

HEALTH HARMS IN SAN MIGUEL IXTAHUACAN WHERE GOLDCORP Inc. OPERATES AN OPEN-PIT, CYANIDE LEECHING GOLD MINE

Rights Action

PHOTO ESSAY

February 20, 2009

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During a series of 20 interviews, conducted in December 2008 - January 2009 by Francois Guindon and Karen Spring, Rights Action documented many people in villages in San

Miguel Ixtahuacan suffering rashes, hair loss and other health problems that had not been present before Goldcorp began its gold mining operations in 2004.

Of the participants in the interviews, more than 60% reported that someone in their immediate family were suffering from types of health problems they had never experienced prior to 2007.

From Rights Action's work in the Goldcorp Inc. gold mining-affected communities in Honduras, similar skin rashes, hair loss and health problems have been documented after Goldcorp began its mining operations in Honduras in 2000.

(Reports and information about Goldcorp in Honduras available on request.)

BELOW:

The pictures and stories are samples of the health impacts that mining is apparently causing in communities near Goldcorp's "Marlin" mine.

All of the individuals in the photos are Mayan Mam.

As in Honduras, Goldcorp denies their operation is causing environmental and health harms – harms that will remain in these communities long after the company finishes its mining activity in the region.

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Please forward these articles and interviews far 'n' wide, including to doctors, nurses, health experts and others interested in further investigation of these problems.

WHAT TO DO: See below.

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Maria, the Mayan Mam mother of this 6 month year old newborn (below) ...



... lives in the community of San Jose Ixcaniche, one of the communities most affected to date by Goldcorp's "Marlin" Mine.

This photo was taken in December, 2008. Maria explained that three months prior to this photo, her baby started getting skin rashes, concentrated mostly on her arms and torso, and shortly after that, began losing her hair. Julia and her family bath and wash in a river close to her house, near the mine.

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Juana, a young girl enrolled in a school in San Jose Ixcaniche ...



... has itchy and scabby sores all over her right arm.

* * *

Julia, the mother of baby Fernando (1.4 yrs old), said:



"I am scared that I am going to lose my son because of the number of rashes on his body. For 3 months, he could not sleep because he was always itching himself and the rashes

would open and blood and pus would come out of the wounds He has had rashes for 11 months."

Julia, the mother of baby Fernando, has used at least 10 different types of creams and lotions on the rashes that her son has on his feet, legs, torso, arms and neck. Nothing has helped cure the skin problems.

* * *

A 13-year old boy ...



... suffering from dry skin that cracks, itches and bleeds. This type of skin problem is not unique - many children suffer from what was described to us as "iguana skin".

* * *

Another new born baby ...



... affected by skin rashes.

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Goldcorp Inc. explains that health problems as being caused by bad hygiene, lack of water (the company uses 250,000 litres/hour of the local water supply, even as creeks and wells are drying up!) and fleas.

Local people interviewed told us that they know the difference between the appearance of chicken pox, flea bites and the current unexplained rash outburst over the past year.

* * *

This 1.1 month year old baby died.





This baby belonged to a family including two daughters of 5 yrs and 12 years old, a mother and father.

The baby (in the photos above) passed away in July 2008 for reasons that are unknown to the family and the community.

These photos, taken shortly before the baby's death, show the skin problems – rashes and open wounds.

This same family continues to experience unexplained skin problems similar to others seen in their neighbours and community members. Below are photos of the baby's mother and sister that live in the community of San Jose Ixcaniche.





Rights Action learned that the father abandoned his family. The mother has been left to take care of the children and mourn the death of her newborn baby. The mother has no source of income and is unable to seek medical attention for herself and her children that suffer from rashes.

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Two young boys ...



... from a school in one of the communities in San Miguel Ixtahuacan. We were told during an interview that many

children, especially at school, are afraid of letting other children see their skin problems.

One teacher commented that many students refuse to take off their sweaters out of fear and shame that other children will tease them about their rashes.

13 year old Carlos ...



... with rashes on the right side of his face.

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Another example of "iguana skin" ...



... in a young child.

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This is who Emeterio Perez is ...





Emeterio, a 73 year old man from the community of San Jose Ixcaniche in San Miguel Ixtahuacan. In less than a year, Emeterios health has dramatically changed.

He started to experience pain that started in his feet and slowly spread throughout his body.

Then, dry, itchy rashes that started on his feet broke out all over his body. As shown in the picture above, his stomach began to swell to an unbelievable size as he began to feel weaker and weaker. Emeterio told us during his interview, that another man in the same community who has since passed away, experienced the same symptoms.

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After completing this recent spate of interviews with people in communities in San Miguel Ixtahuacan who have rashes, hair loss and other unexplained health problems that have arisen in the last year, it is obvious to Rights Action and the local population that the operation of Goldcorp's mine has worsened the health of these mining affected communities.

One interview participant stated:

"What is going to happen after ? If there is an illness or two, three, four, five ... or ten illnesses, what is the company going to do? Will they be cured quickly? Will they leave big hospitals or leave them to die? ... The people die and they won't care. They will leave and won't care what happens to the people."

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MORE INFORMATION

For more info about health issues and the context in which Goldcorp Inc. is operating its "Marlin" mine, read: "Who Is Emeterio Perez" –

http://www.rightsaction.org/articles/Emetrio_Perez_013109.html

See report "Investing in Conflict" about Goldcorp's operations across the

Americas: <http://rightsaction.org/Reports/research.pdf>.

See film "All That Glitters Isn't

Gold" (<http://www.rightsaction.org/video/gold/>) that documents health and environmental harms related to Goldcorp's "San Martin" mine in Honduras.

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WHAT TO DO

There is no easy way to help the mainly Mayan Mam villagers being harmed by this mine. Goldcorp Inc. has the full support of the governments of Canada and Guatemala; early on, the World Bank was an investor in and supporter of this mine.

It is fundamental that North American citizens hold Goldcorp Inc, its investors and shareholders and the American and Canadian governments accountable for the environmental and health harms and human rights violations being caused by Goldcorp Inc. in Guatemala, and elsewhere.

American and Canadian citizens should write to - and keep on writing to - their politicians, making them aware of these situations, demanding that our governments prioritize global human rights and environmental concerns over global business interests, demanding that our politicians use their power and authority to help hold our corporations accountable if/ when they violate human rights and/or cause environmental and health harms.

Canadians and Americans should write to and keep writing to their own Pension Funds and Investment Brokers – including the Canadian Pension Plan, to find out what types of corporations and businesses they are investing in, to demand that our investors prioritize global human rights and environmental concerns over profits, to insist that investments be withdrawn if/ when profits are being made at the expense of environmental and health harms and/ or human rights violations.

This is slow, long-term work. We need to make our governments, companies and investment firms accountable to us in all facets of global economic relations and policies.

ADDRESSES

Send a copy of this photo-essay, along with your own letter, to your own politicians, media, the company and your own investment firms or pension fund, demanding a response to your letters of concern and protest about this corporate and investment activity.

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Come on an EDUCATIONAL-ACTIVIST DELEGATION TO GUATEMALA, APRIL 12-17:

Rights Action is leading an educational trip to Guatemala
and the Goldcorp Inc-mining affected regions. To join this
delegation: info@rightsaction.org, www.rightsaction.org.

Go to GOLDCORP's ANNUAL PUBLIC SHAREHOLDER MEETING:

May 22, 2009, Fairmont Waterfront Hotel, Vancouver: 900
Canada Place Way, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada,
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http://rightsaction.org/articles/San_Miguel_022009.htm

