

## (1) EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



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Governments, public institutions, and national and international companies that promote the extractive model of development in Honduras maintain that the expansion of mining activities increases job opportunities and produces revenue for national development. In their promotion of mining, these organizations and their supporters often ignore, minimize, or conceal the negative effects of mining on human security, the quality of life of communities, and the environment.

To gain a complete picture of the impact of the extractive model, it is therefore important to make visible and evident the loss of health and quality of life, water contamination, the deterioration of soils, forests and biodiversity, and the conflict that destroys the social fabric of the communities affected by the expansion of mining. This is precisely the purpose of the study entitled “Mining, Environmental Health and Human Security: Evaluation Results of Quality of Life and Water in Abisinia (Colón), Nueva Esperanza (Atlántida) and San Francisco Locomapa (Yoro), and the Responsibility of the State in Honduras” conducted by two Jesuit organizations: the College for Public Health and Social Justice at Saint Louis University (SLU) in Missouri, United States, and the Reflection, Research and Communication Team (ERIC) in Progreso, Honduras.

In the conduct of this research, the SLU and ERIC research team surveyed 206 households in the rural communities of Abisinia, Nueva Esperanza, and San Francisco Locomapa, and tested 136 samples of home water and of water from 9 watersheds or basins to evaluate water quality in the three study communities. To interpret the results of the surveys, human security was used as an alternative methodological framework to the traditional concept of security because it sheds light on the impact of the extractive model on economic, food, health and environmental security, on personal security, and of the community, and the political security of the residents as Honduran citizens. Unlike traditional state-centered notions of security, human security is person-centered and requires the creation of political, social, environmental, economic, military, and cultural systems that together give people the building blocks of survival, livelihood, and dignity. Also, the ecological model in environmental health was used as an integrating method to understand the person and their quality of life not in an isolation but as part of a specific context of family, community, society, and state.

The results of the household surveys show that most of the people in Abisinia, Nueva Esperanza, and San Francisco Locomapa live in a situation of vulnerability and insecurity characterized by poverty, low levels of education, food insecurity, lack of safe water and adequate sanitation services, lack of health insurance and access to affordable and quality health services. National data indicate that the vulnerability and insecurity profile of these communities is similar to that of rural towns and poor urban neighborhoods that make up 68% of the population in Honduras.

Part of this insecurity profile is the violence experienced by the population, especially the poorest, in Honduras: the immediate and visible violence of trauma and death that is shown daily in the media, and the slow and invisible violence that persists through time and that gradually weakens health and shortens life due to the lack of basic public services, food and water insecurity, and preventable diseases that were not avoided due to lack of access to insurance and health services. The Covid-19 pandemic has further eroded the already precarious health system in Honduras and has increased the vulnerability of communities in need of preventive and medical care.

Furthermore, in their survey responses, the residents of Abisinia, Nueva Esperanza and San Francisco Locomapa expressed their concern about water and their belief that mining causes environmental problems. They also said that they do not believe that mining can bring benefits to their communities, and that they disagree with the influx of mining projects into their communities. This rejection of mining is shared by an increasing number of citizens and municipalities that have declared themselves in resistance against extractive industries and policies, and have decided to be free of mining, which is evidence that there is no national consensus favorable to extractive policies and practices in Honduras.

Also, this study demonstrates that the human insecurity experienced in communities like Abisinia, Nueva Esperanza, and San Francisco Locomapa is the result of the failure of the Honduran state captured by extractive elites organized in networks of power, corruption, and impunity. This failure keeps the state from

complying with the minimum functions of protecting the national territory, preventing crime and threats to citizen security, protecting essential freedoms and rights, promoting education, health care, investment in infrastructure and economic development, and regulating property and the use of environmental goods. The failed state in Honduras and its extractive policies seeks to sustain itself with militarized security policies that, as evidenced in this study, have produced a stagnation and decline in the indicators of human security, social progress, and peace.

In the face of predatory extractivism, popular resistance to mining also expresses the need to seek alternative ways of economic development, social and political coexistence, and protection of natural resources in Honduras and in other countries. Transitions to post-extractivism that have already been proposed seek alternative ways to eradicate poverty, to sustainably use and protect natural resources such as water and land, and to value traditional knowledge and practices of health care, food production, and environmental sustainability.

From a faith perspective, Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si* also points to alternative paths to the extractive model of development based on a vision of integral ecology and ecological conversion founded on the ethical principle of the common good. The common good is defined in *Laudato Si* as a principle based on the human person endowed with basic and inalienable rights ordered to his or her integral development. This principle can be understood in light of this study as economic security, food security, health and environmental security, security of the person and the community, and the political security of the citizens of a country. *Laudato Si* affirms that it is the obligation of society and especially of the state to defend the common good and ensure that decisions on extractive industries' projects are not dominated by selfish and short-term prospects, but instead be informed by the sincere concern for the good of all citizens, especially of the most vulnerable, as well as for the good of the earth, our common home.

With the presentation of this report, the research team of SLU and ERIC fulfills its commitment to obtain and offer rigorous evidence that serves as an instrument for social and political change and the promotion of the community's health and well-being. We hope that this report contributes to the search for alternative ways of social, political, and environmental coexistence that fulfill the aspiration of all Hondurans, especially the most vulnerable, to live lives with full health and dignity in healthy environments.

“Mining, Development, and Justice in Honduras: A Community-based Initiative for Education and Advocacy”

MINING, ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH, AND HUMAN SECURITY: EVALUATION RESULTS OF THE QUALITY OF LIFE AND WATER IN ABISINIA (COLÓN), NUEVA ESPERANZA (ATLÁNTIDA) AND SAN FRANCISCO LOCOMAPA (YORO), AND THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE STATE IN HONDURAS

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