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A framework of remediation initiatives in response to violence against women in the Porgera Valley

Confronting violence against women

Violence against women is a serious crime that has a deep and traumatic impact on those who are subject to it, their families, and their communities.

In the Porgera District of Papua New Guinea (PNG), women – and often their children – have few means of protection from the violence that many experience or witness on a regular basis. Many women report persistent physical symptoms that manifest the anxiety and emotional trauma of living in constant fear.

An independent remediation framework

Barrick Gold Corporation and the Porgera Joint Venture (PJV) have launched the *Olgeta Meri Igat Raits (All Women Have Rights)* project, a framework of remediation initiatives in response to violence against women in the Porgera Valley.

The remediation framework has been developed as part of Barrick's response to specific incidents of sexual violence perpetrated by men who were employed at the Porgera mine against women residing in the Porgera Valley.

Over the past 18 months, Barrick has consulted extensively with local and international stakeholders and experts on violence against women (VAW) and human rights to develop the remedy framework. The framework sets out a unique and independent process for remediation. It features both an individual remedy component and a community development program to address issues of VAW and improve community-level services and infrastructure.

The company has worked with local and international stakeholders to establish an independent body that will design and oversee the implementation of the framework over the

next three years and beyond. The Olgeta Meri group is funded through a managed trust to which Barrick is making a substantial financial contribution.

Prominent Papua New Guinean citizens will lead the group, including Dame Carol Kidu, a former parliamentarian and cabinet minister in PNG, and Ume Wainetti, the National Director of the Papua New Guinea Family and Sexual Violence Action Committee. The project team will design and oversee the implementation of the framework over the next three years and beyond. The group will provide direct support to local women who have experienced violence, assist in improving treatment and support for women who have been the victims of violence, raise awareness about human rights and help prevent VAW within the Porgera District.

Access to remedy is recognized as a critical element of addressing human rights violations, and provides a basis for helping those whose rights have been violated. In developing the remediation framework, Barrick adopted an approach that is consistent with the U.N. Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, which provides guidelines for companies in addressing human rights issues.

These remedies are consistent with international human rights law and are considered to be practical, sustainable and appropriate to local socio-economic circumstances.

An effective individual claims process

Central to the remediation framework is an individual claims process designed to meet the needs of women in the Porgera Valley who have been the subject of sexual violence or abuse by current or former employees of the PJV. Eligible women will be invited to lodge a claim outlining their experience and receive reparations. The claims process will be administered by a team of specialist project officers with experience and training in dealing with the issues surrounding gender-based violence. Claims will be independently assessed by experts familiar with VAW and the remediation of human rights violations led by Mr. John Numapo, a respected jurist and former Chief Magistrate of PNG.

The project officers processing the claims and experts responsible for assessing them will be operating entirely independently of Barrick and the PJV. The individual claims process is expected to be conducted over a twelve-month period.

Tailored remedies will be developed on a case-by-case basis with regard to the circumstances of the individual claimant in consultation with the claimant.

The individual reparations program will consist principally of the provision of individualized services and support to those who have been the victims of sexual assault by employees of the PJV, and will involve remedies including, but not limited to:

- a) Facilitation of effective access to justice mechanisms where requested;
- b) Access to medical and/or psychosocial support services;
- c) Provision of fair and appropriate financial reparations for personal harm or economic damages suffered; and
- d) To the extent practicable, rehabilitation of rights and circumstances experienced prior to the alleged offence(s).

The process for making individual claims within the remediation framework will be easily accessible for those residing within local communities, will recognize local traditional circumstances, and will be independent of Barrick and the PJV to ensure the privacy and confidentiality of those submitting claims.

A community development program to help women

Significant research shows that the events that took place at the Porgera Mine are symptomatic of the broader issue of widespread violence against women in the Porgera Valley, and within PNG generally. Addressing this serious issue is critical if there is to be any meaningful progress for women living and working in local communities.

The *Olgeta Meri* group will design and develop a community development program, tailored to the Porgera Valley, to help build the infrastructure and services necessary to meet the needs of women.

The community development program will include projects aimed at providing services to women who have experienced VAW; increasing awareness of human rights; and helping to

prevent VAW generally. These projects will complement existing VAW programs led by the PJV.

The community development program will directly relate to gender and sexual violence issues in the Porgera Valley but will be designed with the potential to be applied elsewhere in PNG. Programs will be planned and implemented by an experienced team with the advice of a panel of experts on VAW and human rights programs.

The development of the *Olgeta Meri Igat Raits* framework is one way the company is working to fulfill its promise to the women of the Porgera Valley – *“We will uphold your rights and we will protect your dignity”*.

For more information about the remedy framework and other Barrick initiatives to combat gender violence, please visit: barrick.com/operations/australia-pacific/porgera.