

## 4. NGOs

To fight against child labour, some NGOs (Non-Governmental Organisations) make a difference.



IS YOUR SMART PHONE  
HUMAN RIGHTS SMART?



This **poster**, released by Amnesty International, **denounces** the fact that children work in the mines to find cobalt, an important material used to make smartphones.

They take collaborative actions to change the attitudes and the norm regarding **child labour**. They also help families to earn money in another way.

## Tips and advice

### Reuse:

[Jedonnemontelephone.fr](http://Jedonnemontelephone.fr)  
[donnons.org](http://donnons.org)  
[Emmaüs Connect](http://Emmaüs Connect)

### Reduce:

Do we need to change phones when the previous one works just fine?

### Recycle:

Take your device back to the shop (fnac, darty...).

### Repair:

[magasin.save.co](http://magasin.save.co)  
[vite-un-depanneur.fr](http://vite-un-depanneur.fr)

## Buy sustainable and repairable smartphones:

Fairphone  
Shiftphone



This leaflet was written by the 1ères 8 in Lycée P. Mendes France. The aim is to raise awareness about the overconsumption of electronic devices and to give advice to **Reuse, Reduce and Recycle...**

The documents studied by the class were taken from the textbook "Hit the road" Série techno 1ère et Tle, Magnard, 2021. Cover page by Rayane D.

## 1. The human cost of cobalt

There are **5.1 billion mobile phone users** in the world and the **batteries** in our phones are made with cobalt.

The **Democratic Republic of Congo** (DRC), has the world's largest reserves of cobalt, but the mining conditions are very bad: **40 000 children work in the mines** without protection. When they inhale cobalt dust, they can have fatal lung diseases, chronic rashes and convulsions. They must work in the mine to survive because they can't choose another job. They work a lot, 10 to 12 hours a day, and they are very young, between 8 and 15 years old.



Some of the biggest technology firms in the United States are brought to justice because they are accused of **complicity in the death and mistreatment** of African children in the cobalt mines. However, very few companies verify the information they receive from their suppliers and some companies don't even try.

## 2. E-waste

E-Waste, short for **electronic waste**, has become a major problem: about 50 million tons of E-Waste are produced each year. Roughly 35% of that is recycled in Europe. The rest is thrown in **landfills**, or even worse, **shipped out** to 3rd world countries. **Cancerous and toxic metals and gases** (lead, arsenic, mercury, cadmium, lithium) can **leak out** of the devices and are extremely **harmful** to the environment and workers recycling them.



Why has this become such a problem?

There are 4 main reasons:

- **Overconsumption of electronic devices** : do we need to change phones every year when the previous one works just fine?
- **Bad design** from the companies who don't design products with **recyclability** in mind.
- **Lack of recycling or donations** from the users.
- **Programmed obsolescence.**

## 3. Greenwashing

Greenwashing might sound clean, but it is a dirty **business practice!** Greenwashing is when a company spends more time and money on marketing themselves as environmentally friendly than on minimizing their environmental impact.



Brands use greenwashing as a **marketing tool to increase their profit**. Indeed, ecology has become an important marketing argument and brands "pretend" to do something for the environment, lying openly to their customers.

Here are some tips to recognize greenwashing :

- Beware of green **packaging** : the color green is often used to give the illusion of an environmentally friendly product.
- Pay attention to the composition of the products. **Read the labels** carefully.
- Beware of eco-labels: some are fake..