



COMMUNITY STORIES

El Tigre resistance

"We do many jobs in this rural community, mostly in agriculture, and we all help out, both women and men."

Enduring over the years in the village El Tigre

Over time, the rural district El Tigre, within the municipality of El Bagre in the Colombian department of Antioquia, has become home to the Ortega family. Their family tree holds eight large nuclear families and passes on their **farming and mining tradition**, which has managed to stay rooted despite great difficulties and challenges to remaining in the territory.

"We are inclined, above all, towards the agriculture, but sometimes we do mining, panning for gold," says Pablo Gabriel Ortega, the community's leader and president. Pablo Gabriel explains how

socioeconomic dynamics have allowed the roots to the land to remain firm in a rural district that is a half-hour trip from the urban area on a road that constantly puts to the test the capabilities of the drivers.

With the intervention of the **Somos Tesoro** project, through the **Alliance for Responsible Mining (ARM)** and the nonprofit **Pact**, in the village of El Tigre they have launched **agricultural pilots focused on labor reconversion**, addressing the difficulties of gold panning in the area and **changing the perception on mercury use in the mining practices** of the Ortega family.

The duality between mining and farming

Long before discovering the value of gold, only agriculture was practiced in the fields surrounding El Tigre. Pablo Gabriel Ortega recounted his family's experience: "My dad was a peasant farmer, looking for a place to live and work, with 9 children to support, and once he arrived here he found work. Gold used to be abundant, but my dad came to work in agriculture; they didn't even know about the gold." Pablo Gabriel affirmed that **mining had its golden moment in their lives when they realized the value of the mineral**, but he commented that it's now only done a few days a week, depending on the harvest season. →

"We do not frequently pan for gold; it all depends on what other work we have. If there is agricultural work to do, we won't mine. Sometimes we take a day off to look for gold, but it's not a constant thing."



El Tigre, July 2017
(c) ARM



A growing difficulty in the territory is that "now gold is scarce, because the mines are already depleted and machinery is needed to reach very deep reserves," Pablo Gabriel explained. Since such machinery is not available to the Ortega family, agriculture has once again become the economic foundation of the family. Through the Somos Tesoro project, local **families are receiving technical assistance to set up community gardens** where they will plant hot peppers, cilantro, green beans, cucumber, passion fruit, and pineapple.

"The training ARM gave us in the Somos Tesoro project helped us to better understand the dangers of mercury."

Mercury in their lives

"Normally we mix the mercury by hand. We knew it was dangerous, but we did not know how to handle it. Now we know that we have to protect ourselves with gloves, boots, or masks if we use it," shared the village president, referring to what they've learned from the ARM intervention.



El Tigre, July 2017
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The future of mining in El Tigre

The type of mining performed by the inhabitants of El Tigre holds an uncertain future, due to the **scarcity of the mineral and the complexity of its extraction** for local gold panners. Although agriculture has a long history in the rural district, gold panning continues to lure its inhabitants, hoping to recover an abundance of gold in their soils and river tributaries.



El Tigre, July 2017
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