



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



@USAID_Colombia

facebook.com/USAIDColombia

ARTISANAL GOLD MINING

OBJECTIVES

USAID supports the Government of Colombia's (GOC) efforts to create a durable and inclusive peace in the wake of the country's 50-year armed conflict. Combatting illegal activities, including illegal mining, and providing alternative incomes through the licit economy, are paramount for a sustainable peace.

Nationally, 38 percent of Colombia's territory that is affected by illegal mining is also affected by illicit coca cultivation. Uncontrolled gold mining is a stimulus for both illegality, and wide-scale environmental degradation. To help address the growing social conflict, environmental impact, and governance challenges arising from the gold mining boom in Colombia, the Artisanal Gold Mining activity seeks to harness the growing awareness and action at all levels of government, and increasingly by large mining operations, to create a shared agenda for sustainable change in this economically important, yet much maligned, sector of the economy.

The activity supports the reduction of environmental impacts from illegal mining by promoting an integrated model which: 1) improves environment practices, including mercury reduction, by supporting responsible mining where feasible; 2) promotes alternative livelihoods where responsible mining is not feasible; and 3) rehabilitates legacy abandoned mining sites. In all cases, the activity works in concert with Colombian government entities, aligning itself with prevailing government policy on mining. USAID's Artisanal Gold Mining activity is implemented by Chemonics and runs from September 2015 – September 2020 in the departments of Antioquia and Chocó, where 60 percent of gold produced in Colombia originates.

PHOTO BY USAID/COLOMBIA

COMPONENTS

MINING LEGALIZATION AND FORMALIZATION

Artisanal Gold Mining seeks to strengthen the GOC's capacity to enforce gold mining legislation, and enhance the participation of artisanal gold mining associations and Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities in mining formalization programs. Mining legalization and formalization will reduce the environmental impacts and criminal activities associated with illegal mining.

MERCURY REDUCTION

Mercury contamination from illegal mining is believed to affect some 200,000 Colombians in mining communities in which the activity operates. Recent monitoring of airborne mercury in municipalities such as Segovia and Remedios, recorded average airborne mercury levels of 10,000 nanograms per cubic meter (ng/m³), when the World Health Organization safe limit is just 1,000 ng/m³. In some urban areas, peaks of 80,000 ng/m³ were recorded.

ALTERNATIVE LIVELIHOODS

It is estimated that only 20 percent of existing mining are feasible for legalization/formalization. Artisanal Gold Mining will provide assistance to generate alternative livelihoods for those communities that cannot or should not be involved in gold mining. In Antioquia, honey production will provide improved livelihoods for 450 families, representing an income of USD \$400 per month for each family. The activity will build, distribute and stock 12,000 beehives, producing 30 kilograms (kg) of honey per beehive per year at a market price of USD \$2.5/kg. This represents an increase of 2.26 percent of the agricultural GDP of the six municipalities that make up the Bajo Cauca region. In Chocó, annatto production will provide improved livelihoods for 600 families on 1,200 hectares, generating 2.5 tons per hectare per year, representing a monthly income of USD \$625. This is more than twice the current minimum salary in Colombia, which is USD \$280.

REHABILITATION OF DEGRADED LANDS

Illegal mining leaves behind a legacy of abandoned degraded mining sites. Artisanal Gold Mining seeks to rehabilitate 11,500 hectares of highly degraded land using reforestation with *Acacia magnum* in Antioquia, and assisted natural regeneration in Chocó. In Chocó, six agreements have been signed with Afro-Colombian Community Councils to rehabilitate 8,220 hectares of an estimated total of 45,000 hectares of degraded land. In Antioquia, eight projects with private investors, local governments, and communities will rehabilitate 3,280 hectares of an estimated total of 22,000 hectares of degraded land.

EXPECTED RESULTS

- Legalize and formalize 220 artisanal mining operations, which is estimated to be about 40 percent of illegal mines with the potential for legalization in Antioquia and Choco.
- Support the legalization of eight tons of gold, representing USD \$280 million dollars' worth of gold (USD \$35 million/ton) removed from the illegal economy, and approximately 17 percent of illegal production in 2016.
- Eliminate 55 tons of mercury from the production process of the supported mines.
- Reduce airborne mercury contamination by 30 percent in a sample of gold shops.
- Rehabilitate 11,500 hectares of degraded land.
- Sequester 1,600,000 tons of CO₂.
- Diversify incomes of 13,800 families as an alternative to mining.