

Field School's students Experiences
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Social Impact of Illegal Mining in the Tres Islas Indigenous Community

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Some of the social impacts of the illegal mining activities in the community of “Tres Islas” are the impacts in the education of the youth and children. For instance, the teenagers are having trouble getting scholarships because they live on a mining territory, therefore, according to a scholarship program, they are considered well off but this may not be the case because they are not always involved in mining. So they are refused financial help and scholarships. This causes the youth to have trouble getting higher degrees and continuing their education and fulfill their goals.

Also, the poor level of education in the community is deterring them to participate to the scholarship competitions successfully. Therefore, there is a huge disproportion in opportunities for the youth in the community. When talking with the children, we realized that most of the children want to get a good education in order to become, for example, nurses and doctors. But they all realized that they would have to study in Puerto Maldonado or in the United States to accomplish their dreams and goals.

The children in the community mostly aspired professions not in the community territory, which seems to show that they aspire for things that they don't have in the community. Even if most of them seemed to know a lot about mining activities in their community, it was really secondary in their drawings, and none of them seemed to have the aspiration to be involved in mining when they grow up. Education seemed to be in the forefront of their aspirations. The teacher of the community school, who is from Puerto Maldonado, admitted that she thought that if the children get their degrees in Puerto Maldonado there was a low chance they would return to work in the community. But according to the drawings of the children, there is a connection to the family and the territory. They were drawing all their families together in the community. Also, most of them drew open doors on the houses, which seems to mean they hadn't lost their confidence and openness toward strangers, even though their lands have been destroyed by strangers. The children also showed a strong connection with the community lands. For example, all of their drawings contained trees which were the first element they drew. Also, some of them were able to point out different trees, explaining to us what fruits were produced. Also, on almost all the drawings we could see the Madre de Dios River with fish which unfortunately has high levels of mercury now because of the illegal mining practices.

The illegal mining has not only affected the youth but the future of the community as a whole. The community is very interested in cultural tourism but mining has drastically affected the possibilities for cultural tourism because of the devastation and contamination of the environment in and around the community. They are trying to use ecotourism and cultural

tourism to provide a beneficial avenue of community-sufficiency. With the community accomplishing their goals, the youth also gains opportunities to accomplish their dreams.