Proper management of electronic waste is key

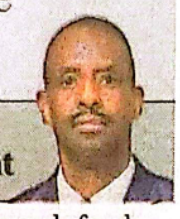
At the turn of the 21st century—and even in the decades preceding it—advances in science and technology were widely viewed as catalysts for higher standards of living and improved livelihoods. These breakthroughs were expected to drive production of top of the range goods and services, ultimately making life easier and more comfortable for humanity.

However, mass production can have adverse, and often irreversible, impacts on both the planet and humanity if sustainability considerations, particularly proper disposal, are neglected. This is a critical lesson that is apparent in procurement and disposal of public assets, especially with regard to electronics and plastic products.

Thus, in a significant step towards sustainable public procurement, the Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Assets Authority (PPDA) has issued a new guideline on the management of electronic waste (e-waste). The move promotes responsible disposal of obsolete government ICT assets, reinforcing regulatory compliance and environmental protection.

Guideline No.3 of 2025, issued in line with Section 134 of the PPDA Act, Cap.205, provides a framework for the disposal of electronic assets and electronic waste (e-waste). The objective of the guideline is to offer procedural direction to Procuring and Disposing Entities (PDEs) in the disposal of such assets, with a view to safeguarding human and public health and protecting the environment from the adverse effects associated with e-waste, while promoting sustainable procurement practices.

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Waste management

The guideline also delineates items classified as e-waste to include electronic devices such as computers, refrigerators, air conditioners, cellular phones, desk phones, fax machines, consumer electronics – television sets, monitors, and microwave ovens.

Furthermore, the guideline aligns with other provisions of the PPDA Act. Section 66 requires PDEs to consider environmental protection, social inclusion, and the stimulation of innovation, while Section 95 prescribes approved methods for the disposal of public assets. It is also anchored on the Electronic Waste (E-Waste) Management Policy for Uganda, issued by the Ministry of ICT in 2012, which seeks to protect public health and the environment, support sustainable development, and promote responsible e-waste management.

At the heart of the new guideline are four key principles designed to reduce harm and to optimise the value of government electronic assets: Reduce, repair, re-use, and recycle.

As mentioned earlier, the issuance of the guideline comes at a time when the world is grappling with challenges of mass production and limited safe disposal technologies. Substances from e-waste, such as lead, mercury, and cadmium are known to contaminate soil, water, and air when improperly disposed of. Beyond health risks, irresponsible disposal leads to significant economic loss. Valuable materials such as gold, silver and copper are discarded, and only a fraction of e-waste is recycled, contributing to resource depletion and climate change.

Furthermore, the guideline is anchored on the prevailing and well-documented unsafe and hazardous disposal practices observed among some PDEs. These include dumping e-waste on land or into water bodies, mixing it with general waste, open burning or heating, stripping and shredding, and manual disassembling.

With this guideline, the Authority is taking a decisive step to ensure that government electronic assets are disposed of safely, sustainably, and responsibly.

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