



Engaging Artisanal and Small-Scale Gold Miners in the National Action Plan Development

Under the Minamata Convention on Mercury, the development and implementation of a National Action Plan is required for all parties with “more than insignificant” ASGM in their territories. This guide provides practical recommendations for developing and carrying out consultations with artisanal and small-scale gold miners regarding the development of a National Action Plan to reduce the use of mercury in the ASGM sector.



Who is this guide for?

This document is intended to assist government officials responsible for developing and implementing their National Action Plan (NAP) to reduce, and where feasible eliminate, mercury use in artisanal and small-scale gold mining (ASGM), as required by the Minamata Convention on Mercury. Stakeholder engagement, particularly engagement with miners and mining communities, is key to creating a practical and feasible NAP, paving the way for successful implementation of the Convention.

What is in this guide?

This document includes a brief introduction to ASGM, a list of requirements for artisanal and small-scale gold mining NAP (ASGM NAP) under the Minamata Convention, and practical guidance to developing and carrying out consultations in artisanal and small-scale gold mining communities to collect input to feed into the NAP document.

National Action Plan Requirements

The primary purpose of this guide is to help governments carry out consultations with stakeholders as part of the process of developing an ASGM National Action Plan (NAP) in compliance with the Minamata Convention on Mercury. The NAP requirements are listed in Annex C of the Convention.

Annex C

ARTISANAL AND SMALL-SCALE GOLD MINING NATIONAL ACTION PLANS

1. Each Party that is subject to the provisions of paragraph 3 of Article 7 shall include in its national action plan:

(a) National objectives and reduction targets;

(b) Actions to eliminate:

(i) Whole ore amalgamation;

(ii) Open burning of amalgam or processed amalgam;

(iii) Burning of amalgam in residential areas; and

(iv) Cyanide leaching in sediment, ore or tailings to which mercury has been added without first removing the mercury;

(c) Steps to facilitate the formalization or regulation of the artisanal and small-scale gold mining sector;

(d) Baseline estimates of the quantities of mercury used and the practices employed in artisanal and small-scale gold mining and processing within its territory;

(e) Strategies for promoting the reduction of emissions and releases of, and exposure to, mercury in artisanal and small-scale gold mining and processing, including mercury-free methods;

(f) Strategies for managing trade and preventing the diversion of mercury and mercury compounds from both foreign and domestic sources to use in artisanal and small scale gold mining and processing;

(g) Strategies for involving stakeholders in the implementation and continuing development of the national action plan;

(h) A public health strategy on the exposure of artisanal and small-scale gold miners and their communities to mercury. Such a strategy should include, inter alia, the gathering of health data, training for health-care workers and awareness-raising through health facilities;

(i) Strategies to prevent the exposure of vulnerable populations, particularly children and women of child-bearing age, especially pregnant women, to mercury used in artisanal and small-scale gold mining;

(j) Strategies for providing information to artisanal and small-scale gold miners and affected communities; and

(k) A schedule for the implementation of the national action plan.

2. Each Party may include in its national action plan additional strategies to achieve its objectives, including the use or introduction of standards for mercury-free artisanal and small-scale gold mining and market-based mechanisms or marketing tools.

Stakeholder involvement is a mandatory requirement of the Minamata Convention

Stakeholder participation in the implementation and ongoing development of the NAP is mandatory under the Minamata Convention.

Involving stakeholders will ensure that the plan is feasible and practical, and will instill a sense of ownership of the process, making it easier to implement the changes proposed in the NAP.

Mining communities and miners must be involved so that they provide a “reality check” to the planned actions, as well as develop a personal connection to success of the process.



Who are artisanal and small-scale gold miners?

Artisanal and small-scale miners are workers who engage in mining at a very small to medium-scale. They work on either underground or surface mines. Artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) operations are legally recognized in some countries, but may also be informal or illegal. ASM operations range from very low levels of technology and production, poor working conditions and pronounced negative social and environmental impacts; to relatively high degrees of mechanisation, with better recovery rates, more formalised working conditions and organisational structures.

Artisanal and small-scale miners may include farmers supplementing their income; young students funding their school and university education; and businesspeople investing in a profitable enterprise. ASM can include individuals and families as well as larger groups, and may include men, women, and sometimes children. At the mining sites, miners undertake diverse roles, from general labour work (diggers, washers) to skilled machine work, supervising and bookkeeping. Their livelihoods and backgrounds are dynamic and diverse. Women who are engaged in ASM operations are usually carriers of the ore (for surface mining operations) and in some cases washers and machine operators.

The educational background of artisanal and small-scale miners is varied. While many artisanal and small-scale miners are poor, there is an emerging number of highly educated entrepreneurs who make significant capital investment into ASM operations who tend to be the concession owners and financiers.

While the term “ASM” includes workers who mine for a diverse range of minerals and precious gems, the Minamata Convention applies only to artisanal and small-scale gold mining and processing in which mercury amalgamation is used to extract gold from ore (termed “ASGM”).

Successful approaches to consultation take into account that artisanal and small-scale miners generally want a stable livelihood, and want themselves and their families to be healthy. Therefore, they can be enthusiastic learners and actors in designing and implementing NAPs.



Why carry out miner consultations?

Consulting with miners provides an important step in developing and implementing the NAP. Practical and realistic information about the day-to-day operations of the sector provides a foundation from which governments and other stakeholders can formulate feasible action plans, prioritise and develop intervention strategies and monitor improvements. Further, consultation is not a one-time exercise: improving the ASGM sector will require ongoing consultation with artisanal and small-scale miners.



Workshop organisation

What should you know before conducting the consultations?

- The basics of the sector including its policy and regulatory framework and the existing basic set up of the miner's organisation systems in your country.
- The basics of how gold is usually mined/processed in your country.
- The basics of typical profit sharing systems in your country.

Which stakeholders should attend the miner consultations?

- Government ministries, including:
 - mining and minerals
 - environment
 - health
 - labour
 - women and child welfare ministries (if children are involved in mining)
- Local government departments
- Traditional leaders and land owners
- Representatives of national and local mining associations
- NGOs working with ASGM communities
- Academics working on ASGM issues



What topics could be presented during miner consultations?

- An introduction to the Minamata Convention and the NAP requirements.
- An overview of the national ASGM sector including current initiatives towards formalisation and promoting mercury-free technology.
- The impact of mercury on human health and the environment
- An introduction to NAP process in your country (including a guide on how to get involved).
- A list of resources/links where people can find information on these topics (e.g. UNEP Global Mercury Partnership ASGM page).

Workshop format



Session formats could include

- Power point presentations
- Question & answer session
- Group discussions and presentations
- Role-playing exercises

Mobilisation, notice and logistics

- Notice should be given at least two weeks prior to the meeting.
- Organizers should work with leaders of local mining associations, NGOs and Officers of Government's Mining and Environment Departments at local government areas or designated mining districts.
- Miners should be given transportation subsidies and provided with snacks and lunch.
- Certificates of Participation should be given to serve as an incentive for miners.

MODEL AGENDA

9:00am	Self-introductions
9:10	Introduction to mercury: human health and environmental impacts
9:50	Overview of the Minamata Convention and requirements of the National Action Plan
10:30	Question & answer session
11:30	Snack break
11:45	Overview of country ASGM sector and mercury-free technologies
12:30pm	Question & answer session
1:00	Lunch
2:00	Break-out session: Identification of ASGM mercury management priorities and recommendations to be included in the National Action Plan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actions to eliminate worst practices of mercury exposure • Steps to facilitate formalization or regulation of ASGM • Public health strategy • Strategies for reducing emissions, releases, and risks of exposure to mercury • Strategies for providing information to artisanal and small-scale gold miners and affected communities • Strategies for managing trade and diversion of mercury for use in ASGM
3:00	Group presentations
3:30	Closing remarks and closure

Participants, setting & press involvement

Participants

- No more than 30–40 attendees are recommended per consultation session.

Geographic location, meeting place and duration

- Meetings should be held as close to the miners as possible, for example in district mining centres or major mining communities, in locations that are easily accessible for miners and other participants.
- Meetings are not recommended to exceed 6.5 hours; suitable times for consultation are within the hours of 09:00 and 16:00.

- Consultations can be formal or informal. Formal meetings encourage direct engagement between government and civil society with the miners who will be most directly affected by the NAP. However, formal meetings may not be possible in cases where miners are informal or illegal, limiting the ability of governments to directly engage with them. In these cases, NGOs or other civil society members can act to facilitate the input of these miners into the process through more informal consultations.

FORMAL VERSUS INFORMAL MEETINGS

Formal meetings

- Ideally government representatives from relevant ministries (mining, environment, health and local government) will be represented.
- These meetings should be conducted in formal settings with appropriate facilities, such as audiovisual services.
- The Press can be invited to formal meetings to participate and better understand the issues of ASGM, and to subsequently publish articles that enhance the understanding of the general public of this sector.

Informal meetings with informal/illegal miners

- Government and press presence may not be feasible, as miners may be wary of engaging openly in these circumstances.
- Informal meetings can take place in the mining communities themselves, in village centres or community gathering places.
- Informal meetings should include mainly miners, local community members and local/traditional leaders.

Suggested consultation topics

Development of the National Action Plan

- What actions should be included in the NAP with regard to:
 - providing information to mining communities
 - actions to eliminate worst practices
 - steps to reduce exposures to mercury
 - steps to manage mercury trade
 - health promotion strategies

Priority actions and responsibilities under the NAP

- Among all of these issues, what are the biggest priorities?
- Who should be responsible for carrying out actions to address these issues?
- Who can support these efforts (e.g. NGOs, academics) and what kind of support can they give?
- If the government and other stakeholders took the recommended actions, what would be reasonable mercury reduction targets for the country? And what are reasonable timelines for meeting those targets?
- How can/should miners best engage in the NAP process?

Promotion of low-mercury and mercury-free technology

- What do the miners think about mercury versus alternatives?
- What is the best way for miners to receive training on mercury-free technologies? Is this best done through government programs, private sector initiatives, other?
- What are the barriers for miners to change practices? What help is needed? (training, access to finance etc.)

Formalisation of the sector

- What are biggest issues around formalisation of the sector?
- What are some specific steps that the government can take to formalise the sector?
- What can the government do to encourage miners to become legal?

Environmental and health issues

- What do miners think about the health effects of mercury? Have they observed effects in their own communities? Are there existing concerns about health?
- How can miners collaborate with each other & other stakeholders on awareness creation about environmental and health effects of mercury?

Expected outputs

Miner consultations should aim to identify miners' priorities that should be considered by the National Steering Committee in developing the NAP in order to develop a feasible and practical document. Where possible, the outputs of the meeting should focus on specific recommendations on key aspects of NAP, especially on issues that will require close cooperation of miners, such as eliminating worst practices, reducing or eliminating mercury use where feasible, raising health awareness, and formalisation of the ASGM sector.

Since April 2015, FoN and AGENDA have engaged in several stakeholder consultations to raise awareness on the Convention and elicited sources of data and information about the ASGM sector, with the aim of gaining a common understanding and agreement about the direction of the NAP.

MINERS' OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Examples from Ghana and Tanzania

Acknowledged the severity of the mercury problem from their own observations

Recommended that government undertake exploration and demarcate viable lands for licensed miners to improve their mineral recovery and profitability and reduce environmental damage

Recommended that all stakeholders should collaborate to create awareness on environmental and health effects of mercury

Requested that miners be involved in development and implementation of any procedures adopted to minimise mercury emissions and to phase out mercury

Requested that government provide training to small-scale miners on best available technologies and practices

Recommended that the government establish centres of excellence in order to facilitate best available technology transfer to miners easily

Recommended the designation of special sites for amalgamation at mining locations to control the use of mercury

Requested more research on mercury-free methods and the dissemination of the most effective ways/methods

Expressed an interest in learning from other countries that have phased out mercury use in ASGM

Key Resources

This section gives an overview of the key resources, which are organized into four categories: technical aspects, formalization and responsible gold certifications, health, and gender and child labor.

Technical aspects

- UNEP 2015. “Guidance Document: Developing a National Action Plan to Reduce, and Where Feasible, Eliminate Mercury Use in Artisanal and Small Scale Gold Mining.” https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/11371/National_Action_Plan_draft_guidance_v12.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y
- UNEP. 2012a. A Practical Guide: Reducing Mercury Use in Artisanal and Small-scale Gold Mining. United National Environment Programme <http://www.unep.org/chemicalsandwaste/global-mercury-partnership/reducing-mercury-artisanal-and-small-scale-gold-mining-asgm/key-resources>
- UNIDO. 2006. Manual for Training Artisanal and Small-scale Gold Miners. Global Mercury Project, United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), Vienna, Austria. 144pp. http://www.communitymining.org/attachments/221_training%20manual%20for%20miners%20GMP%20Marcelo%20Veiga.pdf%3FphpMyAdmin=cde87b62947d46938306c-1d6ab7a0420

- UNIDO. 2008. UNIDO Technical Guidelines on Mercury Management in Artisanal and Small-scale Gold Mining. United Nations Industrial Development Organization 5pp <http://www.unep.org/chemicalsandwaste/global-mercury-partnership/asgm/reports-and-publications>
- The International Cyanide Management Code for the Manufacture, Transport, and Use of Cyanide in the Production of Gold (Code) is an industry voluntary program developed by UNEP and the then International Council on Metals and the Environment (ICME). It promotes safe management of cyanide use in gold mining. For further information visit web site: <http://www.cyanidecode.org/>

Formalization and responsible gold certifications

- The ASGM Partnership website contains extensive information on formalization including a summary analysis of case studies on formalization from five different countries: Ecuador, Mongolia, Peru, Tanzania, and Uganda. <http://www.unep.org/chemicalsandwaste/global-mercury-partnership/asgm/reports-and-publications>
- Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC): SDC experiences with Formalization and Responsible Environmental Practices in Artisanal and Small-scale Gold Mining in Latin America and Asia (Mongolia). Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA), Bern, Switzerland. 54 pp. (2011) https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/154963/resource_en_216063.pdf
- The Fairmined Initiative was created by the Alliance for Responsible Mining (ARM): <http://www.fairmined.org/>
- Responsible Jewelry Council: <http://www.responsiblejewellery.com/rjc-standards-committee/>

Health

- The following materials are available from the World Health Organization:
 - Guidance on identifying populations at risk from mercury exposure, jointly developed by WHO and UNEP in 2008. http://www.who.int/ipcs/assessment/public_health/mercury/en/
http://www.who.int/entity/ipcs/assessment/public_health/Bibliography_of_KeyInformation_from_WHO_relevant_MinamataConvention.pdf?ua=1
 - Factsheet on exposure pathways to mercury, corresponding health effects and possibilities to reduce human exposure from mercury sources. http://www.who.int/ipcs/assessment/public_health/mercury/en/
http://www.who.int/entity/ipcs/assessment/public_health/Bibliography_of_KeyInformation_from_WHO_relevant_MinamataConvention.pdf?ua=1
 - In 2014, WHO commissioned a review of the literature regarding the health effects of mercury among those working and/or living near artisanal small-scale gold mining (ASGM) communities: Environmental Health Perspectives; DOI:10.1289/ehp.1307864 <http://ehp.niehs.nih.gov/1307864/>
 - WHO is also developing a suite of materials on ASGM and public health required under Article 7 of the Minamata Convention on Mercury. http://www.who.int/ipcs/assessment/public_health/mercury/en/
- The Artisanal Gold Council (AGC), in collaboration with UNIDO, has developed a guide to provide training to health practitioners on health risks common in the artisanal and small scale gold mining sector.

Artisanal Gold Council (2014), Richard M., Moher P., and Telmer K.; Health Issues in Artisanal and Small-Scale Gold Mining- Beta Version 0.8: www.artisanalgold.org

- UNIDO: Protocols for Environmental and Health Assessment of Mercury Released by Artisanal and Small-scale Gold Miners. United Nations Industrial Development Organization, Vienna, Austria. 294pp. (2004) <http://www.unep.org/chemicalsandwaste/global-mercury-partnership/asgm/reports-and-publications>

Gender and child labor

- The US Department of Labour: “Reducing Child Labour and Forced Labor: A Toolkit for Responsible Businesses” that can be used across sectors and industries to assisting in addressing child and forced labor throughout the supply chain: <http://www.dol.gov/ilab/child-forced-labor/index.htm>
- ILO (2007) document on: Girls in mining <http://www.ilo.org/public/portugue/region/eurpro/lisbon/pdf/girlsmining.pdf>.
- PACT (Poole, Hayes, and Kacapor) (2013) document on: Breaking the chain: Ending the supply of child-mined minerals <http://www.pactworld.org/sites/default/files/PACT%20Child%20Labor%20Report%20English%202013.pdf>
- UNICEF (2012) document on: Children working in mines https://www.unicef.org/csr/files/UNICEF_REPORT_ON_CHILD_RIGHTS_AND_THE_MINING_SECTOR_APRIL_27.pdf
- The World Bank (2012) document on: Gender Dimensions of Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining: A Rapid Assessment Toolkit. http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTEXTINDWOM/Resources/Gender_and_ASM_Toolkit.pdf



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