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The Minamata Convention's Financial Mechanism

Funding Requirements for Formalisation Activities Related to Artisanal and Small-Scale Gold Mining

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Cover photo: Small-scale gold mining in Madagascar. Reference image by GEF (Flickr). 2013. CC BY-NC-SA 2.0.

Contents

Introduction

Artisanal and small-scale gold mining (ASGM) is the largest source of mercury emissions. The ASGM sector is therefore an important focus area in international efforts to reduce the mining, use, trade and improper disposal of mercury and the associated negative impacts on the environment and human health.

Most of ASGM activity is informal and takes place largely outside the scope of government regulations.[1] The transition of the ASGM sector away from mercury use is therefore a complex task and requires technical and financial resources that are sometimes lacking in the countries concerned. The Minamata Convention on Mercury, the most important global instrument addressing mercury, therefore provides financial and technical support for these countries in the implementation of their commitments.

In this report, we look at the processes related to the support provided by the international community targeting and affecting the ASGM sector. We try to get a picture of the type and amount of support as well as the prerequisites and possible reasons for exclusion. We are particularly interested in the question of who can apply for funding and whether the support also reaches the informal ASGM sector – e.g. informal gold mines in the Amazon that are associated with deforestation. The analysis has been carried out as a desk-based exercise; the actual impact of the provided support on the ASGM sector and related socio-economic structures has not been scientifically evaluated.

The report is part of an inter- and transdisciplinary research project by the Wyss Academy for Nature and the Centre for Development and Environment (CDE) at the University of Bern on ASGM.[2] The research team seeks to find ways to foster the transition towards a more responsible model of ASGM, especially in the region of Madre de Dios in Peru. The aim is to ensure that miners and their communities achieve economic and social benefits, while negative impacts on the environment are minimized. We acknowledge that gold mining and trading plays an important economic role in regions such as Madre de Dios and can help to meet the basic needs of the local population. However, we assume that structural adjustments can significantly improve the protection of people and their health, as well as the environment, especially water bodies and forests. This working paper contributes to a better understanding of the potential and limits of the

[1] GEF and UNEP, 'Formalization' (*planetGOLD*, 1 January 2017) <https://www.planetgold.org/formalization> accessed 26 February 2025.

[2] See Martina Burger and others, 'Are the Markets Ready for Responsible Gold from Artisanal and Small-Scale Miners? An Investigation with a Focus on the Swiss Market and Gold from the Amazon' (Wyss Academy for Nature and Centre for Development and Environment, University of Bern 2025) Wyss Academy and CDE Report No 1; Judith Schäli, Martina Burger and Elisabeth Bürgi Bonanomi, 'Due Diligence and Supply Chain Regulation for Swiss Gold: A Stocktaking with a Perspective on Possible Implications for Artisanal and Small-Scale Gold Mining' (Wyss Academy for Nature and Centre for Development and Environment, University of Bern 2025) Wyss Academy and CDE Report No 2.

international financial regime in support of the structural adjustments required for long-term market access of ASGM gold.

1 The Minamata Convention on Mercury

Mercury is one of the most potent neurotoxins known. It is recognized as a substance producing significant adverse neurological and other health **effects on both humans and wildlife**, with particular concerns expressed about its harmful effects on infants and unborn children.[3] Excessive human absorption can lead to so-called Minamata disease (methyl-mercury poisoning), which was first reported in the mid-1950s in the vicinity of Minamata Bay after the inhabitants had eaten large quantities of fish contaminated with wastewater discharged from a chemical plant.[4]

The effects of elevated mercury exposure go far beyond the individual: mercury damages entire communities, fuels poverty and feeds conflicts, 'pushing equality further out of reach'.[5] According to the Global Mercury Assessment Report of 2018, around 2.220 tonnes of mercury were emitted directly into the atmosphere from anthropogenic sources in 2015. In addition, around twice this amount was emitted indirectly by mercury from anthropogenic sources that was previously deposited in soil and water.[6] Mercury has a long environmental lifetime. It can travel globally and cycles between the atmosphere, ocean, and land for centuries or longer.[7]

As a global concern of our time, mercury is addressed by the **Minamata Convention on Mercury**,[8] a global treaty with the objective to protect human health and the environment from anthropogenic emissions and releases of mercury and mercury compounds (art 1). The convention sets out a range of measures to this aim, including measures to control the supply of mercury,[9] the supply and trade of mercury-added products,[10] and the manufacturing processes in which mercury or mercury compounds are used.[11] It moreover includes provisions on the environmentally sound interim storage of mercury (art 10), on mercury wastes (art 11), and contaminated sites (art 12). The convention addresses both emissions of mercury or mercury compounds to the atmosphere (art 8) and releases to land and water (art 9). After an initial assessment, states parties to the convention

3 Minamata Convention on Mercury, 'Text and Annexes' (2024) UNEP/MC/2024/2 1.

4 Katsuyuki Murata and Kanae Karita, 'Minamata Disease' in Tamie Nakajima and others (eds), *Overcoming Environmental Risks to Achieve Sustainable Development Goals: Lessons from the Japanese Experience* (Springer 2022) 9.

5 Minamata Convention on Mercury (n 3) I.

6 UNEP, *Global Mercury Assessment 2018* (2019) 11.

7 ibid 24.

8 Minamata Convention on Mercury (adopted on 10 October 2013, entered into force on 16 August 2017, as last revised in 2024) 3201 UNTS, UNEP/MC/2024/2.

9 The Mercury Convention provides for a prohibition of new mercury mines (art 3[3]) and the phase out of existing mines (art 3[4]).

10 It provides for the phase out of the manufacture, import or export of listed mercury-added products (art 4(1) and Annex A).

11 It provides for the phase out or restriction of the use of mercury or mercury compounds in listed manufacturing processes (art 5(2) Annex B).

may develop and execute implementation plans, including of regional scope. In its provisions, the convention allows for flexibilities to accommodate national development plans.[12]

The Minamata Convention was adopted by over 140 countries in 2013 and entered into force after it had been ratified by fifty countries, on 16 August 2017. Both Switzerland and Peru ratified the convention in 2016, before its entry into force. As of February 2025, the convention has 152 parties. Together with the Basel,[13] Rotterdam[14] and Stockholm[15] conventions, it forms a comprehensive global regime for the sound management of chemicals and hazardous wastes.

[12] Minamata Convention on Mercury (n 3) 2.

[13] Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal (1989 Basel Convention) (adopted on 22 March 1989, entered into force on 5 May 1992) 1673 UNTS 126, 28 ILM 657 (1989).

[14] Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade (Rotterdam PIC Convention) (adopted on 10 September 1998, entered into force on 24 February 2004) 38 ILM 1 (1999), 2244 UNTS 393.

[15] Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (Stockholm POPs Convention) (adopted on 22 May 2001, entered into force on 17 May 2004) 40 ILM 532 (2001), 2256 UNTS 119.

2 The role of Artisanal and Small-Scale Gold Mining

The largest source of mercury emissions is ASGM,[16] where mercury is used to extract gold from gold-bearing sediments through ore amalgamation. Large quantities of mercury are accumulating in soils and sediments surrounding ASGM sites over time and may eventually enter aquatic systems. ASGM introduced about 1.220 tonnes of mercury into the terrestrial and freshwater environments in 2015. Mercury emissions associated with ASGM account for almost 38% of the global total and are the major contributor to the emissions from South America and Sub-Saharan Africa.[17] The vast majority of releases from ASGM occur in South America (53%), East and Southeast Asia (36%), and Sub-Saharan Africa (8%).[18] It is estimated that Peru's ASGM sector emitted 110.362 kg mercury in 2018.[19]

The ASGM sector has been estimated to provide direct employment for over 16 million people, producing about 20% of all gold extracted, as well as indirect employment to some 100 million people.[20] The people and families working in this sector or living close to production sites often derive livelihood benefits from it. However, they are also particularly exposed not only to the risks associated with mercury, but also to risks generally associated with the widespread informality of the sector. Such risks include unequal benefit sharing among men and women; the worst forms of child labour; hazardous working conditions; links to state and non-state armed groups and associated human rights abuses; impaired health; and environmental degradation. As 'a process that seeks to integrate the ASGM sector into the formal economy, society, and regulatory system', formalisation of the sector is seen as one of the most essential responses to these challenges and a pre-condition for the effective reduction and control of mercury use.[21]

Parties to the Minamata Convention are required to take steps to reduce, and where feasible eliminate, the use of mercury and mercury compounds in ASGM (art 7[2]). They have to develop a national action plan (NAP) and report on implementation every three years (art 7[3]). As part of the NAPs, the countries concerned must seek strategies to formalise and regulate the ASGM sector. NAPs moreover include: national objectives and reduction targets; actions to eliminate specific processing methods involving mercury and promote mercury-free alternatives; monitoring;

16 Minamata Convention on Mercury (n 3) III; UNEP (n 6) 30.

17 UNEP (n 6) 2 f.

18 ibid 32.

19 UN Environment, 'Global Mercury Assessment | UNEP - UN Environment Programme' (15 September 2017) <https://www.unep.org/topics/chemicals-and-pollution-action/pollution-and-health/heavy-metals/mercury/global-mercury-2> accessed 16 December 2024.

20 UNITAR and UN Environment, 'Handbook for Developing National ASGM Formalization Strategies within National Action Plans' (UNITAR and UN Environment 2018) 10.

21 ibid.

strategies for managing trade in mercury and mercury compounds; strategies for stakeholder involvement; and a public health strategy for exposed communities (Annex C).[22]

Peru adopted its ASGM NAP in 2019.[23] The country was supported with a grant of USD 500,000 (excl. agency fees of 47,500) for the preparation of the NAP via the convention's financing mechanism. The grant leveraged co-financing of USD 217,000. The grant goes to the government, which is responsible for the preparation of the NAP and its implementation.[24]

[22] See UNEP, Global Mercury Partnership and Minamata Convention, 'Guidance Document: Developing a National Action Plan to Reduce and, Where Feasible, Eliminate Mercury Use in Artisanal and Small-Scale Gold Mining' (2017) <https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/25473/NAP_guidance2018_EN.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y> accessed 25 February 2025.

[23] El Peruano, 'Mercury Convention National Implementation Plan Peru' (2019) <https://minamataconvention.org/sites/default/files/documents/national_implementation_plan/Peru_NIP_ES.pdf>.

[24] GEF, 'National Action Plan on Mercury in the Artisanal and Small-Scale Gold Mining Sector in Peru' <https://www.thegef.org/projects-operations/projects/9475> accessed 25 February 2025. See also GEF, 'Peru | Minamata Convention on Mercury' <https://minamataconvention.org/en/parties/per> accessed 25 February 2025.

3 Financial and technical support under the Mercury Convention

3.1 The financial mechanism

The Mercury Convention provides for financial and technical support for developing countries and countries with economies in transition. To ensure the provision of adequate, predictable and timely financial resources to developing countries, it established a **financial mechanism** (art 13[5]), which consists of two parts:

- the *Global Environment Facility (GEF) Trust Fund*; and
- a *Specific International Programme* (SIP) to support capacity-building and technical assistance (art 13[6]).

The financial mechanism supports developing countries and countries with economies in transition in implementing their obligations under the Convention (e.g. the preparation of initial assessments, ASGM NAPs or mercury inventories), through various programmes and projects. The payments via the mechanism go to the member states (i.e. the governments or corresponding ministries) that successfully applied for funding. Only developing-country parties to the Minamata Convention and parties with economies in transition are eligible for funding under the convention's financial mechanism.[25]

The Minamata Convention's governing body, the Conference of the Parties (COP), reviews and assesses the funding mechanism on a three-year basis (art 13[11] MC). The provision of resources from other sources, including the private sector, is encouraged (art 13[12]).

[25] Minamata Convention COP Decision MC-1/6 of 22 November 2017, UNEP/MC/COP.1/Dec.6 Annex I para 5 ff.

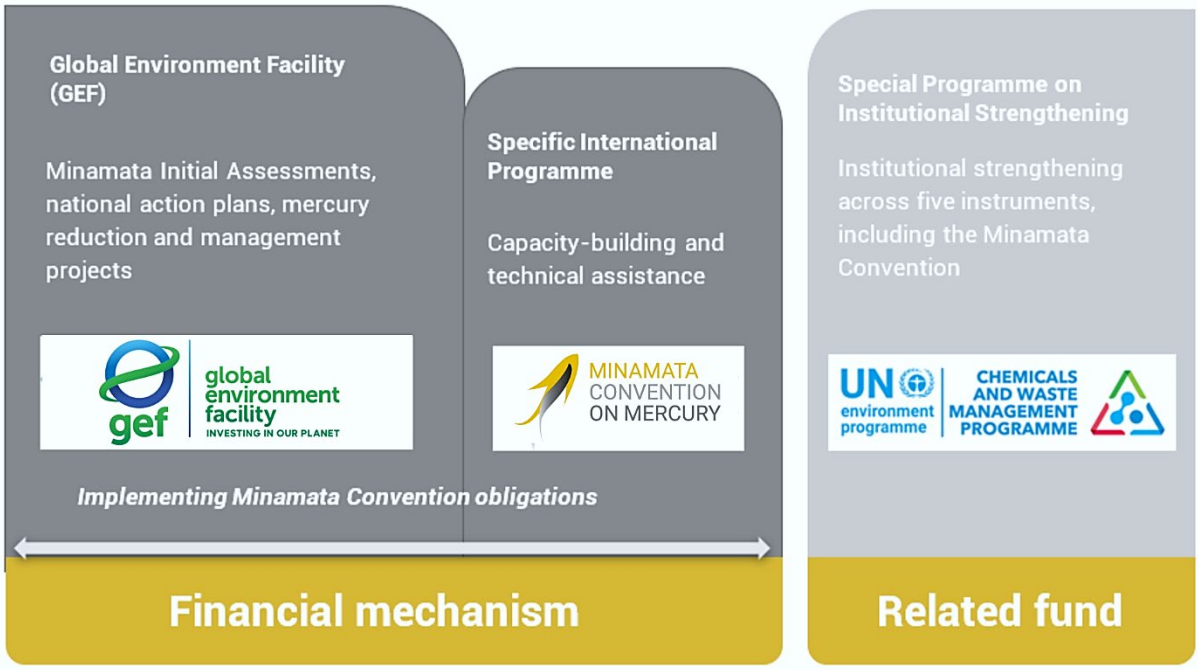

Figure 1: Financial Mechanism as set up under article 13 of the Minamata Convention.
Source: 'Financial Mechanism | Minamata Convention on Mercury' <https://minamataconvention.org/en/about/financial-mechanism> accessed 16 December 2024.

The GEF Trust Fund

Established in 1992, the **GEF** is the financial mechanism not only of the Mercury Convention but also of the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the UN Convention to Combat Desertification, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, and the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction Agreement. It involves 18 implementing agencies, such as the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), the UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) or Conservation International (CI). The **GEF Trust Fund** is one out of six Funds under the GEF umbrella and has different focal areas, including chemicals and waste, biodiversity, climate change, international waters, and land degradation. Resources for the Minamata Convention are programmed under the GEF chemicals and wastes focal area.

The GEF Trust Fund is replenished every four years. Its 8th replenishment cycle (GEF-8) started in 2022 and will end in 2026. About USD 5.33 billion have been pledged by twenty-nine donor countries for the current cycle. 15% of the budget is allocated to the chemicals and waste sector.[26]

The **GEF Trust Fund** is operated under the guidance of the Minamata COP. At its first meeting in 2017, the COP defined its overall strategies, policies and programme priorities for access to and utilization of financial resources.[27] The relationship between the GEF and the COP is defined by a

[26] See GEF, 'The GEF at a Glance' (2024) <https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/2024-12/GEF-glance-dec24-01.pdf> accessed 25 February 2025.
[27] Minamata Convention COP Decision MC-1/5 of 22 November 2017, UNEP/MC/COP.1/Dec.5.

Memorandum of Understanding.[28] The GEF's funding for mercury has been provided to developing countries and countries with economies in transition to:

- prepare Minamata Initial Assessments (MIAs) and ASGM NAPs;
- implement a number of specific provisions, including those related to reducing mercury emissions and releases or addressing the health and environmental impacts of mercury.

To date, 166 projects in 127 countries have been funded from the GEF Minamata Convention allocation. According to the Minamata Convention webpage, the **total of Minamata-related GEF project grants** amounts to USD 512,876,792 (as of 25 February 2025), which leveraged co-financing of USD 2,964,122,377.[29] In the GEF's 8th replenishment, some USD 269.000.000 were allocated to the Minamata Convention, corresponding to 5% of the total budget.[30] Funded projects and programmes include MIAs, ASGM NAPs, and projects to address mercury-added products, manufacturing processes, ASGM, mercury wastes, and capacity-building.[31]

The GEF provides financial resources to meet costs in support of the implementation of the Convention. To our knowledge, there are no general requirements from the Convention or the GEF that funds may only flow to formalised actors in the ASGM sector, that certain authorisations must be in place or that people who ultimately benefit from the funds must not be associated with deforestation. Rather, formalisation is one of the objectives under the convention and **formalisation efforts are supported**: Parties with ASGM must include in their NAPs steps to facilitate the formalisation or regulation of their ASGM sector. Under their NAP, they may carry out an analysis and characterization of their ASGM sector, including the level of formalisation.[32] ASGM NAPs are supported under the financial mechanism.

Relevant **project evaluation criteria** include the following: in providing resources for an activity, the GEF should take into account the **potential mercury reductions** of a proposed activity relative to its costs (art 13[8]). The GEF provides resources to meet the agreed incremental costs of global environmental benefits and the agreed full costs of some enabling activities. Funded activities must accord with the GEF mandate to deliver global environmental benefits and reflect the GEF chemicals and waste focal area strategy. Covered costs usually include costs arising from country-driven activities that build capacity and promote the utilization of local and regional expertise; promote synergies within the chemicals and wastes focal area and with other focal areas; leverage co-funding, including from the private sector; and promote sustainable national socioeconomic development, poverty reduction and activities consistent with existing national sound

[28] GEF and Minamata Convention, 'Memorandum of Understanding between the Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention on Mercury and the Council of the Global Environment Facility' (2019) GEF/C56/10/Rev01, Annex.

[29] The Minamata Convention Secretariat has developed a dashboard based on its project database that visualizes projects funded by the GEF Minamata Convention allocation since GEF-5: Minamata Convention, 'Projects' <https://minamataconvention.org/en/projects/list> accessed 24 February 2025.

[30] GEF, 'GEF-8: Annex 2: Resource Allocation for the Eighth Replenishment of the GEF Trust Fund' <https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/2023-01/GEF-8_PD_Annex2_Resource_Allocation.pdf> accessed 16 December 2024.

[31] See, for example, GEF, 'Report of the Global Environment Facility to the First Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention on Mercury' (2017) UNEP/MC/COP.1/INF/3, Annex p 6.

[32] GEF, 'Initial Guidelines for Enabling Activities for the Minamata Convention on Mercury' (2024) GEF/C.45/Inf.05/Rev.01 7 f.

environmental management programmes geared towards the protection of human health and the environment.

Funding is primarily provided as grants to governments. Exceptions include the *Small Grants Program* and the GEF's *non-grant instrument*. The GEF **Small Grants Programme** promotes the implementation of the Minamata Convention at the local and community levels by providing financial and technical support **directly to civil society and community-based organizations** in addressing mercury management. It tests and pilots community-based approaches to the prevention, reduction, and elimination of mercury use in ASGM, and promotes safe collection and disposal of mercury-containing products and waste.[33] Since its inception, the *Small Grants Programme* has supported more than 27,000 projects implemented by civil society groups in 135 countries across all GEF focal areas. Between 2011 and 2021, it supported 121 community-based projects in mercury reduction and management with total funding of USD 3.7 million, having generated USD 3.4 million in co-financing.[34] The GEF's *non-grant instrument* works to unlock private sector investment in the environment.

Box 1 shows an example of a major GEF-funded ASGM-related programme in support of countries' commitments under the Minamata Convention.

Box 1: The planetGOLD programme

Global Opportunities for Long-term Development (GOLD) of the Artisanal and Small-Scale Gold Mining (ASGM) Sector Plus – GEF GOLD +

	First phase	Second phase
GEF Period:	GEF-6	GEF-7
GEF ID:	9602	10569
GEF Funding:	USD 45,262,294	USD 74,318,526
Co-financing:	USD 135,174,956	USD 342,323,325
GEF-Agency:	UNEP, CI, UNDP, UNIDO	UNEP, CI, UNDP, UNIDO
Executing Agency:	National Governments, Artisanal Gold Council, National Resources Defence Council	National Governments, Artisanal Gold Council, National Resources Defence Council

The GEF GOLD – or **planetGOLD** – is a global multi-country and multi-agency initiative supported by the GEF. It comprises several GEF projects supporting the transition away from mercury use in ASGM and countries' respective commitments under the Minamata Convention. PlanetGOLD is led by UNEP and implemented in partnership with UNIDO, UNDP, and CI. planetGOLD is promoting and piloting alternative technologies and better practices with artisanal and small-scale gold miners. It also aims to connect the resulting mercury free mines to global gold supply chains, including refiners.[35] In its second phase, the programme places special emphasis on promoting holistic,

[33] GEF, 'Report of the Global Environment Facility to the Fifth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention on Mercury' (2023) UNEP/MC/COP.5/INF/14, Annex, p 21.

[34] ibid 22.

[35] GEF (n 31) 24.

multisectoral, and integrated **approaches to formalisation**, i.e. the integration of miners into the formal economy and regulatory system.[36]

UNEP and the GEF defined **specific criteria to govern operations of ASGM entities** engaged with the planetGOLD programme. ASGM entities must, among other things:

- eliminate mercury in the mining process and appropriately manage mercury contaminated tailings;
- respect and protect the rights of indigenous peoples; and
- minimize the impact on biodiversity.[37]

The programme started under the 6th GEF replenishment (2014–2018) with eight countries (Colombia, Guyana, Peru, Kenya, Burkina Faso, Philippines, Indonesia and Mongolia). In 2020, the GEF Council approved the expansion of the planetGOLD programme to eight additional countries (Bolivia, Republic of the Congo, Ghana, Honduras, Madagascar, Nigeria, Suriname, and Uganda). In 2021, seven more countries were added (Côte d'Ivoire, Ecuador, Guinea, Mali, Nicaragua, Sierra Leone, and Zambia). Additional projects have been approved in Paraguay and Zimbabwe, and there are currently projects under development in Costa Rica and Senegal.[38]

According to the 2022–2023 progress report, about 31.4 tonnes of mercury have been abated under the programme so far; about 17,221 miners, both female and male, have been assisted in their formalisation process; about 984.6 kg have been responsibly produced in conformance with the planetGOLD criteria; and USD 1,085,723 have been made available through new financial products or mechanisms.[39]

The Specific International Programme

The **Specific International Programme** *to Support Capacity Building and Technical Assistance* (SIP) is another part of the Convention's financial mechanism and complements the GEF Trust Fund. Like for the GEF Trust Fund, only developing-country parties and parties with economies in transition are eligible for resources under the SIP and may present project applications subject to approval by the SIP Governing Board.[40] Projects are selected on the basis of the same guidelines laid down by the COP as under the GEF Trust Fund.

[36] GEF and UNEP, 'Second Phase of planetGOLD Expands Countries Addressing Mercury in ASGM' (*planetGOLD*, 15 June 2021) <https://www.planetgold.org/second-phase-planetgold-expands-countries-addressing-mercury-asgm> accessed 16 December 2024.

[37] See GEF and UNEP, 'planetGOLD Criteria for Environmentally and Socially Responsible Operations v2.0' (2022) <https://www.planetgold.org/sites/default/files/planetGOLD_Criteria_for_Environmentally_and_Socially_Responsible_Operations_Feb21.pdf> accessed 18 December 2024.

[38] GEF and UNEP, 'About the Programme' (*planetGOLD*, 19 February 2021) <https://www.planetgold.org/about> accessed 16 December 2024.

[39] GEF and UNEP, 'planetGOLD Annual Progress Report 2022–2023' (2024) 6 f <https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/2024-05/planetGOLD_22-23_Annual_Progress_Report.pdf> accessed 25 February 2025.

[40] Minamata Convention COP Decision MC-1/6 of 22 November 2017, UNEP/MC/COP.1/Dec.6 (n 25) para 1.

UNEP is the host institution of the SIP. To date, 24 projects have been funded by the SIP in four application rounds with total contributions of USD 7,780,000. Two of the projects relate to ASGM.[41]

The *Specific Trust Fund* was established in 2018 to receive funds for the SIP. The Programme is open to receive contributions and applications for support for a period of 10 years.[42] Contributions of resources are encouraged from a broad range of sources, including parties to the convention, governments, the private sector, foundations, NGOs, intergovernmental organizations, academia and other types of civil society actors.[43] It is administered through the Secretariat of the Minamata Convention, which manages the project submission, screening and appraisal process for each SIP round. SIP Governing Board reviews project submissions and allocates available funding to selected projects.[44]

3.2 Provision on capacity-building and technical assistance

In addition to its provision on financial resources and the financial mechanism (art 13), the Convention includes a specific provision on **capacity-building, technical assistance and technology transfer** to developing country parties, in particular parties that are least developed countries or small island developing states, and parties with economies in transition (art 14). Respective means may be provided via the financial mechanism under article 13 or other arrangements, including regional, subregional and national arrangements or partnerships involving the private sector. Capacity-building and technical assistance may also be delivered through other multilateral and bilateral means (including in cooperation with other multilateral environmental agreements) (art14[2]). It must be context-specific and needs-oriented (art14[4]).

At its first meeting in November 2017, the COP established a *Special Trust Fund* to support activities by the secretariat related to capacity-building, technical assistance and technology transfer under article 14.[45] The Special Trust Fund complements the *General Trust Fund*, providing financial support to the work of the Convention Secretariat.[46] In addition to the two mentioned

[41] Minamata Convention, 'Dashboard' (*Specific International Programme to support Capacity-Building and Technical Assistance*, 2021) <https://minamataconvention.org/en/implementation/specific-international-programme/dashboard> accessed 26 February 2025.

[42] Minamata Convention, 'Specific International Programme to Support Capacity-Building and Technical Assistance' <https://minamataconvention.org/en/implementation/specific-international-programme> accessed 18 December 2024.

[43] Minamata Convention COP Decision MC-1/6 of 22 November 2017, UNEP/MC/COP.1/Dec.6 (n 25) para 9.

[44] Minamata Convention, 'Financial Mechanism' <https://minamataconvention.org/en/about/financial-mechanism> accessed 16 December 2024.

[45] Minamata Convention on Mercury, 'Financial Rules for the Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention on Mercury, Its Subsidiary Bodies and the Secretariat of the Convention, as Adopted at the First Meeting of the Conference of the Parties in Geneva, 24–29 September 2017' (2021) UNEP/MC/COP.1/Dec.10, Annex <https://minamataconvention.org/sites/default/files/documents/2021-07/Minamata_Financial_Rules.pdf> accessed 16 December 2024.

[46] The General Trust Fund finances all activities foreseen in the work programme of the Convention, including COPs and meetings of other convention bodies, executive direction and management, communication and outreach, and interinstitutional cooperation.

funds, the COP established a *Specific Trust Fund* to support capacity-building and technical assistance in the context of the Specific International Programme.[47]

Technical assistance and capacity-building activities under the Specific International Programme and those undertaken by the Minamata Convention secretariat pursuant to article 14 should avoid duplication and overlap.[48]

[47] See Minamata Convention, 'Financial Contributions' <https://minamataconvention.org/en/parties/contributions> accessed 16 December 2024. See Minamata Convention on Mercury (n 45).

[48] Minamata Convention COP Decision MC-1/6 of 22 November 2017, UNEP/MC/COP.1/Dec.6 (n 25) Annex I para 4.

Conclusion

The existing regime for support of developing countries under the Minamata Convention and related instruments and initiatives is relatively complex. There are **various funding channels**, some of which overlap. Programmes and projects are usually financed from various sources, implemented by several organisations and sometimes serve multiple objectives and focal areas, which makes the **mapping of financial flows complex**.

With a few exceptions, particularly the GEF Small Grant Programme, the **support is directed at governments** that applied for it by submitting corresponding projects. Part of the financial support is used for government activities, such as the creation of the ASGM NAP. The sources we analysed did not specifically record where the funds ultimately flow to or who benefits from them on the local level. In order to investigate this question, the projects, such as those under the planetGOLD programme, would have to be examined in more detail.

The guidelines of the Convention or the GEF **do not contain any provisions that would exclude the informal sector** from funding. On the contrary, formalisation efforts are supported. However, we have not analysed the extent to which the money paid to governments actually reaches the informal ASGM sector.

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