

Reduce Your Global Footprint

Better manage your electronic device lifecycle

(May be even play a role in saving a species from extinction)

How your organisation purchases, uses and disposes of electronic devices impacts directly on your global footprint.

A key component of today's high end electronics (including mobile phones, tablets and laptops) is tantalum, an element extracted from the raw material coltan. Although coltan is a resource available in a number of countries (including Australia, Brazil and Canada), the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has become a cheaper source; cheaper from a dollar perspective. However the DRC has become a hot-spot for horrific levels of violence, death and rape as a number of rebel groups fight to control the DRC's coltan resource band. Rebels and the mining have overrun many of the Congo's national parks, clearing vast areas of once lush forests, leaving misery and ruin. Child labour and exploitation in mining (and war) is rife. Poverty and starvation caused by ongoing war have driven some miners, rebels and locals to hunt the Congo's endangered elephants and gorillas populations. In many areas the gorilla population has been nearly halved. Between the bush-meat trade, land clearing, fighting and ebola (a virus which is decimating the great apes) the DRC gorilla populations are in steep decline; extinction in our life time is a real prospect.

As an organisation, when we look at our electronic assets (our phones, tablets, servers or laptops) we don't think of murder, violence, rape, child exploitation or species loss; we see a tool through which we better manage our businesses and lives. We should still use our electronic assets, but to reduce our global footprints we should carefully consider our part in their overall lifecycle.

As an organisation you can take a number of simple, low-cost steps to better manage your part in your electronic device lifecycle and help reduce your global footprint:

- (1) Select electronics produced under the [Conflict-Free Smelter \(CFS\) Program](#) driven by the [Electronics Industry Citizenship Coalition \(EICC\)](#) and [Global e-Sustainability Initiative \(GeSI\)](#). Rankings of electronic manufactures and suppliers can be found at: [Conflict Minerals Company Rankings](#).
- (2) Retain your phone, laptop, tablet and other IT assets for longer before replacing or upgrading.
- (3) Recycle your high end electronics, which if sent to landfill could leach toxic elements into the soil and waterways. Organisations like the [Aussie Recycling Program](#) or [PhoneCycle Pty Ltd](#), provide a cost free mechanism through which you can recycle and allocate a donation (e.g. \$2 a phone) to worthy charities (e.g. [Jane Goodall Institute's primate conservation program](#)). Other organisations like [Planet Ark' tech collect](#), provide a free e-waste recycling service, funded by over 60 of Australia's leading technology importers and manufacturers.
- (4) Donate directly to [Gorilla Doctors](#), an organisation working to conserving wild mountain gorillas and eastern lowland gorillas through life-saving veterinary medicine and a 'One Health' approach.

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