

Reuse, Reduce and Recycle...

vendredi 3 juin 2022, par [BOUROUDIAN](#)

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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...**



4. NGOs

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



This poster, released by Amnesty International, **demonstrates** the fact that children work in the mines. In fact, cobalt, an important mineral used to make smartphones, is mined in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), where the mining conditions are very hard. **All 200 children work in the mines** without protection. When they inhale cobalt dust, they can have fatal lung diseases, chronic rashes and neurological issues. 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 thought to justify because they use **resources of complexity 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**.

Tips and advice

Reuse:

[July 2020/Smartphones](#)
[Smartphones](#)
[Smartphone Control](#)

Reduce:

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

Recycle:

Take your device back to the shop (free, only...)

Repair:

[Repair your phone](#)
[How to repair your phone](#)

Buy sustainable and repairable smartphones:

Factphone
Dellphone



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The illustration depicts the child was taken from the notebook "In the mine" (Série lecture 1ère de l'As. Séquentiel 2021 - Cover page by Florence D.

1. The human cost of cobalt

There are **5.1 billion mobile phone users** in the world and the **battery** 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 hard. **All 200 children work in the mines** without protection. When they inhale cobalt dust, they can have fatal lung diseases, chronic rashes and neurological issues. 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.



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2. E-waste

E-Waste, short for **electronic waste**, has become a major problem: about 50 million tons of it is thrown away each year. Roughly 20% of that is recycled in Europe. The rest is thrown in **landfills**, or even worse, **dumped out to the world's oceans**. **Concave and toxic metals and gases** (lead, arsenic, mercury, selenium, 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 3 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 electronics** 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:

- **Green 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.
- **Be aware of eco-labels**: some are fake...