

**11 June 2008**

## **People from the Portsmouth Diocese Say No to 'Dirty' Gold**

Over 200 people visited the Pure Gold? photo exhibition last week at Southampton Solent University Conference Centre, including Cabinet Minister, Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills, Rt Hon John Denham MP and the Mayor and Mayoress of Southampton.

CAFOD's exhibition, which looked at the reality behind the glamour of gold, attracted people of all ages across the city, and showed the impact of irresponsible gold mining on communities all over the world.

Visitors were able to see for themselves how gold mining has affected the water supplies of the people of Honduras and hear the stories of individual families who now either have to travel a long way to get water or buy water which can cost them a quarter of their income. Some families have to exist on one small bucket full a day.

A special speaker from CAFOD partner Indigenous Peoples' Links, Andy Whitmore, also gave a talk on Saturday about the issues facing the indigenous people of the Philippines and namely the Subanon people of Mount Canatuan who had to watch their sacred mountain being destroyed to make way for a mine.

'We featured a photo of one lady who tried to stand up to the bulldozers when they came to demolish her house without her consent. She found a gun pointed at her and was forced to move,' said Lynda Mussell, CAFOD's Diocesan Manager.

'One of the most moving photos Andy showed us was that of a householder who was continuing to hold out against the mining company, even though it had torn down every other house around it. The house just stood on its own in the midst of tons of rubble. We were all stunned by that person's strength and courage to stay there in the face of such overwhelming opposition.'

Comments made in the visitors' book at the exhibition stated that it was 'deeply moving' and 'really makes you think and want to do something'.

Visitors were asked to help by emailing their pension fund and asking them to use their influence to stop mining companies harming people and the environment. Almost all of us who are pension fund members have a stake in mining companies which gives us the power to call for change. Mining projects that harm people and cause pollution are also more likely to be disrupted or shut down and so can be a financial risk for our pensions too. For more information and to take action, please go to [www.cafodpuregold.net](http://www.cafodpuregold.net)

Last year over 4,000 people from the diocese used their people power in a similar way and petitioned jewellers to use their influence with their suppliers to clean up the gold industry. This petition was joined with 45,000 other signatures across England and Wales, all of which persuaded seven major jewellery chains to pledge to work towards sourcing cleaner gold, both in their own supply chain and across the industry.

'We are so grateful to the people of this diocese for their help with such an important campaign.' said Lynda, 'Every individual action taken helps us get a step closer to our goal – to ensure that gold mining is a blessing, not a curse, for people in developing countries'.

#### Notes to Editors

1. **For more information about this press release** contact Lynda Mussell (Diocesan Manager) on 07920 586912.
2. **Photos:**
  - The Mayor and Mayoress welcoming Andy Whitmore on behalf of the people of Southampton at his first talk on Saturday 7 June 2008
  - Ann Thorp (CAFOD volunteer), Maria Malson (CAFOD volunteer), The Right Hon John Denham MP Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills and Lynda Mussell, CAFOD Diocesan Manager.
3. **CAFOD** is the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development which works with communities in over 50 countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America, supporting people to find their own solutions to poverty. The agency works with all people regardless of race, gender, religion or nationality.
5. **Mining facts:**
  - One gold ring creates 18 tonnes (equivalent to two double-decker buses) of waste rock that may leach toxic metals and acid.
  - Mineral-rich developing countries have some of the slowest economic growth rates in the world - and the highest poverty rates.
  - Britons spend £2bn on gold jewellery every year – the cost to poor countries is pollution, disease and war.
  - The UK is a major centre for the global mining industry with three of the biggest mining companies in the world based in London and 70 gold mining companies listed there.

*[Sources: No Dirty Gold report and CAFOD report]*

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NEWS RELEASE