SUSTAINABLE RECYCLING INDUSTRIES

COLOMBIA
Project Outcomes 2013-2023

Turning e-waste into resources for development

SRI is an international cooperation project helping to build a sustainable recycling sector for waste from electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE, or “e-waste”) in several countries of the Global South.

The programme focuses on governance and technology aspects that allow for an optimal recovery of secondary raw materials and the safe management of hazardous substances.

Recent trends of the e-waste management in Colombia

The global trend of increasing e-waste generation is also observed in Colombia, where in 2019 an estimated amount of 185,000 tons of WEEE were generated.

In 2010, the first regulations based on the extended producer responsibility (EPR) principle were issued, which led to the creation of the first take-back agreements for computers, light bulbs, and batteries. Later on, Law 1672 of 2013 assigned obligations to all actors in the EEE value chain and required the creation of a National Policy, which was issued in 2017.

Currently, the country has 70 agreements, which collected the 20% of the WEEE generated in 2019. Due to the new regulation issued in 2022, by 2023 the creation of new agreements for all types of WEEE is expected.

The regulation gave way to the establishment of a growing number of formal WEEE processing or recycling companies, reaching currently 80 companies with an environmental license.

Development of the recycling business sector

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<thead>
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<th>Year</th>
<th>Authorized recyclers</th>
<th>Take-back agreements</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>2013</td>
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<td>2019</td>
<td>53</td>
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<td>2023</td>
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The SRI Project started in 2013, based on the results of a previous SECO initiative: “E-waste Recycling for Latin America”

### Structure

The proposed activities are structured in four core implementation areas:

#### 1. Support the development of an adequate policy and legislative framework

- Enable the implementation of a sustainable e-waste management system.

#### 2. Establish normative requirements

- Introduce methods for measuring performance against them, for ensuring a level playing field.

#### 3. Nurture the recycling business environment and value chain

- Fostering the professionalization of the industry.

#### 4. Provide solutions for the safe treatment of problematic waste fractions

- That are adapted to the local conditions.

### Timeline

The SRI Project started in 2013, based on the results of a previous SECO initiative: “E-waste Recycling for Latin America”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>SRI Phase I</th>
<th>SRI Phase II</th>
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<td>2023</td>
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### Outcomes

#### 1. Policy and legislative framework

**Initial Context**

By 2013, the country had an incipient regulatory framework that regulated only 3 WEEE streams, and included few actors in the WEEE management chain.

**Main Outcomes**

SRI devoted a large part of its efforts to supporting the Ministry of Environment to strengthen the legal framework.

In the 2013-2019 period, the approval of Law 1672 of 2013 and the National WEEE Policy was achieved. During 2020-2023, it contributed to the development of various awareness-raising, education and training tools, such as an awareness-raising video, a booklet aimed at children and young people, a virtual course, 2 international congresses and the update of the technical guide.
2. Normative requirements

INITIAL CONTEXT
In 2013, Colombia did not have Technical Standards for the management of WEEE. Only a few recyclers followed technical standards required by their clients.

MAIN OUTCOMES
To improve this situation, the SRI Project partnered with the country’s leading organization in technical standards and certification, ICONTEC.

As a result, the Colombian Technical Standards (NTC) 6352 and 6359 were prepared, based on the CENELEC standard and the ISO/IWA 19 guiding principles. Following, a conformity assessment system was built and auditors were trained and certified to assess performance and the implementation of good practices by WEEE recyclers.

3. Business environment

INITIAL CONTEXT
In 2013, the infrastructure for WEEE recycling was not consolidated, their managers were not organized and collection rates were less than 5% of the WEEE generated.

MAIN OUTCOMES
The project developed a training and updating program for the WEEE recycling sector, and in 2016 achieved the formation of a National Association, with 11 founding companies.

With the aim of integrating the different actors in the sector to increase the volumes collected, in 2023 a study was prepared on informality in the management of WEEE, which includes proposals for its integration with the formal sector.

4. Problematic fractions

INITIAL CONTEXT
Although in 2013 Colombia had a National Policy for the comprehensive management of hazardous waste, there was great ignorance about the management of the hazardous fractions of WEEE.

MAIN OUTCOMES
SRI promoted the implementation of good practices for the proper management of hazardous fractions, through an alliance with SENA (a Colombian comprehensive professional training Institute). A Labor Competence Standard was prepared in 2014 and a training program for WEEE managers was developed in 2016.

Subsequently, the SRI Project translated the document “Processing of WEEE plastics” and supported the Ministry of Environment and UNDP in the development of tools for the identification of plastic fractions contaminated with POP brominated flame retardants.
Overall impacts of the programme

Colombia has established itself as a leading country in LAC in the management of WEEE, thanks to the positioning that it has achieved in the government’s environmental agenda, the commitment of the private sector and the initiative and change of perspective of the recycling sector. It has a solid legal and regulatory framework, a collection network made up of several take-back agreements and a growing industry of close to 80 companies that formally treat 20% of the WEEE generated.

Remaining challenges

However, there are still challenges that must be faced, such as:

- Improve collection channels and increase the volumes of WEEE formally treated.
- Extend current collection programs to new WEEE categories.
- Direct the management of WEEE towards a circular economy, taking advantage of the conditions, developments and high potentialities that the country presents.
- Align WEEE management with the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.