

# Computer Aid launches campaign for action against toxic trade

Submitted by: Wildfire

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London, 22nd September 2008: The UK government must take action to prevent the UK's electrical waste (e-waste) being illegally exported and dumped in countries such as Ghana, Nigeria and China, according to international development charity Computer Aid International, which today launches a petition calling for the government to provide the Environment Agency with the resources to effectively police the Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) directive.

In a statement issued today, Computer Aid calls on the UK government to tighten up the WEEE directive and highlights why it's time to take action to prevent the UK's hazardous waste being exported to the developing world. The charity also hits out at cowboy commercial traders actively abusing re-use and recycling initiatives, as well as the computer manufacturers that shirk responsibility for their equipment dumped in developing countries.

Louise Richards, CEO of Computer Aid, states:

"National newspaper exposes and reports from both Greenpeace and Consumers International clearly demonstrate the extent of the e-waste problem, and serve to highlight the limitations of the current legislative framework for e-waste. According to Consumers International, in Nigeria alone more than half a million second-hand PCs arrive in Lagos every month, yet only one in four works.

"The Environment Agency must be provided with the resources to police e-waste, prosecute anyone involved in a supply chain that results in the dumping of e-waste and remove licences from organisations in breach of the WEEE legislation. It's imperative that the government clamps down on fraudulent traders posing as legitimate re-use and recycling organisations, who are enticing unwitting UK businesses to use them for disposal of electrical equipment.

These traders do not declare the contents of their shipments as hazardous e-waste, but falsely claim consignments consist entirely of electrical equipment destined for productive re-use. The result? The waste is manually scavenged for metals, then stripped down and incinerated in the open air. The high volume of environmentally unsound e-waste is driven almost exclusively by the motive of profit, but the cost is borne by the environment and the children who disassemble the equipment."

Computer Aid also highlights how existing legislation is failing to hold manufacturers to account if their products are found dumped in developing countries, as Tony Roberts, Founder and Director of International Programmes, urges producers to take responsibility for the products they are placing into the global market:

"Under the Producer Pays principle of the WEEE directive, producers of electrical equipment are responsible for funding the end of life recycling of equipment within the European Union, but no such legislation exists for the millions of electronic products sold in Africa, Latin America and Asia. Producers should be made to accept the producer pays principle on a global scale, and take responsibility for the safe recycling of products in developing countries. They must also consider the design of their products and reduce their use of hazardous substances in the manufacturing process, so they can be more

easily recycled.

“Modern economic development is not possible without information and communication technologies, any more than it is possible without cars or factories, but we must put a stop to this shameful abuse of e-waste in the developing world.”

To date, Computer Aid has refurbished more than 130,000 PCs and laptops, all of which are being used to support e-learning, e-health, e-inclusion and e-agriculture projects in countries such as Kenya, Madagascar and Zambia. Asset tracking ensures all computers can be traced to the exact hospital, school or project they are benefiting.

Computer Aid is committed to ensuring the application of Information Communications Technology (ICT) is environmentally sustainable and has launched a research programme into low power PCs, as well as offering practical support and advice on capacity building for re-use and end-of-life recycling in Africa.

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About the WEEE directive

The Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) Directive came into UK law in January 2007, and has been in force since July 2007. It aims to minimise the impact of electrical and electronic goods on the environment, by increasing re-use and recycling and reducing the amount of WEEE going to landfill. The WEEE Directive also aims to improve the environmental performance of businesses that manufacture, supply, use, recycle and recover electrical and electronic equipment.

The WEEE Directive affects producers, distributors and recyclers of electrical and electronic equipment - including household appliances, IT and telecoms equipment, audiovisual equipment (TV, video, hi-fi), lighting, electrical and electronic tools, toys, leisure and sports equipment.

About Computer Aid International ([www.computeraid.org](http://www.computeraid.org))

Computer Aid International is a registered charity (no. 1069256) and the world's largest and most experienced not-for-profit supplier of professionally refurbished computers to developing countries.

Since it was founded in 1998, Computer Aid has provided over 130,000 PCs to organisations in more than 100 developing countries. Based in London, Computer Aid International fully tests, professionally

refurbishes, upgrades, packs and ships Pentium 3 and Pentium 4 computers donated by UK companies for re-use in schools and not-for-profit organisations overseas.

The charity is committed to providing the highest level decommissioning service to its UK computer donors and to delivering the highest quality refurbished computers to recipient organisations overseas. PC donors in the UK include British Airways, Ford, Virgin, Investec, the National Audit Office, Royal Mint, Packard Bell and Christian Aid. PC distribution in developing countries is achieved through strategic partnerships with partners such as SchoolNet Africa, British Council, UN-Habitat, and the national Computers for Schools programmes of Chile, Kenya, Zambia and other countries.

