

Project Information			
Project Title:	A GEFGOLD/ Supply Chain Approach to Eliminating Mercury in Guyana's ASGM Sector: El Dorado Gold Jewelry: Made in Guyana		
Country:	Guyana	GEF ID:	9713
GEF Agency:	Conservation International	Duration In Months:	48 months
Executing Agency:	Conservation International - Guyana	Actual Implementation Start Date:	05/04/2018
GEF Focal Area(s):	Chemical and Waste	Expected Project Completion Date:	04/30/2022
GEF Grant Amount:	USD 2,652,294	Expected Financial Closure Date:	10/31/2022
Expected Co-financing:	USD 3,136,600	Date of Last Steering Committee Meeting:	01/29/2021
Co-financing Realized as of December 2020:	USD 1,294,600	Mid-Term Review-Planned Date:	04/30/2020
Date of First Disbursement:	05/04/2018	Mid-Term Review-Actual Date:	12/15/2020 (currently ongoing)
Cumulative disbursement as of December 2020:	USD 781,631	Terminal Evaluation-Planned Date:	02/28/2022
PIR Prepared by:	Ingrid Sarabo	Terminal Evaluation-Actual Date:	TBD
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SECTION I: PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS STATUS SUMMARY

PRIOR PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION STATUS (FY20)

During FY20, the project reached the mid-term of the implementation phase and efforts were made to progress in areas by adjusting implementation approaches to suit the changed circumstances. The scopes of work for consultancies were revised to ensure successful conclusion under the conditions. These included incorporating telephone and online consultations, working sessions, and remote training into the methodologies for completing the consultancy for the Value Chain, Standards and Branding Assessment, and for developing the project's Monitoring and Evaluation Framework. Similarly, the consultancy through which the Communications Strategy is being developed was adjusted to remove the need for in-person stakeholder consultations.

The situation was continually assessed and plans put in place to re-mobilize quickly and efficiently to conduct preliminary assessments, prospecting activities, and environmental/social assessments as soon as they could be done safely. This readiness included ensuring the appropriate post-COVID-19 actions are taken in keeping with CI and national guidelines for reengagement with Stakeholders, paying strict attention to FPIC.

Despite delays, some key achievements were completed in FY20. Those achievements are explained by each project component as follows.

Component 1: Appropriate Mercury-Free Technologies Mainstreamed in Guyana's ASGM Sector

Engagement with miners working in the three project-focused Regions revealed that across all three regions, miners were aware of mercury-free technologies but few owned or used them and even less had success with the new technologies. This research also established that miners had a strong interest in learning about mercury-free mining technologies, but were concerned about the cost.

The project team partnered with the Guyana Geology and Mines Commission (GGMC) to mobilize suitable mercury-free processing equipment and conduct mobile demonstrations at locations within project-focused Regions. These demonstrations provided valuable information and learning that positions the project to further strengthen capacities to ensure more effective field activities. One permanent demonstration site was identified in Region 1, but field activities to prepare the site for demonstrations were halted two days before commencement, due to the spread of COVID-19, and subsequent restrictions that are still in place. Region 1 has since become one of the Regions most severely impacted by COVID-19 spread in Guyana. Despite several advertised calls for Expressions of interest (EOI), there were no responses from suitable Concessionaires from Regions 7 and 8 for several months. However, utilizing a targeted approach, one EOI was received from Region 7 towards the end of Q4, but the restrictions made it impossible to arrange the requisite preliminary visit to the area. It was expected that the use of a targeted approach is likely to also yield success in the identification of a demonstration site in Region 8.

To further strengthen national capacities and facilitate improved demonstrations of mercury-free technologies and practices, a training program has been designed in partnership with Mercer University, Georgia, USA. The soon-to-be formalized partnership will produce a curriculum and associated protocols and provide hands-on training of trainers for GGMC, the Mining School, and other partners and help improve technologies to avoid mercury emissions from gold shops. Building this capacity within relevant national partners will help support the accelerated adoption of mercury-free mining technologies and sustained reduced mercury use within the ASGM sector.

Component 2: Mechanism for Financing Capital Investments for Mercury-Free Technologies Established and Functional

Following receipt of proposals in response to a call issued, a firm was selected to design a Long-Term Financing Mechanism to support miners in transitioning to the use of mercury-free mining technology. It was expected that the consultancy would commence early in FY21 with a kick-off meeting and then desk research. This activity requires a significant amount of in-person consultations, but ahead of that phase, it is expected that if necessary, the planned "round table discussions" could be conducted remotely to ensure that there is continual progress.

Component 3: Markets Established for Branded Mercury-Free Gold from Guyana

The Project applied to the Guyana Registrar for the El Dorado Gold brand trademark for mercury-free gold produced in Guyana. The application was approved in April 2020 and the Certificate is to be issued within 6 months of the approval date.

Significant progress was made by consulting firm The DragonFly Initiative (TDI) in reviewing the PlanetGOLD Criteria for Environmental and Socially Responsible Operations and to contextualizing them for Guyana's context. Follow up engagements with stakeholders are required to fill the identified gaps and design and test the chain of custody system, which must await the lifting of travel restrictions.

As TDI continued its efforts to complete work, where possible, a decision was taken to conduct a joint assessment of what remains to be achieved under the Consultancy. An agreement will then be reached on the best approach to having the remaining work completed under the circumstances where the Consultants will be unable to travel to Guyana in the foreseeable future.

Component 4: National policies and incentives for mercury-free gold established

Collaboration commenced with the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) on stakeholder consultations for the development of the Minimata NAP. The Consultant hired to identify the gaps in Guyana's legislation has completed the desk research, which will inform amendment of policies and legislation for the reduction of mercury use in the ASGM sector. However, the arrangements for said Consultations have been placed on hold due to the existing COVID-19 restrictions.

Component 5: Monitoring and Evaluation

The project's Monitoring & Evaluation Consultant commenced discussions with the MNR that will inform what is required for the development of a system to track and monitor and report on the use of mercury by miners in the ASGM sector. The Project has committed to supporting the MNR in this regard.

A consultant was contracted to develop a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework. The Inception Report that included a review of the Project Results Framework, was submitted for consideration and agreement on the next phase of the consultancy to complete the framework and Results Management Plan

Component 6: Communications and Knowledge Management

Several knowledge products were produced over the year, including posters highlighting the dangers of mercury and actions to reduce exposure, a video featuring a gold buyer telling his personal experience of mercury poisoning, a video capturing work undertaken over the first year of implementation of the project, and a blog detailing the story of mining in Guyana and the importance of shifting away from mercury use in Guyana's ASGM sector. These products have also helped profile the Planet Gold project with the videos being featured at the third Conference of Parties in Geneva and the blog featured on the "Voices" page of the PlanetGOLD website.

Safeguards

All applicable safeguards plans were updated over the year and their implementation advanced. The Accountability and Grievance Mechanism (AGM) was designed and the development of a database to support implementation commenced. Stakeholders' awareness of the safeguards was also enhanced through engagements and the production of communication materials targeting stakeholders.

The Social and Gender Assessment was completed and the findings informed a revision of the Gender Mainstreaming plan. It is intended that the Assessment Report will be peer-reviewed for publishing early in FY21.

Challenges Adaptive Measures and Actions

Overall, the project was behind in establishing the demonstration sites and starting the mercury-free mining demonstration activities with miners due to several reasons. First, there were difficulties finding concessionaires willing and able to satisfy the criteria for demonstration sites. Second, restrictions imposed to contain the COVID-19 global pandemic prevented the project from continuing the activities in the three intervention regions. Lastly, some field activities were scaled back in February 2020 to avoid conflicting with political campaign events during the run-up to the national and regional elections on March 2, 2020. As of June 30, 2020, a winner of the elections

was still to be declared, with accusations of elections fraud, a national recount, and multiple court challenges taking place during the period.

Further, the launch of a consultancy to develop a Financing Mechanism and conclusion of a Value Chain, Standards and Branding Assessment of mercury-free gold in Guyana were delayed due to the restrictions in place to address the pandemic.

CURRENT PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION STATUS (Mid-Year Update)

Progress since FY20 update

Component 1: Appropriate Mercury-Free Technologies Mainstreamed in Guyana's ASGM Sector

Several miners showed clear interest in working with the project towards the end of Q2 FY21, resulting from consistent and targeted outreach to the mining community through various methods. Expressions of Interest for the establishment of demonstration sites were received from three concessionaires, one in each of the project-focused Regions. At the same time, with protocols for local travel being put in place, the Team took all possible steps to be in readiness to restart fieldwork, albeit with extra measures and safeguards. The Equipment Loan Agreement between CI-Guyana and GGMC was finalized and the Agreement Between CI-Guyana and Concessionaires was drafted, both with support from the Office of the General Council.

Desktop research was conducted to determine the likely impact of the mining operations at the demonstration sites on biodiversity and ecosystems at the proposed sites in Regions 7 and 8. The findings concluded that more rigorous 'on the ground' assessments were not required prior to the conduct of prospecting activities.

Component 2 - Mechanism for Financing Capital Investments for Mercury-Free Technologies Established and Functional

The Canadian International and Research Development Institute (CIRDI) was engaged to design the financing mechanism to facilitate access to finance by members of the ASGM community. In Q2 the Consultants prepared i) a Global Baseline Assessment that provided a snapshot of global artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) financing mechanisms, including emerging trends, common challenges to access of finance by ASM miners, and future prospects. and ii) a National Baseline Assessment that provided a snapshot of the ASM landscape in Guyana with focus on the challenges with respect to access to finance across the sector.

Preparations were made for the 1st Round Table Discussion scheduled for Q3, with CIRDI having consultations with a range of stakeholders including Govt representatives, Miners' Associations and individual miners and members of Civil Society.

Component 3 - Markets Established for Branded Mercury-Free Gold from Guyana

As the consultants could not be in Guyana as planned, the decision was taken for CI-Guyana to work remotely with TDI to accomplish identified outputs work. A series of interactive sessions were held, focusing on the PlanetGOLD standards and through these the Consultant led the assessment of the Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) criteria that must be verifiably achieved in order to brand El Dorado gold as responsibly produced. This resulted in the Consultants proposing recommendations for supporting miners to achieve full compliance with the standards, including an assessment framework that ensures a mercury-free, responsible production status along the supply chain – from small-scale mining operations up to gold buyers.

TDI also conducted a series of interactive sessions with the project team and the Guyana Gold Board (GGB) focusing on Guyana's national system as managed by the GGB. This resulted in recommendations for a credible, practical and cost-efficient chain of custody process for mercury free gold produced in Guyana.

Component 4: National policies and incentives for mercury-free gold established

The project continued working in this area on the basis of discussion held in the latter part of FY20, with the legal Consultant, who was hired by the Ministry of Natural Resources under the Guyana National Action Plan development process. That process involved the identification of policy gaps in the local legal framework and determine what project support was needed to close those gaps. However, early in FY21, the Consultant withdrew from that process and the Ministry commenced efforts to identify a suitable replacement.

The project continued to have both formal and informal stakeholder engagements through activities under Components 1, 2 and 3 which will result in recommendations for policy revision and or development. This while awaiting continued collaboration with MNR, as the entity that leads on policy revision.

Component 5: National capacity for the monitoring of the use of mercury in the gold mining sector established and strengthened.

The Expert hired to develop the M&E Framework and Results Management Plan using the project's Theory of Change facilitated a discussion that included the project team, representatives of the Minamata Working Group and the NAP baseline consultant. The group considered the data gathering approach to be utilized for establishing the baseline for mercury use by miners and it was agreed that the project would collaborate closely the Consultant's team as their work progressed. The baseline assessment process commenced in Region 7 assessments in November 2020. However, the project could not participate as there was no approval at that time, for CI-Guyana to re-commence field activity.

The M&E consultancy was completed within the original timeframe and with very satisfactory results. Performance indicators were designed at the Impact, Outcome, and Output levels for each of the six project Components and for the Environmental and Social Safeguards. The methodology for measuring each indicator was individually detailed – source(s) of data, collection methods, means of verification and individual team member responsible for data collection. Baselines were established (estimates where necessary) for all indicators as well as the targets for the remaining years of the project. The Consultant also conducted training sessions for the team in the areas of data gathering and analysis utilizing the recommended software (open Data Kit) and an M&E data base specifically created for the project.

Component 6: Communications and Knowledge Management

A consultant was hired to develop a Communications Strategic Plan for the Project and the kick-off meeting was held on 23rd November. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was agreed that the methods of engaging stakeholders would be limited to individual telephone interviews instead of in-person and focus group discussions. This approach was of course more time consuming and in some instances the persons interviewed were less responsive than they would be during a face-to-face interaction. The Consultant submitted an Inception Report on 30th November, which was approved, after which work continued apace to the end of Q2.

A Field Video demonstrating how to operate three pieces of equipment used in mercury free mining operations – Gold Kacha, Gold Cube and Blue Bowl - was produced. The video explains the Physical features of each piece and the most effective way each can be used. The field video is primarily to assist the Communications and Safeguards coordinators to demonstrate these inexpensive but efficient pieces during their Education and Awareness sessions with miners. Other communication material finalized and produced included: two posters highlighting the dangers of mercury and preventative measures to be taken when mercury is utilized and a brochure outlining the Project Safeguards.

The first draft of a booklet was developed in collaboration with partner agencies, informing miners of the COVID-19 virus: its symptoms and how to practically stay safe travelling to and from mining camps as well as when working in the camps. Avatars that reflected images of both male and female miners were visible throughout the booklet.

Safeguards

A database expert was hired to develop a Grievance Mechanism website and online database that allows persons to submit grievances related to CI-Guyana's Responsible Mining Initiative (RMI), and authorized CI-Guyana personnel to process those grievances according to the AGM Operations Manual. The database is password protected, with all grievances having unique identifiers and any edits made, are tracked by the system,

guaranteeing confidentiality. The consultant also trained CI-Guyana field staff on how to use the database and each was made aware of the varying authorization levels.

An operating manual outlining the procedures to be carried out for the successful collection, recording and resolving of grievances for the RMI, was developed.

A 3-day training on 'Dealing with Gender Based Violence (GBV) while in the Field' was conducted remotely by an Independent Consultant for the staff of CI-Guyana. Objectives of the training were to identify signs (both physical and psychological) of GBV (including domestic violence, rape, incest and human trafficking) and to learn how to react effectively to GBV whether personally experiencing it, seeing it in action or being informed by someone of it without putting anyone in danger (staff or other). At least 90% of staff participated and shared that they felt they could better identify signs of GBV and had guidelines on how to react to GBV in the field

Challenges, Adaptive Measures and Actions

Originally, the plan was for a team to visit the mining areas proposed for demonstration sites, for the assessment of ore type, proximity of concession to other miners, road accessibility, accessibility to water and importantly, to confirm that the areas were already cleared of primary forests. However, in response to the COVID-19 related restrictions, it was decided to first conduct desktop research to determine if in-person assessments were absolutely necessary.

Based on the FY21 workplan, a team from Mercer University was to visit Guyana to focus on developing technical skills of persons who work directly with the miners, and other members of the mining community such as gold shop owners, to build their awareness of how to reduce their exposure to mercury emissions and avoid the dangers associated with burning mercury. However, the worsening situation with respect to COVID-19 cases at Mercer University and in its immediate environs in Georgia, USA, led to a revision of the original proposal. In the proposed new arrangement, Mercer University would conduct remote training of trainers utilizing a series of 11 videos combined with 11 live online sessions.

The added value of this approach is that the production of videos will allow for sustainability since it allows for long-term training and re-training that would not have been possible had the Mercer team visited Guyana and conducted consecutive one hour in-person training sessions over the limited timeframe of the visit.

It is still anticipated that arrangements including in-person training during demonstrations and "on the ground" assessments of Mercury Capturing Systems, still critical to achieving project objectives, would be possible later in the project, dependent on a much-improved the COVID-19 situation in Guyana and in the USA.

Midterm Review

Asesoramiento Ambiental Estratégico was contracted to perform the Midterm Review (MTR) for the "A supply chain approach to eliminating mercury in Guyana's ASGM sector: El Dorado Gold Jewelry — Made in Guyana". The inception meeting and stakeholder interviews have been completed. The key findings report will be shared with Conservation International by the end of April 2021.

ADDITIONAL QUALITATIVE ADDITIONAL (Mid-Year Update)

Stakeholder engagement, Gender and Knowledge. Please provide an update here with a particular focus on how COVID-19 is impacting those specific areas and how the project is overcoming these challenges. For example: engaging stakeholders is done differently, face-to-face knowledge events are moved to virtual settings, consequences of women facing disruptions in health and education services. Of course please consider also mentioning any major non-COVID related change since the FY20 update.

At the beginning of FY21, COVID-19 spread in Guyana had worsened, as it had globally. Except for urgent and essential situations, restriction on both international and local travel and other matters remained in place. This severely hampered implementation of planned project activities across all six components, Component1, even more so than others. Region 1 continued to be the most challenging of the three regions for the recommencement of field activities due to the number of COVID 19 cases that continued to emerge over the two quarters of the FY and the proximity of the region to the neighbouring country where the COVID-19 incidence remains disturbingly high.

In the attempt to be in full readiness ahead of the lifting of restrictions and re-engagement with stakeholders in the field, quotations for the procurement of services and equipment were obtained. However, over time quotations expired as we were unable to advise suppliers on when we will be ready to purchase specific equipment. As a result, there is some uncertainty as to whether all necessary items will be immediately available when eventually needed.

It was hoped that by the month of December 2020, it would have been possible have full in-person participation for the Round Table Discussions for the development of the financing mechanism, however this was not feasible due to the persistent COVID-19 situation in Canada and in Guyana. As a result, a hybrid approach was developed for the sessions planned for Q3 FY21, with some persons (including one facilitator) participating in-person while others (including another facilitator) joining online.

The FY21workplan anticipated capacity building for members of the National Mining Syndicate through a Grant Agreement. The intention was to assist in improving the financial management capacity of the entity and its membership. It was expected that this would improve the capacity of the Syndicate's membership to participate in the financing mechanism being developed under the project. However, the capacity building activity required in-person working sessions, which were not permissible in the context of COVID-19 restrictions, and was postponed until conditions allow for it to occur.

The FY21Workplan included hosting the Project's first Biennial Conference, originally intended to attract both local and international experts as speakers and guests. Due to the uncertainty associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, which continued through Q2, there was agreement to delay plans for the event until a definite decision could be made on the type and scale of conference to be held under the limiting circumstances.

With field work on hold, due to COVID-19 related restrictions, none of the planned sensitization sessions could be held in communities close to proposed demonstration sites. This significantly hindered the project's workplan for raising the awareness of stakeholders of the dangers of mercury and the ways the project intends to make a difference in this regard. Efforts were made to engage gender focal points at WWF and UNICEF to share information and experiences on implementing safeguards towards the formation of a Safeguards Group. However, both the WWF and the UNDP mercury reduction projects were yet to be launched. The startup of both projects had been directly affected by the ongoing pandemic.

With specific reference to the WWF mercury reduction project, it is expected that its co-financing arrangements with the GEFGOLD project will be significantly affected with the extended delay in start of project implementation.