# E-waste: challenges and opportunities for the world of work

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#### Only tripartite UN-organization

183 member states

#### Strategic objectives:

- To promote and realize standards, and fundamental principles and rights at work
- To create greater opportunities for women and men to secure decent employment
- To enhance the coverage and effectiveness of **social protection** for all
- To strengthen tripartism and social dialogue



ILO

#### E-sales leads to e-waste

- Today a million computers will be sold
- E-waste is the fastest growing waste stream





#### Who are the people working with ewaste?





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Photo: Alex Hofford



#### Photo: Sayantan Bera/CSE







# Numbers????

Some estimations:

- Ghana 25,000 (supporting 200,000)
- China perhaps 10 millions and 60,000 enterprises
- India 80,000
- USA 30,000

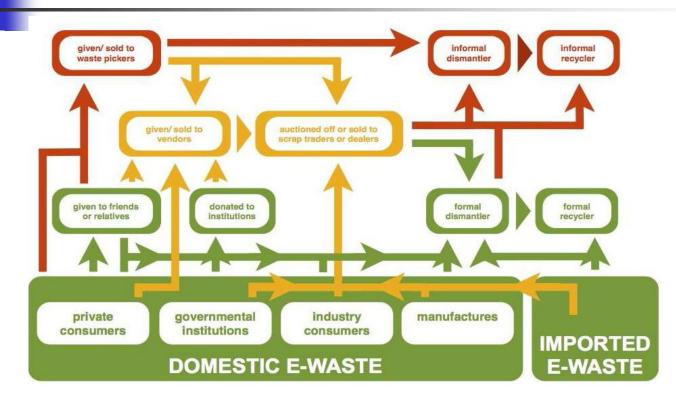


## Characteristics of work with e-waste

- Mostly informal work: unrecorded, unregulated
- Labour intensive
- Low earnings
- Often dangerous
- Many times illegal



# Formal and informal recycling often interlinked



E-waste flow in India (Skinner, Lloyd, Dinter & Strothmann 2010)



#### Problems with informality

- No identifiable employer with responsibility
- Lack of health insurance, pension schemes, unemployment insurance
- Lack of awareness of workers' rights and lack of awareness for safety and health issues
- Child labour
- Environmental hazards and inefficient recovery of materials



# Tackling informality

- Difficult task:
  - Regulations
  - Enforcement
  - Economic and other incentives



#### Problems with human health

- Main risk from heavy metals, POPs, flame retardants and other hazardous substances
- Three main groups:
  - Original constituents (e.g. mercury)
  - Substances added during recovery processes (e.g. cyanide)
  - Substances formed by recovery processes (e.g. dioxins)



#### How can we solve the problems?

- International solutions: regulating e-waste streams
- Local solutions: enforcing regulations, offering incentives to informal recyclers
- ESM and OSH go hand in hand



# Opportunities

- E-waste widely recognized and easily understood by the public
- Volumes increase and every country has to manage its e-waste
- Recycling more and more important economically
- Can create employment, both low-skilled and high-skilled