Banro Corporation (NYSE: AMEX and TSX: BAA) is a Canadian gold mining corporation with production from its first gold project, Twangiza, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Banro’s Twangiza oxide mine began production in October 2011 and projected to produce approximately 120,000 ounces of gold during its first full year of operation.

Banro is also focused on the development of its second open pit project, Namoya, and is undertaking exploration on two additional fully-permitted and licensed projects, Kamituga and Lugushwa. All of Banro’s current projects reside along the 210 kilometer-long Twangiza-Namoya gold belt in the South Kivu and Maniema provinces of the DRC.

Mining Gold from the Ground While Managing Documentation in the Cloud

In August of 2011, Banro deployed the M-Files enterprise content management (ECM) system in a private offshore cloud environment to better manage documentation associated with its Twangiza gold mine in the eastern DRC. Banro integrated M-Files into their Sage X3 ERP system and also utilizes the solution to manage specific human resource, financial information and workflow processes with its subcontractors.

Banro has set up M-Files vaults ranging from “Finance” (expense claims, bank statements and reconciliations, invoices), “Human Resources” (passports, visas, work permits), “Intranet” (general documents and templates) and “Projects” (engineering drawings, piping and instrumentation, transmittals, purchase orders, import documentation, environmental impact materials, and every detail of Twangiza and Namoya plants).

M-Files has made Banro much more efficient, for example, by enabling its finance team in Toronto to access Congolese produced documents in secure vaults to complete quarterly audits, while its South African-based subcontractors can seamlessly share AutoCAD drawings for the company’s current $154 million Namoya mine project.

According to Thorsten Neumann, group IT Manager at Banro Corporation, “M-Files enables us to manage several unique aspects of our business operations and processes, including the geographic distribution of our organization and the need to effectively manage globally dispersed subcontractors. M-Files addresses our particular needs as a multi-national mining company.”
M-Files Helps Mitigate the Inherent Power and Security Issues Associated with Operations in Africa

Banro deployed M-Files in a unique way to better cope with uncertainties in the DRC. The company experiences frequent power outages, and the offline capabilities of M-Files enable them to maintain a high level of productivity even if access to the network or a particular server is unavailable.

“The Congo continues to struggle with basic infrastructure such as reliable power. Security is another great concern. The environment is not suited to deploying reliable IT systems. This is the reason why we set up our vaults in a private offshore cloud environment,” said Neumann.

Security of confidential information is also a very significant consideration for Banro. The company has learned from its own experiences about the value of maintaining tight control over its data -- and keeping it beyond the reach of external parties.

The permissions control and access rights features in M-Files provides Banro with a more secure system for protecting confidential information, such as maps, ground resources and other sensitive data. Banro has established an “offshore vault” as a mitigation strategy to help protect the business against the risks of operating in Africa.

Effective Quality Documentation Management Results in a Smoother Audit Process

Banro produces a significant amount of documentation for its Twangiza gold mine, such as project drawings, operations reports, incident reports, payroll and statutory reports, policies, standard operating procedures (SOP), and other information related to quality operations.

With M-Files, Banro established a single consolidated repository for organizing mining documentation, as well as an effective system for coordinating with project subcontractors to ensure compliance.

“Audits are common in finance for mining operations, especially during the exploration phase prior to breaking ground,” said Neumann. “We place preliminary assessments and associated information into our secure M-Files vault, and this centralized approach makes for a much smoother audit process.”

Banro HR Taps M-Files for Management of Visa and Passport Processes for Subcontractors

Banro needed an effective solution for managing specific HR activities associated with employing a multi-national workforce. In fact, the driving factor that led the company to seek out an ECM solution came from its need to more effectively manage its HR function - most notably, the complicated process of managing processes associated with workers’ visas and passports.

“We needed a more effective system for coordinating immigration of our staff and subcontractors,” said Neumann. “M-Files had the functionality to not only effectively manage sensitive HR information such as visas and passports scans, but also workflow processes associated with keeping organized records, such as status of submissions to government departments and expiry of work permits.”
Banro to Expand M-Files Use for Future Mine and Management of Government Documentation

“We feel like we’ve only scratched the surface in terms of what we can do with M-Files,” said Neumann.

Banro has already started leveraging M-Files for their future mines after Namoya, and the company also plans to expand their use of the ECM solution into other aspects of its business operations, including the management of government documentation, such as agreements, title deeds, exploration permits, and compliance reports.

“M-Files is able to run the front office and back office while also meeting the specialized needs of the mining industry to help us maintain compliance with mandatory regulations. M-Files’ robust features enable us to effectively and efficiently manage mining documentation while also providing a flexible platform that can be extended to meet the needs of other departments and accommodate future growth,” added Neumann.