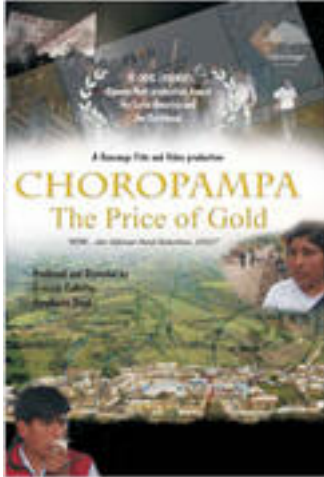


‘Choropampa’: US Broadcast Premier

The award –winning documentary ‘Choropampa- The Price of Gold’ had its US broadcast premiere in September on a television station that reaches a million households in the very region of Colorado where Newmont Mining, the corporation responsible for the mercury spill reported in the film, has its head offices.



The film, which took nearly three years to complete, looks into the effects of a mercury spill from a Newmont tanker in the village of Choropampa near the Yanacocha mine, the biggest gold mine in South America where mercury is routinely used for the extraction of gold.

Newmont owns more than 51% of the Yanacocha mine and was responsible for the spilling of 332 pounds of mercury in the village of Choropampa. The documentary contrasts scenes of poor Peruvian villagers scooping up pounds of mercury with their bare hands against US scientists relating how they have to be fully equipped with protective suits and breathing apparatus to clean up the contents of a thermometer.

In statements reminiscent of those from Union Carbide after the Bhopal disaster, and amidst plausible claims of corruption in the ministry of health, Newmont’s lawyers claim that there is no evidence of ongoing health ailments on account of the spill. But the villagers voice is loud and clear.

The documentary gives room for the villagers to speak about the effects of the spill on their health and it records the trajectory of the village organisation for compensation and justice, from the internal discussions of how the struggle should be run to clashes with the police as the villagers block off the road to the mine.

The Denver-based mining company is heavily criticised in the documentary for failing to adhere to standard safety precautions, and for contempt for the local population after the spill.

Heather Draper of Rocky Mountain News reported that Kirby McClure, programming manager at Colorado’s KBDI television decided to show the film because of its local angle. Viewers will have seen the local corporation’s treatment of the Peruvian victims of the tragedy.

"Despite the depiction in the film of people continuing to experience illness due to the mercury, the remediation was completed, and ongoing testing by Peruvian health authorities indicates there are no long-term impacts to the community," Newmont spokesman Doug Hock told Draper.

U.S. lawyers representing 1,000 residents along the path of the spill have sued Newmont, claiming the villagers have sustained "severe and permanent physical injuries and disabilities" from the spill.

WACC supported the distribution of the documentary amongst grassroots groups.