

ADDRESSING GENDER IN THE ARTISANAL & SMALL-SCALE GOLD MINING SECTOR

A planetGOLD Programme Quick Guide



Introduction

In a sector that employs up to 20 million people, women and children comprise around 20% of artisanal and small-scale gold miners (ASGM).¹ While women are active in the ASGM workforce, they also typically face a range of gender-specific barriers that prevent their full participation:

- In addition to their work at the mines, women still largely take on traditional unpaid labor such as managing household chores and childcare. These extra duties affect their availability to spend time earning a livelihood, reducing their income levels compared to men.²
- Women miners lack necessary equipment and tools to protect them from mercury contact and other hazards and sometimes must borrow PPE from their male co-workers.³
- Women are more vulnerable to gender-based violence in the mining workplace.
- Traditional social attitudes and customs, including limits on property ownership, reduce women's access to finance to support their mining operations.
- Women are frequently excluded from government structures and processes that determine mining policy and allow for formal recognition of mining activities.
- Societal perceptions overall often reflect a lack of respect and recognition for the rights of women miners.⁴



planetGOLD Burkina Faso



planetGOLD Colombia



planetGOLD Kenya



Janeth Lazarte/planetGOLD Peru

Progress is not possible without women

The creation of a responsible, equitable and profitable ASGM sector must address gender-based challenges. Empowering women, by including them in policy development, decision-making and access to finance, services and markets, can lead to higher participation rates, improved productivity and higher, more reliable incomes, which in turn contribute to poverty reduction within mining communities.⁵

Addressing gender in the planetGOLD programme

The planetGOLD programme is committed to supporting and creating sustainable opportunities that strengthen gender inclusiveness in ASGM. The planetGOLD country projects take several measures to ensure the active inclusion of women's voices and concerns in all phases of their projects, from stakeholder engagement (such as project kick-off meetings, trainings, and steering committees) to special gender baseline studies and gender equity planning, to the design of specific gender-focused interventions that enhance the participation women in ASGM.⁶

This guide describes approaches to address challenges faced by women in ASGM and provides select examples of planetGOLD activities and interventions to date that have supported greater participation by women in **formalization**, **access to finance**, and **adoption of new mercury-free technology**. This guide also examines efforts to improve public perceptions about women in the ASGM sector **through enhanced communications**.

Formalization

Challenge: Women are routinely excluded from decision-making processes and power, which leads to ASGM sector policies that fail to address gender barriers. Women are also typically underrepresented in positions of leadership within ASGM operations and businesses.⁷

Select planetGOLD Formalization Approaches and Activities around Gender:

- **Strengthen gender-responsive formalization**
 - planetGOLD Kenya supported formation of all-female mining cooperatives by providing training and assistance for registration, enabling women to obtain licenses and access financial services.⁸ planetGOLD Burkina Faso also assisted in the establishment of an official women's cooperative.⁹
 - planetGOLD Ecuador worked to support jancheras (women mineral sorters), by way of a new regulatory instrument that recognizes their work as a "productive, formalized, economic activity," thereby allowing them the opportunity to sell their minerals legally at a fair price.¹⁰
- **Enhance inclusion of gender issues in data collection, evaluation, and policy formulation**
 - The planetGOLD Philippines' project conducted a gender study to assess the current situation of women in ASGM communities and identify opportunities for collaboration between national and local government agencies.¹¹
 - Through the gender analysis in six locations, planetGOLD Indonesia mapped out the different roles of women and men in ASGM value chains and different access and control over productive resources that contribute to gender inequality.¹²
 - *Women and Men of Gold*, published by planetGOLD Peru, provides recommendations through an action plan to promote equal rights and opportunities for men and women in the mining sector.¹³



planetGOLD Burkina Faso

- **Include women in structures and processes for ASGM policymaking and civic engagement**
 - The planetGOLD Philippines project assisted with the development of the Interagency Council for Women Workers in the Informal Sector, which includes women miners. This Council addresses challenges and identifies opportunities for women and conducts gender-focused research and data collection.¹⁴
 - In Mandal soum, planetGOLD Mongolia helped to establish a Gender Committee, which supported local efforts in ASM formalization, environmental rehabilitation, and workplace safety.¹⁵
 - With the goal to synchronize and include a gender dimension in the implementation of relevant laws, planetGOLD Indonesia cooperated with the Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child Protection to support the Gender Responsive Village initiative. This initiative addresses the different needs and perspectives of all genders, incorporating a gender focus in the village development process.¹⁶
 - To bolster the importance of gender mainstreaming and work towards gender equality for all artisanal miners planetGOLD Indonesia also produced *Guidelines for Gender Mainstreaming in ASGM* which serves as a reference in the implementation of ASGM governance and mentoring programs for gender-sensitive mining communities.¹⁷

Access to Finance

Challenge: Women face economic inequality in the mining sector, often forced into work jobs that decrease their chances of higher pay and income. Cultural traditions can also mean that women lack assets in the form of land or machinery that could be used as collateral to access loans. Girls may face barriers to education, which can translate to lower financial literacy and money/business management skills among women.¹⁸

Select planetGOLD Approaches and Finance Activities around Gender:

- **Create ASGM-specific financial products and mechanisms that incentivize the participation of women**
 - To enable the inclusion of women miners to access an ASGM revolving fund, planetGOLD Burkina Faso prioritized assisting mixed-sex cooperatives. As a result, 23% of the members of the seven cooperatives selected for participation were women.¹⁹
 - planetGOLD Colombia created peer-to-peer loan, savings and credit groups to reach ASM in remote areas (80% of participants are women in these areas). The team also provided educational training and supported miners in developing loan applications.²⁰
 - The planetGOLD Peru project co-designed Mujer Pallaquera Credit, a finance mechanism for pallaqueras to provide both working capital and the acquisition of fixed assets along with an additional benefit of insurance coverage for cancer diagnosis or a discount for on-time payment.²¹





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- **Educate financial institutions about the needs of women miners**
 - The planetGOLD projects in Colombia and Indonesia trained financial institution staff to address gender inequalities within the ASGM sector as part of the design of financial products tailored to women's needs.²²
- **Provide women miners with financial education**
 - The planetGOLD Peru project developed a guidance document presenting a financial education program with a gender approach developed for women mineral selectors.²³
 - The planetGOLD Burkina Faso team launched an education campaign for Gnikipière women supporting their applications to the ASGM revolving fund.²⁴
 - Reaching three different sites, and attended by both men and women, planetGOLD Kenya provided basic financial management training, which included direction on record keeping, business operations and awareness on formal financing.²⁵
- **Create specialized campaigns to build economic opportunity**
 - To promote economic empowerment and capacity building, planetGOLD Peru developed the initiative Emprende Pallaquera. Its objective was to improve the economic situation of the pallaqueras, while promoting the creation of group enterprises, providing an alternative to diversify sources of income and reducing dependence on manual gold sorting.²⁶

Technology

Challenge: Generally, women are not considered when selecting appropriate mercury-free equipment and providing training. Superstitions and common perceptions about lack of physical strength exclude women from highest paying extraction jobs in the mines, and push them toward undervalued roles, such as crushing, waste rock scavenging, or sometimes amalgamating, jobs that pay less and may have more mercury exposure.

Select planetGOLD Technology Approaches and Activities around Gender

- **Provide access to training for women and appropriate accommodations**
 - The planetGOLD Mongolia project organized a women-only technology training for miners in Mandal soum.²⁷
 - The planetGOLD Guyana project ensured that women from the local government, community, and miners were provided with transportation to the trainings and meals, as well as appropriate accommodations. Facilities were installed at each camp so both men and women were comfortable during their stay.²⁸



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planetGOLD Indonesia

- **Identify and install accessible technology that considers needs of women miners**
 - The planetGOLD Indonesia project developed a micro-cyanidation tank which, with its smaller size and ease of use, is more accessible to women miners both in terms of cost and operation.²⁹
 - planetGOLD Guyana and planetGOLD Indonesia promoted the Gold Cube among women miners. The cube is a gravity concentration tool aimed at capturing finer gold without using mercury. The cube is cost effective, lightweight, durable, can work with different soil types, and is easy to operate. The cube can be shared among several women, increasing incomes.³⁰
- **Provide opportunities for women to use technologies in ways that increase their income**
 - planetGOLD Burkina Faso installed two mercury-free gold concentrators for women's cooperatives which provided women with an additional income source by creating an accessible processing area they can then lease to men as a paid service.³¹

Enhanced Communications

Challenge: Stereotypes and cultural norms serve to limit women’s participation in ASGM operations, policymaking and access to finance. Breaking the stereotypes around women working in the mining sector requires continuous elevation of women’s voices and visibility.

Select planetGOLD Communication Approaches and Activities around Gender:

- **Establish and maintain a gender narrative in the mining communities and sector to influence policy change**
 - With a focus on women miners in Ecuador, especially jancheras (female mineral sorters), the project launched the “Mujeres con Voluntad de Oro” campaign to elevate their visibility and address the socio-economic challenges they face. This campaign then contributed to the national government’s publication of a legal instrument which legally recognized the work of jancheras for the first time.³²



Ruth Epwoka/planetGOLD Kenya



planetGOLD Philippines



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- **Conduct on-the-ground training in mining communities and with local officials to promote gender empowerment**
 - Launched by the planetGOLD Colombia project, the “Yo Me Reconozco” campaign focused on promoting gender empowerment and equality.³³
 - The planetGOLD Colombia project also facilitated several workshops on the prevention of Gender Based Violence in the Cauca and Antioquia regions. Both government and public officials were in attendance.³⁴
 - Uplifting women miners in the Philippines ASGM sector, the planetGOLD Philippines project released its first episode of [#PowerofGold](#) to educate viewers on their determination and potential in a male-dominated world.³⁵
- **Develop digital outreach**
 - Staff and partners from the planetGOLD programme have marked International Women’s Day by participating in campaigns that share photo stories and videos, emphasizing the importance of including women in ASGM and promoting more responsible mining practices.

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For further information, visit www.planetGOLD.org to explore the planetGOLD resource library, curated collections, and country pages. Scan the QR code to access the site.



ENDNOTES

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