

Location

The Small-scale Mining Cooperative of 15 De Agosto is located Lambate within the Municipality of Irupana, department of La Paz. It's found on the foothills of the Illimani Mountain, which is the highest and most majestic in the Andes. The region is rich in mineral deposits, hence the large number of mining communities.

Organisation

The coop was founded the 22nd of January, 1991. They have 220 members and 80 workers, of which 55 are women. The experience, work and quantity of members of the coop is well recognized within the Bolivian mining federation, making it an important reference point within the sector.

All of the members and workers live in the cooperative community, where there are around 200 households.

Production

The coop has four processing plants and monthly production varies between 4000 and 8000 grams of gold per month. The monthly gold production makes it the largest in the ASM sector.





Achievements

In the beginning the founding members of the coop worked in an artisanal manner, due to the altitude and access to the deposits, the labor required a lot of sacrifice. Year after year they were able to strengthen their work, with the opening of new paths to the mine entrance, and access to electricity.

Currently the coop is thinking of investing to improve the technical extraction of gold and exploration studies for new deposits

Challenges

The principle challenges center around strengthening and improving their administration system, industrial health and safety, promoting environmental practices, improving labor policies and promoting social responsibility within the families.

Our proposal

The gap analysis performed with the 15 De Agosto Coop against the Fairtrade and Fairmined standards indicates that the following areas need to be addressed in order to reach the certification:

- Promote the cooperative culture within the mining organization.
- Improve environmental aspects, such as correct use of mercury, and the implementation of a cyanide plant in the coming years.
- Open markets for exporting their gold to improve incomes and generate payments of dividends and taxes for municipality.
- Improve industrial health and safety to decrease the risks of workplace accidents.
- Start parallel productive activities for women who live in the mining camp to generate alternative incomes.

ESTIMATED PROJECT DURATION OF 8 MONTHS

