

# It's Only a Mobile!



## Aim

that young people explore the global effects of mobile phones production

## Age

12 years and over

## Time

45 minutes

## Materials

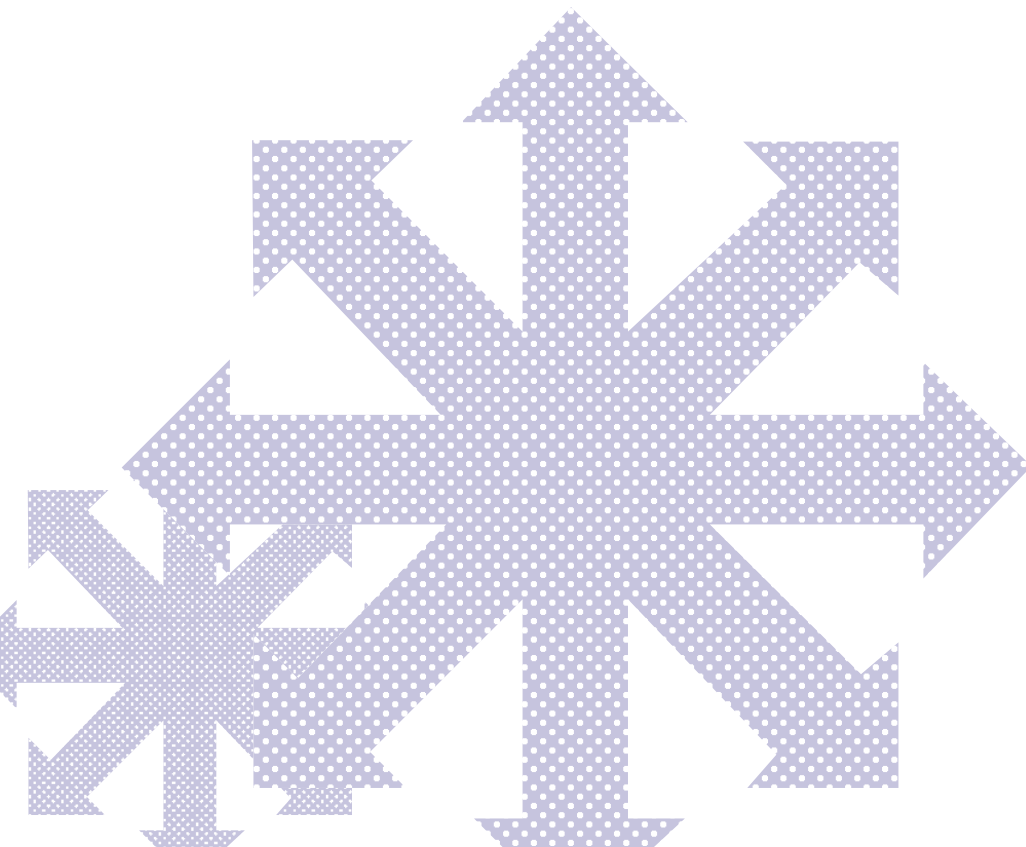
Set of role cards for each group, flipchart and markers

## What you need to do

Begin by asking who in the group has a mobile phone. Brainstorm on what is good and what is bad about mobile phones. Record all the responses. Split into five equal groups. Give copies of ONE of the role cards to each group. Each group has five minutes to read their card and discuss how mobile phones are relevant to the character.

Explain that you are going to form new groups, so that each character is present in the new group. It may be necessary to double up some of the characters. The reporter then begins to interview all the characters in their group. After the interviews have finished, the groups spend five minutes discussing the following: Who is responsible for the conditions under which mobile phones are produced? Who can do something about it?

The reporter then feeds back to the large group in a style of the group's choosing. For example, they could present it as a radio/TV piece with quotes from each character, or as a studio discussion.



# It's Only a Mobile!



## Only a Mobile?

Mobile phones contain gold from South Africa or Russia, copper from Chile or Papua New Guinea, nickel from Canada and coltan (tantalum) from Australia, Brazil, Canada and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

The antenna for your mobile may come from Hong Kong, the circuit board from Malaysia, the speaker and battery from China, the computer chips from Japan or Germany. The little screen may be from South Korea and the keypad from Taiwan. The finished mobile is assembled in places like Ireland, Germany or Mexico.

Mobile phone companies may also be involved in other activities that undermine people's rights.

- Sony invests in countries with oppressive regimes
- Siemens builds nuclear power stations and is involved in controversial projects like the Narmada River dam in India
- Ericsson makes radars for combat aircraft
- Nokia manufactures anti-aircraft systems
- Samsung and NEC make rocket and missile guidance systems for the military

**Source: Save the Children UK. Rightangle.**

## Action

- Ask the manufacturers of mobile phones if they have a code of practice for workers. Request a copy and compare it with the International Labour Organisation (ILO) core labour standards, available at [www.ilo.org](http://www.ilo.org). Ask how they ensure the code of practice is followed by the factories that make and assemble their phones.
- Contact mobile phone manufacturers to ask what their policy is on buying coltan from the Democratic Republic of Congo. What checks do they run on who they buy it from?
- Explore ways of reusing or recycling old mobile phones. Contact your local council to ask about facilities for recycling the mobiles. If they are not available, ask the council to set them up.
- Oxfam are running a "bRing bRing Appeal" for old mobiles. The phones are refurbished for use in countries with emerging mobile networks, while also generating money for Oxfam's work in developing countries. Why not set up a collection point in your youth club or in a prominent place in your local community. Bring the phones to any Oxfam shop or O2 centre, marking it "bRing bRing Appeal". Remember to remove the SIM card before disposing of the phone.





## Role Cards

### Young Mobile Phone User in Ireland

You have been asked to do an interview for 'Youth View', the youth culture programme. You have had a mobile phone for the past three years. Now you can't live without it. You have to have a part-time job to pay for the phone and bills. You mainly use the mobile to text your friends. You're not sure where your phone was made.

### Public Relations Officer for Mobile Phone Company

Your company is a major European mobile phone player. Your phones consistently come out on top in consumer surveys of mobiles. The key to your success is providing stylish phones, full of technology, at affordable prices. To keep prices down, you get the parts from a wide variety of sources mainly in Asia and Africa, before assembling them in Mexico where labour costs are lower. You are delighted to showcase your company on 'Youth View'.

### Young Person in Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

There has been a civil war in your country for some years and tens of thousands have been killed. Your family was thrown off their land at gunpoint. Now you and your father have to work in the coltan mine. The work is very hard and you hardly earn enough to provide one decent meal a day for your family. Coltan is the raw material for tantalum, a metal that is essential in mobile phones. In your country, fighters in the civil war sell the coltan to pay for guns. Some day you'd like to own a mobile phone. You're surprised that someone from the television wants to interview you but you are eager to tell your story.

### Worker in a Mexican Factory

You work in the San Caetano free trade zone\* near Mexico City. You assemble parts for mobile phones. The different bits come in from all over the world. The hours are long and conditions are cramped, but with overtime you earn twice what people outside the zone earn. Two of your fellow workers who were pregnant were made to work standing up until they resigned. Others who have tried to form trade unions have also been sacked. You have agreed to be interviewed for 'Youth View' as long as you can't be identified.

### Young Reporter in Ireland

You are a reporter for a youth TV/radio programme. You have been asked to make a documentary on mobile phones. You want to investigate the link between mobile phones, war in Africa and workers' rights in Latin America. But you want to present a balanced report, so you also wish to find out how mobile phones bring people closer together. The following are sample questions for interview:

- How are mobile phones relevant to your life?
- What is good and bad about mobile phones?
- What contribution do you think mobiles make to under/development?

\*See activity thirteen for explanation of free trade zone.

