NATIONAL STATUS REPORT ON MERCURY USE IN GHANA'S ARTISANAL AND SMALL-SCALE GOLD MINING SECTOR

Executive Summary

Artisanal and small-scale gold mining (ASGM) is a vital livelihood sector in Ghana, employing an estimated 1–1.5 million people directly, including miners, gold traders, equipment suppliers, and transporters. Additionally, about 4.5 million people indirectly depend on ASGM for their livelihoods through services such as food vending, logistics, and retail (Minerals Commission, 2022; Environmental Protection Agency, 2022). The sector contributes significantly to national gold output and rural employment. However, the sector's continued reliance on mercury poses serious environmental and public health threats, particularly to women and children in mining communities. Mercury contamination of air, water, and soil has resulted in increased cases of neurological disorders, respiratory illnesses, and other chronic health impacts.

To address these risks, Ghana ratified the Minamata Convention on Mercury on 23 March 2017, affirming its commitment to reduce and, where feasible, eliminate mercury use in ASGM (Minamata Convention on Mercury, 2017). In line with this commitment, Ghana developed the Minamata Initial Assessment (MIA) in 2018 and the National Action Plan (NAP) in 2022. These strategic frameworks offer guidance on emissions monitoring, mercury-free technology adoption, legal reform, and capacity building (Environmental Protection Agency, 2018; 2022).

Despite these foundational steps, the 2023 Ghana National Report submitted under Article 21 of the Convention identifies persistent implementation challenges:

- Illicit mercury importation and continued unauthorized use, exacerbated by weak enforcement, porous borders, and informal supply chains;
- Absence of a national mercury storage and disposal facility, limiting the government's ability to manage excess and confiscated mercury safely;
- Low uptake of mercury-free gold processing technologies, due to high costs, lack of technical support, and limited awareness among ASGM operators.

Ghana has enacted several relevant laws—including the Mercury Law (PNDCL 217, 1989), Minerals and Mining Act (Act 703, 2006; amended 2015 and 2019), Environmental Protection Agency Act (Act 490, 1994), and the Hazardous and Electronic Waste Control and Management Act (Act 917, 2016). Yet enforcement remains fragmented and under-resourced, particularly in rural ASGM hotspots.

This report provides a comprehensive analysis of Ghana's ASGM mercury landscape and identifies urgent priorities for policy reform, inter-agency coordination, and technological

transition. It emphasizes the need to revise and fully implement the NAP and MIA with clear timelines, enforcement protocols, and support mechanisms for ASGM miners.

In addition to national actions, the report supports two proposed amendments to the Minamata Convention put forward by IPEN:

1. The adoption of a legally binding global phase-out date of 2032 for mercury use in ASGM; and

2. A global ban on mercury trade, which continues to supply illicit markets and undermine national control measures (IPEN, 2023).

These international measures are essential to curbing global mercury pollution, accelerating the transition to mercury-free mining practices, and protecting the most vulnerable populations from its devastating health and environmental consequences.

Introduction for the ASGM National Status Report – Ghana

Gold mining has been central to Ghana's economy and culture for centuries. Historically, Ghana, formerly known as the Gold Coast, was a hub for gold trade, attracting European explorers and merchants as early as the 15th century. Indigenous Ghanaians engaged in traditional gold mining using manual panning and sluicing techniques, relying on natural water streams to extract gold from alluvial deposits. This long-standing practice laid the foundation for the country's gold industry, which continues to be a dominant economic activity.

With Ghana's independence in 1957, gold mining remained a key driver of economic growth. However, large-scale mining operations were often controlled by multinational corporations, leading many local miners to seek alternative means of benefiting from the country's rich mineral resources. This led to the rapid expansion of artisanal and small-scale gold mining (ASGM), which became an informal but thriving sector, especially in gold-rich regions such as Tarkwa, Obuasi, Dunkwa, Bolgatanga, and Wa.

By the late 20th century, ASGM had grown significantly, fueled by rising global gold prices and increasing unemployment, which pushed thousands of individuals into informal mining activities. Without access to advanced mining technologies, ASGM miners sought simpler and more affordable extraction techniques, leading to the widespread adoption of mercury-based gold processing methods. Mercury quickly became a staple in Ghana's ASGM sector, as it provided an efficient yet highly hazardous means of extracting gold from ore.

The growing use of mercury in ASGM raised serious environmental and public health concerns. Mercury contamination of major water bodies such as the Pra, Offin, and Ankobra rivers became evident, affecting local drinking water sources and aquatic ecosystems. Studies showed increased cases of mercury poisoning among ASGM workers and surrounding communities, resulting in neurological disorders, respiratory issues, and kidney damage.

Pregnant women and children in mining communities were particularly vulnerable, as mercury exposure has been linked to birth defects and developmental disorders

Artisanal and Small-Scale Gold Mining (ASGM) is a critical sector in Ghana, contributing significantly to employment, local economies, and national gold production. However, it remains highly informal and largely unregulated, resulting in severe environmental and public health risks, particularly due to the widespread use of mercury in gold extraction. Mercury contamination threatens air, land, and water resources, endangering the health of miners and surrounding communities.

To address these concerns, Ghana ratified the Minamata Convention on Mercury in 2017, committing to reducing and, where feasible, eliminating mercury use in ASGM. The National Action Plan (NAP, 2022) was subsequently developed to guide national efforts toward mercury reduction, while the Minamata Initial Assessment (MIA, 2018) provided a baseline for mercury emissions, trade, and policy gaps. Despite these frameworks, enforcement remains weak, mercury smuggling persists, and Ghana lacks a national mercury storage facility, further complicating responsible waste management.

This report presents a comprehensive assessment of mercury use in Ghana's artisanal and small-scale gold mining (ASGM) sector, examining the regulatory landscape, enforcement shortcomings, environmental degradation, and public health impacts, while emphasizing the urgent need to revise Ghana's National Action Plan (NAP) and Minamata Initial Assessment (MIA). It also endorses two critical amendments to the Minamata Convention proposed by IPEN: first, a global ban on mercury trade, which continues to drive illicit supply chains and undermine domestic mercury control efforts; and second, the establishment of a legally binding 2032 global phase-out date for mercury use in ASGM. Adoption of these measures is essential to aligning Ghana's policy framework with evolving international standards and ensuring lasting protection for communities exposed to mercury-related harm.

National Regulatory Framework Related to Mercury and ASGM in Ghana

Ghana has established multiple laws and policies aimed at regulating mercury use in Artisanal and Small-Scale Gold Mining (ASGM). These frameworks are designed to control mercury imports, promote responsible mining practices, and mitigate environmental and health risks associated with ASGM. However, weak enforcement, illegal mercury trade, and lack of implementation mechanisms continue to undermine these efforts.

1. Mercury Law (1989, PNDCL 217)

Ghana's regulatory framework for mercury control is rooted in the Mercury Law (PNDCL 217, enacted in 1989), which remains the country's primary legislation on mercury importation. The law requires that all mercury imports be licensed, but it fails to ban or restrict mercury use in ASGM, thereby enabling its continued use in gold processing. Critically, the law does not address illegal mercury trade, which persists through porous borders especially with Burkina Faso and China nor does it include a tracking mechanism for mercury distribution or use. These regulatory shortcomings contribute to the widespread informal use of mercury in ASGM and undermine Ghana's enforcement capacity under the Minamata Convention (Environmental Protection Agency, 2022).

2. Minerals and Mining Act (2006, Act 703, Amended 2019)

The Minerals and Mining Act (2006, Act 703) is the overarching legislation governing mining activities, including ASGM. This law provides guidelines for licensing, environmental protection, and responsible mineral exploitation. However, its enforcement within the ASGM sector remains weak due to:

- High levels of informal and illegal mining activities (galamsey) that operate outside regulatory oversight.
- Limited resources for monitoring compliance with mercury-related regulations.
- Challenges in enforcing environmental protection clauses within the law, particularly concerning mercury emissions and disposal.

In 2019, the law was amended to introduce stricter penalties for illegal mining activities, but enforcement remains inconsistent, with many ASGM operators still using mercury without legal permits or oversight.

3. Environmental Protection Agency Act (1994, Act 490)

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Act (1994, Act 490) grants regulatory authority to the EPA to oversee environmental compliance, waste management, and chemical regulations, including mercury. Under this Act:

- The EPA is responsible for monitoring mercury emissions and releases from ASGM activities.
- Environmental permits are required for mining operations, including guidelines on mercury management.
- The EPA has the power to enforce penalties for violations of environmental standards.

However, major challenges remain:

- Lack of capacity for monitoring ASGM sites nationwide.
- Inadequate enforcement of environmental impact assessments (EIAs) in ASGM areas.

- Weak collaboration between regulatory agencies, leading to gaps in monitoring mercury trade and usage.

4. Hazardous and Electronic Waste Control and Management Act (2016, Act 917)

The Hazardous and Electronic Waste Control and Management Act (2016, Act 917) was enacted to regulate the handling, storage, and disposal of hazardous substances, including mercury. This law aligns with Ghana's commitments under the Basel, Stockholm, and Minamata Conventions.

Key provisions include:

- Guidelines for proper storage and disposal of mercury waste.
- Classification of mercury as hazardous waste, requiring special disposal measures.
- Obligations for industries to comply with safe chemical management standards.

ASGM Activity in Ghana

Artisanal and Small-Scale Gold Mining (ASGM) is widespread across Ghana, particularly in mineral-rich regions. The major ASGM hubs include:

- Western Region – Tarkwa, Prestea, Bogoso, Wassa Akropong
- Ashanti Region – Obuasi, Amansie, Konongo, Manso-Nkwanta
- Central Region – Dunkwa-on-Offin, Twifo Praso
- Eastern Region – Akyem Oda, Kyebi, Anyinam, Osino
- Upper East Region – Bolgatanga, Bongo, Tongo
- Upper West Region – Wa, Nadowli
- Northern Region – Tinga, Bole

Health and Environmental Impacts of ASGM

The unregulated use of mercury in ASGM poses serious risks to human health and the environment.

Health Impacts

- Mercury poisoning – ASGM miners and nearby communities are exposed to mercury vapors, leading to neurological disorders, kidney damage, and respiratory issues.
- Birth defects and developmental issues – Pregnant women in ASGM areas risk giving birth to babies with severe birth defects due to mercury exposure.
- Occupational hazards – ASGM miners work in unstable pits prone to collapse, leading to injuries and fatalities. (https://www.africanews.com/2017/07/05/ghana-at-least-14-miners-missing-in-collapsed-pit//)

- Contaminated water sources – Communities dependent on ASGM-contaminated rivers suffer from increased rates of gastrointestinal diseases and skin infections.
- Between 2010 and 2013, over 100 individuals, predominantly illegal small-scale gold miners (commonly referred to as galamsey operators), died in the Konongo and Odumase areas from a mysterious lung disease. The illness displayed symptoms akin to tuberculosis but did not respond to conventional treatments. Investigations linked the outbreak to prolonged exposure to mercury fumes and dust from artisanal mining sites, highlighting the serious health risks associated with unregulated gold mining operations (National ASGM Status Report Ghana, 2023).
- Health experts and economists have sounded alarms over the long-term consequences of continued exposure to pollutants in artisanal and small-scale gold mining (ASGM). Chronic mercury exposure has been connected to kidney and liver damage, respiratory complications, and increased risks of various cancers. These conditions threaten not only the health of mining communities but also the productivity and sustainability of Ghana's labor force (National ASGM Status Report Ghana, 2023)

Criminal Networks and Illicit Trade in ASGM

Criminal activity in Ghana's Artisanal and Small-Scale Gold Mining (ASGM) sector poses a major threat to national revenue, environmental governance, and public health. Organized networks engaged in gold and mercury smuggling exploit weak enforcement, porous borders, and legal loopholes despite existing regulatory frameworks such as the Mercury Act (1989) and the Minerals and Mining Act (2006, amended 2019). Ghana's status as Africa's top gold producer has made it a target for illicit gold trading, with large volumes smuggled through neighboring countries like Togo and Burkina Faso, bypassing official export channels and costing the state substantial revenue losses.

Equally concerning is the persistent illegal mercury trade. Mercury continues to be smuggled into Ghana from countries such as Burkina Faso, Mali, and China. Even with import restrictions, data show Ghana imported mercury as recently as 2019, underscoring the limitations of current enforcement mechanisms (Chatham House, 2019; National ASGM Status Report Ghana, 2023). The lack of a national mercury tracking system and insufficient border surveillance facilitate the continued use of mercury in unregulated mining, compounding environmental and health risks.

To dismantle these illicit trade networks, Ghana must urgently strengthen border controls, enhance cross-border cooperation, and implement a centralized monitoring system for mercury and gold trade.

Gold Smuggling, Mercury Trade, and Revenue Losses

Ghana, despite being Africa's top gold producer, continues to suffer significant financial losses due to illicit gold exports and weak enforcement systems. A large portion of the country's gold

is smuggled through neighboring countries such as Togo and Burkina Faso to avoid taxes and export duties. This practice deprives the government of billions in revenue annually (Modern Ghana, 2025; GhanaWeb, 2025a).

Compounding this issue is the continued illegal trade of mercury. Although Ghana has laws restricting mercury imports, smuggling from countries like Burkina Faso, Mali, and China remains rampant. Data from Chatham House's Resource Trade Earth platform confirms mercury imports as recently as 2019, suggesting enforcement gaps remain (Chatham House, 2019).

Additionally, digital platforms may facilitate mercury trade through unregulated online sales, a growing global trend. Ghana currently lacks a regulatory framework to monitor or block the illegal online trade of mercury, creating a blind spot in chemical control enforcement.

Addressing these challenges requires a multi-pronged strategy, including a centralized gold oversight body, border surveillance enhancement, and the development of cyber-monitoring tools to detect and disrupt illegal online trade of hazardous chemicals

Mercury Trade, Smuggling, and Illegal Online Sales in Ghana's ASGM Sector

Despite regulatory restrictions, mercury remains widely used in Ghana's artisanal and small-scale gold mining (ASGM) sector. The National Action Plan (NAP) developed under the Minamata Convention highlights that mercury is primarily smuggled into Ghana from Burkina Faso, Mali, and China. These illicit flows are sustained by criminal networks that operate informal, black-market supply chains. Mercury is often mislabeled, hidden within other imports, or trafficked across porous borders using unregulated trade routes (Government of Ghana, 2022).

According to Ghana's 2022 NAP report, an estimated 43.4 tonnes of mercury were used in ASGM activities in 2017 alone. Moreover, the report identifies over 68.7 tonnes of mercury imported into Ghana between 2014 and 2019, reflecting inconsistencies between official trade restrictions and actual market access (Government of Ghana, 2022, p. 54).

Online mercury sales though harder to track—pose an emerging threat. Internationally, mercury can be found for sale on platforms such as Amazon, eBay, and Alibaba under chemical names or disguised as other products. Ghana currently lacks a targeted regulatory framework to detect and prevent such digital transactions. The unregulated nature of e-commerce platforms creates a significant loophole in national enforcement systems.

To address both physical and digital mercury trade, Ghana must not only enhance border enforcement and customs tracking but also establish cyber-monitoring protocols and inter-agency task forces to regulate online chemical commerce

The Need to Amend the Minamata Convention: Ending Global Mercury Trade and Introducing a 2032 Phase-out for Mercury in ASGM".

The Minamata Convention on Mercury was established to reduce and eventually eliminate the harmful impacts of mercury pollution on human health and the environment. However, the Convention does not currently set a definitive timeline for the phase-out of mercury use in Artisanal and Small-Scale Gold Mining (ASGM), which remains the largest source of anthropogenic mercury emissions globally.

To address this urgent issue, the IPEN Mercury Treaty Amendment Proposal (2025) calls for a complete phase-out of mercury use in ASGM by 2032, alongside a strengthened global commitment to ending mercury trade and improving access to mercury-free gold processing technologies

1. Eliminating the Largest Global Source of Mercury Pollution

- ASGM is responsible for over 37% of global anthropogenic mercury emissions, making it the single largest source of mercury pollution worldwide (UNEP, 2019).
- Mercury released during gold processing severely impacts miners and nearby communities, especially women and children (Government of Ghana, 2022).
- Without a legally binding phase-out, mercury use will continue unchecked, delaying the transition to safer, more sustainable gold mining methods.

2. Ending the Mercury Trade that Fuels ASGM Pollution

- Mercury used in ASGM is largely smuggled across borders from countries like Burkina Faso, Mali, and China, entering informal markets and undermining national bans (Government of Ghana, 2022, p. 54).
- Ghana imported over 68.7 tonnes of mercury between 2014 and 2019, exposing enforcement gaps in mercury control.
- Mercury is also marketed through unregulated online platforms like Facebook Marketplace and U-Buy, where it is sold as "liquid metal" in sealed ampoules (Facebook Marketplace, 2024; U-Buy Australia, 2024).
- Ghana lacks specific cyber-monitoring frameworks to regulate the online sale of mercury.
- A global ban must address both physical and online trade routes to effectively end mercury access in ASGM.

3. Advancing Safer, Mercury-Free Gold Extraction Technologies

- Mercury-free alternatives such as gravity concentration, controlled cyanide leaching, and the borax method are increasingly available and effective (UNEP, 2019).
- Despite their viability, uptake remains low due to cost barriers, limited training, and lack of technical support in ASGM communities.

- A 2032 phase-out would drive global investment and donor support to scale up these technologies and make them accessible to miners worldwide (Government of Ghana, 2022).

4. Protecting Vulnerable Communities from Mercury Exposure

- Mercury exposure in ASGM disproportionately affects **women and children**, causing neurological damage, reproductive health issues, and developmental disorders (UNEP, 2019).
- A 2032 phase-out would compel national governments to:
  - Implement stronger health and safety regulations;
  - Launch community awareness programs;
  - Expand medical monitoring and protective measures in high-risk mining areas (Government of Ghana, 2022).

5. Implementation Strategies for the 2032 Mercury Phase-Out

To ensure a successful global transition away from mercury in ASGM, the following measures should be prioritized:

- Amend the Minamata Convention to establish a legally binding 2032 phase-out date for mercury use in ASGM.
- Enhance international cooperation to eliminate illicit mercury trade by improving cross-border enforcement and tracking mechanisms.
- Expand financial and technical support for ASGM miners to adopt mercury-free gold processing technologies.
- Require national governments to develop ASGM formalization policies that promote sustainable, mercury-free mining practices.
- Strengthen monitoring and reporting obligations under the Minamata Convention to ensure compliance with the phase-out deadline.

Ghana's Mercury Storage and Waste Management Gaps

A major gap in Ghana's mercury management strategy is the lack of a dedicated mercury storage and disposal facility. This deficiency significantly hampers the country's ability to comply with Minamata Convention obligations, particularly regarding mercury stockpiling, disposal, and environmental protection. Ghana's National Action Plan (NAP, 2022) and Minamata Initial Assessment (MIA, 2018) both highlight the urgent need for a structured, well-regulated mercury storage system to prevent reintroduction into the ASGM sector and mitigate contamination risks.

Key Concerns in Mercury Storage and Waste Management

1. Absence of a Centralized Mercury Storage Facility

- Ghana does not have a national mercury storage or disposal site, meaning excess mercury remains in circulation or is improperly stored in unsafe conditions.
- Illegal ASGM operators and smugglers often recover confiscated mercury from regulatory authorities due to poor storage infrastructure.
- Without a dedicated facility, seized mercury is often stockpiled in insecure locations, increasing the risk of it being resold into illegal ASGM markets.

2. Environmental Contamination from Improper Mercury Disposal

- Mercury waste from ASGM, gold refining, and electronic waste is often dumped into rivers, open landfills, or mining pits, leading to widespread pollution.
- The MIA (2018) identified severe mercury contamination in Ghana's major water bodies, including the Pra, Ankobra, Offin, and Birim Rivers, affecting drinking water and aquatic life.
- In the absence of proper storage facilities, miners often discard mercury in local environments, leading to bioaccumulation in fish and increased public health risks.

3. Weak Enforcement of Hazardous Waste Management Laws

- The Hazardous and Electronic Waste Control and Management Act (2016, Act 917) mandates safe disposal of hazardous substances, but enforcement remains weak.
- Regulatory agencies lack adequate infrastructure, resources, and trained personnel to oversee mercury waste management effectively.
- Illegal dumping of mercury-containing waste continues unchecked, contributing to chronic environmental degradation.

4. Limited Funding and Technical Expertise for Mercury Storage Solutions

- Establishing a national mercury storage and disposal system requires significant financial investment, which remains largely unavailable.
- Technical expertise in mercury stabilization and secure storage is lacking, preventing the development of long-term waste containment strategies.
- Ghana has not yet secured international funding for mercury storage solutions, despite provisions under the Minamata Convention for technical assistance and financial support.

5. Absence of a Structured Framework to Manage Confiscated Mercury

- Ghana lacks clear protocols for handling seized mercury stocks, leading to uncertainty in disposal methods.

- Confiscated mercury is often held indefinitely, increasing risks of leakage, theft, or reintroduction into ASGM operations.
- Without a government-led mercury disposal plan, enforcement agencies lack clear directives on how to safely eliminate seized mercury.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Despite ongoing policy efforts and Ghana's commitment to the Minamata Convention on Mercury, mercury use in Artisanal and Small-Scale Gold Mining (ASGM) remains widespread. The continued illicit mercury trade, weak enforcement mechanisms, and lack of viable alternatives for ASGM miners have significantly hampered progress in reducing mercury emissions.

Additionally, the absence of a national mercury storage facility, poor waste management practices, and limited public awareness of mercury-free gold extraction techniques have further exacerbated the environmental and health risks associated with ASGM.

To effectively address these challenges and ensure Ghana's compliance with international obligations, the following urgent actions are recommended:

1. Revise the National Action Plan (NAP, 2022) and Minamata Initial Assessment (MIA, 2018) to Strengthen Enforcement and Regulatory Frameworks

- Ghana's NAP (2022) and MIA (2018) provide a roadmap for mercury reduction, but weak enforcement of existing regulations has allowed illegal mercury trade and ASGM mercury use to continue unchecked.
- Regulatory Gaps:
    - The Minerals and Mining Act (2006, Act 703) should be amended to impose stricter penalties for mercury smuggling and unauthorized use in ASGM.
    - Stronger inter-agency collaboration between the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Ghana Minerals Commission, and border security agencies is needed to monitor mercury trade routes.
    - A mercury tracking system should be established to monitor legal imports and prevent black-market sales.
- Implementation Measures:
    - The NAP (2022) must integrate stricter monitoring mechanisms for ASGM operations, ensuring that formalized miners are transitioning toward mercury-free processing methods.
    - The MIA (2018) should be updated with revised mercury emissions data to reflect current levels of pollution in ASGM hotspots.

2. Establish a National Mercury Storage and Disposal Facility to Manage Excess and Confiscated Mercury

- Currently, Ghana lacks a dedicated mercury storage and disposal facility, leading to improper disposal of confiscated mercury and environmental contamination.
- Challenges of Mercury Storage in Ghana:
    - Mercury waste is often dumped into water bodies or resold into illegal ASGM markets due to the absence of secure storage locations.
    - The Hazardous and Electronic Waste Control and Management Act (2016, Act 917) mandates proper hazardous waste disposal, but implementation remains weak due to insufficient funding and lack of infrastructure.
- Proposed Solutions:
    - Develop a government-regulated mercury storage center in compliance with Minamata Convention guidelines.
    - Implement safe mercury disposal protocols to prevent the reintroduction of confiscated mercury into ASGM markets.
    - Secure international funding and technical assistance for the establishment of mercury storage infrastructure.

Introduce Financial Incentives for ASGM Miners to Transition to Mercury-Free Processing Methods.

- Many ASGM operators continue using mercury because alternative gold extraction technologies are expensive and inaccessible.
- Barriers to Mercury-Free Technologies in ASGM:
    - High initial costs of purchasing mercury-free processing equipment.
    - Lack of training among miners on using alternative techniques such as gravity concentration, cyanide leaching (under controlled conditions), and the borax method.
    - Resistance from informal mining groups due to misinformation and lack of financial support.
- Key Policy Recommendations:
    - Establish government grants or low-interest loans to help ASGM miners acquire mercury-free processing equipment.
    - Provide subsidies for ASGM operators who transition to mercury-free mining, ensuring that financial barriers are reduced.
    - Set up regional training centers in ASGM communities to educate miners on safe and efficient mercury-free techniques.

4. Expand Public Health Monitoring Programs in ASGM Communities to Assess Mercury Exposure Levels

- Mercury poisoning remains a major health threat to ASGM workers and surrounding communities, particularly women and children.
- Health Impacts of Mercury Exposure in Ghana:
    - Studies show that miners and gold traders exposed to mercury suffer from neurological damage, respiratory diseases, and kidney failure.
    - Mercury contamination of water sources has led to increased cases of birth defects and developmental disorders in ASGM-affected communities.
    - Galamsey (illegal mining) communities experience higher rates of mercury-related illnesses, with limited access to proper healthcare.
- Public Health Interventions Needed:
    - Establish national mercury exposure testing programs to monitor mercury poisoning levels among ASGM workers.
    - Develop health awareness campaigns targeting ASGM communities, educating them on the dangers of mercury exposure.
    - Expand government-led medical interventions, ensuring that affected populations receive adequate treatment.

Advocate for an Amendment to the Minamata Convention to Set a 2032 Phase-Out Date for Mercury Use in ASGM

- Ghana's NAP (2022) and MIA (2018) align with the Minamata Convention's goal of reducing mercury use, but a 2032 global phase-out deadline would provide the necessary international backing to accelerate efforts.
- Why a 2032 Mercury Phase-Out is Essential:
    - ASGM remains the largest global source of mercury emissions, contributing over 37% of worldwide mercury pollution.
    - Without a legally binding deadline, mercury use in ASGM will persist indefinitely, delaying global efforts to eliminate mercury exposure risks.
    - A 2032 phase-out would create clear enforcement obligations for Ghana and other ASGM-dependent nations.
- Steps to Support the 2032 Phase-Out in Ghana:
    - Strengthen cross-border enforcement to curb illegal mercury trade from Burkina Faso, Mali, and China.
    - Improve ASGM formalization by integrating mercury-free processing techniques into Ghana's mining laws.
    - Collaborate with ECOWAS and international partners to ensure regional enforcement of mercury bans.

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AKO Foundation (PO)

AKO Foundation is a non-profit and non-governmental environmental organization based in Accra, Ghana. Our mission is to create change by inspiring and empowering young people for a sustainable future, fostering a generation of leaders committed to environmental stewardship and innovative solutions.

Main Goals and Activities:

- Environmental Education & Advocacy: Raising awareness and promoting sustainable practices among youth and communities.
- Chemical & Waste Management: Encouraging safe and responsible waste disposal while advocating for policies that address plastic pollution and hazardous chemicals.
- Youth in Agribusiness: Training young farmers on sustainable agricultural practices, helping them access markets, and supporting eco-friendly farming initiatives.
- Women & Climate Change: Empowering women in climate action and environmental solutions through education, policy advocacy, and skill-building programs.
- Policy Engagement & Research: Conducting research on environmental policies, engaging in international dialogues such as the Plastic Treaty negotiations, and contributing to policy development.