



ALLIANCE FOR
RESPONSIBLE MINING



VOICES OF MINERS

David Quispe Quito, president of the Yani gold mining cooperative



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My name is David Quispe Quito, and in 2016 I became the president of the Yani Cooperative, of which I had been a member since 2009.

I am from the community of Ancoma Norte, in the province of Larecaja, La Paz, Bolivia. I was born in 1976. I started going to primary school and completed third grade, but after that my parents could not afford to continue sending us to school. So at the age of 13 I had to abandon my studies and go to work in the mines. There I learned how to be responsible, to work, to earn money on my own and to make at least to get by, maybe enough to go on a trip. I am proud of what mining has taught me, although it came at a price. It was especially hard for me when I was still a little boy, and I suffered a lot at work. Sometimes I cried, but I got through it, and that is what made me stronger.

I haven't been a miner my whole life. There was a time in my life when I decided to go to the capital city in search of new employment opportunities, and I began to work as a tailor. That was when I went back to school and had the great achievement of graduating from high school. I stayed working in the city for 12 years, during which time I started a family and needed a larger income. Unfortunately, salaries were not high in the city of La Paz and I was not making enough as an employee. I had to search out other sources of income, so in 2005 I went back to mining, in Tijuani. I worked there for only a short time because it was very dangerous, with nothing in place for safety. Not only that, but I had to work extremely hard just to earn a little bit of money. I told myself, "I do not want to die here", and so I quit.

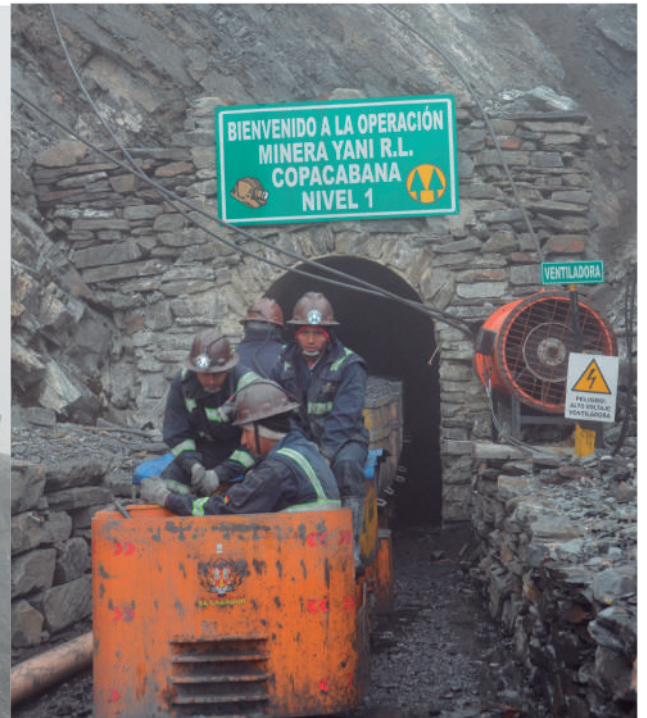
After trying my hand at other types of jobs, I had the opportunity to take out a bank loan and join this cooperative. In 2010, after a year of membership, I became treasurer of the cooperative. Then at the end of 2015 I switched to the safety department. It was not an easy task to raise awareness and convince the other members to make changes. In 2016 I resigned from that position and was later elected president of this cooperative. Thanks to the support of all my partners, we have gotten this far, and our dream is to keep making progress. We may have many challenges yet to meet, but I aspire to make the cooperative be seen as an example for others and to ensure the members feel at peace and content with their work, as at ease here as at home.

We have achieved many changes, and even more once we started receiving the support of organizations like ARM and Cumbre de Sajama. We have managed to shorten work times and adjust schedules so that the miners feel less fatigued and more comfortable. Before, we didn't use any reflective materials, but now the miners wear reflective clothes and carry good lighting.

In terms of environmental contamination, although we still need to fine-tune many things we have already become aware of the issue and are making changes. For example, people used to toss trash anywhere—on the street, on the soccer field, wherever— until we decided, "that is wrong". We held a cleanup day and now we store our waste next to where we recycle. We have plans to improve this system and also to reuse water. As for mercury, we stopped doing open-air burning, which had been almost normal for us, because we did not know how harmful mercury was to our health and to the environment. We have been implementing good practices, and now we use retorts where the heating is hermetically sealed off and the mercury is collected after recovering the gold.

Having achieved the Fairmined Certification means a lot to us, since a premium price is paid per kilo sold. This money will be well received and allow us to make necessary improvements: We can build athletic fields, help the school and the community, and purchase machinery to improve our mining activity.

"We invite jewelers around the globe to purchase Fairmined Gold from the Yani Cooperative. By doing so, you will help us in our efforts to perform responsible mining. It is important to receive a fair price that matches our sacrifice, in order to demonstrate that miners who act responsibly are worth more."



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