

FAIRPHONE

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Game-changing pilot project proves commercial viability of reclaiming cobalt from used African batteries

Closing the Loop and Fairphone have partnered with other circular innovators, such as the Dutch government, in a project that is likely to become a game-changer for the electronics industry - proving that scrap batteries from Africa can be used to produce clean materials for the future.

Amsterdam, 30.09.2020 - Dutch social enterprises Closing the Loop (CTL) and Fairphone have announced the successful shipment of a container filled with lithium-ion batteries. The batteries were collected in Nigeria, before being shipped to Europe for safe recycling. As part of the pilot scheme, more than 5,000kg of batteries were safely collected by paying local communities in Nigeria to prevent the batteries from ending up in landfills. This approach creates local job opportunities and improves environmental conditions. The shipment of batteries arrived in Antwerp earlier in 2020, where it was received by a recycling facility.

CTL offers organizations a global service to make their technology purchases more sustainable. They directly link the commercial needs of their customers to the opportunities offered by waste collection in emerging markets. As one of CTL's first customers, Fairphone supported this service early on and aims to integrate the recycled materials in its supply chain. This shipment was also funded by a number of other CTL customers, including the sustainability-conscious Dutch government. In addition, it aligns with the European Commission's [recent proposal](#) to explore ways to reduce the export of waste.

Scrap battery collection in Nigeria offers major social and environmental benefits, as there are no safe battery recycling facilities on the African continent. As a result, batteries are often processed under dangerous health and environmental conditions, or dumped and burned in the open air along with other electronics. CTL's innovative business model makes it possible to safely collect and ship these batteries from West Africa to Europe. For Fairphone, this shipment is the first step in its long-term plan to use recycled materials such as cobalt, from regions with limited recycling infrastructure, to produce a fairer mobile phone battery. The pilot shows the tech industry that business models to counter e-waste in Africa are possible, and despite the bureaucratic difficulties, collecting and recycling batteries from Africa is achievable and even commercially viable.

Miquel Ballester, Fairphone's Design Lead comments: "At Fairphone, we want to show the industry it can be commercially successful while also making ethical choices in their business and supply chain - this project proves it's possible. It shows that recycled cobalt can not only offer a more sustainable solution for a fairer battery, but can also generate income in impoverished communities that practice urban mining. As the global energy transition to more sustainable, battery-led technology continues, and the demand for cobalt rapidly increases, we need to keep working to ensure that all sources of cobalt positively contribute to local livelihoods."

Reinhardt Smit, Closing the Loop's Supply Chain Director comments: "The main thing this pilot proved is the opportunity to source material from African waste, in a sustainable and financially sound manner. Waste compensation enables tech users to make devices waste-free, while adding to their own commercial - or social - goals. Not because it's their responsibility, but because it's an opportunity."

Please click [here](#) for the link to the whitepaper "Making a business case for African battery recycling".

Note to the editor

About Fairphone

Fairphone is building a market for ethical phones and motivating the industry to act more responsibly. We design, produce and sell smartphones to uncover the supply chain behind our products, raise awareness for the most urgent issues, and prove that it's possible to do things differently. Together with our partners and collaborators, we're working to make caring for people and the planet a natural part of doing business.

About Closing the Loop

CTL offers organisations across the globe a pragmatic service for sustainable IT purchasing. It collects electronic scrap on behalf of customers, thereby compensating their customers' new device, using a service called Waste Compensation. The service delivers its customers a positive impact and a great story. CTL's service has been widely adopted by IT users, but also by industry leaders such as T-Mobile and Samsung.