

- On island nations, like the Solomons, it is very difficult for governments to address the issues and control the impacts because administratively the capacity does not exist.

The point is that there have been huge increases in mining activity over the past 5-10 years directly related to trade liberalization. In most cases the vast majority of the benefits flow to the political classes with poorer people and especially women and indigenous people tending to be marginalized and worse off.

The forces driving this upsurge in mining are:

- trade liberalization
- investment liberalization
- weak environmental laws
- gold prices
- richer deposits in non-industrialized countries

From 1988-1993, 75 countries changed their mining laws to meet the demands of foreign investment. As one country liberalized mining laws others were persuaded to do so as well in order not to be left behind. This usually meant relaxing foreign ownership, removing regulations, providing tax holidays, and so on. In Africa 33 countries have recently liberalized and standardized their mining laws, under UNDP (United Nations Development Program) coordination, in order to facilitate mining development.

The perception has been that the impacts of mining are localized but this is untrue. The impacts are very large, very widespread, and have major social and environmental consequences:

- (1) There was civil war in Bougainville with 122 executions and 40 villages burnt; in Freeport 900-3000 (depending upon whether one uses government or non-government statistics) died in reprisals in 1977. During the 8 months from October, 1994, to June, 1995, 16 people were killed.
- (2) In Ok Tedi 400 square kilometres of forest and 80 kilometres of river downstream from the mine have been drastically affected, with that stretch of the Ok Tedi River effectively being totally devoid of aquatic fauna.
- (3) In Grasberg/Ertsberg (aka Freeport) there is total destruction of the Ajkwa River and its tributaries.
- (4) At Marcopper 145 metric tonnes of tailings are spread over 50 kilometres of bay floor; 35 kilometres of the Boal River is biologically dead.
- (5) At Panguna (Bougainville) all-aquatic life in the 480 kilometre river system is dead.

The scale is very large, social impacts are large, and mining is accelerating.