

## Multiple exposure of Amerindian people to toxic metals: how co-building the communities outreach and empowerment?

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All over the Amazon region, high levels of mercury (Hg) are regularly measured in Amerindian people<sup>1</sup> and more recently high lead (Pb) levels in blood were also detected in Brazil and in French Guiana<sup>2</sup>. For most authors, the human Hg contamination is generally associated with the artisanal gold-mining activities<sup>3</sup>, while the main source of exposure are the diet and food practices. For instance, high levels of mercury have been measured in human hair and urine of the Nahua people, in the Peruvian Amazon, far from any extractive activities. Both Pb and Hg exposures are serious hazards that can affect the cognitive and behavior development. Regular fish and manioc consumption and concomitant mercury and lead exposure in Amerindian communities has important social, cultural and nutritional implications. But few initiatives were developed with local communities to share experiences, to cross academic and traditional knowledges and to raise awareness. In French Guiana, we organized a specific restitution campaign on the Hg cycle, sources and human exposure. Posters were designed in straight collaboration with Wayãpi people, and used as a medium for discussion and debate with villagers and health care professionals along the Oyapock River, while in Guyana and Suriname the Hg exposure were shared individually accompanied with practical recommendations and discussions. Lowering piscivorous fish consumption to prevent mercury exposure should be balanced with nutritional advantages conferred upon growing children<sup>4</sup> but asking to lower manioc consumption would affect drastically social and cultural cohesion. Any advice that enables vulnerable populations to reduce their contaminants exposure must be weighted face to the way of living of these people and to their cultural practices.

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