TRADING WASTE WITH THE GLOBAL SOUTH

Trade-related challenges regarding battery recycling

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17 March 2023
ABOUT ME

• Co-founder of Closing the Loop
• Lifetime experience in Africa
• 8 years of experience trading waste between Europe and Africa
• South African, raised in Ghana
ABOUT CLOSING THE LOOP

• Social Enterprise based in the Netherlands, global customer base
• Offers Waste Compensation, a commercial service for Circular Economy, enabling collection and recycling of waste (see here)
ABOUT CLOSING THE LOOP

• 12 years experience in Africa (Ghana, Nigeria, Cameroon, Rwanda, Uganda, Zambia, South Africa and more)
• Collected >4 million mobile phones
• Collected ±1 million batteries
• We operate mainly in Africa
• Exported waste from 6 different African countries
• We work with local collection networks & partners
**SUPPLY CHAIN**

How does it work?

**COLLECTORS**
- Repair Shops
- Waste Associations
- Communities

**AGENTS**
- Agents collect the e-waste in bags from multiple shops

**LOCAL PARTNERS (LSP’S)**
- LSP’s weigh and earmark the bags
- The bags are stored safely until shipment

**RECYCLERS**
- The bags are shipped in containers and recycled safely

### Upstream Tier 3
- Repair Shops
- Waste Associations
- Communities

### Upstream Tier 2
- Agents collect the e-waste in bags from multiple shops

### Upstream Tier 1
- LSP’s weigh and earmark the bags
- The bags are stored safely until shipment

### Downstream
- The bags are shipped in containers and recycled safely
IMPORTANT CONTEXT

• Our experience is with the export of waste from Africa. For this discussion, we are not talking about the import of waste. The issue of ‘illegal dumping’ is not in scope for this presentation. I advise to separate the topics.

• Our experience is with mobile phone/laptop batteries, not car batteries (IC cars). This is an important distinction:
  • Car batteries can be recycled at a profit from material value, even if done correctly.
  • Mobile phone/laptop batteries can not be recycled correctly purely based on material value.

• There is much to be said on waste transport, this presentation tries to focus on trade
COMPLEX REALITY OF WASTE TRANSPORTATION

• Basel Convention covers waste transportation. Implemented to avoid dumping of waste.
• Waste transport historically (and presently) not presented as a trade issue
• Basel Convention is very strict (with good reason)
• Usually managed by Environmental Ministries & Agencies
CHALLENGES

• Because of complex permitting, very few “honest” actors
• Low volume of permits means less capacity in developing countries
• Waste shipment permits are an Environmental issue, waste trade is an economic one
  • Consequences for customs, different ministries, etc.
  • Consequences in understanding the operational issues & the business issues
• Waste has bad reputation with carriers & freight forwarders
• Some waste is actually ‘hazardous’
• Informal nature of collection can complicate matters
POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

- Collaboration is key! Authorities working together can help overcome challenges.
- Approaching waste as a commodity to be traded
- Capacity building involving the right actors, especially operationally
THANK YOU

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