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 that may have been triggered by mercury. Thealigned leg appears to have some limited attempt at straightening, and the foot is usually pointed downward. Zaskia’s father and mother are not involved in the gold business in any way.

Rini, 15 years old, suffers from contractures, a medical condition with permanent shortening of a muscle or joint usually in response to prolonged hypertonic spasticity in a muscle group. In Rini’s case, her mother called off the job. Her mother and uncle burned the amalgam at the backyard, 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 stopped breast feeding her. Later she was taken care by her aunty who took her out from the hospital. She is reliant mostly on Pediasure milk.

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 10-20 miners burned the amalgam at the backyard and celebrated the gold boom. Gradually, Dita’s health is degenerated.

Rifky, 2.5 years old, his abnormally shaped head shape was caused by synostosis (microcephaly), a condition where bones in the skull grow together too early, causing the head to be abnormally small. Rifky’s father and mother divorced her after birth and leaving her in the backyard near her open bedroom.

Baby Jasmine, 6 months, born with deformed fingers. Her mother is a housewife, her father used to mining gold in the backyard. She has replacement of her left finger to make her more comfortable.

Baby Iqbal, 13 months, suffers from frequent seizures, hyper-salivation, nutrition problems, and muscular dystrophy. His mother works in gold mining sites and working everyday under mercury. His mother took him for a gold plantation, and told her baby not to touch him. Later, his mother and uncle burned the amalgam at the backyard of the kitchen, near her open bedroom.

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