

Yani Cooperative Bolivia



Location

Yani Ltd Cooperative is located in Ancoma Canton, municipality of Sorata, in the La Paz department. It lies in a mountainous area, crossed by deep valleys and surrounded by immense snowed peaks. The numerous gold exploration operations in the region have determined a strong mining vocation of the local families since the times of the Spanish colonization.

Organisation

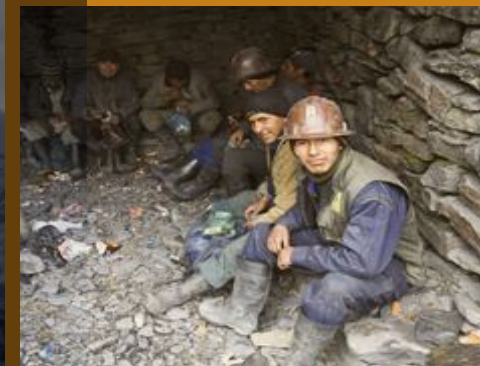
Yani Auriferous Cooperative Ltd was founded in 1985. During the decade of the 80's, the closure of a many mines run by the Bolivian State left thousands of miners without a job. Looking for an alternative income and livelihood the workers set up the cooperative. Now the cooperative has 90 members, most of them originating from a traditionally gold mining zone.

Around 250 people live in this isolated community, mostly families of miners and workers. There is a great need of improved access to basic sanitation, health and education.

Production

In its beginnings, when all the mining labour was manual, the gold production of the Yani Cooperative, hardly surpassed the operating costs with the monthly yield of around 500 grams. Over the years, thanks to a lot of work and effort, the cooperative members have managed a semi-mechanisation of their operations.

These improvements allowed them to increase their production to the actual level of between 1,5 and 3 kilos of gold per month.



Achievements

One of the main achievements of the cooperative was the opening of a road to gain access to the mine shafts located on the altitude of over 5000 metres above sea level, greatly facilitating the gold ore extraction. They have also implemented the technology to process their mineral next to the mines, semi-mechanising the process with a plant that helps to achieve a more efficient gold recovery. Apart from improving the production, Yani Cooperative has advanced the formalisation process, establishing itself as a legally constituted organisation.



Challenges

The main challenge is a further organisational development. While the miners concentrate most of their efforts on improving the mine's productivity, other aspects such as environmental performance, transparent internal regulations, workers' welfare and occupational health and safety or may sometimes lag behind.

It is necessary to build a more solid organisational structure, in order to improve the cooperative's governance and to assure development opportunities for miners' families and a wider community living in this area.

Our proposal

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

- Technical: technical assistance focused on improving the extraction and recovery processes, increasing the productivity and reducing the Health and Safety hazards.
- Environmental: implementation of environmental management plan, in order to minimise the negative impacts on the environment, with a special focus on responsible use of mercury.
- Social: promotion of good relationships between the cooperative and the community and improving the awareness of gender equality.
- Commercialization: implementation of an internal control to assure traceability

ESTIMATED INVESTMENT OF €26,000 NEEDED OVER 10 MONTHS

