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Barrick Gold Corporation's response to allegations that leakage from the North Mara gold mine has contaminated water sources in the Mara district of Tanzania with arsenic and other metals

In May 2009, an environmental incident occurred at the North Mara mine when water seeped from a mine rock storage facility into the Tigithe River. The situation occurred when the fall rainy season precipitation fell on a temporary mine rock storage facility on mine property near the river. As the rain passed over and through the rock stockpile, it contacted the naturally occurring sulphur contained in the rock, making the water acidic. This process is known as acid rock drainage (ARD). As the rain water accumulated, it began to seep into the nearby river.

The seepage was exacerbated by the theft of some of the impermeable material used to line waste water ponds located on the property. Thieves had cut out sections of the liner, which allowed the ponds to leak. Later, some of the materials appeared as roofing material in the outlying villages.

This was an isolated incident, limited to a small geographic area and was responded to quickly. When decreased pH levels were detected in the river (approximately 1000 meters downstream), immediate action was taken by mine officials to notify authorities and to contain and correct the seepage.

All water storage ponds were fitted with new liners and enhanced security and the temporary mine rock storage facility was relocated. The land is currently undergoing remediation.

Subsequent water sampling confirmed that pH levels in the river returned to normal and remain within statutory requirements under the Tanzanian Mining Act.

North Mara mine is subject to significant regulatory oversight. Regulatory authorities from the state environmental and mining departments have visited North Mara and will continue to review the mine's corrective measures.

In October, the Parliamentary Sub-Committee on Land, Natural Resources and Environment also visited the site and agreed with this conclusion. Tanzanian President Jakaya Kikwete also visited the site and, in a public meeting, indicated he was pleased with the mine's corrective actions.

Inaccuracies and limitations of a third-party study

With respect to the IPM-Report 2009 (a third-party study) entitled “Investigation of trace metal concentrations in soil, sediments and waters in the vicinity of “Geita Gold Mine” and “North Mara Gold Mine” in North West Tanzania, we have serious concerns regarding its findings and methodology used. Most noteworthy are the following:

1. Contrary to statements on pages 13 and 19, there is no tailings storage facility located in the Gokona/Gena mining area.
2. Contrary to statements made on pages 1, 13 and 19, there have been no tailings dam spills, or other similar incidents, associated with the North Mara Tailing Storage Facility.
3. No natural background condition was established in the paper; therefore, it is impossible to characterize a mine-related impact. The bedrock geology of the entire study area (the Lake Victoria Greenstone Belt) contains naturally elevated metal values and it is not unusual for the soils to show above-average levels of arsenic, lead, copper, nickel, etc. Likewise, stream sediments in these types of areas will display elevated concentrations of metals. The study fails to take into account this key consideration.
4. The study’s examination of arsenic excluded other very significant sources of arsenic such as artisanal mining activities surrounding the North Mara Mine and the impure phosphate fertilizers used on cultivated lands.