

# New Minamata Disease outbreak (I)

In the last 20 years, the ASGM practice of using mercury has been found all over Indonesia. Every year, more than 400 tonnes of mercury gets used in ASGM. At many ASGM sites, the environment and the local food chain has been contaminated with mercury. Over a period of time, we find the severe health impacts in the communities - especially in infants and children under 15 years of age. Since April 2014, BaliFokus and Medicuss Foundation teams have discovered more and more communities and children suspected of suffering mercury poisoning. Source and photo credit: BaliFokus & Medicuss Foundations.



Zaskia, 4 years old, born with clubfoot, also called Congenital Talipes, a congenital deformity involving one or both feet may have been triggered by mercury. The affected foot appears to have been rotated internally at the ankle. Her house is surrounded by ball-mills that use mercury, but her father and mother are not involved in the gold business in any way.



Baby Jasmine, 6 months, born with deformed fingers. Her mother is a housewife, her father works in mining site and openly burns the amalgam to remove the mercury, very often by himself.



Baby Iqbal, 13 months, suffers from frequent seizures, hyper-salivation, nutrition problems, and muscular dystrophy. His mother is a housewife and his father is a miner. They keep a small amount of mercury in an open cup in the kitchen. Their house is quite far from the ball-mills centre but children in their neighbourhood still suffer from numerous health problems including juvenile cataracts and hydrocephalus.



Rifky, 2.5 years old, his abnormally-shaped head shape was caused by synostosis (microcephaly). Since 2-months of age, he has suffered from seizures, hypersalivation and non-stop crying. His mother is a housewife and his father a gold miner. During her pregnancy his mother was exposed to mercury in their village that was surrounded by ball-mills and gold shops. When she delivered her deformed child, her husband divorced her immediately and returned her to her family (elder sister). Since his first birthday, his mother has taken Rifky to a traditional baby massage therapist monthly and learned how to massage her baby by herself. He is now calmer and his jobless mother has improved her skills on how to care for her baby.



Dita, 9 years old, was born normal but growing up as a quiet girl. When she was 3 years old, she started to show seizures or convulsions, muscle atrophy, contractures, hyper-saliva, delayed development and malnourished. Her father left her to work in another gold mining site and never return. Her mother was a gold burner. During the peak period of gold rush, about 10-20 miners burned the amalgam at the backyard and celebrated the gold boom. Gradually, Dita's health is degenerated.



Rini, 15 years old, suffers from contractures, medical condition with permanent shortening of a muscle or joint usually in response to prolonged hypertonic spasticity in a concentrated muscle area, such as in seen in the tightest muscle of people with condition like cerebral palsy, and atrophy extremely muscle. Her mother works in gold mining sites and working squatting inside the mercury tainted water for 6-8 hours a day including during her pregnancy. When she was baby, her mother also took her to the site and left her lying in the tent until her mother called off the day. Her mother and uncle burned the amalgam at the backside of the kitchen, near her open bedroom.



Santi, 11 years old, born normal, very often has seizures and convulsions, cerebral palsy and muscle weakness. She was born normal until 2 years old when her mother realised that her daughter could not sit properly and has shown a very slow development. Her mother left her at the hospital and later she was taking care by her aunty who took her out from the hospital. She is reliant mostly on Pediasure milk.