



## Water Studies @ Yanacocha – CAO Insights and Suggestions

The CAO has been involved in Cajamarca since 2001, when we received a complaint stemming from the June 2000 mercury spill along the main highway near the communities of Choropampa and San Juan. We feel that some of the experiences and insights gained during the course of our work there could help inform the work you are undertaking there, as well as any future endeavors involving Minera Yanacocha and the communities within its area of influence.

The major focus of CAO's work between our initial involvement in 2001 and closure of the original complaints in 2006 has been to assess the impact of mining operations on water quality and quantity. Our work in Cajamarca was conducted through a "dialog table" (*Mesa de Diologo y Consenso*) composed of stakeholders from civil society, government, and Minera Yanacocha. Over the course of the work, CAO:

- 1) Completed an independent water quality and quantity study (2002-2003);
- 2) Implemented a participatory water quality monitoring program (2004-2006);
- 3) Facilitated a workshop with canal users to identify water quantity concerns (2006).

- 1) The Independent Water Quality and Quantity Study was designed to address concerns raised in the complaint by establishing if, and to what extent, waters exiting the mine property were adversely affected by mine operations, and to evaluate any potential adverse human and ecological impacts associated with mining operations. A technical consulting team convened by CAO and the Mesa collected and analyzed surface water quality data to determine pre and post mining water quality, and developed a hydrologic model to assess impacts of mining operations on water quantity in streams and canals. This study concluded in 2003. The full project report is available in English and Spanish on CAO website (see the 'Independent Water Study 2003' section):

[http://www.cao-ombudsman.org/html-english/complaint\\_yanacocha.htm](http://www.cao-ombudsman.org/html-english/complaint_yanacocha.htm)

- 2) The Participatory Water Quality Monitoring Program, which began in 2004, stemmed from one of the recommendations in the independent study. During and after completion of the independent study, several other participatory programs developed and matured. Each of these programs had a specific user group as a focus, with staff and financing from Minera Yanacocha. The programs included:
  - The municipal water company SEDACAJ, working with water users in the city of Cajamarca;
  - The canal users associations (COMOCAs) working with farmers in the four basins surrounding the mine;
  - Communities downstream from mine operations but not served by COMOCAs.

CAO's involvement enabled a trusted source of funding and interpretation that was independent from the mine. We worked with the other participatory programs to provide quality

control on data collected, independent interpretation of all data collected in the area of influence, and broad dissemination of the results. We also trained staff and volunteers of the Mesa to collect, interpret and communicate the results of the water quality monitoring data and provided continued oversight and financing. The monitoring program concluded in the first quarter of 2006, and results were disseminated in Cajamarca and rural areas. The Annual Water Monitoring Report prepared for the project is available in English and Spanish on the CAO website (see the 'Mesa Annual Water Monitoring Report' section):

[http://www.cao-ombudsman.org/html-english/complaint\\_yanacocha.htm](http://www.cao-ombudsman.org/html-english/complaint_yanacocha.htm)

- 3) The Canal Users Workshop included presidents and users of canals from the two associations in the region (COMOCA Sur and Este) and technical experts from Minera Yanacocha responsible for water quantity management at the mine site. During the workshop, canal users identified the key concerns of water users and the mine presented its strategies for addressing those concerns and discussed results of its studies and water management activities. The meeting notes and list of available studies is available on the CAO website:

<http://www.cao-ombudsman.org/html-english/complaintyanacochacanalusers.htm>

From these efforts during the past five years, we would like to offer the following observations and suggestions which we believe will be useful for any future evaluation of water issues in Minera Yanacocha's area of influence:

- 1) Studies conducted by Minera Yanacocha and others are plentiful, useful and sufficiently valid for their purpose, but meaningful oversight and independent review is lacking. For example, consultants to Minera Yanacocha are completing a site-wide hydrologic model that will be available in October 2006. This model will include a detailed evaluation of water quantity impacts and management and mitigation measures. Currently, there is no mechanism for independent review of this model and evaluation of conclusions and recommendations. From our perspective, citizens do not feel that more studies are necessary; rather, they seek trusted, independent mechanisms to ensure that existing and on-going studies are credible and that recommendations and agreements are implemented in a way that ensures the mine's accountability.
- 2) Mechanisms to communicate study results, recommendations, and mitigation efforts should be strengthened.
- 3) Citizens living in the mine's area of influence want continuous water quality and quantity monitoring, with finances and oversight that come from sources independent of Minera Yanacocha.

We hope these observations are useful, and we would welcome the opportunity to discuss our experiences and insights with you in greater detail.