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A GEF Initiative

Report

Documentation of planetGOLD Programme: Communication Interventions in Mongolia

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Abbreviations/Acronyms

Abbreviation/Acronym	Definition
ASGM	Artisanal and small-scale gold mining
ASM	Artisanal and small-scale mining
ASM NF	Artisanal and Small-scale Mining National Federation
IEC	Information, education and communication
MET	Ministry of Environment and Tourism
X	Social media platform previously known as Twitter

Executive Summary

The purpose of the planetGOLD Mongolia project's communication and awareness-raising interventions was to disseminate information and knowledge created by the project to various audiences involved in the Mongolian ASGM sector. Artisanal and small-scale gold (ASGM) miners had been branded as environmental polluters and this stigma was persistent at the beginning of the project implementation. With this negative stigma, the planetGOLD Mongolia team strategized the content of the communication, and awareness-raising interventions by focusing on 'the development potential' of ASGM in Mongolia. With this language, the project has effectively persuaded various targeted audiences to promote more responsible, and mercury-free ASGM operations.

Three main communication interventions were promoted from 2019 to 2024. First, the project produced and disseminated digital Information Education and Communication (IEC) materials to the public via web-based or digital platforms. The project created three social media platforms: Facebook, LinkedIn, and X (formerly known as Twitter) to distribute newsletters, project updates, videos, infographics, and reports. As of September 2024, the project's web-based engagement reached 53,000¹ people through access to the project websites. The second intervention focused on the implementation of advocacy and awareness-raising events to specific project's audiences like children, and media. The project also conducted expos, forums, and conferences to disseminate IEC materials and knowledge products to government officials, ASGM miners and other relevant entities. Lastly, the project conducted capacity-building activities at the local level to connect local government officials and ASGM miners, associations and partnerships to promote better mining practices.

So far, there were positive changes observed toward the ASGM sector within the project audiences. Various government officials demonstrated their willingness to improve the ASGM regulatory framework including ASGM formalization, gold trading and investments. ASGM miners themselves demonstrated their willingness and efforts to promote more responsible ASGM practices. Despite these positive changes, the negative perception of ASGM in the public persists and therefore ongoing assistance is needed through effective communication and awareness raising interventions.

There are three useful lessons from the project communication interventions for future similar projects. First, highlighting the development potential of ASGM has been effective in disseminating IEC materials to the public including the dangers of mercury and the possibility of improving the sector. Second, a combined approach of web-based digital and physical (face-to-face) capacity-building and awareness-raising activities has allowed effective behavioral and perception changes at the local level. Lastly, the physical capacity-building activities provided tangible results toward responsible ASGM practices, and these can inform the development of IEC materials and web-based content. It is recommended that these lessons be promoted for future projects covering wider ASGM communities in Mongolia.

¹ Data was presented at the regional steering committee meeting for the project progress update.

1 Background on Communication Interventions

Background and Context

The planetGOLD Mongolia project's communication, awareness-raising, and campaign component aimed at disseminating information and knowledge created by the project to various audiences involved in the Mongolian Artisanal and Small-scale Gold Mining (ASGM) sector. The planetGOLD Mongolia project developed a communication strategy document as guidance in implementing the project's communication and awareness-raising activities. The communication strategy also guided the development of regular project updates, milestones, and other relevant information to stakeholders and the public.

The communication strategy acknowledged [the contextual study's](#) findings on the landscape of ASM, particularly ASGM in Mongolia. The study explained that artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) including ASGM in Mongolia emerged in 1990s when the country transitioned to a market economy resulting in an increase in social disparity, and unemployment. Within ASM, ASGM miners have been stigmatized as environmental polluters due to the use of mercury in gold processing, polluting the rivers. This stigma was strong within the government entities as no policies were developed for ASM until 2008 when formalization of the sector began.

Although the Government of Mongolia had an intention to formalize ASM miners in 2008, the formalization policy was more on the ban of mercury use with strong law enforcement. The arrival of a sustainable artisanal mining project (SAM project) funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) (2008 – 2014) introduced the mercury free processing plant for gold recovery and helped to improve the ASGM practices from the livelihood perspective. The SAM project had also educated ASGM miners about the danger of mercury to human health and the environment. However, the negative stigma of ASGM miners persists evident in the abolishment of the 2017 ASM regulation with another ban policy on the use of mercury in the ASGM sector. Later, the ASM regulation was successfully amended in 2022 (with the support of the planetGOLD Mongolia project), however, the negative perception of ASGM miners due to the use of mercury in ASGM operations was strong when the planetGOLD Mongolia project commenced in 2019.

The communication strategy acknowledged the above challenges on mercury issues in ASGM. Using 'mercury and its danger to human health and the environment' as direct communication messages for awareness-raising and campaign interventions may create rejections, counterproductive discussions, and a negative perception of the planetGOLD Mongolia project and its activities. Subsequently, the project's communication messages focused on the 'development potential' of the ASGM sector in Mongolia. The development potential approach aligned with the global planetGOLD programme suggesting that the execution of communications and awareness raising is to advance progress on the programmatic components such as formalization, financial mechanisms, and mercury-free technology. Educating and advocating the dangers of mercury was embedded in

disseminating knowledge from these pillars for the more sustainable and mercury-free development potential of the ASGM sector in Mongolia.

Communication Interventions Chosen

Considering the above challenge, planetGOLD Mongolia focused on opportunities rather than solely on problems that ASGM miners face. The opportunity messages include: 1) transforming the ASGM sector has the potential to benefit the environment, economy, and the lives of thousands of people in rural areas; and 2) upgrading ASGM practices will boost productivity, improve the gold supply chain and eliminate the use of mercury in gold processing. Therefore, three interventions were selected:

- Intervention 1: Producing and disseminating digital Information Education and Communication (IEC) materials to the public via web-based or digital platforms
- Intervention 2: Conducting advocacy and awareness-raising events
- Intervention 3: Conducting capacity-building activities for the targeted stakeholders

2 Intervention One: Producing and disseminating digital IEC materials to the public via web-based or digital platforms

Description of the Intervention

The planetGOLD Mongolia project produced various IEC materials and disseminated these materials to the public via web-based or digital platforms. This intervention was selected based on two findings in the situational study. First, Mongolia population is sparsely located across the largest landlocked country in the world with 30% of deserted areas. Among the planetGOLD Mongolia's project locations, only Selenge Province (or Aimag in Mongolian Language) is close to the capital city of Ulaanbaatar. Meanwhile, Khovd and Gobi-Altai Aimag are more than 1,000 kilometers from Ulaanbaatar.

Second, 70% of the 3.3 million population in Mongolia use the internet. Facebook is commonly used among the Mongolian population including those who live in remote locations. LinkedIn and Twitter (X) are also used to engage with international organizations, the private sector, academia, and other actors outside Mongolia.

Subsequently, the planetGOLD Mongolia project used the online media platforms of [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [X](#) (known before as Twitter) in communicating messages, advertising activities, and providing updates on the project milestones, updates, and published documents. Information on [Facebook](#) is provided in Mongolian Language, while [LinkedIn](#) and [X](#) use English. The project produced various IEC materials to communicate and advocate the

importance of the ASGM sector. Besides disseminating IEC materials on social media platforms, planetGOLD Mongolia has also published key IEC documents on [the planetGOLD global website](#) and two local websites dedicated to ASGM miners and associations.

Partners and Key Stakeholders

In this intervention, the planetGOLD Mongolia project intended to share IEC materials to the public. The public as defined in the project communication strategy covers primary and secondary audiences for the project. The primary audience is defined as the immediate stakeholders of the project such as ASGM miners, ASGM communities, multi-level government institutions, and non-government organizations (NGOs) in the project locations. The secondary audience includes other stakeholders beyond the project locations such as informal ASGM miners and their communities across the country, national media, banks, private sectors, and academia.

Main Outcomes, Outputs and Impacts

planetGOLD Mongolia maintained its presence in Mongolia by providing a dynamic and engaging online presence. The planetGOLD websites (global and country websites) are a central hub for information related to the programme. Social media ([Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [X](#)) have been the most predominant platform for planetGOLD Mongolia to engage with the public (Figure 1). By using these social media platforms, planetGOLD Mongolia not only shared updates, project milestones, and advertised activities but also initiated discussions and shared news and updates from the global planetGOLD programme, other planetGOLD countries' experiences, and relevant stakeholders regarding ASGM and its development.

Through the publication of quarterly newsletters and updates on activities, planetGOLD Mongolia shared key discussed points, recent developments, and recommendations on the outcomes of planetGOLD Mongolia project activities. For example, a newsletter, and regular updates were published regarding the ASM conference (held in September 2024), a collaboration between planetGOLD Mongolia and the Ministry of Industry and Mineral Resources, and the Mineral Resources and Petroleum Authority (Figure 2). At least 24 newsletters have been developed in Mongolian Language and English. The specific target audiences of the quarterly newsletters are local and central government officials, media, and international stakeholders. From 2019 to 2024, planetGOLD Mongolia has reached about 50,000 people through the social media platforms of Facebook, LinkedIn, and X and nearly 300 subscribers to receive regular newsletter updates.


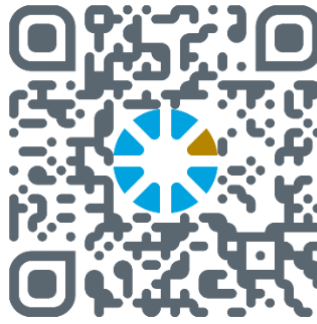

		
Facebook @Planet-GOLD Mongolia	X (Twitter) @planetGOLD_MN	LinkedIn @planetGOLD-mongolia

Figure 1: The social media platforms of the planetGOLD Mongolia project

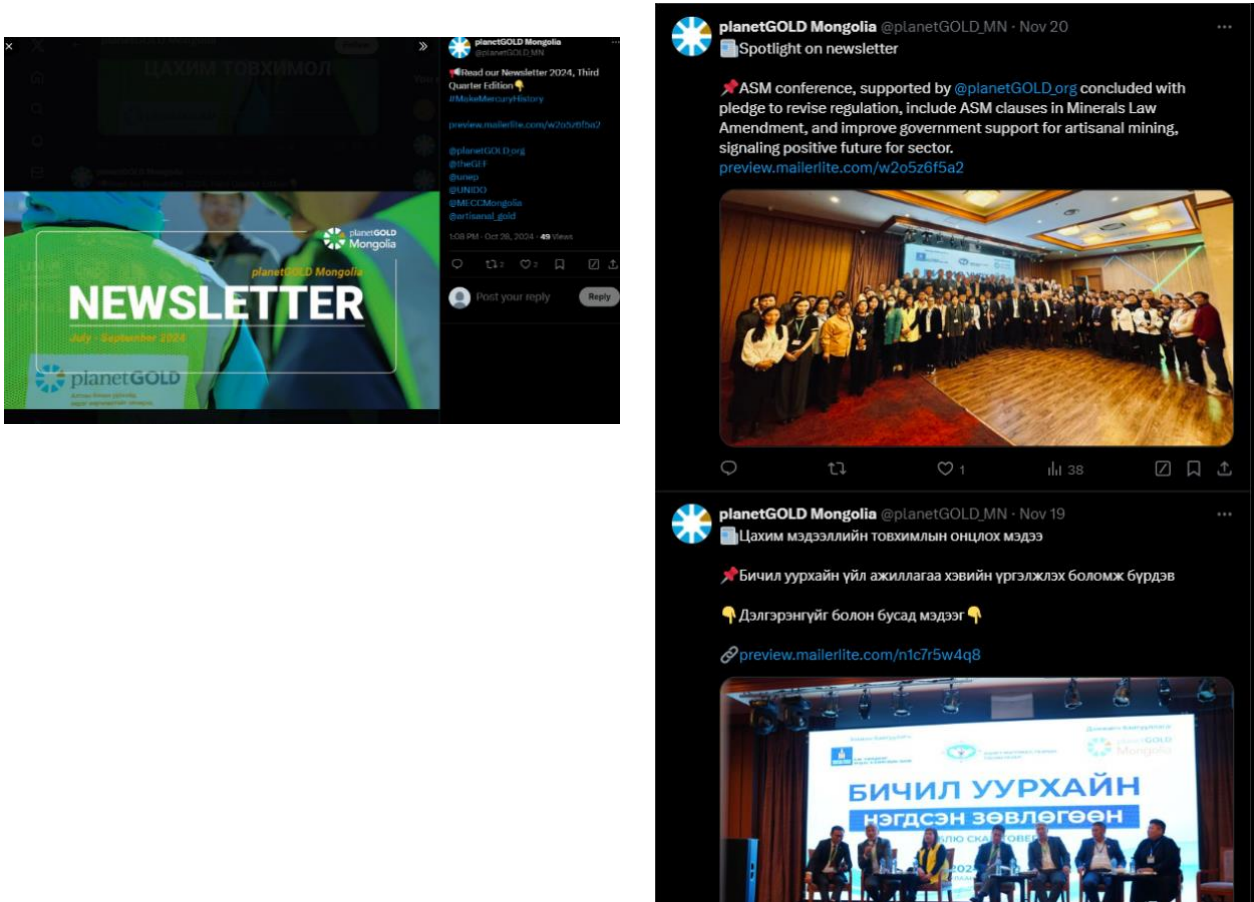


Figure 2: Examples of planetGOLD Mongolia updates on social media platforms on [the ASM conference](#) and the [newsletter](#).

These social media platforms work in synergy with the planetGOLD (global and Mongolia) websites by providing a synopsis of knowledge products and encouraging the public to visit and access the knowledge products (Figure 3). [The knowledge products are uploaded on the planetGOLD website](#) with free access to the public. Key knowledge products in the form of key reports include:

- Artisanal and small-scale trade in Mongolia – A review of current policies and practices.
- Legal framework analysis of the artisanal and small-scale gold mining sector in Mongolia
- Contextual study of the planetGOLD Mongolia project sites
- Gender mapping in the artisanal gold mining sector in Mongolia
- Assessing the gap: Artisanal gold miners and social services.



Figure 3. [Posting on Facebook](#) to encourage to access the project knowledge products on [the planetGOLD website](#)

Special attention was given to the website content to educate ASGM miners about specific topics with explanations provided by national experts. For example, the planetGOLD Mongolia project released [a podcast](#) (Figure 4) to inform ASGM miners and associations/partnerships about the latest policy on the treasury fund at the Bank of Mongolia. Relevant experts from the Bank of Mongolia were invited to this podcast to educate and provide information concerning the treasury fund.

The website content is also developed to attract the interest of the finance sector. The finance sector (and potential investors) can access information about the business case related to ASGM and how they can support ASGM miners in the planetGOLD Mongolia project locations. As of September 2024, 26,900 people have engaged, accessed, and used the project’s awareness materials.

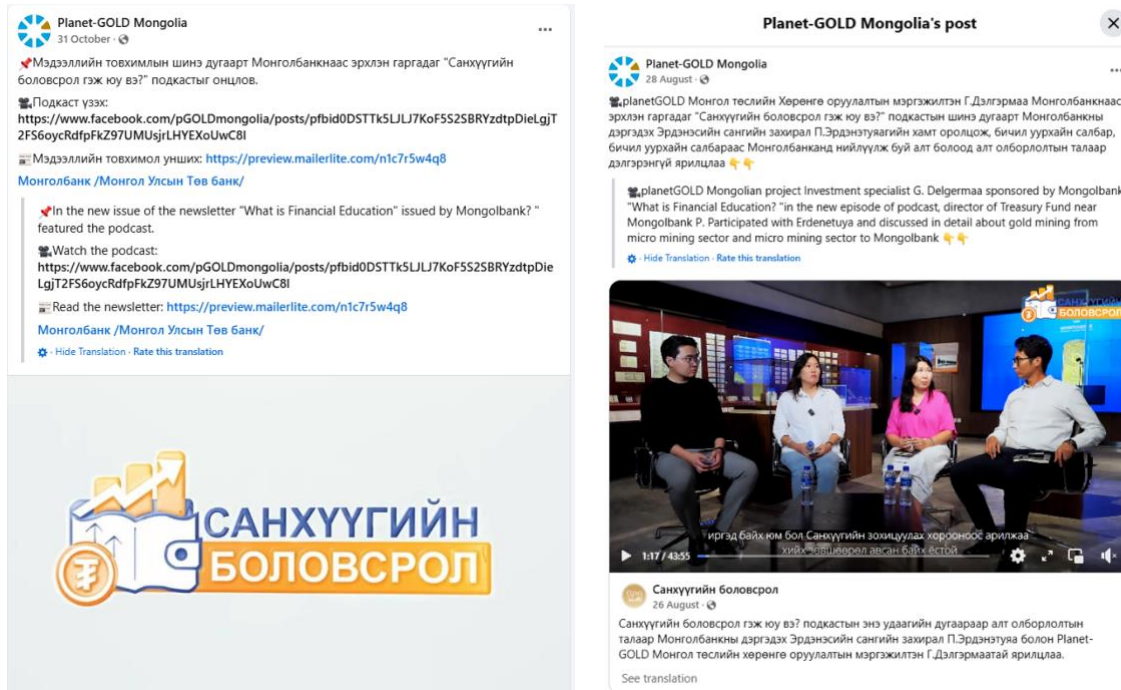


Figure 4. Specific content to educate ASGM miners and associations about [a new finance policy](#) relevant to ASGM published on [the newsletter](#)

Aligning with the global planetGOLD campaign to raise awareness of the dangers of mercury, planetGOLD Mongolia posted on social media infographics, posters, and videos regarding this matter. For example, the impacts of mercury on the human body and the environment are presented in the infographics (Figure 5). The planetGOLD Mongolia team also created interactive and virtual reality tours allowing the public to take a tour of the sites by wearing a virtual reality headset or by clicking through the versions published on [the global planetGOLD programme website](#) and posted them on [planetGOLD Mongolia’s social media platforms](#) and [the planetGOLD website about the mercury-free processing system](#) with the Mongolian language (Figure 6). To date (September 2024), [12 videos](#) have been produced including videos for women empowerment in the ASGM sector (see Section 6.1) and 2D animation videos to showcase stages of a responsible gold supply chain to ASGM miners and

the significance of gold traceability to end users and the public posted in YouTube².



Figure 5. Infographics of mercury impacts are provided in the Mongolian language and posted on Facebook.

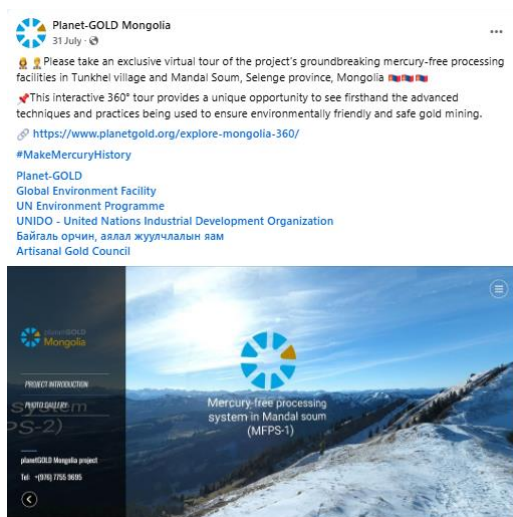


Figure 6. [A virtual interactive tour to inform about the mercury-free processing system and posted on the planetGOLD Mongolia’s social media.](https://www.planetgold.org/explore-mongolia-360/)

² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S12NrBKmbcw> and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V_36Nd_yeRQ

3 Intervention Two: Conducting advocacy and awareness-raising activities

Description of the Intervention

Awareness-raising and campaigns were designed based on specific target audiences with specific intentions. For example, planetGOLD Mongolia developed a strategy of targeting awareness-raising activities for children and educators to break the intergenerational cycle of mercury use. The planetGOLD Mongolia team visited local schools and other gatherings of children to hold age-appropriate awareness sessions and engaging events on the dangers of mercury, ways to avoid exposure, and safer, more responsible ASGM methods.

The planetGOLD Mongolia project also conducted expos, forums and conference as part of awareness-raising events, to advocate responsible and mercury-free ASGM in Mongolia. Expos were intended to connect actors involved in the gold value chains in Mongolia and beyond. Forums were organized to advocate the importance of ASM formalization in Mongolia especially when the Minerals Law eliminated all clauses regarding ASM. The removal of the ASGM article in the Minerals Law raised concerns among ASGM miners and associations. As a result, the Mineral Resources and Petroleum Authority of Mongolia with the support of the planetGOLD Mongolia project organized the ASM Conference (September 2024) in Ulaanbaatar attended by 250 participants from government institutions and ASGM miners. The ASM conference urged the inclusion of ASM clauses in the Minerals Law and this has received full support from the Mongolian Minister of Industry and Mineral Resources.

In all these activities, engaging with the media is critical to expanding awareness-raising and advocacy coverage at the local, national, and international levels. Lastly, to sustain all advocacy and awareness-raising activity and results, planetGOLD has engaged with two key partners of Artisanal and Small-scale Mining National Federation (ASM NF) and the Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET).

Partners and Key Stakeholders

The planetGOLD Mongolia partnered with specific targeted audiences and partners to deliver the advocacy and awareness-raising events. For example, professional storytellers and educators were hired to implement children's programs and to reach students, youths, and schoolteachers.

planetGOLD Mongolia partnered with journalists from various daily newspapers, online media, television, radio and others for media engagement. ASM NF and MET are two key partners that planetGOLD Mongolia has engaged to strengthen their websites as part of improving the awareness and development potential of the ASGM sector.

Lastly, planetGOLD Mongolia partnered with the MET and the local governments (Aimags and Soums) in the targeted areas. They organized three forums in Selenge, Gobi-Altai and

Khovd Aimags and organized expos with the Financial Regulatory Commission of Mongolia and the Precious Metal Traders National Association.

Main Outcomes, Outputs and Impacts

Reaching out to children and youths

Creative campaigns for children and youths were conducted through art and storytelling events and contests. These early intervention educational initiatives are promoted to empower young people (children and grandchildren of miners) to learn how to protect themselves from mercury exposure from a young age. If they later choose to go into mining, the hope is that they will be equipped with an understanding of ways to mine in a responsible, mercury-free operation. Children can also become agents of change in their community and help inform their parents and other adults close to them about the importance of making mercury history.

planetGOLD Mongolia conducted art competitions titled ‘Make Mercury History’ for elementary and middle school children in the targeted areas (Mandal and Tunkhel) to raise awareness about the dangers of mercury (Figure 7). These children belong to ASGM families and communities; therefore, it is hoped that they can inform their parents and other family members about the dangers of mercury on the human body and the environment. 600 children participated in the competition. planetGOLD Mongolia produced videos documenting the events and feedback from children. Top entries were published on planetGOLD global and Mongolia websites.





Figure 7. Art exhibitions

Expos and forums

planetGOLD Mongolia in collaboration with MET, the local governments (Aimags and Soums) in the targeted areas organized three forums (Picture 8) in Selenge, Gobi-Altai and Khovd Aimags (September to November 2023) for ASGM miners and government officials. The forums raised concerns regarding the elimination of ASGM articles within the Minerals law and it was timely as the Parliament of Mongolia planned to discuss the Minerals law amendment. The forums also discussed the implementation of the 2022 ASM regulation at the local level; and how to mitigate the negative environmental footprints of ASGM due to mercury and other hazardous chemicals. The planetGOLD Mongolia wrote a blog post to disseminate the forum results and action items and published the blog article in the prominent local media i.e., the Mining Insight magazine in English³ and Mongolian Language

In 2022 planetGOLD Mongolia co-organized the first-ever precious metal expo at the national level. Then follow-up expos were conducted in 2023⁴ and 2024. The expo events aim to advocate a responsible artisanal gold supply chain and connect actors in the gold value chain such as ASGM miners, gold traders, jewelry sellers, and formal finance for investment opportunities. The Expos had presentations covering topics of ASGM formalization, due diligence, gold traceability and transparency, access to finance, and many others. planetGOLD Mongolia organized the third expo (2024) in collaboration with the Financial Regulatory

³ https://en.mininginsight.mn/index.php?newsid=324&utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=planetgold_mongolia_project_updates&utm_term=2024-12-09

⁴ <https://www.planetgold.org/thoughts-precious-metals-and-jewellery-forum-and-expo-2023>

Commission of Mongolia, and the Precious Metal Traders National Association to promote the precious metal sector in Mongolia.



Figure 8. The Forums

In the forum and expo events, planetGOLD Mongolia communication team prepared printed knowledge reports, brochures, banners, infographics, and promotional materials to increase knowledge of the ASGM sector and advocate mercury-free ASGM by introducing the mercury-free processing system. A specific booth was also provided for expo and forum participants to have discussions with planetGOLD Mongolia team and experts (see Figure 9).



Figure 9. A planetGOLD Mongolia information and communication booth at the 2022 Expo.

Advocacy activities through planetGOLD Mongolia's partner platforms

planetGOLD Mongolia conducted advocacy activities via two external (or partner organization) platforms: ASM Knowledge Hub and the Registration of Hazardous and Toxic Chemical web portal. The ASM National Federation (ASM NF) manages the ASM Knowledge Hub and planetGOLD Mongolia has been working with the ASM NF to revamp the existing knowledge and information on the ASM Knowledge Hub. planetGOLD Mongolia signed an

MoU with ASM NF to improve its server, and other web infrastructure to allow better navigation and accessibility for the public and the project's key stakeholders (government agencies and ASGM miners) on this ASM NF Knowledge Hub. In early 2024, planetGOLD Mongolia started publishing its IEC materials, videos, and news on this platform.

MET manages the Registration of Hazardous and Toxic Chemicals web portal. The web portal aims to provide a comprehensive information online system⁵ of hazardous and toxic chemicals for relevant ministries and agencies. planetGOLD Mongolia assisted MET in developing the registration system to meet the project objective of eliminating and preventing mercury usage; and for the Government of Mongolia to meet its obligations under the Minamata Convention. The registration portal was launched in early 2024 listing hazardous and toxic chemicals, and licensed enterprises/organizations. planetGOLD Mongolia has published IEC materials and knowledge products in this MET web portal.

Media engagement

planetGOLD Mongolia has intensively engaged with national and local media to raise awareness and advocate the developmental potential of the ASGM sector. Media engagement has been critical in disseminating news about planetGOLD Mongolia activities and communicating IEC materials and knowledge products. planetGOLD Mongolia engaged with 65 journalists from national daily newspapers, television, radio, online news, and other media organizations. At least 150 news articles have been written and published on media channels. planetGOLD Mongolia team members were interviewed and included in the media releases and news. planetGOLD Mongolia organized two meetings with journalists to disseminate the project and to receive input for better media communication and activities.

Intervention Three: Conducting capacity-building activities for the targeted stakeholders

Description of the Intervention

Capacity building activities are designed for immediate beneficiaries for the planetGOLD Mongolia: 1) ASGM miners across the six project locations and 2) local and national governments, NGOs, financiers, and key supply chain actors. To be most effective, communication with ASGM miners and communities needs to understand the characteristics of each specific location and the contextual analysis helped give insights into the best ways to reach ASGM miners and communities.

The planetGOLD Mongolia project has organized training, workshops, conferences, and forums at national and local levels. The training for government officials was designed to strengthen their capacity in establishing responsible gold supply chains. Training for ASGM

⁵ https://chemical.met.gov.mn/mn?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=planetgold_mongolia_project_updates&utm_term=2024-12-09

women and men miners was designed to improve their capacity and knowledge of finance and mercury-free technology. Gender mainstreaming and environmental practices were part of the training content. As part of the training, project promotional items were distributed. The promotional materials carried the global planetGOLD logos and these were used to communicate the project aims, the progress, the opportunities stakeholders can create, and why the project is important. A communications kit is available for distribution, and it contains (but is not limited to) a PowerPoint presentation, a project brochure, handouts, and factsheets.

Partners and Key Stakeholders

The capacity-building activities were conducted through training, site visits, and expos/forums. These were designed as two-way interactions connecting ASGM miners, associations, and government officials as the targeted audiences. planetGOLD Mongolia developed partnerships with ASGM organizations and through these organizations, capacity building was conducted. The capacity-building activities at the local level were conducted in collaboration with provincial governments at the project locations (e.g., Selenge and Gobi-Altai Provinces).

Main Outcomes, Outputs and Impacts

Conducting training and site visits for ASGM miners and associations

planetGOLD Mongolia has organized 36 trainings and interactive meetings covering responsible mining practice, formalization, Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) training, environmental management and rehabilitation, finance, the mercury-free processing system, and many others. Selected training and interactive meetings are discussed below.

- A conflict management training/meeting was conducted in Mandal Soum, Selenge Aimag (June 2024) for the ASGM organization. The meeting addressed conflict dynamics, conflict resolution techniques, managing emotions, and difficult people, avoiding blame culture, and effective conflict resolution within teams (Figure 10).
- OHS training (June 2024) was conducted with ASGM miners. Fire prevention training for individuals was conducted in Mandal Soum to ensure ASGM miners can promote safety and health at work (Figure 11). A more comprehensive OHS training was conducted in Gobi-Altai Province as a collaboration training between planetGOLD Mongolia and Gobi-Altai Province. The topics covered include workplace safety, proper use of protective gear, fire prevention, first aid, and rehabilitation of land damaged by mining activities (Figure 12).
- In collaboration with ASM NF, planetGOLD Mongolia organized a Digital artisanal miners' workshop in Mandal Soum and Tunkhel Village (February 2024) to respond to

the national government policy on the 2020 Digital Nation Strategy known as the government electronic databases. The databases contain information relevant to ASGM miners and organizations, for example, information on damaged and potential land for ASGM activities. Therefore, the workshop educated ASGM miners on how to use government information platforms.

- planetGOLD Mongolia (March 2024) organized training for preparing and submitting documentary requirements for a small-scale gold processing plant in Mandal Soum, Selenge Aimag. The training participants include ASM processing plant owners and the Precious Metal Traders National Association’s representatives. The project consultants (Glogex Consulting LLC and Greentrends LLC) provided detailed information on obtaining key documents for processing plants to operate legally. The documents include feasibility study report and detailed environmental impact assessment.
- planetGOLD Mongolia has facilitated the creation of the first savings and credit cooperative for ASGM miners. ASGM miners in Tunkhel village and Mandal Soum, Selenge Province formed ‘the Baatarvangiin Khishig Arvijikh’ saving and credit cooperative (BVKA SCC) with the launch in September 2024. The Cooperative aims to improve financial access for miners. This marked a key step toward better financial inclusion for the Mongolia ASGM sector. Leading to this establishment, ASGM miners received capacity building (training and visits) about Cooperative management.



Figure 10. Conflict management training in Mandal Soum, Selenge Province.



Figure 11. Fire safety training in Mandal Soum, Selenge Province.



Figure 12. OHS training in Gobi-Altai Province.

In addition to training and interactive meetings, planetGOLD Mongolia also conducted a [photo exhibition](#) at the community level titled ‘Silent Danger of Mercury and Minamata Convention’ with 1,065 people participating. This exhibition complements planetGOLD Mongolia's social media campaign to make mercury history. In addition, infographics, information boards, and safety signs communicate and raise OHS awareness at the mining sites and the mercury-free processing system (Figure 13).



Figure 13. OHS infographics, information boards, and safety signs.

Training for government officials

Training activities for government officials are also promoted. For example, planetGOLD Mongolia facilitated an experience-sharing visit to the mercury-free processing system facility in collaboration with the Governor's offices of Gobi-Altai, Khovd, and Selenge Provinces (May 2024) (Figure 14). Participants for this visit were officials from the three Governor offices, environment and tourism departments, labor and social welfare officers, and ecological police units. These government officials were introduced to the technical process of the mercury-free processing system and learned about its maintenance. The participants were also introduced to the ideas of micro-mining enrichment technology and the implementation of the CRAFT Code.

The experience-sharing visit was also conducted for rescuers from the Mandal Emergency Management Division to enhance their abilities in rescue and risk prevention (May 2024). The participants visited the National Rescue Brigade, Mining Rescue and Border Guard Unit and Disaster Prevention Training Methodology Centre, and Rescue Squads. This experience-sharing visit was well received as participants felt that they improved their readiness for future rescue calls and operations by gaining practical experience in mining pit rescues and familiarizing themselves with the equipment and tools used in emergencies.

planetGOLD Mongolia in collaboration with Gobi-Altai Governor's Office organized other training activities on environmental and mineral laws, future concerns, and micro-mining rights. These training activities were specifically designed for law enforcement officials such as the state inspectors and specialists from the provincial environment, tourism office, prosecutors' office, and Tax office. In collaboration with the Ecological Police Unit, planetGOLD Mongolia supported training on the 'prevention of environmental crimes and violations' (March 2024). 226 people from residents, government officials, and ASM miners attended the training and learned ways to prevent crimes and violations against the environment. The training also covered other topics such as toxic and hazardous chemicals, responsible mining, and sustainable development as well as criminal proceedings and human rights.



Figure 14. Government officials' experienced visits to the mercury-free processing system facility.

4 Sustainability

planetGOLD Mongolia has supported two external knowledge hubs to sustain the dissemination of IEC materials and knowledge products to ASGM audiences and the public. First, planetGOLD Mongolia has signed a memorandum of understanding with the Artisanal and Small-scale Mining National Federation (ASM NF) to support the organization in upgrading the websites so that it is ready to promote the planetGOLD work directly to ASGM miners, associations, and communities. The second approach is that planetGOLD Mongolia has collaboratively worked with Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MECC) to develop the Registration of Hazardous and Toxic Chemical web portal. planetGOLD Mongolia assisted

MET in developing the registration system to meet the project objective of eliminating and preventing mercury usage; and for the Government of Mongolia to meet its obligations under the Minamata Convention. The registration portal was launched in early 2024 listing hazardous and toxic chemicals, and licensed enterprises/organizations. planetGOLD Mongolia has published IEC materials and knowledge products in this MET web portal.

5 Cross-cutting Issues

Gender

Gender mainstreaming in ASGM has been embedded in IEC materials and the project website content. planetGOLD Mongolia specifically created videos, documenting the experience of two women trailblazers⁶ in the Mongolian ASGM sector. In the videos, these women shared their life stories in the ASGM field, from struggles to success (Figure 15).

Munkhzaya Purevdorj

Ms. Munkhzaya Purevdorj is the leader of the Altain Gobi Tsonj ASGM partnership and a trained gender focal point in Khovd province. As an experienced trainer of ASM legal framework, OHS practices, environmental rehabilitation, and gender equality, she encourages and acts as a role model for local miners to apply responsible mining practice, through her initiatives aimed at wider formalization and women's empowerment in her community.



Oyunchimeg Chilkhaa

Ms. Oyunchimeg Chilkhaa is the Chairperson of the Altai Miners' Solidarity Association and the Coordinator of the Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining National Federation in Gobi-Altai province. Working in the ASGM sector since 2001, she is a proud responsible miner and has pioneer experience with ASGM land rehabilitation locally. Not only she is acting as a bridge between local miners and local government high officials but also, she is advocating for the rights of the artisanal miners and mentoring numerous women miners.



Figure 15. Empowering women videos

⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L995I1RdaLg> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UVdfw8QG3-o>

Another example of gender mainstreaming is that planetGOLD Mongolia conducted a women-only training on technology. ASGM women miners across the five project sites were invited to join the training (June 2024) (Figure 16). In this training, ASGM women miners were introduced to MFPS’s technology process, CRAFT Code implementation, and findings from the latest planetGOLD Mongolia report on ‘Assessing the gap: Artisanal gold miners and social services’. As part of the training, women miners visited the MFPS facility and learned the steps of gold ore processing from the raw into the final gold learned how to maintain MFPS with the equipment.



Figure 16. A women-only training on technology in the ASGM sector.

Other Vulnerable Groups

Children and youths of ASGM miners and communities are the specific vulnerable groups considered in communication, awareness-raising, and campaign activities. They participated in art exhibitions.

Local Communities

The educational and awareness-raising activities have involved ASGM communities especially to educate and raise awareness about the dangers of mercury for human health and the environment.

Environmental Issues (beyond mercury) and Climate Change Issues

Human health and clean and sustainable living environments have been part of the messages and content of the awareness-raising and campaign materials.

Environmental practices were promoted during the communication events. Event collateral such as reusable standing banners was developed and used alongside the basic communications kits to support the planetGOLD project representatives participating in key events. Non-reusable banners and large prints were recycled/disposed of properly by the event venue.

Human rights

Human rights are introduced to the public through the dissemination of IEC materials, and knowledge products. In advancing capacity training and raising awareness of the development potential of the ASGM sector, the human rights theme is introduced and discussed with participants such as government officials, ASGM miners, communities, and other key actors in the gold value chains.

6 Findings, Experiences, and Lessons Learned

Highlights of Communication Interventions

Overall, the key highlights of the knowledge management and communication component of planetGOLD Mongolia are presented below:

- The planetGOLD Mongolia's web-based engagement has reached 53,000 people through access to the project website
- The project engaged with 65 journalists with at least 150 news articles published related to the project or ASGM
- 2,190 people participated in awareness raising
- 600 children participated in art exhibitions
- For knowledge sharing, as of September 2024, 26,900 people have engaged, accessed, and used awareness materials

Such numbers, although limited have been accompanied by the some positive perception changes toward the ASGM sector in Mongolia especially with the willingness of the responsible government officials to support the ASGM sector, with the amendment of the ASGM regulatory framework, and the advancement of MFPS. ASGM miners and associations/partnerships have

demonstrated their willingness to learn and adopt mercury free gold processing systems and improve their occupational health and safety in conducting ASGM.

Children's awareness-raising activities have also been one of the key highlights whereby the dangers of mercury could have been introduced with a more neutral perspective and this hopefully can bridge the intergenerational barriers (now as to transfer the mercury messages to their parents and in the future, as with the possibility of them involved in the ASGM sector) among the family and communities to promote more responsible, mercury-free ASGM operations.

Alignment with planetGOLD programme-wide communications strategy

The execution of effective communication and awareness-raising plays a critical role in advancing progress for planetGOLD Mongolia's other programmatic components. Tackling the use of mercury in the ASGM sector requires not only disseminating information on the dangers of mercury, formalization, financial mechanisms, and mercury-free technologies but also persuading actors to change their behavior.

The global planetGOLD programme aims to use effective communications to help miners, local and national governments, financiers, consumers, and supply chain actors recognize and support the potential of responsible mercury-free artisanal and small-scale gold mining. The planetGOLD Mongolia knowledge management and communication interventions are aligned with this global planetGOLD communication strategy by advocating the impacts of mercury on human health and the environment through the key message of 'the developmental potential of the ASGM sector in Mongolia'.

The planetGOLD's Mongolia promotional materials were packaged using the distinctive planetGOLD global brand and followed the same global programme narrative to ensure consistency by adapting the content to the Mongolian local context.

Additionally, planetGOLD Mongolia team and the government representatives participated in the global events of Minamata COP5 and the photo competition. During COP5, a social media campaign was conducted to raise awareness about the Minamata Convention and the project's implementation to eliminate mercury use in the ASGM sector. Also, planetGOLD Mongolia participated in global photo competitions with 6 photos selected.

Changes Observed in Perceptions or Coverage of ASGM

planetGOLD Mongolia has developed communication and awareness-raising interventions to persuade and assist ASGM miners to change their practices (and behaviors) in promoting more responsible, mercury-free ASGM operations. The planetGOLD Mongolia country manager provided a quote to reflect the quality of training and how that helped for perspective change within miners concerning human rights and gender issues:

“[I] learned a lot from this human rights training. I especially now understand that we are not aware of our male gender issues in society, such as the unequal burden of physical work, and lack of health-seeking behavior” (Miner from Gobi-Atai Province).

At the same time, local and national governments, and financiers have also changed their perspective to be more positive and accommodating toward the ASGM sector. planetGOLD Mongolia team observed changes in government perspectives specifically for ASGM formalization. This is evident in the quote below from the provincial government:

“I learned that formalization is a comprehensive concept, not only limited to miners being organized into partnerships but also miners selling their gold to licensed traders and recording financial documents in line with relevant regulations” (Khovd Provincial Government Official).

Broader Lessons Learned and Success Factors

Web-based or digital products and the role of ‘niche channel’

Disseminating IEC materials and knowledge products through web-based or digital products has been effective, especially in reaching out to the public living in remote locations of Mongolia. The high internet penetration has facilitated this logistical barrier. However, ASGM miners and communities living in remote locations have limited capacity in English and complex news. Therefore, through the experience of planetGOLD Mongolia, it is important to create a niche communication channel’ that suits the needs of the targeted audiences, particularly ASGM miners and communities. This was achieved through the sharing of news, updates, IEC materials, and knowledge products on the Facebook platform using the Mongolian Language. Content has also been adapted into simple messages, and graphically designed to attract attention from ASGM miners and communities. The Facebook platform has also been effective for government officials at the local, regional, and national levels.

planetGOLD Mongolia used LinkedIn and X to share news, updates, IEC materials, and knowledge products in English targeting Academia, the private sector, and international audiences.

Face-to-face capacity building and awareness-raising events and the desire of miners to do good mining practices

The physical (face-to-face) capacity-building and awareness-raising events are needed especially for the ASGM miners and local governments at the project locations, especially where there is a strong negative perception of the ASGM sector. Tangible results can be used as the content to be disseminated to the public for changing perspectives and behaviors toward more sustainable, responsible, and mercury-free ASGM operations.

Distance has been a challenge in conducting physical capacity-building and awareness-raising events. To overcome this challenge, planetGOLD Mongolia organized events and trainings at once and this has been beneficial to reduce travel costs as well as to meet schedules of potential participants.

The use of the ‘developmental potential of ASGM’ as an entry point of communication messages

Breaking the social stigma of ASGM as environmental polluters is not an easy task. planetGOLD Mongolia in its communication strategy identified this with its possible risks. Therefore, the planetGOLD Mongolia communication team decided to use a different message in campaigning for the dangers of mercury to human health and the environment. Rather than using negative language, the content of the IEC materials has been designed to promote opportunities such as:

- ASGM miners are an environmentally friendly community
- Responsible ASGM miners
- Strong desire to protect and restore the environment

Those positive languages hopefully can influence the public and ASGM miners themselves to promote more sustainable, responsible, and mercury-free ASGM operations.

Printed products and organized events at once to overcome long-distance

Despite the extensive use of web-based or digital products, planetGOLD Mongolia communication team has also decided to provide printed products to key target audiences, especially ASGM miners. Some key documents were summarized and procedures for ASGM formalization were provided as a pocket guidance book. These were distributed to the mining sites, and during the events. Similarly, at the mining sites and MFPS, the information boards are provided to provide key information and updates alongside infographics and safety signs to remind ASGM miners and associations to work responsibly.

7 Recommendations for Future Interventions

Addressing the negative stigma around ASGM and finding more innovative ways to communicate and educate about the dangers of mercury openly

Improving the reputation of ASGM miners and associations should be an ongoing programme.

planetGOLD Mongolia has laid the foundation to improve ASGM practices. The results and outcomes need to be continuously and effectively communicated to the public. The approach to focus on the developmental potential of ASGM has been working, although with some challenges.

The mercury ban and its law enforcement have prevented productive dialogue about the dangers of mercury among ASGM miners, associations, and communities. In some cases, ASGM miners pretended that they were not using mercury, therefore all information about mercury is irrelevant to them. To improve the open and productive dialogue on mercury, there should be a willingness from governments and other governing bodies to focus on education and awareness raising of mercury before it comes to law enforcement. These will provide more room for open dialogues and learning for mercury-free ASGM practices at the local level.

Combining social media campaigns and face-to-face capacity building for ASGM miners and communities

Distance has been a main factor in designing communication, awareness-raising, and campaign interventions. The combination of social media campaigns and face-to-face capacity-building activities have been effective as demonstrated in planetGOLD Mongolia's activities. This approach needs to be maintained in the current planetGOLD Mongolia locations and replicated in other ASGM families and communities outside the project locations including programs for children.

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