



# Artisanal and small-scale gold mining and health

**TECHNICAL PAPER #1: ENVIRONMENTAL AND OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH HAZARDS  
ASSOCIATED WITH ARTISANAL AND SMALL-SCALE GOLD MINING**



**World Health  
Organization**



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## Foreword

Millions of people in the developing world depend on artisanal and small-scale gold mining (ASGM) for their livelihoods. This wealth, however, can come at a price.

ASGM has many associated environmental and occupational health issues, particularly when practiced informally or with limited technical and material resources. The health and well-being of miners, their family members as well as nearby communities is often adversely affected.

The Minamata Convention on Mercury, adopted in October 2013, has provided an important opportunity to catalyze global, regional and national intersectoral action needed to promote and protect the health and well-being of populations that depend on ASGM.

In recognition of its associated human health and environmental impacts, in particular resulting from the use of mercury in the ASGM process, the Convention obligates Parties, as applicable, to develop public health strategies on the exposure to mercury of ASGM workers and their communities.

Such strategies must include the gathering of health data, training for health-care workers and awareness-raising through health facilities.

The present document is part of a WHO technical series on ASGM and health developed in response to World Health Assembly Resolution 67.11. It seeks to inform ministries of public health of roles they can play in supporting the implementation of ASGM related provisions of the Minamata Convention on Mercury.

Given the significance of occupational health issues in this context, this effort is also aligned with actions called for under World Health Assembly Resolution 60.26 and in the Global Plan of Action for Workers' Health (2008-2017), in particular actions focused on promoting and protecting health at the workplace and in hazardous working environments.

Health-care providers have a key part to play in responding to ASGM. However, in order to play this part, they need to be mobilized and adequately trained. It is in this spirit that this document has been put forward.



Dr Maria Neira

Director, Department of Public  
Health, Environmental and Social  
Determinants of Health

World Health Organization

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## Acronyms and abbreviations

<b>AGC</b>	Artisanal Gold Council
<b>ASGM</b>	Artisanal and small-scale gold mining
<b>CASM</b>	Communities and Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining initiative
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>UNEP</b>	United Nations Environment Programme
<b>UNIDO</b>	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
<b>WHA</b>	World Health Assembly
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization

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