

E-Waste Initiative Kenya - Repairing and Reusing Electronics

Key Learnings

Managing the Full E-Waste Value Chain

EWIK's operational model is built on managing the entire e-waste journey, from collection to final processing. This involves retrieving end-of-life electronics from households and corporations through a network of drop-off points, door-to-door services, and regional partners. A key differentiator is a formalised processing pathway where items are first tested for potential repair and resale. Only non-repairable units are manually dismantled to harvest valuable components like specific plastics and copper, systematically reframing waste as a source of valuable parts and secondary raw materials.

Addressing Operational Challenges and Problematic Components

A significant operational challenge is managing components that currently hold negative value due to a lack of local processing capacity. Screens are a primary example, representing a cost centre rather than a revenue stream as there is no economically viable local solution for their repair or recycling. The strategic response involves seeking partnerships and investment for specialised machinery, such as screen repair equipment, to transform these problematic fractions into productive and economically viable streams.

Building Sector Capacity Through Training and Data

EWIK addresses systemic capacity gaps through a dual approach. Firstly, it operates a technical training institute to build a professional workforce, integrating social support like on-site childcare to enable participation from young mothers. Secondly, it conducts foundational research to map the informal e-waste value chain, generating the critical data on material flows and stakeholder roles required to formalise the industry, attract investment, and inform effective policy.

Securing Corporate Clients Through Data Security Services

For corporate clients, the primary driver for engagement is data security, not recycling. The essential strategic service is therefore providing trusted, often on-site, data destruction, which serves as the critical entry point to secure corporate e-waste streams. This core offer is complemented by providing certificates of destruction and detailed recycling reports, ensuring full regulatory and environmental compliance and building the necessary trust for long-term commercial partnerships.

Listen to the full episode here:

<https://circularity.fm/e-waste-initiative-kenya-repairing-and-reusing-electronics/>

