In many Artisanal Small Gold Mining (ASGM) areas, women perform the most toxic jobs since they do not require strength. These jobs include pouring the mercury into the ball-mills or mixing the mercury in panning, and burning the amalgam, often with their children or babies nearby. In some countries, women also carry the rocks from the mining sites to the processing plants.

Biomonitoring results from several ASGM countries show alarming concentrations of mercury in hair, urine and blood of children, women and men. There is a rapidly growing body of knowledge in this area, which has also revealed some symptoms similar to Minamata disease and its adverse effects and damage to the developing brain is a particular concern.

This side event will present and discuss the lessons learned from Minamata disease, the case to protect women's health from mercury exposure, present best practices on reducing exposure to mercury in ASGM workers and communities, identify what awareness raising and regulatory measures governments can support and how a successful and meaningful mercury treaty will reduce mercury exposure to women, children and future generations.
# Program: Women and Mercury in ASGM

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| 12:45 – 13:00 | Registration & Lunch  
Lunch will be served for participants  
Opening of the event by IPEN and WECF  
Welcome speeches |
| 13:00 – 13:20 | H.E. Rejoice Mabudafhasi, Deputy Minister for Water and Environmental Affairs, South Africa -  
Welcome and perspective from the Network of Women Ministers and Leaders for the Environment  
H.E. Halima Daud, Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Malawi – Welcome and perspectives from the African region  
H.E. Ambassador Annika Markovic, Environment Ambassador, Sweden Preventing the spreading of Mercury, Sweden’s experience with mercury export ban |
| 13:20 – 14:00 | Speakers and presenters  
Yuyun Ismawati, IPEN lead for ASGM, BaliFokus, Indonesia: Women and Mercury in ASGM: Local problems, Global Challenge  
Isabella Pagotto, Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, Switzerland: Importance of gender mainstreaming  
Prof. Dr. Med. Toshihide Tsuda, Okayama University: Lessons learned from Minamata disease and reflection to mercury exposure in ASGM  
Dr. Maria Neira, Director, Department of Public Health and Environment, World Health Organization, addressing public health strategies and ASGM |
| 14:00 – 14:25 | Questions & answers  
The Q&A session will explore the responses and commitment of countries towards the mercury in ASGM and prevent its adverse effect to women’s health and children as well as the population in general including:  
1. Applying the lessons of Minamata disease 50 years ago to the next 50 years  
Impacts of ASGM and mercury on women, reproductive health, intergenerational justice and women's role in development.  
3. International community cooperation, monitoring and preventive measures |
| 14:30        | Closing                                                              |

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