



Participants during the Sierra Leone GOLD project launch held on November 12, 2024, at The Family Kingdom Hotel in Freetown, **CI-GEF Initiative**

SIERRA LEONE GOLD PROJECT

Enhancing the formalization and Mercury reduction in Artisanal and Small-scale Gold Mining (ASGM) Sierra Leone



Sierra Leone.

Inception Workshop Report on the Launch of the Sierra Leone Project and Training of the Project Management Unit on CI-GEF Reporting Requirements

12 – 13 November 2024,
The Family Kingdom Resort
Freetown, Sierra Leone



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

Abbreviation/Acronym	Definition
ASGM	Artisanal and Small-scale Gold Mining
CI	Conservation International – A GEF-Agency that is the Implementing Agency for this project.
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, a German development agency
GOLD+	Global Opportunities for Long-term Development of the Artisanal and Small-Scale Gold Mining Sector. GEF's second phase of the planetGOLD projects that supports participating countries to reduce the use of mercury in the ASGM sector a holistic, multisectoral integrated formalization approach, and increasing access to finance leading to adoption of sustainable mercury free technologies and access to traceable gold supply chains
EPA-SL	Environment Protection Agency Sierra Leone, the Executing Agency for this Project
GEF	The Global Environment Facility - a multilateral family of funds dedicated to confronting biodiversity loss, climate change, and pollution, and supporting land and ocean health. GEF has funded this project
GMP	Gender Mainstreaming Plan
NRDC	The Natural Resources Defence Council. A GEF-partner NGO that leverages their expertise of some 700 scientists, lawyers, and other environmental specialists to confront the climate crisis, protect the planet's wildlife and wild places, and to ensure the rights of all people to clean air, clean water, and healthy communities. NRDC is providing technical support to this project
NTC	National Technical Committee
PlanetGOLD	The planetGOLD programme works to eliminate mercury from the supply chain of gold produced by artisanal and small-scale miners by supporting improvements in formalization, access to finance, awareness raising and technological support
PMU	The Project Management Unit of this project, which is based at the EPA-SL
PSC	Project Steering Committee
SEP	Stakeholder engagement plan



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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Extraction of minerals is a key economic activity in Sierra Leone, and artisanal gold mining, which provides livelihoods for more than 100,000 people in many rural communities, will continue to attract more people as alluvial diamond fields become less lucrative. The sector is, however, largely informal, with miners often lacking access to finance, awareness of safer and environmentally friendly mining techniques or technology, and often using primitive techniques that are harmful to their health and the environment, such as the use of toxic mercury for extraction of gold from ore. This project aims to reduce mercury use in the Artisanal and Small-scale Gold Mining (ASGM) sector, through a holistic, multisectoral integrated formalization approach, and increasing access to finance leading to the adoption of sustainable mercury-free technologies and access to traceable gold supply chains. Through the adoption of more responsible mining methods, the project seeks to mitigate environmental degradation, minimize health risks, improve livelihoods, and formalize the gold supply chain—all while contributing to both national and global environmental goals.

On Tuesday, 12th of November 2024, the Government of Sierra Leone invited stakeholders to an inception workshop, to formally launch the implementation phase of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) funded Sierra Leone planetGOLD Project. The project, part of the GEF-7 Global Opportunities for Long-term Development of the Artisanal and Small-scale Gold Mining Sector (GOLD+) Program, is titled “Enhancing the formalization and Mercury reduction in Artisanal and Small-scale Gold Mining (ASGM) Sierra Leone”. Conservation International (CI) is the Implementing Agency, providing technical and financial oversight to the Environment Protection Agency of Sierra Leone (EPA-SL), which is the Executing Agency of the project.

WORKSHOP OUTCOMES

Eighty-six (86) stakeholders (37% women and 63% men), drawn from the private sector, NGOs, academia, traditional and women’s leaders from the artisanal mining communities and relevant Government Ministries and Agencies converged at the Family Kingdom resort, Freetown for the inception workshop (Attendance list is at Appendix I). The workshop launched the implementation phase of the project and served as a platform for CI and the EPA to present the project’s objectives and expected outputs and outcomes, and foster collaboration amongst stakeholders by agreeing on their roles and responsibilities and managing stakeholder expectations. Stakeholders were very receptive to the project and affirmed their full participation in ensuring the successful implementation of the project.



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OBJECTIVE OF THE WORKSHOP

To launch the implementation phase, present the Sierra Leone GOLD+ project's objectives and expected outputs and outcomes and foster collaborative efforts by managing stakeholders' expectations and building an understanding of their roles in the implementation phase.

2.0 PART 1: PROJECT LAUNCH PROCEEDINGS

Opening Remarks

Environment Protection Agency Sierra Leone (EPA-SL)

The Chief Director of the Environment Protection Agency, Mr. Sheku Mark Kanneh, welcomed workshop participants and expressed appreciation to Conservation International (CI) for their ongoing support, from the project's preparatory phase to its current implementation. He assured the CI team that the project management unit is committed to achieving its milestones.

Mr. Kanneh highlighted the project's significance in fostering the long-term development of the ASGM sector. Addressing community members and traditional leaders from the three pilot sites, he emphasized the importance of data collection throughout the project. He expressed confidence that, upon completion, the gathered data would guide decisions on scaling up interventions in those communities or replicating similar programs in other ASGM areas.

Conservation International (CI)

Charity Nalyanya, Senior Director for Technical Oversight, Africa, CI-GEF Agency, outlined Conservation International's role in supporting similar projects globally. She emphasized CI's technical expertise in implementing GEF-funded projects to ensure they achieve their intended targets.

She encouraged participants to focus on three key takeaways: (1) the importance of the project, (2) the need for collaboration among all stakeholders for successful implementation, and (3) the expected impact—how the project will drive transformational change in the ASGM sector.

She also provided details on the project's implementation approach and underscored the critical role of women in the gold mining supply chain. Additionally, she highlighted key focus areas during implementation, including the types of instruments used in gold mining, the quantity of mercury involved, and associated labor and health risks.

Keynote Address | Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC)

The Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Honorable Jiwor Abdulai, delivered the keynote address, highlighting that artisanal mining is a legitimate economic activity that can coexist with sustainable environmental management. He acknowledged the harmful effects of mercury use on downstream communities and commended the CI team for their efforts in implementing the project.

He emphasized the importance of addressing gender disparities within the sector and assured the team of the Ministry's full support in achieving the project's objectives. Concluding his remarks, he reaffirmed the Ministry's commitment to providing political backing to both EPA-SL and CI to ensure the project's success.

Presentations

All the Presentations are provided in Annex V.

Presentation 1 | Conservation International (CI) and CI's planetGOLD Portfolio: Expectations and Linkage with Sierra Leone GOLD Project

Laureen Cheruiyot, GEF Support Manager at the Conservation International GEF Agency (CI-GEF Agency), provided an overview of CI's role in the project and its alignment with broader CI initiatives. She explained that the Global Environment Facility (GEF) collaborates with 18 implementing agencies, including CI, to support projects focused on biodiversity conservation, climate action, and pollution reduction in developing countries. Since becoming a GEF Agency in 2013, CI has successfully implemented over 125 projects across 93 countries.

She emphasized that the Sierra Leone project is part of planetGOLD's Global Opportunities for Long-term Development of the Artisanal and Small-scale Gold Mining (ASGM) Sector Plus (GOLD+) program, which aims to eliminate mercury from the ASGM supply chain. The Sierra Leone project is one of 22 ongoing initiatives under this program, alongside two completed projects, including the Guyana project, also implemented by CI. She highlighted that progress in Sierra Leone contributes to the broader planetGOLD objective, fostering knowledge sharing and the adoption of mercury-free technologies across the sector.

Presentation 2 | The Sierra Leone planetGOLD project: Theory of Change; Results Frameworks and Implementation arrangements.

Mo-Bashir Idriss, the Sierra Leone GOLD Project Lead at the Executing Agency, EPA-SL, delivered the presentation, providing stakeholders with key project details. He outlined that the project will span five years, from 2024 to 2029, with a completion timeline extending to May 2030.

The presentation highlighted the project's overall objective: to reduce mercury use in Sierra Leone's ASGM sector through a comprehensive, multisectoral formalization approach. This includes increasing access to finance to facilitate the adoption of sustainable, mercury-free technologies and integrating ASGM operations into traceable gold supply chains. Idriss also detailed the expected project outcomes, emphasizing its role in promoting responsible mining practices and environmental sustainability.

Presentation 3 | Disclosure of the Accountability and Grievance Mechanism (AGM); Operational Safeguards, And Stakeholder Engagement & Gender Mainstreaming Plans

The Environmental and Social Safeguards Officers of the Project Management Unit (PMU) at the Executing Agency, EPA-SL, delivered this presentation.

Stakeholders were introduced to the project's Accountability and Grievance Mechanism (AGM), which was developed to ensure compliance with CI-GEF's policies and standards. The mechanism allows project-affected persons to raise complaints or provide feedback on how

the project impacts them or their communities. The PMU will actively monitor and address grievances, seeking resolution before escalation to higher levels.

Additionally, the PMU outlined the environmental and social safeguard standards triggered by the project, including:

- **ESS 4:** Indigenous Peoples, Local Communities, and Traditional Groups
- **ESS 5:** Resource Efficiency & Pollution Prevention
- **ESS 8:** Community Health, Safety, and Security

To further strengthen safeguard compliance, the Gender Mainstreaming Plan (GMP) and the Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) were also introduced as key components of the project's implementation framework.

Presentation 4 | The planetGOLD Global Coordination Project

Susan Keane, Global Coordinator of the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) delivered this presentation virtually, outlining the role of the global planetGOLD coordination team and its connection to the Sierra Leone project.

She explained that Sierra Leone is one of 16 Phase 2 countries implementing similar projects, joining 8 earlier projects from previous phases. She emphasized that the global coordination team plays a key role in facilitating knowledge sharing, highlighting program successes, and ensuring that individual projects align with the broader planetGOLD objectives.

Plenary

Stakeholders discussed ongoing projects that might be of interest to this project:

1. The GIZ funded Pact project – this project is a pilot of the Minamata NAP by GIZ and has formalized mining associations in several chiefdoms of Tonkoli District in Northern Sierra Leone. There is a need to engage the GIZ team to share information on the opportunities and lessons learnt in supporting formalization efforts
2. The UNITAR and EPA-SL executed project from 2019 developed an ASGM overview of Sierra Leone which should be reviewed.

Feedback From the Launch

The discussions centered on advancing the formalization of the ASGM sector with a strong focus on gender sensitivity. Key stakeholder institutions emphasized the urgent need to eliminate mercury use by promoting mercury-free technologies and raising awareness among supply chain actors.

Additionally, participants underscored the importance of mitigating environmental degradation, reducing health risks, and improving livelihoods through responsible mining practices while adhering to safeguard policies. Stakeholders also provided insights on the instruments used in gold mining, the quantity of mercury consumed, and associated labor and health risks, identifying these as key areas for targeted intervention.

Institutional stakeholders, CSOs, paramount chiefs, and other participants highlighted the anticipated benefits of the project, particularly in reducing mercury use among ASGM miners. The following priority areas were identified for project implementation:

- Strengthening stakeholder engagement and formalizing miners, as discussed during plenary sessions.
- Addressing the environmental and human health impacts of mercury use.
- Ensuring the inclusion of all relevant institutions, with the PMU playing a central role in coordination.
- Establishing a parallel Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) to facilitate collaboration with communities in resolving grievances.

Additional recommendations included:

- Developing a tool to support sector formalization.
- Collaborating with Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) committees at mining sites.
- Redesigning and demarcating buffer zones at project sites.
- Engaging political leadership to ensure buy-in and effective project implementation.
- Strengthening private sector involvement in the initiative.

Conclusion, Next Steps and Follow Up Actions

Stakeholders from various institutions and pilot sites expressed their appreciation for the project's implementation in communities highly affected by mercury use in ASGM. They also acknowledged CI-GEF's financial and technical support, as well as the EPA's efforts in ensuring timely execution of the project.

Key next steps and follow-up actions identified include:

1. Expediting the update of all safeguards plans by the PMU.
2. Establishing the Project Steering Committee (PSC) and National Technical Committee (NTC) and convening meetings to review implementation plans.
3. Continuing the mapping of artisanal gold miners and stakeholders, including site visits to pilot locations.

4. Developing the annual work plan to guide project execution.

3.0 PART 2: TRAINING OF THE PMU ON CI-GEF'S FINANCIAL, SAFEGUARDS AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

The PMU received in-person training from the CI team on CI-GEF's financial, procurement, and reporting requirements. The training covered prohibited practices, reporting templates, Monitoring & Evaluation, and safeguards, complementing previous virtual sessions.

Key takeaways from the training included:

1. Mandatory reports must be submitted through Conservation Grants.
2. Required reports (prepared by the PMU and approved by CI) include:
 - Annual Work Plan and Budget
 - Quarterly Technical Reports (including safeguards compliance)
 - Quarterly Financial Reports
 - Annual Project Implementation Report (PIR)
 - Annual Co-Financing Materialization Letters
 - Independent Mid-Term Review (MTR)

Project staff were also encouraged to complete the CI-GEF e-courses that supplemented the in-person training if they had not yet done so.

The CI-GEF teams followed up on another of the implementation set up phase activities such as the development of the annual work plan, grant agreements with subgrantees, field assessments to update safeguards plans among other activities.

4.0 ANNEXES

Annex I – Inception Workshop Participants List



participants list.pdf

Annex II – Presentations



Inception
Workshop PPT Presc

Presentation about the CI-GEF planetGOLD portfolio by Laureen Cheruiyot, CI-GEF Agency



planetGOLD Global
Project Intro_Sierra l

Presentation about the PlanetGOLD Global project by Susan Keane, Senior coordinator NRDC



Presentations 1
Overview.pdf



Presentations 2
AGM.pdf



Presentations 3
Plenary.pdf



Presentations 4
Safeguards.pdf

Presentation about the Sierra Leone GOLD project by the project management unit

Annex III – Inception Workshop Agenda

Inception Workshop of the GEF Funded Project: 'Enhancing the Formalization and Mercury Reduction in Artisanal and Small-Scale Gold Mining in Sierra Leone' Project (GOLD+ Project).

Date: November 12th 2024

Venue: Family Kingdom Resort

AGENDA		
TIME	ACTIVITY	RESPONSIBLE PERSON (S)
08:30 - 9:30	Arrival and Registration	Workshop Secretariat – EPA-SL (Project Management Unit)
09:30 - 10:00	Prayers	All
	Self-Introductions	All
	Welcome/Opening Remarks	Chief Director of Environment Protection Agency (EPA)
	Special statements	Conservation International



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		Minister of The Environment and Climate Change
	Group Photo	All
10:00 - 10:15	TEA/COFFEE BREAK	All
10:15- 10:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation about CI and the GOLD+ Program: Expectations and Linkage with Sierra Leone GOLD Project. 	Conservation International
10:30 - 11:20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation: Disclosure of the Accountability and Grievance Mechanism. For instance, the process of reporting, recording, resolving and escalating grievances, AGM point of contact, etc. 	EPA-SL (Project Management Unit)
11:20 –12:20	<p>Plenary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mapping ongoing responsible mining initiatives in Sierra Leone (to ensure coordination with the Sierra Leone GOLD+ Project) • Expectations from stakeholders, feedback on strengthening stakeholder collaboration and coordination between the Sierra Leone GOLD+ Project and ongoing responsible mining initiatives related to ASGM formalization, environmental management, and mercury reduction. 	All EPA-SL (Project Management Unit)
12:20– 13:00	The Jurisdictional Approach (JA) for landscape planning	The Regional Centre for Mapping of Resources for Development (RCMRD) – Virtual?
13:00– 14:00	LUNCH	All
14:00 –15:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation on the Safeguards, Stakeholder Engagement Plan and Gender Mainstreaming Plan (highlights). 	EPA-SL (Project Management Unit)
15:00– 15:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation on the Sierra Leone GOLD+ project: Theory of Change; Results Frameworks (objective, outputs, outcomes, targets) and Implementation arrangements. 	Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) - Virtual
15:30– 15:50	<p>Way forward, including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Next steps regarding establishing the Project Steering Committee (PSC) and the Technical Coordination Committee (TCC) • Remarks from the Minamata Focal Point 	EPA-SL (Project Management Unit) Ministry of the Environment
15:50– 16:00	Closing Remarks	Ministry of the Environment/EPA-SL
16:00 Onwards	Departure	ALL

Annex IV – Project Launch Publicity Materials and Media

Four banners were created for the inception workshop—two hanging banners and two pull-up banners. One hanging banner and both pull-up banners can be reused for future stakeholder engagements, as they do not include the date or venue.



Outside hanging banner 1



Outside Banner 2

The inception workshop was widely publicized in several national print, radio, and TV media, and on the social media platforms of the EPA-SL (Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn) as well as online.



Enhancing the Formalization and Mercury Reduction in Artisanal and Small-scale Gold Mining (ASGM) Sierra Leone Project

Project Targets

The objective of the ASGM project in Sierra Leone is to reduce the use of mercury in the ASGM sector through a holistic, multi-sectoral integrated formalization approach, and increasing access to finance leading to the adoption of sustainable mercury-free technologies and access to traceable gold supply chains.

- 450,900 hectares excluding protected areas under improved practices
- 1,408 tons of mercury reduced, avoided or phased-out in ASGM
- 11,560 direct beneficiaries, of which 50% are women
- 297.6kg responsible gold produced over the project lifetime
- Amount (Kg) of gold sold through formal markets (Target: TBD)



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SIERRA LEONE

FACTS

DID YOU KNOW?

IMPACT OF MINING

Sierra Leone's Intact Forest Landscape is under threat from illegal gold mining and mercury use in Artisanal and Small-Scale Gold Mining (ASGM). This not only causes land degradation and water pollution but also poses health risks to local communities.



LAND DEGRADATION

Advancing at a minimum rate of 500 hectares annually, land degradation in Sierra Leone has environmental impacts that extend beyond its borders, affecting neighboring countries and underscoring the vital need to protect forests and natural resources for biodiversity and regional well-being.



MINING PITS

In some communities, the mining pits left behind are creatively repurposed! Locals sometimes turn these pits into small fishponds or use them for other community activities.



Information ©GEF, Sierra Leone Global Environment Facility
Photo Credits ©Global Environment Facility

Pull-up Banners

Annex V Print and online media produced

1. The Awoko Newspaper (print and online) of 13 November 2024 - "EPA Launches Project to Reduce Mercury Use in Artisanal Gold Mining - Awoko Newspaper" <https://awokonewspaper.sl/epa-launches-project-to-reduce-mercury-use-in-artisanal-gold-mining/>



2. The Concord Times Newspaper of 13 November 2025 (above)– "EPA, Partners launch \$2.8 Million GOLD+ Project to reform Sierra Leone's artisanal mining sector"

3. The SaLone Times Newspaper of 15 November 2024 (picture on right)

4. EPA-SL Social Media Handles

- a. Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/share/15VJcS9khE/?mibextid=WC7FNE>

- b. LinkedIn - https://www.linkedin.com/posts/environment-protection-agency-epa-sl-89b10b2a6_minamata-asgm-epa-activity-7263189025929261056-3tRK?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_desktop

- c. Instagram

https://www.instagram.com/p/DCZQdt3OdGA/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link

5. EPA-SL's website - [The Environment Protection Agency, in partnership with Conservation International, has officially launched the Implementation Phase of the \\$2.7M GEF-Funded Project Titled 'Enhancing the Formalisation and Mercury Reduction in Artisanal and Small-Scale Gold Mining in Sierra Leone' \(Gold+ Project\) at the Family Kingdom Resort, Freetown. - Environment Protection Agency](#)



Annex VI – Pictorials from the launch



Figure 1: Cross Section of project stakeholders



Figure 2: The Minister of Environment & Climate Change, Jiwor Abdulai (centre), and Chief Director, EPA, Sheku Kanneh (far left) with the CI Team



Figure 3: Paramount Chiefs from the mining communities, far left PC Dr Margaret Gbanie-Baio & Centre – PC Tamba Sheku; Right, Director of Administration at EPA, Ramatu Massaquoi



Figure 4: The Representative from the Ministry of Mines and Mineral Resources making their contribution to the launch



Figure 5: Key stakeholders at the high table during the event. From left to right, Dr. Mohamed Vandi, Deputy Executive Director of the National Public Health Agency, Paramount Chief Tamba Sheku of Penguia Chiefdom. Jiwor Emmanuel, the Minister of Environment, Sheku Kanneh, the Chief Director of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Charity Nalyanya, representing Conservation International

Annex VII – Program for the Debrief Training Session of CI-GEF Reporting Requirements

Day 2: Technical and Financial Training of the PMU		
08:30 - 9:30	Arrival	All
09:30 - 11:00	Technical Reporting Training	Conservation International
11:00 - 11:30	Tea and Coffee Break	All
11:30 - 1:00	Environmental and Social Management Framework Training: Expectations, Guidance and next steps, including development of the AGM Poster and disclosure of the AGM	Conservation International
1:00 - 2:00	Lunch	All
2:00 - 3:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial Reporting Training Training in the new project management system (PPM) 	Conservation International
3:30 - 3:45	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wrap-up & Next Steps 	Conservation International