

Responsible Consumerism

General Objective:

- Offer the student body basic knowledge about responsible consumerism.

Specific Objectives:

- Familiarize ourselves with questions about excessive buying of mobile phones.
- Learn the material mobile phones are made with.
- Learn where mobile phones go when they are recycled.

The group:

Students of Economic Studies, during their time studying **1st Bachillerato**, had a debate about the culture of buying mobile phones and other electronic equipment. Each student spoke about how many mobiles there are in their house and how many mobiles each member of their family has bought in the last 3 years.

We came up with a group estimate of the average number of devices bought. After a second, deeper analysis, searching the Internet for information and using Intermon Oxfam's teaching resources on responsible consumption, the students pooled the information collected.

Through several sessions, students watched a documentary from channel Odisea called "Coltan, bloodstained trade" and then they had a little debate about it. After each session, they should search the web for further information. Finally, we noted the importance of the three Rs of responsible consumerism: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle.

Conclusions:

The telephone companies need us to buy a new phone every so often to stimulate revenue. To construct the mobiles that we use everyday, a scarce mineral called coltan is needed, which is principally found in Africa, in the central-eastern countries. Although this is far from our daily life there are very real conflicts for the use of this scarce resource. In the latest civil war in the Democratic Republic of Congo different military factions, such as the Rwandan and Congolese, fought for control of the areas where the mineral is found. It is sold to Asian merchants and, in time, gets to multinationals who build these products. The fabrication of most of a mobile phone's components takes place in Asian countries; where the salaries and working conditions (both environmental and in regards to the type of work) of workers are much worse than those of our country. All this so that companies can offer us inexpensive phones, and so facilitate their purchase. Many materials that are not always reusable or recyclable are used in the construction of our mobiles and they also contain substances that are toxic to the environment such as Lead, Mercury and Cadmium. A large proportion of recycling ends up as electronic waste in Asia - in India and China's dumps, where there is a large child workforce to recycle the electronic waste.