



## ASSEMBLY IN SWEATSHOPS

**Continuing along the journey that mobile phones and other electronic devices make to our pockets, let's now take a look at the situation in the companies and workshops where conflict minerals are made into electronic components.**

Although there are assemblers in many countries (especially in those with lax environmental and labour regulations), most are located in China. A study published by the International Trade Union Confederation<sup>1</sup> ranks China as a Level 5 country, which means labour rights are not guaranteed; while some are recognised by law, they are not easily accessed by workers, who are often subjected to autocratic and unfair work practices. Most of our electrical appliances come from this country, with an annual value of over 3.2 million<sup>2</sup> euros.

These workshops are often called sweatshops because of the precarious working conditions inside. Large multinational companies constantly use these companies, yet condemnation from civil organisation in the West and unions/groups of local workers, as well as industry-related scandals, are just as constant.

*The complaints range from brutal schedules, working conditions comparable to a semi-slavery, various forms of child exploitation, lack of trade union rights and even cases of gender-based abuse and sexual harassment (most workers in the sweatshops are women). There are also figures that reflect extremely low wages, according to a report by the Mexican organisation CEREAL, only 1% of the sale price of a cell phone in that country ends up in the pocket of the person who made it.*

These precarious conditions have serious consequences for working people, and the stress and pressure can lead to suicide. The case that caught the media's attention was a Foxconn worker who lost a prototype of the fourth generation iPhone. Foxconn was investigated as a result of the scandal and its practices were widely condemned. Although a number of improvements were adopted, trade unions have questioned the extent to which they are implemented. It should be noted that Foxconn is the largest supplier and manufacturer for brands like Apple, Dell, Hewlett-Packard (HP), Motorola, Nintendo, Sony and Nokia.

While the general public is likely more familiar with sweatshops in the clothing industry, thanks to campaigns like Ropa Limpia (Clean Clothes) and widely covered events such as the collapse of Rana Plaza in Bangladesh and the message that a young woman found on a garment tag from a major chain this summer<sup>3</sup>, increasingly more people are coming together to raise awareness and condemn the working and wage conditions of people working in electronic sweatshops.

*These actions demand an end to the human rights violations at these sweatshops, decent wages, no child labour and workshops equipped to ensure a decent and safe workplace.*

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/survey\\_ra\\_2014\\_eng.pdf](http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/survey_ra_2014_eng.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.eldiario.es/economia/Espana-paises-respetan-derechos-laborales\\_0\\_296770922.html](http://www.eldiario.es/economia/Espana-paises-respetan-derechos-laborales_0_296770922.html)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.ropalimpia.org/es/noticias/404/las-marcas-no-han-aportado-ni-la-mitad-del-fondo-para-las-victimas-del-rana-plaza>  
<http://www.ropalimpia.org/es/noticias/399/respuesta-al-mensaje-en-la-etiqueta-de-primark>

# ACTIVITY PROPOSAL

## SHORT FILM COMPETITION



**Objective:** to launch a local campaign about the working conditions in sweatshops.

**Materials:** a mobile phone with video camera, a video camera, internet connection.

⇒ **I only wear sweat:**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g50Vcktv9b4>

⇒ **Gracias tercer mundo (Thanks, third world)**  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u0\\_EL9Yhd-g](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u0_EL9Yhd-g)

**Development:** after reading the file and watching the two videos, create a short film competition about sweatshops. Start by developing contest rules, deadlines, film length, technical specifications (if any), prizes (if applicable), jury members and judging criteria. With the initial preparations completed, you can now start promoting the competition.

The third step is to write your script, develop the content and film your video. When the jury chooses the winning short film, a projection of all the videos or simply the winners could be made, depending on the number of submissions you have.

Another alternative is for the group to work together on a video or short film, then analyse all the content collected, perhaps even holding a screening in a public place to raise awareness about this issue.

## RESOURCES FOR MORE INFORMATION

- 🌐 **Good electronics:** <http://goodelectronics.org/companies-en>
- 🌐 **Responsible public procurement. Rights of electronics workers:** <https://electronicswatch.org/en>
- 🌐 **Maquila Solidarity Network:** <https://www.maquilasolidarity.org/>
- 🌐 **The Centre for Research on Multinational Corporations (SOMO):** <https://www.somo.nl>
- 🌐 **About foxconn:**  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/11/business/dealbook/foxconn-worker-conditions.html>  
<http://www.chinalaborwatch.org/report/144>  
<https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/jun/18/foxconn-life-death-forbidden-city-longhua-suicide-apple-iphone-brian-merchant-one-device-extract>

A project from:



ALBOAN  
ONG - Jesuita - Fundazioa

[www.alboan.org](http://www.alboan.org)

For a:



[www.tecnologia Libre de conflicto.org](http://www.tecnologia Libre de conflicto.org)

Cooperate:

