

## Worksheet 16 – Goldmining

### Facts on Papua New Guinea

- Papua New Guinea is a group of islands in the South Pacific Ocean with a population of 6.4 million
- One of the world's most ethnically diverse countries with over 850 indigenous languages spoken
- It has one of the highest mortality rates and lowest life expectancies (66 years)
- The level of literacy is 57.3%
- 40% of the population live on less than \$1 a day and 75% of the population is dependent on agriculture
- Papua New Guinea has a long history of colonisation, from the arrival of the first European explorers in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries up to independence from Australia in 1975

### Mining on Lihir Island

Mining started on Lihir Island in the 1980s and the mines were found to have a lot more gold than was initially thought. The mines are still in operation today. The mines have the third largest gold reserves in the world. Papua New Guinea has one of the most biologically diverse habitats in the world, with new species still being discovered. Traditionally people lived off subsistence farming and fishing – and many people still do.



The running of the gold mines on Lihir Island has had a far reaching impact on the island and the life of its inhabitants; some positive and others negative. As people depend heavily on the land for agriculture, the environmental destruction caused by the mine is detrimental. Toxic waste from the mines has polluted the rivers and streams and wide areas of the forest have been chopped down. Local traditions have been influenced by the presence of expats, which has also brought negative aspects such as alcoholism and prostitution.

With the profits from the mine, the health facilities, roads and schools on the island have been improved, education grants have been provided; communication channels have been set up and there are more job opportunities open to women.