

Rights Action – May 15, 2011
Goldcorp Impunity Watch in Honduras

BLOOD POISONING AT GOLDCORP'S "SAN MARTIN" MINE IN HONDURAS



On May 9, Rights Action published an article "The real cost of gold in Honduras: Goldcorp & Honduran regime cover-up blood & urine testing & poisoning at San Martin mine":
http://rightsaction.org/articles/Honduras_gold_cost_050911.html

BELOW

- Youtube 10 minute film about health harms at Goldcorp's mine in Honduras. This film features Carlos Amador who is in Vancouver for education and activism work related to Goldcorp's AGM, May 18, in Vancouver
- Photo-essay by Karen Spring: The Real Cost of Gold: Personal Stories of Recurring Health Harms

WHAT TO DO: write Goldcorp to ask about the blood poisoning cover-up (See below)

- Please re-distribute this information all around
- To get on/off Rights Action's listserv: www.rightsaction.org
- Rights Action's Facebook group: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Rights-Action/176850879028427?ref=ts>

On Youtube:

ALL THAT GLITTERS ISN'T GOLD - A STORY OF EXPLOITATION AND RESISTANCE

- 10 min. trailer: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-tmqXc5rX8s>
- Complete, hour-long documentary: <http://www.rightsaction.org/video/gold>

All That Glitters Isn't Gold tells the stories of community members residing near Goldcorp's San Martin open-pit gold mine in Honduras' Siria Valley. The first mine to be developed under Honduras' controversial new mining law that was passed in the wake of Hurricane Mitch in 1998, the San Martin mine opened in 2000 and is the largest open-pit heap-leach mine in Honduras. Community members discuss the grave complications they have experienced since the mine began operating -- from rampant health problems to a lack of water -- contesting the company's claims that the mine has been a model of healthy development for the community and has caused no adverse effects.

THE REAL COST OF GOLD: Personal stories of recurring health harms

By Karen Spring, May 2011

Manuela Oreyda Velasquez is a mother of 14 children living in the small village of El Pedernal, El Porvenir in Siria Valley. She and two of her sons – 14-year old Abel and 17-year old Darixón - have suffered recurring skin rashes and hair loss since 2003.



Manuela showing the small skin rash that Abel has on his back. She mentions that this particular rash is not as bad as the ones he has before and that they keep coming and going all over his body.

The family and the local community organization that works with families in the region suffering from similar health problems (the Siria Valley Environmental Defense Committee), are convinced the health problems were caused by water and air contamination due to heavy metals and to the poisonous chemicals used at the San Martin Mine that operated from 2000-2009.

"Abel's hair started falling out when he was very young [at age 6]. In 2007, the skin rashes started as his skin became very itchy. Two years after, his skin problems began coming and going away. They itch and burn and he would often have difficulty lying down and going to sleep at night... from 2003 until now, his health problems continue and he has not been cured."

14-year old Abel sits impatiently beside his mother as she explains his health problems. He is somewhat small for his age, shy and waiting to be dismissed so he can go to the fields and help his brother harvest the family's bean crops and work in the field.

The symptoms of the blood poisoning seems far from the 14-year old's mind but his mom explains how he would cry and refuse to go to school when he was younger for fear that other children would see the large chunks of hair that had fallen out of his scalp.

Born and raised in El Pedernal, Manuela talks about the differences before the arrival of Canada's Glamis Gold in 2000 (bought out by Goldcorp in 2006).

"Before the company started, I never saw children losing hair like my children ... many of the forests have been destroyed and we are seeing illnesses caused by the contaminated water."

In 2007, Manuela & two of her sons, Abel and 17-year old Darixón, had blood and urine samples taken by the Honduran government (after years of being pressured by local residents and the Siria Valley Committee, and by increasing international attention to the harms and violations caused by Goldcorp's mine) to properly investigate why no skin creams and medication would cure the itchy skin rashes and hair loss that Manuela, her sons and many people in the region are suffering.

The samples, accompanied by individuals contracted by Goldcorp, were sent to a laboratory in Columbia where the blood and urine were analyzed for levels of arsenic, mercury, lead and cyanide.

In early April 2011, almost 4 years after the blood and urine tests were taken, Manuela got a call from the local health clinic asking her to come to the clinic to pick up the results. When she arrived, government and local health officials verbally gave her the levels of lead, mercury and arsenic in her, Abel and Darixón's blood. "They lied to us. They said they would give us the results if we went ... [but instead] they gave us the results verbally but nothing official [in writing]."

Manuela and her family were given the levels of lead, mercury and arsenic found in the samples, given no explanation as to what they mean, offered no treatment and then asked to sign some forms. Manuela never saw the documents they asked her to sign and she refused. Manuela and local activists believe the papers are related to a scheme to cover up the government and Goldcorp's responsibility in the health and environmental problems.

On April 12, 2011, Manuela and her family received the official results that were obtained by a lawyer working with the solidarity organization CEPRODEC (Center for the Promotion of

Community Development) representing the 62 individuals, confirming the levels given to her verbally days before.

Her sons, Abel and Darixón's blood lead levels were confirmed to be over twice the levels of blood-lead content for children recommended as safe by the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Their blood lead levels are alarming particularly for their age group as children are much more sensitive to lead than adults and the physical damages are much more severe and long-term.

The day after Manuela and her family were given the formal blood results, Manuela received a call from local health authorities from San Ignacio (one of the three municipalities in Siria Valley) offering to take her, Abel and Darixón in an ambulance to the public hospital in Tegucigalpa, all expenses covered and to be treated based on the 2007 blood test results.

Like many individuals and families in Siria Valley, Manuela was instantly suspicious. For years, local health officials in San Ignacio, like Goldcorp, have denied the contamination to be an issue in the region and locals suspect they are part of the scheme to cover up the health and environmental problems caused and fiercely denied by the government and Goldcorp.

Dr. Juan Almeyda, a Honduran doctor and ecologist and the Environmental Committee also point out, that the results are from tests taken almost 4 years ago and that new ones need to be completed before any treatment begins or is offered.

* * *

Francis is the young, timid mother of Eder, a cute 3-year old boy that has suffered from hair loss for over one year.



“He started itchy different places on his head and then the hair began falling out.”



The family lives in the same community as Manuela's family, El Pedernal, where unfortunately, a lot of adults and children suffer from similar problems.

Unlike Manuela's family, Francis and her children have not been tested for traces of heavy metals in their blood. Eder is an example of one of the many children most likely affected by the contamination caused by the open-pit cyanide leaching process used at the San Martin Mine but whose family does not have the economic resources to investigate and treat his health problem.

Francis mentions that she has taken her son to the local health clinic and applied creams that she was told would help the hair to grow back. Looking at Eder, it is obvious that the treatment has not worked as at least 5 clear spots of irritated skin can be seen on his head where his hair has fallen out.

Many people in Siria Valley suffer from the same problems. Goldcorp and the Honduran Government deny that the mining operation has anything to do with these problems.

WHAT TO DO

Send letters to Goldcorp, with copies to your media, your own politician, to the Canada Pension Plan, to your own pension fund (if it is invested in Goldcorp):

Why did Goldcorp not release this information 4 years ago?
Will Goldcorp accept responsibility for the health and environmental harms and provide full compensation and reparations as part of a necessary health attention program in the Siria Valley?
Will Goldcorp include complete medical/health and environmental considerations & reparations measures in the closure plan?

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WHAT TO DO - DONATE FUNDS

Since 1995, Rights Action has been funding the community development, environmental justice and human rights defense work of community based organizations in Guatemala and Honduras that are resisting harms and violations caused by Goldcorp's mines in both countries.

TAX-DEDUCTIBLE DONATIONS: Make check payable 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>

GOLDCORP Annual Shareholder Meeting, May 18, 2011, Vancouver, Education and Activism

To get involved: miningjustice@gmail.com, <http://goldcorpoutofguatemala.com/>

DELEGATION to Guatemala (JULY 3-10, 2011) "ELECTIONS; NO DEMOCRACY"

Join a Rights Action delegation to Guatemala from July 3 to 10, 2011. This pre-elections delegation will speak with human rights and social movement organizations struggling to create conditions for truly democratic processes, and limit the control organized crime and big business hold over the state through illegal networks of influence.
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MORE INFORMATION

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