activities including road show awareness and collection of these waste streams from Institutions and residential areas around the country. As part of the collaboration effort, KIRDI has organized a National Conference and Exhibition with the theme of multi-disciplinary approach of stakeholders in management of e-waste. The collaborative aspect of the best available technologies and practices of e-waste management will be presented. The event is expected to generate wider media coverage. It can be concluded that collaboration among stakeholders is an effective tool in management of e-waste and related health effects in Kenya.

Biography

Faridah Hussein Were is a Senior Research Scientist with the Kenya Industrial Research and Development Institute. Her research interest is occupational and environmental exposure to heavy metals and related health effects. She is actively advocating for programs that promote safe and health working conditions. In particular, she works closely with the relevant authorities in the development of national standards. She has published several articles in the peer reviewed journals. She is also a part-time lecturer at the University of Nairobi, where she has jointly published a course book on safety methods in laboratory and other hazardous areas. She serves as a national technical committee member for the Kenya Bureau of Standards, a national steering committee of the National Environment Trust Fund and a member of Kenya Chemical Society.

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