

Occupational and Environmental Health of Copper artisans in Santa Clara del Cobre, Michoacán, México: A sustainable approach.¹⁽

Dra. Blanca Estela Lemus Ruiz
School of Biology
University of Michoacán, México
bblemus@netscape.net

ABSTRACT

Santa Clara del Cobre is a mestizo town in México; the main occupation is the production of copper artifacts. Among the group of artisans, the manufacture process, more than 500 years old, has gradually change for modern ways. Adopting new techniques implies new health and environmental risks, and almost not awareness of its implication for community and workers' well being.

With qualitative methodology, we have been working with this group, detecting the most important perceived health and environmental risks, and in the process, we gain their confidence and support for training workshops in risk prevention.

Worker population is mostly male; the idea of being a man's job is related with the traditional culture. In late times, however, women are incorporated particularly in those processes in which no physical force is needed.

An effect observed in this setting is the impact of globalization. After September 11, tourism affluence has been severely affected, also, economic turmoil in war times impacts copper prices. Another effect mentioned before is the technical change, with the incorporation of new health risks.

Goals: An integral diagnosis of environmental and occupational risks is the first step of this research. The second is to raise consciousness of prevention among workers and population, with workshops appropriated to cultural and educational patterns of this group. The overall goal is to apply concepts of sustainability in the research and training.

This research is not concluded yet, however, we can show some of the most important findings, and obstacles encountered and ways of overcome them in the course of our fieldwork.

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