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Report

# Documentation of planetGOLD Programme: Ecuador Partner Project Communications Interventions

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**Primary authors:** Dr. Gisselle Vila Benites, Cornell University

**Editorial Support:** Susan Keane; Jennifer Wilmore Scroggins – Natural Resources Defense Council

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## Abbreviations/Acronyms

Abbreviation/ Acronym	Definition
ABG	Agency for Regulation and Control of Biosafety and Quarantine for Galapagos
ASGM	Artisanal and Small-Scale Gold Mining
AGROCALIDAD	Agency for Phytosanitary and Zoosanitary Regulation and Control
AML	Anti-Money Laundering
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GAD	Decentralized Autonomous Government
IESS	Ecuadorian Institute of Social Security
INAMHI	National Institute of Meteorology and Hydrology
INNOVAGRO	Ecuadorian Chamber of Agricultural Innovation and Technology Industry
MAATE	Ministry of the Environment, Water and Ecological Transition
MAG	Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock
MAPE	Artisanal and Small-scale Mining
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
S&M	Monitoring and Evaluation System
ToC	Theory of Change
UPOP	Unintentional Persistent Organic Pollutant
BCE	Central Bank of Ecuador
NPCM	National Programme for Chemical Management

# Executive Summary

The planetGOLD Ecuador partner project implemented during the first phase of the planetGOLD programme included four specific communication interventions designed to overcome technical, social, and economic barriers while fostering trust and collaboration among stakeholders. The communication interventions focused on disseminating knowledge, changing behaviors, building technical capacity, and fostering inclusion and digital innovation. These efforts ensured accessibility of global advancements in mercury-free practices to Ecuadorian miners and stakeholders, encouraging responsible mining practices and promoting gender equity and market diversification.

## 1. Intervention 1: Awareness Campaigns on Mineral Selling Strategy and COVID-19 Risks

Targeted campaigns under the project's Mineral Selling Strategy aimed to build trust between miners and mercury-free processing plants, encouraging them to sell untreated ore rather than process it with mercury. These campaigns addressed miners' skepticism about the plants' ore assessments by highlighting the strengthened lab capacities resulting from the project's technical interventions. The ValORO tu Trabajo initiative specifically focused on fostering confidence in fair pricing and accurate assaying with results that directly informed 272 people, including 152 women, while the highly successful "Reglas de Oro" (Golden Rules) campaign (2020-2021) reinforced health and safety awareness, reaching 12,000 people in Ecuador and Peru through social media and radio. Widely distributed visual materials further ensured lasting impact in the ASGM sector.

### Key Impacts:

- *Changed behavior among miners, directly informing 272 people via the "ValORO tu Trabajo" campaign, including 152 women, addressing their skepticism about mercury-free processing plants and convincing them to assay and sell untreated ore*
- *Reached beneficiary miners with awareness about the prevention of the use of mercury in mining, while indirectly reaching some 60,000 people nationwide*
- *Reached approximately 12,000 people with the Golden Rules campaign promoting visibility and integration of women mineral selectors in the formal economy*

## **2. Intervention 2: Visibility and Advocacy for Women Artisanal Miners**

The planetGOLD Ecuador project actively promoted gender inclusion by advocating for and increasing the visibility of women artisanal gold miners, known as *jancheras*. Their efforts aimed to ensure that women received equal opportunities and recognition in the mining sector.

Key Impacts:

- *Empowered women by integrating them into formal supply chains with fair wages and social benefits.*

## **3. Intervention 3: Dissemination of Knowledge Products and Reports**

By partnering with universities and local organizations, the planetGOLD Ecuador project successfully distributed training materials and resources, effectively merging global knowledge with local needs. This approach did not only enhance the impact of the project but also fostered a sense of community and shared purpose.

Key Impacts:

- *Increased accessibility to technical knowledge, fostering wider awareness of mercury-free ASGM practices.*
- *Enhanced communication infrastructure, including grievance mechanisms for transparency.*
- *Improved stakeholder collaboration and the practical application of responsible practices.*

# 1 Introduction

The planetGOLD partner project in Ecuador, implemented under the National Programme for Chemical Management (NPCM) during the first phase of the planetGOLD programme, addressed the challenges of mercury use and informality in the ASGM sector from 2018 to 2024. As part of a broader government initiative to manage chemical waste—including mining waste and mercury—the NPCM aligns with planetGOLD's mission to eliminate mercury use in gold mining while promoting responsible practices. The program sought to achieve these goals through the adoption of mercury-free technologies, improved access to finance, formalized markets for responsibly mined gold, and raising awareness among ASGM stakeholders.

The planetGOLD Ecuador program operated in key mining regions, including Camilo Ponce Enríquez, Chinapintza, and Zaruma-Portovelo. While these sites primarily sell gold to the Central Bank of Ecuador (BCE) or other buyers, challenges persist as some miners continue to use mercury clandestinely despite its ban in Ecuador since 2015. The program focused on engaging a wide range of ASGM producers and processing plants, implementing strategies to increase miners' access to formal markets, and fostering trust in mercury-free processing methods. Notable activities include strengthening processing plants and assaying laboratories, implementing a Mineral Selling Strategy, and supporting miners in obtaining Fairmined certification.

In terms of communications, the planetGOLD Ecuador project has implemented initiatives to promote mercury-free ASGM practices to encourage miners in transitioning to more responsible methods. These interventions contributed towards addressing the technical, social, and economic barriers faced by the ASGM sector while fostering trust and collaboration among stakeholders. The communication interventions combined knowledge dissemination, awareness campaigns, capacity building, and inclusive approaches to promote responsible ASGM practices in Ecuador.

The project's communication interventions focused on behavior change and stakeholder engagement. Through partnerships with universities, knowledge hubs, and local organizations, the project has aimed to amplify the reach of its reports, training materials, and knowledge products, ensuring that global advancements in mercury-free mining are accessible to miners and policymakers at the local level. Targeted campaigns further enhanced technical capacity, promoting safer and more efficient practices. Additionally, the project integrated cross-cutting themes such as gender inclusion, ensuring that the benefits of formal markets and responsible practices extend to all participants in the mining value chain.

## 2 Background on Communication Interventions

### Background and Context

The planetGOLD Ecuador partner project, implemented during the first phase of the planetGOLD programme under the National Programme for Chemical Management (NPCM), applied several communication mechanisms aimed at disseminating the project outcomes and results. The key communication efforts were grouped as described below.

### Communication Interventions

The communications strategy of the planetGOLD Ecuador project entailed three broad interventions, namely:

- 1 Awareness Campaigns on Mineral Selling Strategy and COVID-19 Risks
- 2 Visibility and Advocacy for Women Artisanal Miners
- 3 Dissemination of Knowledge Products and Reports

The following sections will provide detailed information on each of these interventions.

### Communication Intervention 1: Awareness Campaigns on Mineral Selling Strategy and COVID 19 Risks

The “ValORO tu Trabajo” campaign was the flagship communication intervention under the Mineral Selling Strategy, designed to build trust between miners and processing plants. The campaign aimed to persuade miners to sell untreated ore to mercury-free plants by addressing their concerns over fair pricing, gold recovery rates, and the reliability of ore assessments. The campaign's name itself carried a dual meaning, reinforcing both the economic and personal value of miners' work—playing on the phrase “I value your work,” with “ORO” (gold) embedded in the title.

To support these objectives, the campaign produced a variety of communication materials tailored to miners and their communities. These included informative brochures, posters, and radio spots that explained the benefits of mercury-free processing. The campaign also featured outreach activities such as community meetings, live educational skits, and even a children's competition aimed at engaging mining families in the transition to formalized mineral selling.

The intervention reached 272 people directly, including 152 women, through targeted awareness-raising events in key mining regions. These efforts complemented technical interventions that strengthened the ore assessment capacities of processing plants, helping to reduce miners' skepticism about plant evaluations.

Additionally, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the “Reglas de Oro” (Golden Rules) campaign was launched between 2020-2021 to promote health and safety protocols within the ASM sector. This initiative disseminated biosecurity recommendations through social media and radio broadcasts, reaching approximately 12,000 people across Ecuador and extending to Peru. Visual materials, including campaign posters, community engagement photos, and examples of awareness-raising tools, were developed and distributed widely to reinforce key messages and ensure a lasting impact.

## **Description of the Intervention**


To address the longstanding mistrust between miners and mercury-free processing plants, the project implemented a communication campaign under the Mineral Selling Strategy. This campaign sought to encourage ASGM miners to assay their ore and sell it to processing plants that utilize mercury-free gold recovery methods. By highlighting the benefits of this approach—such as higher recovery rates, environmental safety, and fairer pricing—the project aimed to shift miners away from traditional mercury-based amalgamation methods.

The campaign included direct engagement sessions, where miners were provided detailed explanations of the advantages of selling untreated ore to mercury-free processing plants. These sessions aimed to address miners' skepticism and build their confidence in the assessment methods used by the processing plants. Communication materials were tailored to provide clear, actionable information, and efforts were made to ensure inclusivity, with special outreach to women miners.

This intervention also emphasized the “win-win” nature of the Mineral Selling Strategy, where miners benefit from better recovery rates and processing plants gain a reliable supply of ore. Two key components of this strategy have been the “ValORO tu Trabajo” campaign and the Golden Rules campaign.

The “ValORO tu Trabajo” campaign sought to build trust between miners and processing plants by highlighting the improved ore assessment capacities of mercury-free facilities.

In addition, as a response to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the project launched the “Reglas de Oro” (Golden Rules) campaign to promote occupational safety and



health within the ASM sector. The campaign aimed to reduce the risk of contagion in mining communities by disseminating practical self-care measures through social media, radio spots, and printed materials. Key recommendations included proper use of personal protective equipment (PPE), workplace sanitation, social distancing protocols, and symptom identification. The campaign reached approximately 12,000 people in Ecuador and was also shared with mining communities in Peru.

The Golden Rules campaign produced a series of seven videos providing miners with practical guidance on how to protect themselves and others from the spread of COVID-19. These videos, along with a set of posters offering similar safety recommendations, were distributed widely through WhatsApp, social media, and printed formats.

By integrating these awareness and capacity-building initiatives, the project strengthened miners' understanding of both economic opportunities and health risks, ensuring a more informed and resilient ASM sector.

Also, as part of its communication and education strategy, the project also implemented a series of workshops aimed at building awareness among miners in Zamora Chinchipe and other regions.

The initiative combined theoretical workshops with practical site visits, allowing miners to directly apply new knowledge in their operations. This hands-on approach ensured that participants not only understood the concepts but also gained the skills needed to implement them.

These efforts were particularly critical in building trust and encouraging miners to transition to responsible mining practices. The awareness sessions were complemented by the dissemination of educational materials, which were distributed to participants for ongoing reference. This intervention aimed to create a ripple effect, where trained miners could share knowledge with their peers, further broadening the impact.

## Partners and Key Stakeholders

This intervention included collaboration with the following key stakeholders:

**Figure 3: Partners and Key Stakeholders of Intervention 2**



- **ASGM Miners, Processing Plant Technicians and Associations:** Miners were the primary target audience and direct beneficiaries of the awareness campaign, which focused on shifting long-standing behaviors and mindsets regarding mineral selling. The campaign sought to address miners' hesitations and skepticism about selling untreated ore to processing plants by highlighting the economic and technical benefits of mercury-free processing. Many miners traditionally process their own ore using mercury, often believing it to be the most profitable approach. However, the campaign provided clear, relatable information demonstrating how selling directly to mercury-free plants could lead to better gold recovery rates, fair pricing, and safer working conditions. To reinforce this message, communication efforts included outreach activities such as informational materials, awareness events, and direct engagement with miners in key regions. Mining associations played a crucial role in disseminating these messages and fostering trust between miners and processing plants. Additionally, plant technicians received operational guidance to strengthen mercury-free processing methods, ensuring miners had confidence in the plants' ability to provide accurate ore assessments and fair transactions. By tackling both knowledge gaps and trust issues, the campaign aimed to create a more transparent and responsible mineral supply chain.
- **Mercury-Free Processing Plants:** Plants such as EMICOR and Nueva Union collaborated closely with the project. These facilities not only process mercury-free

gold but also serve as advocates for the benefits of this approach, helping build trust among miners.

- **Community Organizations and Media Outlets:** Local organizations and media channels played a critical role in spreading campaign messages, engaging communities through accessible and culturally appropriate communication strategies.
- **Institute of Geological and Energy Research (IIGE):** As a technical partner, IIGE led workshops and technical site visits, offering specialized knowledge in mining operations, mercury-free methods, and environmental monitoring.
- **UNDP Ecuador:** Provided project oversight, coordinated funding, and ensured alignment with international best practices in communication and awareness.
- **Local Mining Associations:** Collaborated to identify participants, share logistical resources, and encourage local miners to attend sessions. The project learned that associations are crucial in reaching miners who are typically hard to access.
- **Environmental and Occupational Safety Organizations:** Contributed to training content related to health, safety, and environmental protection, ensuring that miners are well-versed in these critical areas.

## Main Outcomes, Outputs and Impacts

### Main Outcomes:

- **Behavioral Change Among Miners:** The campaign addressed miners' skepticism about mercury-free processing plants and encouraged them to assay and sell untreated ore, demonstrating the economic and environmental advantages of this approach.
- **Increased Participation in the Mineral Selling Strategy:** More miners engaged with mercury-free processing plants, leading to improved gold recovery rates and reduced environmental harm. This included miners who previously relied on clandestine mercury use. According to UNDP Ecuador<sup>1</sup>, awareness about the prevention of the use of mercury in mining directly reached the project's beneficiary miners of Portovelo

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<sup>1</sup> UNDP Ecuador. <https://www.undp.org/es/ecuador/noticias/ninas-y-ninos-de-portovelo-suman-su-creatividad-la-campana-valoro-tu-trabajo-por-una-mineria-libre-de-mercurio>

and Zaruma (El Oro) and Camilo Ponce Enríquez (Azuay) and indirectly to some 60,000 people nationwide.

- In particular, the Golden Rules campaign reached approximately 12,000 people in Ecuador and was also shared with mining communities in Peru. In addition, the ValORO tu trabajo campaign directly informed 272 people, including 152 women.
- Improved Technical Skills and Knowledge: Through target workshops, miners learned to implement mercury-free gold recovery methods, improve their operational systems, and comply with environmental and safety standards.
- Increased Participation in Capacity-Building Programs: The program reached 115 participants, including miners and plant technicians, who now have the tools to adopt responsible practices and improve mining efficiency.
- Strengthened Local Expertise: By combining theoretical workshops with practical visits to mines, the project created a cohort of trained miners who can share their knowledge with peers, further extending the program's reach.

**Figure 4: Main Impacts of Intervention 1**

**The Golden Rules Campaign**

- Promoted occupational safety and health to reduce the risk of contagion in mining communities by disseminating practical self-care measures through social media, radio spots, and printed materials.

**The "ValORO tu Trabajo" Campaign**

- Aimed at building trust between miners and processing plants by highlighting the improved ore assessment capacities of mercury-free facilities.

**Significant Reduction in Mercury Use**

- By encouraging ore sales to mercury-free processing plants, the campaign helped prevent mercury discharges, contributing to better environmental outcomes in mining regions.

**Economic Benefits for Miners**

- Miners realized higher incomes through improved gold recovery rates and fair pricing agreements with processing plants. This served as a compelling incentive for others to join the strategy.

**Strengthened Trust in Formal Market Systems**

- Miners became more confident in the ore assessment process used by processing plants, fostering a transition toward formalization and compliance with environmental regulations.

## Communication Intervention 2: Visibility and Advocacy for Women Artisanal Miners

The communication intervention on visibility and advocacy for women artisanal miners as centered around the "Mujeres con Voluntad de Oro" campaign, aimed to address the systemic challenges faced by women in the artisanal and small-scale gold mining (ASGM) sector, particularly the *jancheras*—female mineral sorters who have long been marginalized in this male-dominated industry.

Through a variety of communication products and outreach efforts, the campaign worked to increase the visibility of *jancheras*, promote gender equity, and advocate for their legal recognition and integration into the formal supply chain. This intervention not only contributed to groundbreaking policy changes but also highlighted alternative livelihoods and better practices for women miners, fostering greater gender inclusion in the sector.

### Description of the Intervention

A cornerstone of the project's communications efforts has been the "Mujeres con Voluntad de Oro" campaign, which sought to address critical challenges in the artisanal and small-scale gold mining (ASGM) sector, while promoting development through gender equity and inclusion. The campaign focused on the recognition and empowerment of women miners, specifically the *jancheras*—female mineral sorters who have long been marginalized in the male-dominated mining sector. Through a comprehensive suite of communication products, including videos, stories, and outreach materials, the campaign aimed to elevate the visibility of these women and address the socio-economic challenges they face.

One of the significant accomplishments of this campaign was its contribution to the national government's publication of a groundbreaking legal instrument: the "Legal instrument for the integrated management of mining waste of sterile material by base recyclers in the special regime of small-metal mining". This document, which was officially published in October 2022, legally recognized the work of *jancheras* for the first time, marking a major step forward in addressing the systemic undervaluation and invisibility of their labor.

In addition to elevating the visibility of *jancheras*, the project also supported the promotion of alternative livelihoods for women miners, providing them with a pathway out of poverty through more responsible practices and diversification of income sources. For instance, one

such effort involved strengthening the role of women in goldsmithing as a viable economic alternative. These efforts were accompanied by a focus on improving working conditions, including reducing exposure to harmful practices like mercury use in the sector, and promoting fair pricing for the products of female miners.

The campaign and its various communications products were also aligned with national and international initiatives aiming to reduce mercury use in small-scale mining. As part of these efforts, the project collaborated with key stakeholders, including the Ministry of the Environment, the Ministry of Energy and Non-Renewable Natural Resources, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), to advance policies that promote gender equality and environmental sustainability.

A key output of the project was the creation of a step-by-step guide for the regularization of jancheo activities, which was shared with 79 individuals (69 women and 10 men) in the Camilo Ponce Enríquez canton. This guide offered practical recommendations for implementing environmentally responsible practices and accessing formal support networks. As part of the ongoing work, the project continues to support capacity-building initiatives, focusing on issues like tax management and legal compliance, which remain significant barriers to full integration of women in the formal mining economy.

Through the “Mujeres con Voluntad de Oro” campaign, the project not only worked towards legal recognition but also created a platform for the empowerment of women miners by advocating for their inclusion in the formal mining supply chain. This intervention highlights the vital role of gender-inclusive communications in promoting sustainable development and enhancing the well-being of marginalized communities in the ASGM sector.

Furthermore, the campaign drew attention to the importance of integrating gender-sensitive perspectives into mining policies and practices. This was exemplified by the release of the “Jancheras, Mujeres con Voluntad de Oro” study, which provided a comprehensive analysis of the socio-economic conditions of women in the ASGM sector, with a focus on the province of Azuay. This study revealed the harsh working conditions faced by jancheras, the lack of legal recognition for their work, and their exclusion from formal social security systems. By providing a robust body of research and evidence, the project helped shape public discourse on gender equity in mining, paving the way for inclusive policies that can improve the lives of jancheras.

In conclusion, the intervention spearheaded by the “Mujeres con Voluntad de Oro” campaign has had a transformative impact on the ASGM sector, laying the groundwork for greater recognition of women’s contributions, improving their access to rights, and promoting fair economic opportunities. The initiative not only contributed to the legal recognition of the work of jancheras but also underscored the need for continued support in the form of social, economic, and environmental interventions to ensure gender equity and sustainable development in mining communities.

### Partners and Key Stakeholders

The intervention relied on collaboration with the following stakeholders:

**Figure 5: Partners and Key Stakeholders of Intervention 3**



- **Women Material Sorters (Jancheras):** Women involved in informal mining activities, such as sorting waste materials, were key partners in the project’s gender-focused initiatives.
- **Local Women’s Groups:** The project also worked with women-led organizations to promote social inclusion and advocate for fair treatment and pricing for jancheras, such as the following formal women’s associations: “Fuerza Dorada”, “Mujeres

Autónomas Trabajadoras Las Águilas”, “Mujeres Emprendedoras 4 de junio”, “Rumi Kuri”, y “Unión y Progreso”.

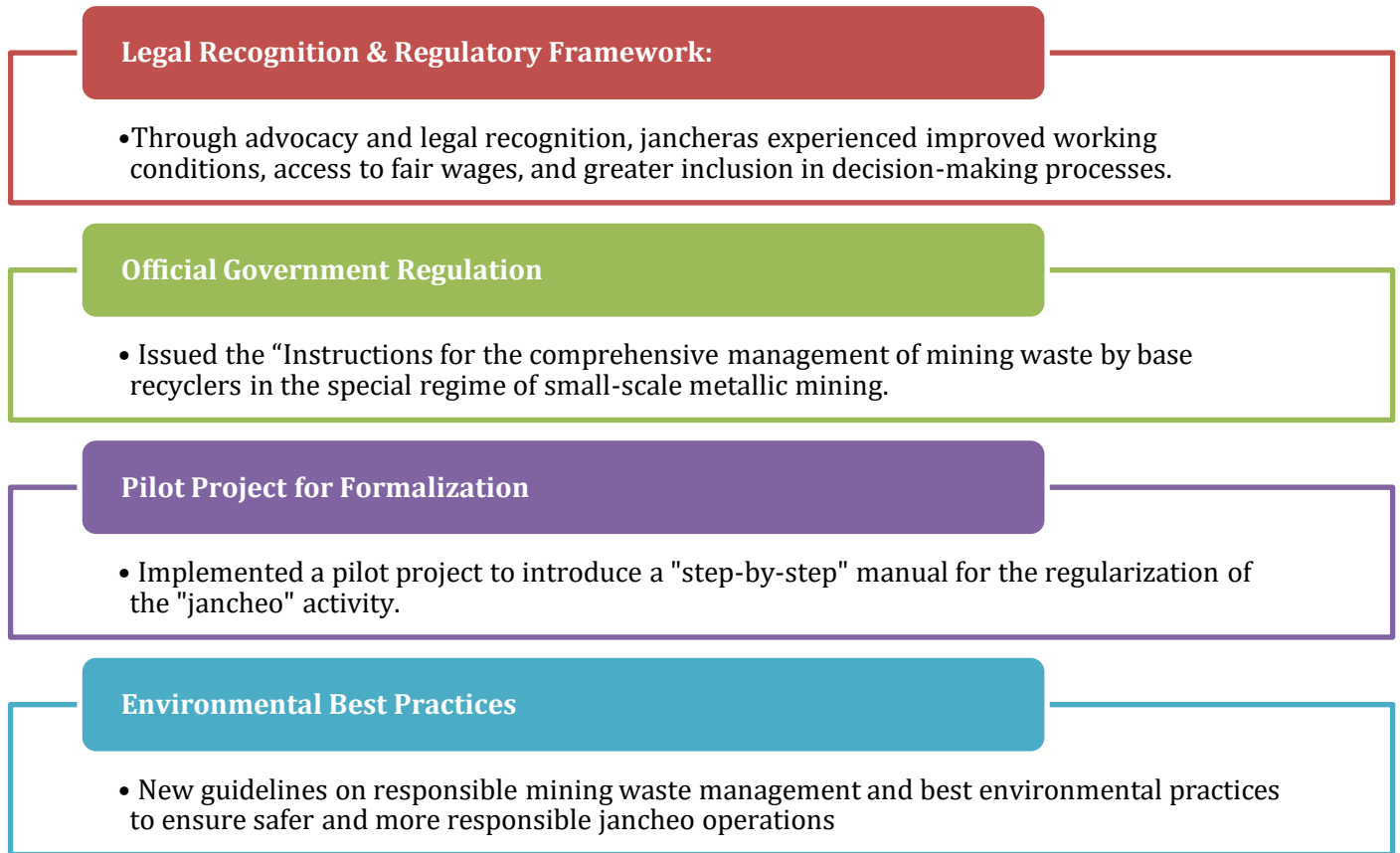
- **Ministry of Energy and Non-renewable Natural Resources:** provided support with the technical team of the Subsecretary of Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining
- **Ministry of Environment, Water and Ecological Transition:** provided support with the technical team of the Subsecretary of Environmental Quality.
- **National Program for the Environmentally Responsible Management of Chemical Substances (PNGQ):** has been supporting studies on the Jancheras since 2018 and contributed with its team experience to the project.

## Main Outcomes, Outputs and Impacts

### Main Outcomes

- **Legal Recognition & Regulatory Framework:** The project’s advocacy efforts contributed to the formulation of a legal tool for recognizing and regulating the activity of “jancheo”, leading to stronger recognition of their role in the mining value chain and improved access to fair pricing mechanisms. This has contributed to a broader discussion on the need for equity and social justice within the mining value chain.
- **Official Government Regulation:** In October 2022, the Ministry of Environment, Water and Ecological Transition (MAATE) and the Ministry of Energy and Mines (MEM) issued the “Instructions for the comprehensive management of mining waste by base recyclers in the special regime of small-scale metallic mining.”
- **Pilot Project for Formalization:** The PNGQ implemented a pilot project to introduce a "step-by-step" manual for the regularization of jancheo, aimed at integrating jancheras into the formal economy.
- **Environmental Best Practices:** The PNGQ manual includes guidelines on responsible mining waste management and best environmental practices to ensure safer and more responsible jancheo operations.

**Figure 6: Main Impacts of Intervention 2**



## **Communication Intervention 3: Dissemination of Knowledge Products and Reports**

One of the project’s key interventions on communication was sharing knowledge products, training materials, and reports generated at the global and national levels through in-country amplifiers. Universities, organizations, and knowledge hubs were leveraged to disseminate information to relevant stakeholders in Ecuador.

The planetGOLD Ecuador project, in collaboration with key partners such as the Institute of Geological and Energy Research, also produced communication products and tools to raise awareness of mercury-free mining methods, to promote knowledge dissemination, and to

improve miners’ technical capacities. These outreach materials addressed operational issues, occupational.

## Description of the Intervention

The planetGOLD Ecuador project prioritized the effective dissemination of knowledge products and reports at both the global and local levels to ensure the uptake of mercury-free ASGM practices. The global project provided support by connecting with in-country amplifiers, such as universities, research institutions, and local knowledge hubs, to share findings, tools, and training materials. These partners served as intermediaries to distribute planetGOLD resources, ensuring accessibility to a wider audience, including miners, processing plants, and policymakers.

The main goal of this intervention was to bridge the gap between the knowledge generated at the global level and its practical application in Ecuador, ensuring stakeholders have access to cutting-edge practices and tools that support the transition to mercury-free ASGM.

## Partners and Key Stakeholders

This intervention relied on collaboration with the following stakeholders:

**Figure 1: Key Partners and Key Stakeholders of Intervention 1**



- **Universities and Research Institutions:** Universities in Ecuador, particularly those with programs in environmental sciences, mining engineering, or sustainable development, played an important role in distributing knowledge products and incorporating them into educational curricula. These institutions also acted as intermediaries to share findings with students, researchers, and the broader academic community.

- **Knowledge Hubs and Local Organizations:** Organizations and platforms focusing on sustainable development, chemical management, and environmental conservation helped to disseminate project reports, training resources, and findings to their networks.
- **planetGOLD Global Team:** Provided technical support, resources, and global knowledge products, ensuring these are accessible to local stakeholders in Ecuador.
- **Ecuadorian Government Agencies:** Key agencies, such as the Ministry of the Environment, Water and Ecological Transition (MAATE), and the Ministry of Energy and Mines, collaborated in promoting policy alignment and use project findings to guide national-level decision-making.
- **Mining Communities and Associations:** Served as end-users of the disseminated knowledge products, receiving training materials, reports, and tools to improve practices at the grassroots level.

## Main Outcomes, Outputs and Impacts

This communication intervention yielded several notable outcomes:

- **Wider Awareness and Knowledge Accessibility:** By leveraging local universities, organizations, and knowledge hubs, the project ensured that technical reports, training materials, and other knowledge products reached miners, policymakers, and academic institutions. This increased understanding of mercury-free ASGM practices and their environmental and economic benefits across multiple stakeholder groups.
- **Enhancing Access to Knowledge:** An online course on ASGM Mining Governance was developed and made available through the Ministry of the Environment's website (see: <https://maateduca.ambiente.gob.ec/enrol/index.php?id=35>).
- **Integration of Global Knowledge at the Local Level:** The dissemination bridged the gap between the global planetGOLD network and Ecuador's ASGM stakeholders, allowing Ecuadorian miners and local institutions to benefit from cutting-edge solutions and practices.

**Figure 2: Main Impacts of Intervention 1**

### Increased Stakeholder Engagement

- The inclusion of local partners as amplifiers created a more connected and informed stakeholder network, driving collaboration and better alignment with national and global sustainability goals.

### Practical Application of Knowledge

- Stakeholders, including miners and processing plants, applied insights from the shared materials to improve mercury-free practices, contributing to the sector's gradual transition to more responsible mining approaches.


### 3 Sustainability

The sustainability of the communication interventions in the planetGOLD Ecuador project seems to depend heavily on the project's ability to maintain long-term behavioral change, build institutional capacity, and create self-sustaining systems that continue beyond the project's lifespan. Knowledge-sharing practices that were deployed onto local institutions, such as universities, research centers, and community organizations, enabled the sharing of critical information about mercury-free ASGM practices, making them more aware of the benefits of selling untreated ore to mercury-free plants, emphasizing fair pricing and better gold recovery rates. These partnerships helped to create a knowledge network that is supported also by local expertise, which is essential for durability.

The project's communication efforts were instrumental in fostering inclusivity and trust-building among miners, processing plants, and marginalized groups like women material sorters (jancheras). By prioritizing direct engagement and participatory dialogue, especially with the jancheras, the project tackled longstanding barriers such as distrust in formal systems, limited representation, and resistance to change. Through storytelling, advocacy campaigns, and targeted messaging, jancheras and other stakeholders gained visibility and recognition, helping shift perceptions about their role in the mining value chain. These efforts laid the groundwork for policy discussions that ultimately contributed to the legal recognition of jancheo, demonstrating the power of communication in driving structural change.

Beyond visibility, the project strategically designed awareness campaigns and programs to empower stakeholders with the skills and confidence to navigate formal markets and adopt mercury-free methods. Interactive workshops, educational materials, and community-led discussions helped miners and jancheras better understand their rights, responsibilities, and available opportunities within the evolving regulatory landscape. These initiatives facilitated knowledge transfer and encouraged dialogue between different actors in the sector, promoting collaboration and a shared vision for more responsible and equitable mining practices.

By embedding key knowledge and best practices within communities, the project's communication strategies contributed to long-term impact. Rather than relying on future external interventions, trained miners and jancheras became active agents of change, sharing information and advocating for their rights within their networks. This culture of knowledge-sharing and self-reliance has the potential to sustain the project's achievements beyond its implementation period, ensuring that the benefits of legal recognition, fair pricing, and environmental responsibility continue to grow within the small-scale mining sector.




Additionally, the project's close collaboration with the Ministry of Environment, Water and Ecological Transition and the Ministry of Energy and Mines ensures that these institutions are well-positioned to sustain and expand the communication and awareness-raising initiatives introduced by the project. By working alongside these key government partners, the project helped integrate communication strategies into broader regulatory and policy frameworks, strengthening the foundation for long-term advocacy and outreach. This alignment increases the likelihood that future efforts to formalize *jancheo* and promote responsible small-scale mining will continue to prioritize inclusive dialogue, education, and community engagement.

## 4 Cross-cutting Issues

The project's communication efforts explicitly recognize the marginalized role of women in the ASGM sector, particularly women material sorters (jancheras), who often lack legal recognition, access to fair wages, and representation in decision-making processes. Campaigns and advocacy efforts have aimed to elevate the visibility of women's contributions and integrate their roles into formal supply chains.

This emphasis on gender inclusion has also been reflected in awareness campaigns, which ensure equitable access to resources and opportunities. By addressing the systemic barriers faced by women, the project has made strides toward reducing gender inequality and empowering women to participate more actively in responsible mining practices. This approach not only enhances the social responsibility of the project but also ensures that communication interventions resonate with a broader audience, fostering community-wide support.





Environmental and health concerns were considered essential to the project's communication interventions, as the transition to mercury-free mining directly impacts the well-being of mining communities and ecosystems. Campaigns emphasizing the dangers of mercury use and the benefits of avoiding its use through ore sales or through adopting mercury-free technologies have played a pivotal role in shifting perceptions and behaviors.

By targeting key stakeholders, including miners, processing plants, and local communities, the project has fostered a shared understanding of the environmental and health impacts of mercury. This focus on environmental justice ensures that communication efforts not only inform stakeholders but also empower them to advocate for cleaner, safer mining practices.

Another critical cross-cutting issue addressed by the communication interventions was the need for capacity building and equitable market access. The project's knowledge dissemination efforts aimed to equip miners with the technical skills and confidence to participate in formal markets. By addressing these barriers through inclusive communication strategies, the project supported a more equitable market ecosystem, benefiting all stakeholders.

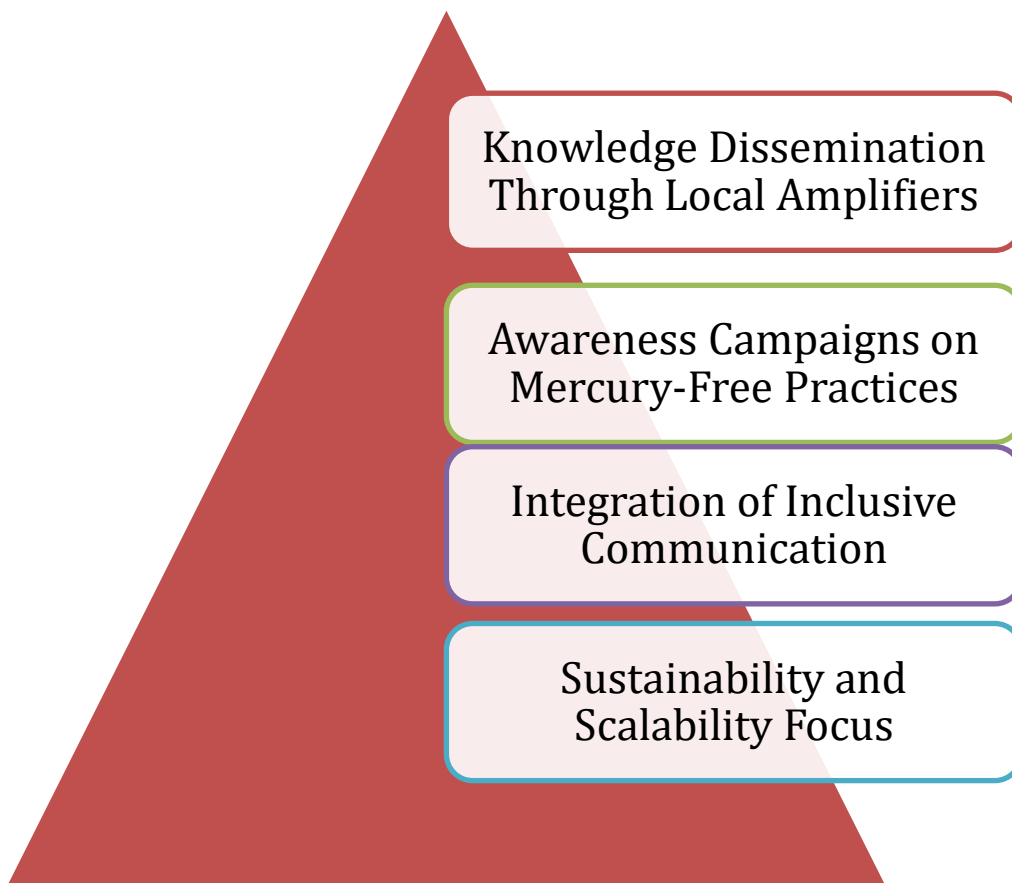
The integration of these cross-cutting issues into the project's communication interventions ensured that they were comprehensive and impactful. These considerations also enhance the credibility and acceptance of the project's initiatives, as stakeholders see their diverse concerns reflected in the project's priorities.

# 5 Findings, Experiences and Lessons Learned

## Highlights of Communication Interventions

The communication interventions in the project highlighted several key areas that facilitated the dissemination of knowledge and the promotion of responsible practices in the ASGM sector in Ecuador.

**Figure 7: Main Communications Interventions**



Firstly, the project focused on knowledge dissemination through local amplifiers by partnering with universities, research institutions, and local organizations. This collaboration ensured the distribution of planetGOLD reports, training materials, and knowledge products across Ecuador, creating a robust network for sharing global advancements in mercury-free ASGM practices with miners, policymakers, and academic institutions.

Awareness campaigns on the project's Mineral Selling Strategy were conducted to address miners' mistrust of mercury-free processing plants. These targeted campaigns highlighted the economic and environmental benefits of selling untreated ore, directly engaging with 272 stakeholders, including 152 women, to foster greater participation in responsible mining practices.



*Designed by master1305 / Freepik — Photo by Ronja Flucke on Unsplash*

Integration of inclusive communication was another key highlight. The project advocated for the recognition and inclusion of women material sorters (jancheras) in the formal mining supply chain. By promoting equitable access to resources and opportunities for women, the project fostered greater gender equality in the ASGM sector.

Lastly, the project emphasized responsibility and scalability by embedding communication strategies into local systems to ensure durability. This included partnerships with local knowledge hubs, mining associations, local women's groups, and national government agencies.

## Changes Observed in Perceptions or Coverage of ASGM

The communication interventions of the planetGOLD Ecuador project have reshaped perceptions of artisanal and small-scale gold mining (ASGM), increasing its visibility in discussions around environmental responsibility, economic development, and gender equality. Through targeted campaigns, knowledge dissemination, and inclusive messaging, the project has created a shift in how ASGM is viewed by key stakeholders, including miners, policymakers, and the broader public.

One significant change has been the heightened awareness of the environmental and health risks associated with mercury use in ASGM, alongside the benefits of transitioning to mercury-free methods. Efforts such as the ValORO tu Trabajo campaign supporting the project's Mineral Selling Strategy, which delivered the strategy's key messages involving transparent gold content assessments and guaranteed payment rates, have helped overcome resistance and mistrust regarding mercury-free processing plants. As a result, more miners are exploring formal market participation and selling untreated ore, contributing to a cultural shift within the ASGM sector. This growing trust is reflected in miners' willingness to engage with government-supported programs and initiatives.

The project has also improved the visibility of women's contributions, particularly those of jancheras (women material sorters). Advocacy efforts have highlighted the challenges faced by women, such as their lack of legal recognition and access to fair wages, while promoting their inclusion in formal supply chains. This has contributed to a broader discussion on the need for equity and social justice within the mining value chain.



The planetGOLD Ecuador project has made significant progress in shifting perceptions and coverage of formalization within the ASGM sector. Through awareness campaigns and capacity-building initiatives, miners have gained a better understanding of the economic and social advantages of formalization, including access to formal markets, fair pricing, and technical support. Additionally, the project has emphasized transparency and compliance with labour, environmental, and social standards. This has led to increased recognition of formalization as a pathway to equitable and responsible practices within the ASGM sector.



*Diana Cabrera from NPCM at an event sharing results of the project's work with jancheras*

While progress has been made, continued efforts are needed to address remaining barriers and expand these changes across the country's ASGM sector.

### **Specific Factors for Success**

The project employed tailored communications to address the unique concerns of various stakeholders, including miners' economic interests and women's need for inclusion in formal supply chains. This approach made messages more relatable and effective. Strong local partnerships were formed through collaboration with universities, community

organizations, and government agencies, expanding the project's reach, ensuring cultural relevance, and building trust with miners and local communities.



The integration of cross-cutting themes such as gender equality and environmental responsibility broadened the project's appeal and impact, connecting mercury-free ASGM practices with larger social and economic benefits. Trust-building for behavior change was achieved by addressing miners' mistrust of formal systems through clear, evidence-based campaigns, encouraging participation in formal markets and adoption of mercury-free practices. Lastly, the project aligned with global planetGOLD programme objectives, which helped gain credibility, resources, and stakeholder support.

## 6 Recommendations

The planetGOLD Ecuador project emphasized the importance of communications and awareness raising to support ASGM miners in transitioning to formal markets and reducing mercury use.

### **Communications Strategy for ASGM Engagement:**

- The project recommended the creation of multidisciplinary teams, including thematic experts and community development specialists, to effectively communicate with ASGM communities.
- Establishing governance spaces and partnerships was highlighted as a key step to ensure long-term engagement and dialogue with miners, private sector actors, and government institutions.

### **Awareness Raising on Mercury-Free Mining and Formal Gold Markets**

- Provide means for continuity of the project's awareness campaigns to educate miners on the benefits of selling ore to formal processing plants, emphasizing higher recovery rates, fair pricing, and environmental benefits.
- Extend the efforts initiated during the project to build trust in formal gold trading mechanisms by promoting transparency in gold content determination and ensuring miners understood the economic advantages of selling to certified buyers.
- Further education and awareness programs were recommended, particularly for women miners ("jancheras"), to help them develop business plans and explore economic opportunities outside traditional mining activities.

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