

Digital Pipeline – responsible IT recycling

RDC

Based in the UK, RDC are the largest provider of IT disposal services in Europe, operating from both the UK & Germany and processing up to 50,000 items every month. As an extension to this, RDC, along with Digital Links International, are one of the founding partners of the Digital Pipeline, the Microsoft-sponsored charitable programme for providing affordable IT equipment to developing communities. To help bridge the digital divide, RDC has used its experience and knowledge to provide procedures, tools and training to set up PC Service Centres in a number of African countries. Digital Links have been involved in shipping processed equipment - ensuring that distribution & support processes are in place for receiving the donated equipment.

The Digital Pipeline is unique in that it not only provides the basis for developing IT-literacy, but it is based on a truly sustainable model to minimise the impact on the environment at the end of the equipment's life. Although the programme itself is still at an early stage, the results so far are very encouraging. The main focus has been on "education", with the vast majority of donated equipment being distributed to schools. As an example, it is estimated that over 10,000 African students have been able to access a computer for the first time as the direct result of the Digital Pipeline.

More than this, however, is that there are already the beginnings of localised business communities, based on providing additional support and training services. Companies like ITD (PTY) in Windhoek, Namibia are now able to offer complete packages, comprising hardware, software and training to meet the needs of the local area and promote the success of the Digital Pipeline locally.