

Report



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Documentation of planetGOLD Programme: Formalization Interventions in Burkina Faso

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Abbreviations/Acronyms

Abbreviation/Acronyms	Definition
AFEMIB	Burkina Women Miners' Association
AEM-BF	Association of Mining Students of Burkina Faso
AGC	Artisanal Gold Council
ANEEMAS	National Agency for the Employment of Artisanal and Semi-Mechanized Miners
ARM	Alliance for Responsible Mining
Au	Gold
ASGM	Artisanal and Small-scale Gold Mining
BGI	Better Gold Initiative
BQP	Certificate of Professional Qualification
CFA	Communauté Financière Africain (African Financial Community) Coopération Financière en Afrique centrale Cooperative (Financial Cooperation in Central Africa)
CQB	Certificate of Basic Qualification
DGPE	The General Directorate of Environmental Protection.
GEF	The Global Environment Facility
Hg	Mercury
LSM	Large-Scale Mining
MEEVCC	The Ministry of Environment, Green Economy, and Climate Change
MEMC	Ministry of Energy, Mines and quarries
MFPS	Mercury Free Processing System
MTR	Mid Term Review
NAP	National Action Plan
NGOs	Non-governmental Organizations
NRDC	Natural Resources Defense Council

NTA	Applied New Technologies
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OHS	Occupational Health and Safety
ONUDI	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
ORCADE	Organization for Capacity Building
PIR	Project Implementation Report
ProDoc	Project Document
PSC	Project Steering Committee.
UNEP	United Nations Environment Program
UNDP	United Nations Development Program

Executive Summary

While industrial mining leads Burkina Faso's gold production, a significant share is thought to originate from the artisanal and small-scale mining sector. The government integrated ASGM into its development and poverty reduction strategy by the early 2010s. However, because artisanal gold processing is recognized as one of the major consumers of mercury, the Burkina Faso has developed a National Action Plan (NAP) under the Minamata Convention on Mercury, to reduce, and where feasible eliminate mercury use in the sector.

The planetGOLD Burkina project is part of GEF's multi-country planetGOLD program. The project was implemented by UNIDO and executed by the Artisanal Gold Council (AGC). The planetGOLD Burkina project's main goal is to support the implementation of the NAP by reducing mercury use, through a holistic strategy of formalization, transfer of technology access to formal financing, and enhanced gold traceability. Under the formalization element of this mercury reduction strategy, the planetGOLD Burkina Faso project focused on the following activities:

- **Policy and Legal Framework Review:** Analyzing and revising mining laws, providing recommendations to promote ASGM formalization, and sharing these recommendations with authorities.
- **Vocational Training Curricula:** Developing training programs for mercury-free gold processing and setting up a mercury-free processing system (MFPS) unit at the Gnikipière site, initially used for training. In conjunction with the establishment of the MFPS, the project also assisted in the formation of cooperatives among miners working near the site.

Key outcomes of the policy interventions included:

- Production of an assessment report identifying gaps in ASGM policies, proposed revisions, and implementation guidelines validated by the Project Steering Committee.
- Reinforcing the national and local agencies responsible for policy enforcement and licensing to ensure the implementation of the revised policy framework, including production of a general booklet reflecting the recommendations for ASGM formalization policy;
- Assessment of institutional capacity;
- Organization of two (2) workshops—one (1) with key government officials and one (1) with non-governmental organizations involved in the sector, such as LSM and vocational training centers, which aimed to strengthen the capacity of national and local enforcement and permitting agencies to implement the revised policy framework.

Key outcomes of the training intervention included:

- Creating a training curriculum within existing vocational/technical schools to increase awareness of the benefits of mercury-free technologies, including cost savings, health benefits, and improved gold recovery, as well as the importance of formalization. Trainees can obtain two levels of formal certification/qualification from this training course. A total of 150 specialists were trained in mercury-free processing systems,
- 10 Applied New Technologies (NTA) instructors completed a training-of-trainers course.

While challenges such as funding limitations and institutional instability were encountered, the project's holistic approach, involving policy reform, training, and financial support, has laid a strong foundation for continued progress and sustainability in the sector.

1 Introduction

While industrial mining leads Burkina Faso's gold production, a significant share is thought to originate from the artisanal and small-scale mining sector. The government integrated ASGM into its development and poverty reduction strategy by the early 2010s. However, because artisanal gold processing is recognized as one of the major consumers of mercury, the Burkina Faso has developed a National Action Plan (NAP) under the Minamata Convention on Mercury, to reduce, and where feasible eliminate mercury use in the sector.

Formally entitled "GEF GOLD: Contribution Towards the Elimination of Mercury and Improvement of the Gold Supply Chain in the Artisanal and Small-Scale Gold Mining Sector," the planetGOLD Burkina Faso initiated in 2019, is part of the Global Environment Facility (GEF's) multi-country planetGOLD program. The project is implemented by UNIDO and executed by the Artisanal Gold Council (AGC).

The project's main goal is to support the implementation of the NAP by reducing mercury use, through a holistic strategy that includes the following components:

- Helping to formalize the sector is considered a fundamental prerequisite for miners to obtain assistance and access to formal finance,
- Working to enhance the availability of formal finance can be used for the purchase and operation of mercury-free equipment,
- Providing technology transfer and training around mercury-free processing methods, as well as other elements of responsible production, can help miners meet requirements of responsible buyers,

- Facilitating access to formal supply chains may provide better and more reliable income.

Specific activities under these components included:

1. **Policy and Legal Framework Review:** Analyzing and revising mining laws, providing recommendations to promote ASGM formalization, and sharing these with authorities.
2. **Technology Transfer, Including Establishing Vocational Training Curricula:** Developing training programs for mercury-free gold processing and setting up an MFPS unit at the Gnikpière site, initially used for training.
3. **Revolving Fund Development:** Establishing a financing mechanism to support ASGM sector compliance with Minamata Convention on Mercury, as well as OECD due diligence guidance for mercury-free gold export.
4. **Global Knowledge Management:** Creating a system for knowledge transfer within the ASGM sector and the project.

The planetGOLD Burkina Faso project supported the formalization of the ASGM sector primarily under the first two of those components, by enhancing mining regulatory policies and developing standardized vocational training curricula, which complemented the technology transfer activities. Specifically, the project focused on the following activities:

- analyzing and reviewing the existing mining laws, providing recommendations to promote ASGM formalization, and sharing these recommendations with authorities.
- developing guidelines for better implementing the proposed reforming policies,
- capacity building for the institutions responsible for their execution,
- engaging stakeholders to raise awareness about strengthening the legislative framework,
- developing training curricula within existing vocational and technical schools to enhance awareness of the benefits of mercury-free technologies (such as cost savings, health improvements, and increased gold recovery) and promote formalization.
- acquiring and installing a mercury-free gravimetric processing training system at a vocational school. In conjunction with the establishment of the mercury-free processing system, the project also assisted in the formation of cooperatives among miners working near the site.

The project has laid the foundation for the formalization of the ASGM sector in Burkina Faso, supporting sustainable mining practices, and facilitating access to finance. While challenges such as funding limitations and institutional instability were encountered, the project's holistic approach, involving policy reform, training, and financial support, has created the way for continued progress and sustainability in the sector.

2 Background on Formalization interventions

As Africa's fourth-largest gold producer, Burkina Faso's gold production rose to 60 tons in December 2023, up from 58.1 tons in 2022. While industrial mining drives production, a significant portion of gold exports is believed to come from ASGM. planetGOLD Burkina Faso supported the formalization of the ASGM sector by strengthening mining regulatory policies and advancing the country's commitments to the Minamata Convention.

The mining sector has driven Burkina Faso's economy over the past decade, with gold mining as a key contributor. In 2020, it accounted for 16% of GDP, 84% of exports, and 14% of government revenues, while also generating local employment and public revenue. The country highlighted the mining sector as a potential growth driver and stressed the need to enhance environmental oversight within the industry through its national development plan, the Accelerated Growth and Sustainable Development Strategy (SCADD) 2011-2015¹.

Burkina Faso is a major mercury consumer in its ASGM sector, with estimates placing its annual mercury usage at 77 624 kg/year². In 2020, Burkina Faso developed its National Action Plan (NAP)³ to reduce mercury use in artisanal and small-scale gold mining (ASGM) as part of its commitment under the Minamata Convention. The NAP recognizes that formalization of the sector underpins any efforts to reduce mercury use. The Ministry of Environment, Green Economy, and Climate Change (MEEVCC)⁴ established a mercury stakeholder group comprising government and professional associations representatives. However, only a small fraction of ASGM sites—34 out of the 800⁵ identified by the Agence Nationale d'Encadrement des Exploitations Minières Artisanales et Semi-mécanisées (ANEEMAS), the national agency responsible for ASGM formalization—have been formalized. The NAP⁶ reported that 450,000 individuals are directly employed in Burkina Faso's ASGM sector. With approximately 90% of the miners in the ASGM sector lacking formal education and operating in the informal sector, the planetGOLD Burkina Faso project integrated formalization as a key pillar of the program, complementing activities on technology transfer, and access to finance and markets.

The project's formalization efforts were implemented through two key components. The

¹ Accelerated Growth and Sustainable Development Strategy (SCADD) 2011-2015: <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/scr/2012/cr12123.pdf>

² [PAN EMAPE Burkina-Faso April2020 FR.pdf](#)

³ [PAN EMAPE Burkina-Faso April2020 FR.pdf](#)

⁴ The role of the Green Economy and Climate Change -MEEVCC is to ensure the transition of Burkina Faso to a green and inclusive economy." It is under the responsibility of the Director General of Green Economy and Climate Change (DGEVCC).

⁵ planetGOLD Burkina Faso Project – Mid-Term Review

⁶ [PAN EMAPE Burkina-Faso April2020 FR.pdf](#)

first intervention involved reviewing and analyzing the legal frameworks of Burkina Faso's ASM sector. This intervention aimed to contribute to policies and legislation supporting the development of a formalized and sustainable ASGM sector. The second component focused on vocational training sessions, which emphasized the benefits of mercury-free technologies for nationals. Specifically:

- **Intervention 1: Review of the policy and legal framework supporting the ASGM sector:**
The assessment of the mining policy included reviewing the texts governing the sector, including comments and recommendations on legislation and regulation limitations to encourage the formalization of ASGM, which were shared with the authorities.
- **Intervention 2: Establishment of vocational training curricula:**
The objective was to deliver a vocational training program destined to train national ASGM specialists on the implementation and scaling of best practices, including mercury-free technologies and formalization.

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

3 Formalization Intervention 1

Burkina Faso enacted the NAP in 2020, however, the use of mercury has remained uncontrolled across ASGM sites. The review of the country's policy and legal framework supporting the ASGM sector produced strong recommendations for the Mining Law in general and supported the formalization of ASGM. The review was validated by a Steering Committee in March 2021, fostering an institutional platform that can drive the ASGM formalization agenda.

Description of Intervention

The project's primary formalization intervention focused on evaluating the policy and legal framework of the Burkina Faso mining sector. The main objective was to propose policy and legislative reforms to support the development of the ASGM sector as a formalized and sustainable activity in the country.

The assessment identified gaps in the mining legislative framework, highlighting the need for reforms to strengthen the ASGM sector. The review included examining the regulatory texts and institutions governing the mining sector and providing recommendations to address legislative and regulatory gaps. The evaluation also covered the implications of the Minamata Convention's requirements and obligations on ASGM in the country, while proposing capacity-building for national and local governments in the development and implementation of strategies.

The policy review was discussed with key stakeholders, including ANEEMAS, DGPE, and the Ministry of Women, and their comments were incorporated into the final reports accordingly. This exercise enhanced communication among the project's stakeholders.

Recommendations, based on the findings of the assessment of the policy and legal framework and validated by the project's steering committee, were destined to support legal and policy reforms in 2023 and 2024. These recommendations aimed to formalize the sector, improve socio-economic and environmental conditions, and promote responsible mining practices and included:

- More inclusive decision-making by incorporating a wide range of institutions and stakeholders to ensure comprehensive and applicable regulatory frameworks.
- Establishing a periodic dialogue framework among national stakeholders to resolve misunderstandings and align efforts in the ASGM sector.
- Reinforcement of the State authority over land ownership, particularly in rural areas.
- Promoting semi-mechanized operations and formally categorizing the sector into large-scale and small-scale mining.
- Integrating ASGM into regional development programs and clarifying local actors' roles in managing the sector.
- Categorization of actors in the mining chain through a system of artisanal miner cards, (digger card, collector card, goods and services provider card, and intermediary card) to actors,
- Decentralization of Services, delegating artisanal mining permit issuance and tax management to local governments through a centralized one-stop shop
- Strengthening the status of women in the sector involves conducting awareness workshops to explain to women the opportunities for them to engage in other phases of ASM, as well as equity measures, and access to dedicated funds for capital needs
- Create transitional solutions for chemicals like mercury and cyanide to align with the progressive elimination of these substances as defined in the Minamata Convention. The treatment centers currently being tested by ANEEMAS could effectively support this technological transition,
- Mandating protective equipment and safe mining practices, with enforcement tied to permit conditions.
- Transforming ASGM into a viable economic sector by establishing artisanal mining zones with small-scale mining licenses. These zones could eventually be converted into industrial mining licenses if technical conditions justify it,
- Centralizing environmental management for ASGM, through assigning responsibility to one of the institutions (ANEVE, ANEEMAS, DEMAS, DGPE, etc.) with the appropriate tools, or by creating an independent national commission for monitoring environmental management and preservation. This commission would oversee and carry out the monitoring mission.

- Strengthening gold traceability and formalizing supply chains to reduce fraud and improve market access.
- Capacity building for the institutions responsible for their execution

The second output of the intervention focused on the completion of an institutional capacity assessment and successfully organized two workshops in June 2021⁷, one with key government officials, and another workshop with non-governmental entities involved in the sector, such as LSM actors and vocational training centers.

Target Groups and Stakeholders

Improving the conditions for the formalization of the ASGM sector in Burkina Faso and increasing the transition of miners from the informal to the formal economy would benefit not only the more than 430,000 gold miners but also the country in the long term.

The project beneficiaries include key government agencies, non-governmental organizations involved in the sector. The policy review fostered institutional collaboration, uniting stakeholders in Burkina Faso's ASGM governance. Participatory workshops were conducted with relevant stakeholders, involving over 15⁸ government agencies and 10 non-governmental organizations. The first workshop had 26 participants, including 11 women (42%), while the second workshop had 28 participants, with eight women (29%). These workshops helped secure stakeholder support for the proposed reforms.

The review process engaged different stakeholders at both national and local levels. Key departments involved in mining policy contributed to the validation of the assessment report through the PSC⁹. They included:

- Ministry of Energy and Mines (MEM) national and regional authorities,
- ANEEMAS, the National Supervisory Agency for Artisanal and Semi-Mechanized Mining
- ASM trade unions
- The Ministry in charge of Women's Promotion
- The Ministry in charge of Higher Education, the Professional training institutions, including NTA
- The Technical Committee for monitoring; this includes representatives of the miners' organizations at the national level,
- Provincial authorities of LOBA
- local authorities and mining community representatives in the Dano municipality, close to where the MFPS was established.

⁷ Project Implementation Report (1 July 2022 – 30 June 2023)

⁸ Project Implementation Report (1 July 2022 – 30 June 2023)

⁹ Project Implementation Report (1 July 2022 – 30 June 2023).

In 2023, the project supported a working group on the National Action Plan to reduce mercury use, organized by the Ministry of the Environment through the DGPE, as part of Burkina Faso's implementation of the Minamata Convention on Mercury.

Main Activities and Outputs/ Achievements

Main governance and regulations

Proposed recommendations to address gaps in existing policies and institutional capacities related to the ASM sector include enhancing environmental protection measures, preventing child labor, promoting gender equality among miners, advancing social protection initiatives, facilitating direct access for miners to international markets, and harmonizing taxes, fees, and royalties. The project recommended¹⁰ the establishment of a national consultation framework among state actors responsible for ASGM. The role of this national consultation framework should be to address the differences and misunderstandings through dialogue among the actors involved in the ASM sector.

Another proposed action is to strengthen the status of women in the artisanal mining sector, particularly by collaborating with women's mining organizations. Since women are particularly vulnerable, largely due to their limited access to the significant funds required to start activities on mining sites, it is crucial to establish a dedicated fund for them. This would facilitate easier access to capital, promoting their economic autonomy and overall empowerment.

Monitoring and Learning

The project encountered unexpected challenges, including the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, which delayed the actual start of activities.

The findings of the policy assessment were reviewed by the PSC, and feedback from ANEEMAS, DGPE, and the Ministry of Women was incorporated into the final reports. Additionally, the review led to the development of recommendations outlining best practices for policy implementation which were discussed during the 2021 workshop¹¹ with non-governmental entities related to the ASGM sector, such as large-scale mining, and vocational training centers, to familiarize them with the legal framework as well as raise their awareness of the mining communities' needs and the project's objectives.

¹⁰ The list of recommendations is reflected in the general booklet: *Améliorer la formalisation, l'accès au financement et la traçabilité de l'or artisanal*.

¹¹planetGOLD 2020/ 2021 ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT

4 Formalization Intervention 2

Establishing Vocational Training Curricula: The second selected intervention focused on developing standard curriculum on training national ASGM specialists on the implementation and scaling of best practices, including mercury-free technologies and formalization.

Description of Intervention

Creating an institutional home for ongoing capacity building on responsible, mercury-free mining is critical for the scaling up of mercury free technology country -wide. Ongoing training is needed both for national specialists, government officials, and mining associations to collaborate in prioritizing sites for future interventions and enabling formalization; and for national specialists to advocate for mercury-free practices and support formalization efforts in the country.

The project worked with the General Directorate for Vocational Training (DGFP) to establish a set of standard vocational training curricula for miners and mining experts, which would result in the participants obtaining recognized educational certificates. The objective of the vocational training curricula was to strengthen national capacities, raise awareness of the benefits of mercury-free technologies, and enhance the formalization process.

A significant impact of this intervention lies in the contribution to formalization efforts of the ASGM sector. It supported the government in overseeing the formalization process through the establishment of ASGM cooperatives.

Target Areas and Target Groups

The vocational training is designed for aspiring artisanal miners and ASGM cooperatives. The training sessions targeted miners and aimed to enhance their skills in mercury-free processes, with active government involvement. ASGM cooperatives benefited from the mercury-free processing facility (MFPS), with the Gnikpière women's cooperative being the first ASGM entity formalized under the project.

The vocational training center, the NTA, was supported in the development of an MFPS curriculum, this will remain after the project ends. Estimating the exact number of miners involved in the pilot site program is challenging due to the continuous arrival of new participants. However, awareness-raising efforts by the project have empowered trained miners to share their knowledge with newcomers from the Dano commune and across the country. Beyond the pilot site, nearby locations in the Dano district, where some artisanal miners who have not directly participated in the PlanetGOLD project, have also been influenced. This is because the project's interventions have been tested and adopted in

these surrounding areas.

Partners and Key Stakeholders

Stakeholder involvement included organizing two workshops attended by representatives from over 15 government agencies and 10 non-governmental organizations. The project has carried out most of the formalization training of the cooperatives with SONASP¹², formerly known as ANEEMAS.

The direct partners of the training curricula include:

- The Ministry of Environment, Water, and Sanitation (General Secretariat and DGPE, the focal point for the Minamata Convention);
- The Ministry of Sports, Youth, and Employment (DGFP, SP/CNC);
- The Ministry of Energy, Mines, and Quarries (General Secretariat and ANEEMAS, DEMAS).
- The federations and trade unions of Artisanal Miners; NGOs working in the mining sector (AFEMIB, ORCADE, ARM, etc.);
- The Ministry for the Promotion of Women;
- The Ministry of Higher Education;
- Vocational training schools, including NTA.

Main Activities and Outputs/Achievements

Creation of curriculum and initial training

The project created training curricula integrated into existing vocational and technical schools to enhance awareness of the benefits of mercury-free technologies (such as cost savings, health improvements, and increased gold recovery) and to promote formalization. Following this, a training program for trainers on mercury-free gold technologies was conducted, focusing on certification standards for artisanal miners. Two (2) professional modules on the role of Qualified Artisanal Miner in Mercury-Free Processing Technologies in ASGM operations were developed and validated in March 2022 by all stakeholders¹³.

The Basic Qualification Certificate (CQB) offers the possibility to all people without prior qualification, or with a low level of qualification, to have a recognized professional title in their field of competence. The Professional Qualification Certificate (BQP) is a qualifying

¹² The Société Nationale des Substances Précieuses

¹³ List of participants drawn as per the report: [3.1.4 Assessment report on expansion of training network.docx](#) **Assessment report on expansion of training network, Output 3.1.4** : The Ministry of Environment, Water, and Sanitation (General Secretariat and DGPE, the focal point for the Minamata Convention); The Ministry of Sports, Youth, and Employment (DGFP, SP/CNC); The Ministry of Energy, Mines, and Quarries (General Secretariat and ANEEMAS, DEMAS); The federations and trade unions of Artisanal Miners; NGOs working in the mining sector (AFEMIB, ORCADE, ARM, etc.); The Ministry for the Promotion of Women; The Ministry of Higher Education; Vocational training schools, including NTA.

professional training qualification which certifies the completion of the training for a miner who graduated middle school.

The Basic Qualification Certificate (CQB) training program covers 7 modules which are: ore extraction, mechanical processing, gold casting, workplace communication, hygiene - health - safety - environmental protection, entrepreneurship and TRE, Trade and training. As for itself, the training program for the Professional Qualification Certificate (BQP) covers 10 modules which are: exploration, ore extraction/excavation, mechanical processing, gold smelting/molding, equipment maintenance, communication, applied management, hygiene - health - safety - environmental protection, entrepreneurship and TRE, Trade and training.

In terms of duration, the Basic Qualification Certificate requires 4 months of training, or 460 hours of learning, while the Professional Qualification Certificate requires 11 months of training, or 1204 hours of learning.

The official launch ceremony for Certificate of Basic Qualification (CQB) and the Diploma of Professional Qualification (BQP)¹⁴ learners took place in June 2023, with the event bringing together PlanetGOLD coordination, NTA, and the learners. The event was sponsored by the Minister of Mines, with participation from the General Directorate for Vocational Training (DGFP). National specialists underwent both basic and advanced training, equipping them to promote mercury-free operations and facilitate formalization within the country.

Initially, 116 miners completed basic-level training and were awarded certificates by the government agency, ANEEMAS. The second group of 43 participants underwent advanced training and earned brevet certificates. Thirteen mining operations benefited from training and awareness-raising activities.

Establishing the training site and support of cooperative formation

To complement this curriculum development, in August 2022, the project established a pilot mercury-free processing system (MFPS) at the Gnikpière site in the Dano commune, in southwestern Burkina Faso. It is managed by a local ASM cooperative of men and women miners. Initially used for vocational training, the facility offers theoretical and practical sessions, providing miners with hands-on experience operating the MFPS unit.

The project supported the cooperative of female artisanal miners of Gnikpière site in August 2022 with the support of ANEEMAS. The women's only cooperative was formalized through the Dano high commissioner. Overall, the project supported the formalization of 13 mining cooperatives around the Gnikpière site, providing them with training and

¹⁴ CQB targets existing miners and prospective miners with limited literacy, while the diploma level, BQP, is designed for qualified, literate miners.

awareness-raising activities on national mining regulations, and responsible ASGM marketing regulations. This was consistent with project's vision for formalizing the ASGM sector involved providing the necessary legal documentation to enable individuals to operate as artisanal miners. This basic step of best practice in the ASGM sector allows them to establish cooperatives of artisanal miners capable of effectively managing the certified mining site.

By August 2022, nearly 2,000 miners¹⁵, including 920 women, were organized into a cooperative. The project also established a women's ASGM cooperative in Gnikpiere, supported their formalization and provided them with equal rights as men. Currently, the formalized cooperatives, including mixed-gender groups with an estimated 2,500 miners (1,900 men and 600 women) and the Gnikpière women's cooperative, are expected to endure beyond the project's duration.

The cooperative members have agreed to the project's conditions and understand that working on the project site requires them to be registered as artisanal miners. They have been encouraged to obtain their mining artisan cards, as this is the first step in the process. Additionally, they have been trained and informed about the benefits of mercury-free mining. These miners now serve as an example for those in other areas who have not yet organized into cooperatives.

Communication Strategy

Awareness campaigns have been conducted to educate people on the effects of mercury, leading to a significant number of artisans at the pilot site and across the country becoming aware of the harmful impacts of this heavy metal and gradually moving away from its use.

Further, the project held an inaugural meeting with stakeholders in July 2023 to promote the curricula at the Institute of Applied New Technologies. In addition to training, the installation of equipment has played a crucial role in significantly reducing mercury usage. The mercury-free technologies unit was inaugurated on August 18, 2022, a significant date marked by the participation of key authorities. Images from the event were shared with all stakeholders.

Monitoring and Learning

Through the training programs, artisanal miners have been educated on formalization; however, mining sites are dynamic, with new miners arriving daily and others leaving for different locations. This constant flux presents a persistent challenge for advancing ASGM formalization within an informal setting.

Local technicians received training to maintain the equipment at the Gnikpière site.

¹⁵ [planetGOLD 2022-2023 Annual Progress Report](#)

However, evaluations revealed that sourcing equipment locally, tailored to Burkina Faso's specific context, would have been more effective. Some of the reduced mercury ore treatment equipment imported from other planetGOLD countries had to be replaced with more suitable alternatives, while other equipments were adapted to the local ore to improve productivity. These adjustments resulted in unforeseen delays in testing the ore treatment technology.

In terms of knowledge transfer and capitalization, the project Steering Committee (PSC), managed by the government through the Ministry of environment, actively participated in the activities to ensure sustainability and the effective capitalization of results.

5 Cross-cutting Issues

Gender

The issue of gender has been addressed in the Burkina Faso project through a transversal angle. The project enforced gender balance by integrating women's participation in each intervention. The project has supported women miners working at the pilot site in forming a woman-only cooperative and has provided assistance to help them organize effectively.

In addition, female artisanal miners from the community in the Dano district have been included in most of the training activities. Regarding professional training, the project aimed to have women comprise up to 40% of the participants during workshops.

For instance, in the first group of trainees, the goal of having 20% women participants was exceeded. Similarly, in the second group also the initially planned quota was surpassed. In the various cooperatives that have been established with the project's support, women typically hold the position of treasurer within the leadership body. Each cooperative's leadership consists of six members, and it is structured to ensure that at least one position is held by a woman. The project team states that women are typically assigned the role of treasurer within the leadership structure.

Local Communities

The project's pilot facility was established on the mining concession of Gnikpière in the Dano commune. The members of the Gnikpière cooperative will be transferred ownership of the plant as beneficiaries upon the project's completion.

Additionally, two project team members were stationed in the Dano commune to enhance communication and ensure that local cultural norms and practices, including resistance to change, were taken into account.

6 Findings, Experiences and Lessons Learned

Highlights of Formalization Interventions

The project's contribution to ASGM mining policy reforms provides a strong basis for the government to reinforce formalization efforts in the sector. The key recommendations highlight the importance of establishing clear taxation systems and fostering engagement with the formal market. Other recommendations address conditions for the approval of artisanal exploitation permits, which may undergo reforms.

If these approaches are integrated into the new policy in the near future, they could have a significant positive impact on the sector's revenues.

In terms of stakeholder perception, the project has influenced a shift in attitudes after its implementation. For example, in the project development area, collaboration with local partners and authorities has allowed ASGM workers to participate in consultations at the municipal, provincial, and even national levels. These workers are regularly invited to share their input, contribute to discussions, and provide suggestions during various meetings and forums.

Broader Implication for Formalization

The review of the mining policy and regulatory framework provided explicit and binding policy proposals aimed at fostering and supporting a sustainable ASGM sector. These proposals include environmental protection, the prevention of child labor, the promotion of gender equality among miners, the advancement of social protection, facilitating miners' direct access to international markets, and harmonizing taxes, fees, and royalties.

In terms of professional training on mercury mineral processing, the approach was effective because the project did not create the training curricula independently but instead supported a state-led process. The state took the lead in developing the training curricula, with the project providing support. These modules were then disseminated to ensure they could be used beyond the project. Universities have shown interest in incorporating these training modules, and the state is now seeking trainers to educate state agents on topics such as technology, mining treatment, and related subjects. To build on its achievements, the project collaborated with specialist agencies to ensure future intervention sites were identified and prioritized for future interventions.

Activities related to the operation of the mercury-free processing plant were extensively shared with government agencies, particularly the Ministry of Environment, Water, and Sanitation (General Secretariat and DGPE, the focal point for the Minamata Convention). This could serve as a potential model for replication in other project contexts.

Specific Factors Affecting Outcomes

Institutional instability in the country, marked by several coups d'état, has disrupted the

functionality of the mining administration. As a result, the project's direct contacts within the technical ministries have changed, impacting the progress of activities, particularly those involving ministry stakeholders.

The selection of the site was based on specific criteria, including organizational dynamics. The goal was to identify a model area that could serve as a pilot project, applying all the planetGOLD criteria for environmentally and socially responsible mining operations and acting as an example for other stakeholders at different sites. However, the complete formalization of the cooperative, including site certification, could not be achieved within the project's timeframe. The cooperative is unable to obtain a mining license because the site already belongs to Wendpanga Or, a semi-mechanized mining company that agreed to host the project operations on its concession. In Burkina Faso, the law is clear that overlapping permits are not allowed. Since the area of intervention is already covered by Wendpanga Or's permit, the owners have reached an agreement with the artisanal miners.

Consequently, the project team highlighted the critical importance of securing mining sites for cooperatives as a prerequisite for formalization. This step is essential for meeting the full criteria for implementing and scaling best practices, such as mercury-free technologies and formalization efforts.

Due to limited financial resources, the project was unable to allocate funds to the government for better supervision of field training, limiting government follow-up. Additionally, the demand for the training program was very high, but the team had to set a target (150 trainees) because the budget was insufficient to accommodate all requests.

Long-term Sustainability

Regarding the sustainability of the project's achievements, the cooperatives were trained on the formalization process, enabling them to share their knowledge with other cooperatives that did not participate in the training. For example, the Zemstaba cooperative members can help sustain the project legacy as they completed training of trainers on mercury-free ore processing technologies. This helps scale the formalization approach beyond the pilot area to other mining communities.

ASGM stakeholders, including local authorities, state services, and support organizations, were involved in the formalization process, fostering connections among key partners in the ASGM sector. Post-project, the stakeholders are aware of where to obtain the necessary documentation for formalization.

Regarding the processing unit, capacity-building efforts were made to ensure the pilot site's management could become autonomous after the project's conclusion. Once the equipment was installed, local experts were engaged to train community members on its operation and maintenance. Machine operators were recruited from within the

community and the cooperative, and all participants were trained on using the equipment. They are capable of independently operating and maintaining the equipment. Additionally, the cooperative is currently working to acquire more equipment to expand its usage.

Burkina Faso has also worked on scaling up these gravimetric treatment technologies. This example has been used to develop other projects aimed at supporting mercury-free mining treatment equipment, funded by other donors such as the Embassy of Canada and Swiss Development Cooperation. This highlights the project's efforts toward sustainability.

Recommendations for Future Formalization Interventions

- **Foster ASGM formalization policies at the national level by incorporating social dynamics and cleaner ore processing techniques into ASGM practices.**

For ASGM formalization projects, it is crucial to analyze social practices as well as the social and organizational dynamics of stakeholders to ensure these factors are considered before finalizing the selection of the mine site.

- **Enhancing capacity building for cooperatives to promote an inclusive and sustainable mining sector:**

With over 2,500,000 people employed in this sector, future projects should prioritize capacity building for cooperative members by scaling up vocational training programs. These efforts aim to support the development of more inclusive and sustainable policies that benefit both beneficiaries and suppliers.

- **Reinforce the implementation of ASGM formalization policies**

Future initiatives in the Burkina ASGM sector should prioritize actions aimed at reforming the sector, including policies and regulations. According to the analysis, these efforts should be directed toward the government and other technical and financial stakeholders to encourage spreading best practices. Policy improvement strategies may include improving the conditions for obtaining mining permits for cooperatives.



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