

Striving for ethical electronics

I see you: the dozens of workers whose lives are claimed every year to make the tin that holds my phone together .



Tian Yu tried to kill herself in 2010 due to the poor working conditions at Foxconn. She emerged from a coma 12 days later with fractured hips and ribs, and paralysed from the waist down.



Huang: 'There are just three points to your life when you work at Foxconn, going to work, coming-home from work and sleeping.'



Uma was diving for tin when 4m deep underwater ditch collapsed around him.

YOUR STORY: Suge

Suge almost died when he was buried alive when a mine collapsed. His three friends working beside him were not so lucky, drowned in the mud of the landslide. He describes the crumbling wall of mud that enveloped him as he struggled to the surface, desperate to escape for his little daughter.

He had worked for 12 years on Bangka island, Indonesia, scavenging tin in 15m deep mines. This tin is used primarily as solder in consumer electronics, holding together the circuit boards, transistors and resistors in smartphones, tablets and

mobiles.

Activists say that the number of dead average 100-150 a year. Compensation is rare.

A recent investigation into tin mining discovered that phone companies including Samsung, Sony and LG are supplied by Indonesia's national tin corporation.

Your smartphone or tablet probably includes Bankanese tin, likely mined by Suge or one of the other tens of thousands of men like him.

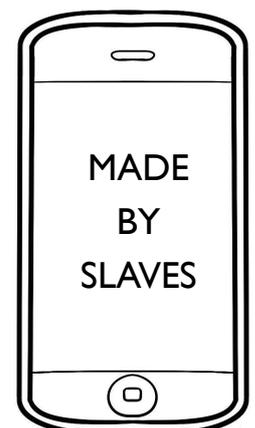
Suge described his terrible accident as 'a small sacrifice to give happiness to people in the world, to give them phones and electronics'.

Is this an sacrifice that we are willing for him to make? His leg for our phones?



Some more facts...

- A 2014 report asked 39 of the leading mobile phone manufacturing companies such as Apple and Samsung if they could show their factory workers are paid a living wage. 38 of them couldn't. The only company who could prove their factories were paying a living wage were Nokia, who have since been bought out by Microsoft.
- Many of the factories where mobile phones are assembled don't check the ages of their workers, meaning many workers can be as young as 12.
- The standard shift for an assembly line worker is 12 hours, but they usually end up working 14 hours or more in one shift, without any breaks for food or to visit the toilet, to keep up the required supply as new products come out so quickly.



I PLEDGE TO CHANGE MY ATTITUDE TOWARDS ELECTRONICS BECAUSE YOUR STORY MATTERS

'If Apple decided to build iPhones and iPads for Americans using American labour rules, two things would likely happen: The prices of iPhones and iPads would go up and Apple's profit margins would go down.' Business Insider.

FOR THINGS TO CHANGE, WE NEED TO SHOW THAT WE DO CARE.

My life...

- The most important thing we can do is to look after electronics so they last as long as possible and less are brought:
 - ⇒ Buy a phone-case to protect it if dropped
 - ⇒ Switch off phones and laptops at night to preserve battery
 - ⇒ Keep the computer hard drive as empty as possible so it can run faster (use online cloud storage)
 - ⇒ Fix things if they break - often we can even do it ourselves - www.ifixit.com has a repair guide for almost every problem!
- If we do need to upgrade/ buy something new:
 - ⇒ Choose an ethical company. The website www.ethicalconsumer.com is a great site to find out which companies rank best on their ethics. For mobiles and laptops, although none of the largest companies score higher than 10/20, Fairphone are leading the way in ethical electronics by carefully sourcing their resources, as well as making changes to the supply chain .
 - ⇒ As a less expensive option, buy a second hand phones.
 - ⇒ Sell or hand the old phone in so it can be re-used.
 - ⇒ Recycle. 65-80% of a phone is recyclable: If every single one of the 3 billion mobile phone owners recycled one phone, 240,000 tons of raw materials could be saved.

Your life...

Yan Li spent his life tweaking tiny bolts on a production line at the gigantic Foxconn factory in Shenzhen, Southern China, which manufactures iPads, Playstations and mobile-phone batteries.

Li was only known to the company by his ID number: F3839667. He stood at a whirring line all day, every day, making the same tiny mechanical motion with his wrist, for 20p an hour. Sometimes his shifts lasted for 24 hours; sometimes they stretched to 35. If he had tried to form a free trade union to change these practices, he would have been imprisoned for 12 years. After one of these terrible shifts, Li died.

Ma Xiangqian, 18, who killed himself after just three months at Foxconn, was too scared to give up his job, despite the pressure, knowing poverty awaited as thousands compete for a single post.

He slowly cracked. First, he was 'fined' from his wages for breaking two tools by accident. After being exhorted to work harder, he was eventually taken off the production line and forced to wash toilets for several weeks as punishment. He told his sister he was 'ashamed' of the way he was being treated. On January 23, he was found in a pool of blood at the foot of his dormitory block.

Some helpful resources:

- www.fairphone.com - Great ethical mobile phone for a similar price to an iPhone
- www.ifixit.com - Fantastic guide on how to fix your own electronics when they break.
- www.ethicalconsumer.com - A summary and ranking of how well companies in all areas of life deal with ethical issues.
- www.ethical.org.au/3.4.2/get-informed/shop-ethical-electronics/ - Another great website comparing how different companies source their products
- www.envirofone.com - Sell your old phone or buy a second hand one – this lowers the number of phones that need to be made in the first place. They accept damaged phones, give free one day delivery and a 6 month warranty on all the phones they sell.