



Regional Conference

GOLDEN SOLUTIONS: Towards a Shared Vision for Better Gold Mining in the Guianas

Concept Note

Introduction

Artisanal, small, and medium-scale gold mining (ASMG) is a vital economic activity in Guyana, Suriname, and French Guiana, providing livelihoods for many communities. However, ASMG also presents significant environmental and health challenges, including mercury pollution, deforestation, and greenhouse gas emissions. Addressing these issues necessitates coordinated regional efforts to enhance policy frameworks, promote more responsible mining technologies, and strengthen monitoring and enforcement mechanisms. A regional conference will provide a platform to discuss the implementation of Minamata commitments, share experiences, and explore collaborative approaches to eliminating or phasing out mercury and adopting mercury-free and low-impact technologies in the gold mining sector in Guyana and Suriname.

The conference will be organized by the following partners/ projects:

- “Improving Environmental Management in the Mining Sector of Suriname, with Emphasis on Artisanal and Small-Scale Gold Mining” (EMSAGS) project, implemented by the Ministry of Natural Resources and the National Environmental Authority; and
- “Mercury Phaseout in the Guianas” (MPIG) project, led by WWF.
- **EMSAGS Project:** The project seeks to improve the environmental management of mining in Suriname, particularly small-scale gold mining, which is the largest driver of deforestation in the country and contributes to biodiversity loss, climate change, and unsustainable land, water, and forest management. The project addresses policy and institutional constraints to improve the management of the Artisanal and Small-Scale Gold Mining (ASGM) sector and create an enabling environment for the dissemination of environmentally responsible mining practices.
- **Mercury Phaseout in the Guianas Project (MPIG):** This initiative aims to implement mercury-free extraction methods in Guyana and Suriname, with pilot sites that will be replicated in additional ASMG locations. It also seeks to promote mercury-free gold production in the Guianas.



Conference Objectives

1. **Impact of ASMG on human health and environment:** Awareness and understanding of the current status of the ASMG sector in the Guianas, with the focus on its impact on human health and the environment. This will include the chemicals used in ASMG beyond mercury, the regulatory frameworks governing the sector in each country, the technologies employed for gold extraction, and the measures taken to regulate and control the use of these chemicals.
2. **Low-Impact Mining Technologies:** Introduce and evaluate low-impact mining technologies that reduce environmental and health risks, including mercury-free methods, and support forest conservation, freshwater resource protection, and lower-mining footprint.
3. **Regional Monitoring Mechanisms:** Strengthen regional collaboration in monitoring mining activities to prevent illegal mining, mitigate environmental degradation, regulate mercury export, and promote responsible development.

Expected Outcomes

- **Clear understanding of the current status of the ASMG sector across the Guianas:** A comprehensive assessment of the status-quo of the ASMG sector across the Guianas, facilitating the exchange of best practices and lessons learned. This assessment will foster regional collaboration and enhance strategic approaches to minimize environmental and health risks associated with chemical use in the sector.
- **Comprehensive understanding of the status quo and implementation of Low-Impact Mining Technologies:** Awareness and understanding of low-impact mining technologies, with a particular focus on mercury-free methods and sustainable practices that minimize environmental and health risks. This will provide practical recommendations for the effective adoption and implementation of low-impact mining technologies.
- **Monitoring Strategy:** A collaborative action plan aimed at enhancing monitoring and enforcement through knowledge sharing and innovation, including addressing illegal mining.

Conference date: Thursday 10th and Friday 11th of July 2025

Participants

The conference will bring together government representatives, environmental and mining experts, and representatives from mining associations across Guyana, Suriname, and French Guiana.