

August 25, 2009

GUATEMALA: MORE COMMUNITY CONSULTATIONS SAY NO TO MINING

BELOW: An article about 3 more Mayan communities holding consultations and saying 'No to mining, yes to life'.

For more information about community consultations and other forms of resistance to mining harms and violations: info@rightsaction.org / www.rightsaction.org

- Please re-distribute this information all around
- To get on/ off Rights Action's email list:
<http://www.rightsaction.org/lists/?p=subscribe&id=3/>
- What to do: see below

* * *

THREE COMMUNITY "CONSULTAS" ABOUT GOLDCORP'S MINING IN GUATEMALA: THREE COMMUNITIES SAY "NO A LA MINA, SÍ A LA VIDA"

August 14, 2009, by François Guindon (Rights Action), in Guatemala (francois.guindon@gmail.com)

(Community meeting in the village of Exial, municipality of San Miguel Ixtahuacán, department of San Marcos, Guatemala. All photos by Rights Action)

While the Canadian mining giant Goldcorp Inc. makes sky-high profits, quarter after quarter, for North American investors, shareholders and company directors, local Mayan Mam communities of San Miguel Ixtahuacán are struggling to defend their lives, territories and rights.

(From info@rightsaction.org or at www.rightsaction.org, one can find articles, reports and links to films documenting a long list of environmental and health harms and human rights violations caused directly or indirectly by Goldcorp's mining)

The "Frente de Defensa Miguelense" – FREDEMI – is coordinating with Mayan Mam communities in San Miguel Ixtahuacán who choose to hold legally binding community consultations regarding the operations of Goldcorp Inc on their territories.

Neither the Guatemalan State, nor the World Bank (an early investor in this mine), let alone Goldcorp Inc. itself, ever respected their various obligations to consult with and get the prior, informed consent from the local populations of San Miguel Ixtahuacán and Sipacapa, before any mining exploration and exploitation licenses were granted to "Montana Exploradora", subsidiary of Goldcorp Inc (Glamis Gold at the time).

This traditional way of community decision-making processes has existed for generations and centuries in Mayan communities. Community mayors (Alcaldes Auxiliares) and the President of the Community Development Council (COCODE) get together and call upon the villagers to discuss, debate and take decisions regarding issues that impact on the entire community.

It's a community driven, participatory democratic activity, celebrated peacefully.

THREE COMMUNITIES - LA PATRIA, CHININGÜITZ & EXIAL - SAY NO TO MINING ON THEIR LANDS

Since December 1, 2008, 18 Mayan Mam communities of San Miguel Ixtahuacán have held community consultations to discuss and debate mining, and then to express their

opposition to gold mining, that is being illegally imposed on them, as a “development” project.

These community to community consultations are now taking place, four years after Goldcorp's “Marlin mine” began operations, at least 14 years after Goldcorp (then Glamis Gold) was improperly given its first exploration licences, with no informed consultation or consent.

Local organizations – like ADISMI (Association for Integral Development of SMI) and the local Catholic parish – are working together to inform the SMI communities about mining impacts on the environment and health and about the range of human rights violations, and importantly about the people's fundamental rights to say ‘no’ to harmful “development” projects, like mining.

(Community meeting in La Patria. The community mayor explains the agenda)

("We were never consulted by our government" said this resident of Chiningüitz)

(People who disagree with mining in La Patria raise their hands. The COCODE's president counts the number of people against mining)

On Monday, August the 10th, Tuesday 11th, and Wednesday 12th, three such community consultations were held in the villages of La Patria, Chininguitz and Exial.

* * * *

Live from the local Arcángel radio, Aniseto Lopez (of ADISMI) talks about the community's right to discuss and then sign a legally binding "acta de le comunidad" in order to reject mining in their communities:

"So what's the message I have come to tell you today? You are all the owners of your own destiny. I'm not here to force anybody to take any decision; you as a community will take the decision. Is Montana Exploradora welcome on your land or not?

We will defend our lives by signing a binding act in our communities if we do not agree with Montana mining for gold on our lands. With this, we will be able to tell the "mineros": "you are not welcome on our lands. Thank-you very much for leaving us and our lives in peace".

If you decide to support the 'mineros', we can sit back like we are doing now; we will respect you and let them destroy our way of life so they can get richer and richer. Now is the time to defend our lives".

(Aniseto Lopez talking to the community of Exial)

After the Exial community mayor asked who's in favor and who's against mining, everybody gathered to sign the community act. All of three communities said "NO to

mining, YES to life", rejecting in the future any negotiation with Montana or any other mining company.

(A resident from Chiningüitz signing the Community Act)

REAL DEMOCRACY

In a profoundly undemocratic country, Mayan communities throughout the highlands of Guatemala (where hundreds of mining concessions have been improperly granted to global mining companies) are choosing to hold community and municipal consultations and are, every singly time, voting not to mining.

Neither the governments of Guatemala or Canada (home to many of these companies), nor international investors, nor Goldcorp itself are paying any attention to the democratically expressed will of the Mayan peoples; Goldcorp plows ahead (literally and figuratively) with its cyanide-leach, open-pit mine, making huge profits for North Americans, leaving harm and violations, and increasing tensions and community breakdown in their wake.

The local communities are doing everything they can to demand respect for their rights and full accountability; it is up to North Americans to partner with them, and work to ensure that our governments, companies and investors respect the democratic will of the local populations and to be accountable for the harms and violations we are causing.

* * *

FOR MORE INFORMATION about and/or how to get involved in efforts in the USA and Canada, to hold Goldcorp Inc, investors in Goldcorp (like the Canada Pension Plan, and numerous pension funds across North America) and other global companies and investors accountable for the harms and violations caused by their companies:

info@rightsaction.org, www.rightsaction.org

TO DONATE FUNDS to indigenous and campesino groups resisting the harms and violations of mining &, hydro-electric dams, make tax deductible donations to “rights action” and mail to:

UNITED STATES: Box 50887, Washington DC, 20091-0887

CANADA: 552-351 Queen St. E, Toronto ON, M5A-1T8

CREDIT-CARD DONATIONS: <http://rightsaction.org/contributions.htm>

Upon request, Rights Action can provide a proposal of which community organizations resisting the harms and violations caused by mining in Guatemala and Honduras we are working with and channeling your funds to.