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Logistics - will become even more critical in a future era of smaller mining projects in riskier parts of the world.

Richard Levack, Managing Director of Banlaw Africa Ltd, speaks about the challenges companies face in the new frontier countries of West Africa.

Levack speaks as a veteran with over 40 years' experience of Mining Services, Logistics, Earthmoving and Equipment Management. In 2000 he co-founded Banlaw Africa Ltd. based in Tarkwa, in Ghana's Western Region. Banlaw Africa also operates in Burkina Faso and Cote d'Ivoire.

Mines are seldom located near capital cities or in areas with good infrastructure, so gaining access to remote areas with heavy equipment, processing plant and materials is a challenge, particularly for smaller projects with limited budgets. Mine camps and local services have to be put in place and, in countries like Burkina Faso and Cote d'Ivoire, where mining is a new industry, a great deal of time must be invested with local communities and government departments conditioning and appraising them as to what exactly mining is about.

Both of these West African countries have new mining codes and, whilst they welcome the mining community, attention has been paid by demonstrating Banlaw Africa's experience to Government departments, the importance of urgency to matters affecting the supply chain, whether it be the clearing of capital equipment, sourcing consumables or bringing in urgent spare parts, all of which are the life blood of mining projects.

Burkina Faso

Banlaw is contracted by Sydney based AIM Resources to provide above ground infrastructure and earthworks services for the underground zinc project at

Perkoa, 120 kms west of capital, Ouagadougou. Perkoa had a primitive exploration camp part of which has been converted and forms the construction camp. A mess area has been provided, built on one of the cement plaster rendered mud block buildings, which also serves as the kitchen. Low-cost ablutions and shower blocks have been installed, replacing the former pit latrines. Water, power and sewer reticulation has been installed and an air conditioned tented camp erected.

Potable water is being drawn from boreholes powered by solar panels whilst compaction and dust suppression water is taken from local riverbeds. With evaporation rates in Burkina Faso double the annual rainfall of 850mm, it was a challenge to achieve the compaction specifications required for the earthworks. Banlaw has an earthworks and concrete laboratory on site as part of its quality control procedures and has its own well equipped local survey crew.

The contracted works in Burkina Faso include box cut excavation for the underground portal entrance, plant site earthworks, road works, water, process and tailings dams and a 20 km pipeline together with fencing and concrete works. Work is progressing well and AIM Resources is starting to bring in underground mining equipment.

Banlaw's other project in Burkina Faso is for London based Cluff Gold Plc. Work on the five year mining contract at Kalsaka, 140 Kms North West of Ouagadougou, will commence shortly with construction work on leach pads, process ponds and a ROM pad. Banlaw are presently researching and testing borrow areas for impermeable materials for the pad construction. The site has 2 metres of Dura crust in the area where ponds are to be excavated which will require blasting. The mining fleet of Caterpillar 773E trucks, ancillary equipment and Hitachi excavators have been ordered and mobilization has commenced. Cluff are completing the mine camp and offices and have set up a temporary

kitchen and mess at their exploration base in Kalsaka village. Access to the mine is being upgraded with containers arriving daily full of construction materials and supplies.

Cote d'Ivoire

In neighboring Cote d'Ivoire, Banlaw has a 6 year contract at Angovia in the Bouafle region, 40 kms North West of Yamosuccro, the political capital. Cote d'Ivoire was once hailed as a model of stability with an economy heavily dependent on agriculture and some 70% of its population working on the land. Cote d'Ivoire is ranked 164 out of 177 countries by the United Nations. The country has had its difficulties over the last few years but stability appears to have returned and elections are due soon.

The minerals industry of Côte d'Ivoire is becoming increasingly important. Since 1995 the country's offshore hydrocarbon operations have become an important domestic source of energy and Côte d'Ivoire's gold bearing Birimian greenstones are attracting interest.

The deposit at Mt. Yaoure was acquired by Cluff Gold Plc from French uranium group Cogema in 2004. The site had been in production since 1997 but was closed in 2003 when the civil war escalated. Access and infrastructure at Angovia are good with a hydroelectric dam only 6 kilometres from the mine. Angovia will be the first of a new generation of mines to go into production. Approximately 3 million cubic metres of material will be moved each year to produce some 40,000 ounces of gold annually. Banlaw's mining fleet for the project is presently being mobilized from the UK to the port of Abidjan which is amongst the most modern in West Africa and is also the largest between Casablanca and Capetown.

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Banlaw Africa is opening an office in II Plateaux, Vallon in Abidjan which is one of the most modern and liveable cities in the region.

As Richard Levack concludes, "Time spent talking with Governments of these mineral wealthy nations has been necessary and beneficial. They appreciate that their country will benefit from mining their natural resources and this will flow throughout the life of the mine. They appreciate that there will be employment, training and new careers. Street traders, small businesses will thrive, new local supply businesses will be born and local service companies will grow new sustainable skills which will also provide jobs and income streams for local communities. Governments of these countries naturally think for the longer term and work with mining companies then there is a win – win for everyone."



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