

Restoring justice in Papua New Guinea



LEADERS OF TWO RIVAL TRIBES IN THE PORGERA VALLEY LAY DOWN THEIR ARMS AT A PEACE NEGOTIATION CEREMONY AT THE PORGERA POLICE STATION.



Papua New Guinea is home to one of the most heterogeneous populations in the world. The Southwest Pacific country is inhabited by over six million primarily indigenous people, comprising several thousand separate clans, separated by mountainous terrain and speaking hundreds of different languages. For thousands of years, tensions and fighting have occurred between these distinct, neighboring clans and tribes.

With the advent of modern weaponry and migration to urban areas, the problem of serious crime and lawlessness intensified. Barrick's Porgera gold mine is located in the Porgera Valley of Enga Province. Over the past 15 years, Porgera Valley has witnessed a steep rise in the local population from roughly 10,000 to 40,000, due to a huge influx of migrants and squatters arriving from other areas of the country. The province has also witnessed a significant escalation in crime associated with high unemployment and population growth. Inadequate policing and the limited capacity of the justice system in the region have further contributed to the problem.

Today, the districts of Lagaiap and Porgera in the Enga province are attempting to tackle the social problems which lead to a breakdown in law and order in their communities. They have launched the "Restoring Justice Initiative", a unique partnership to strengthen and support the law and justice sector.

Partners in the initiative include Barrick's Porgera mine, the Lagaiap and Porgera district administrations, the Engan provincial government, the national government and community stakeholder agencies.

The initiative aims to:

- Strengthen human resources, infrastructure, equipment and training in the legal and justice system,
- Improve coordination between police, district and village courts and correctional services,
- Enhance local capacity to deal with law and justice issues
- Re-connect police and other government services to communities

The Initiative is intended to help the community address issues such as tribal fighting, violence against women, guns, drug and alcohol abuse and illegal mining.

Barrick already works extensively with the government, police, the community, NGOs and other stakeholders to address the problem of illegal mining at Porgera mine. At Porgera, illegal miners enter mine property without the company's permission with the intention of breaking the law by stealing gold-bearing ore. This illegal activity, which is difficult to prevent and complex to address, reflects the broader security and socio-economic situation in the country.

Porgera general manager Mark Fisher is a staunch proponent of the Restoring Justice Initiative.

"Improving law and order in a community creates a stable environment that leads to development opportunities," Fisher said. "This is not only good for business but also for the most important stakeholders in any development process: the communities where we operate, our employees, their families and the people of Enga and Papua New Guinea."