Pure Earth Bangladesh research informs global ULAB rules

Video transcribed and this newsletter article created with video screenshots taken by Elizabeth O'Brien, The LEAD Group Inc, Australia. Watch the 1:24 minute video "From Dhaka to Geneva: Bangladesh's evidence on lead-acid batteries informs global guidelines on waste batteries" at https://lnkd.in/p/gDCePF4Z ; Read at https://www.linkedin.com/posts/henrique-pacini-3baa0a6_baselconvention-wastebatteries-leadpoisoning-ugcPost-7523741636346982401-IOxe/ [LID 30096] and reposted at: https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7523741978501660672/

Pure Earth Bangladesh and Elizabeth O'Brien of The LEAD Group reposted this

---



*4th November 2026 LinkedIn post by **Henrique Pacini***

Programme Lead & Board Member, UK-UNCTAD SMEP Programme | Economist, UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD) | Circular Economy · Trade · Pollution | PhD (KTH) · Harvard Fellow | 60+ publications

From Dhaka to Geneva: how field evidence from Bangladesh is feeding into global rules on waste batteries.

This week the Basel Convention's small intersessional working group is in Geneva (3 to 6 November) updating the technical guidelines on the environmentally sound management of waste lead-acid batteries/ [used lead-acid batteries (ULABs)], and of other waste batteries. These guidelines are the reference countries use to align how batteries are collected, transported, stored, recycled and disposed of.

Why does a project in Bangladesh matter here? Around 3 million electric three-wheelers in the country run on lead-acid batteries: affordable e-mobility for millions, but with a toxic afterlife. Roughly 80% of used batteries are recycled informally, and nearly half of Bangladesh's children under the age of 5 have elevated lead levels in blood.

Research supported by **The SMEP Programme**, led by **Pure Earth** with **Georgetown University** and **Stanford University**, showed that trade policy is part of this story: after Bangladesh restricted battery imports in 2015, domestic manufacturing and informal recycling expanded, and terminated pregnancies rose by 4 to 5 percentage points among women living within 5 km of battery recycling sites. The same evidence fed into Bangladesh's national strategy for a lead-free country.

I recorded a short interview with **Mitali Das**, Country Director of **Pure Earth Bangladesh**, on the margins of the meeting. Her message is simple: e-mobility should not come at the cost of health and the environment.

The world took decades to get lead out of petrol. As electrification accelerates, battery and mineral flows need governance that keeps pace, from the three-wheeler garage to the Basel Convention.

#BaselConvention #WasteBatteries #LeadPoisoning #EMobility

#CircularEconomy #Bangladesh #SMEP #TradeAndEnvironment Chantal Line Carpentier Lara Fisher Crampe Angela Bernhardt Amrita Kundu, PhD Erica Plambeck Savanna (Xi) Li Amanda Dinan Staci Warrington The Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions UNCTAD Trade Atiq Zaman Jitendra Sharma, PhD Carla Valle-Klann



VIDEO TRANSCRIPT transcribed and screenshots placed by Elizabeth O'Brien

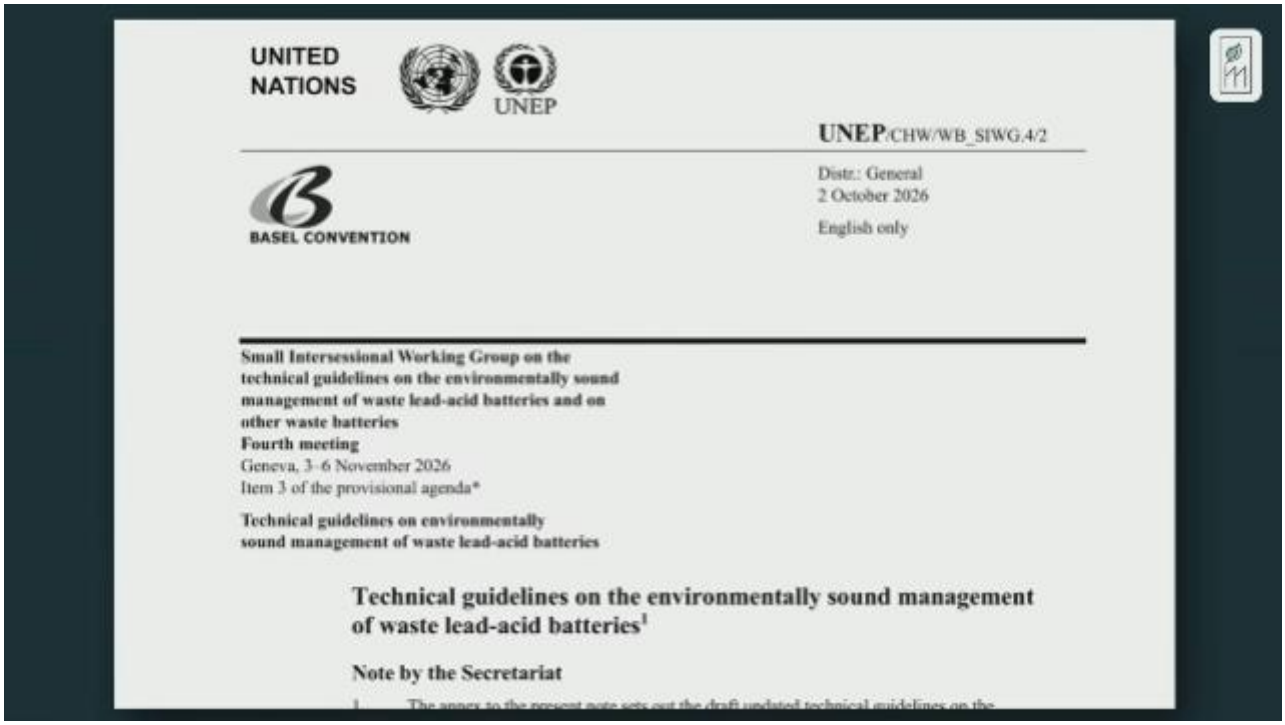


Mitali Das, Country Director, Pure Earth Bangladesh: At the small intersessional working group on the environmental sound management of used lead-acid batteries [ULABs], and of other waste batteries. So, lead pollution is a global issue and Bangladesh also carries the burden of this impact of this pollution… where nearly half of the children have elevated blood lead levels.



One of the major sources is informal recycling of lead acid batteries.




UNITED NATIONS

UNEP

UNEP/CHW/WB_SIWG.4/2

Distr.: General
2 October 2026

English only

BASEL CONVENTION

Small Intersessional Working Group on the technical guidelines on the environmentally sound management of waste lead-acid batteries and on other waste batteries
Fourth meeting
Geneva, 3–6 November 2026
Item 3 of the provisional agenda*

Technical guidelines on environmentally sound management of waste lead-acid batteries

Technical guidelines on the environmentally sound management of waste lead-acid batteries[1]

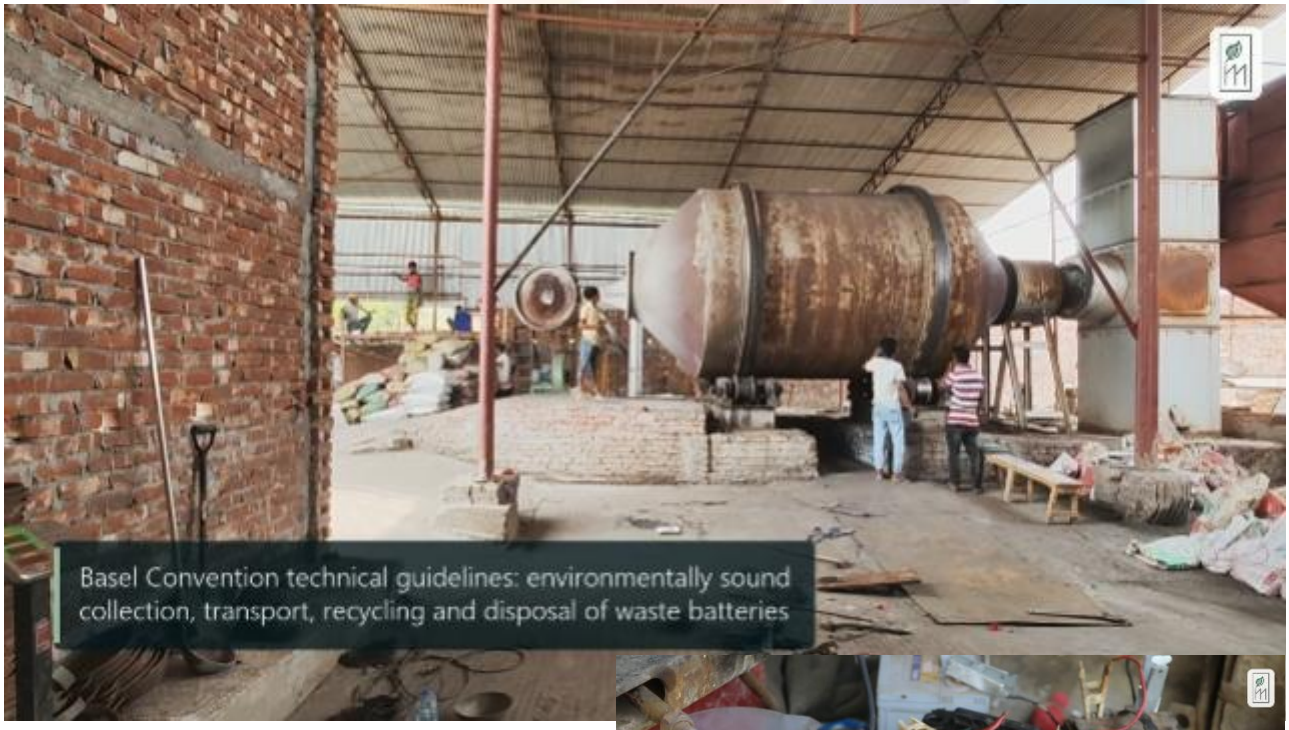
Note by the Secretariat

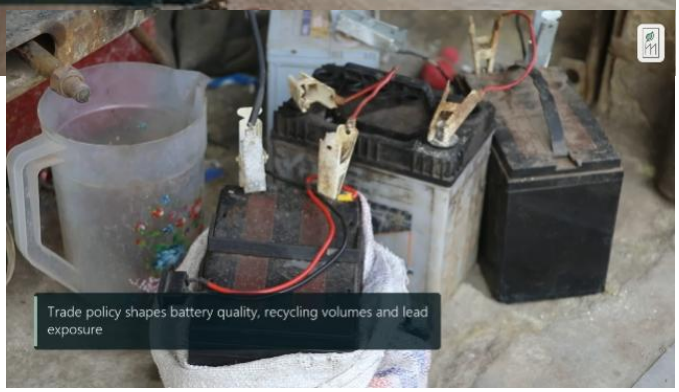
1. The annex to the present note sets out the draft updated technical guidelines on the

It's very important because this gives an international framework to how these batteries can be collected, transported, recycled and also disposed in a more environmental sound manner.

[Basel Convention: Technical guidelines on the environmentally sound management of waste lead-acid batteries, 2nd October 2026 (draft). [Editor's note: The final updated guidelines are slated for consideration

*and adoption at **COP-18** (19 to 30 April 2027 in Panama City, Panama).]*





And it also gives a guideline to a safer transition of the informal lead acid batteries to more formal and safe manner.

Under **The SMEP Programme**, the research suggested there's also a risk of foiling [?inaudible] the informal recycling because of the import barrier of the lead acid battery.


SMEP-SUPPORTED RESEARCH · BANGLADESH
Bangladesh restricted battery imports in 2015. Domestic manufacturing grew, batteries lasted less, and recycling and smelting expanded.
+4 to 5 percentage points
higher likelihood of terminated pregnancy among women living within 5 km of battery manufacturing, recycling or smelting sites
Kundu, Mahzab & Plambeck (2026), Barrier to Import Batteries and Lead Poisoning in Bangladesh · Georgetown University · IFPRI · Stanford GSB

And the widespread electric three-wheelers around our country is one of the sources where



a lot of poor quality batteries are used which are recycled informally... where 80% are done



informally. This gives the message that the **e-mobility should not come at the cost of health and environment.**