



a toxics-free future

13 March, 2016

ASGM Intervention by IPEN for INC7 (Document 7/17 Draft guidance on developing a national action plan to reduce and, where feasible, eliminate mercury use in ASGM)

Given by Griffins Ochieng, Centre for Environment Justice and Development

Thank you Mr. Chair,

I am speaking on behalf of IPEN.

IPEN welcomes the comprehensive draft ASGM NAP Guidance developed by the ASGM partnership. In our view, INC7 should provisionally adopt the ASGM NAP guidance with the additions described below and set a date for review of country experiences with the guidance.

As countries with ASGM like Nigeria, the Philippines, and Indonesia are working on MIAs and NAP for ASGM, we would like to remind countries with ASGM to send a notification to the Secretariat about the status of ASGM in their respective countries as “more than insignificant,” including their own interpretation of more than insignificant.

The country NAP should also look at the ASGM practice as a complete cycle from up-stream to down-stream, including giving attention to the emerging and active contaminated sites such as those around villages at ASGM sites. A framework for sustainable contaminated site remediation, which includes economic instruments such as cost recovery mechanisms directed at mercury suppliers, should be included.

As many countries already implement a local autonomous or decentralized approach, a strong and replicable Local Action Plan should be developed as an integral part of the NAP, to promote a collaborative approach among ASGM miners and associations, local authorities, and local health services with NGO support. Moreover, after miners switch to non-mercury methods, the impact of mercury on community health will require long-term local interventions.

Further, the ASGM NAP guidance also should include a section on alternative sustainable livelihood opportunities for miners and the ASGM communities since many need information on other options when they become aware of ASGM health impacts and the gold deposits declined.

The ASGM NAPs should include recommendations to ban the use of mercury recovered from ASGM tailings or contaminated site remediation to prevent further use in ASGM. A mechanism to manage confiscated mercury from ASGM sites need to be prepared.

Lastly, beside market mechanisms, recommendations to manage and purchase gold produced from ASGM miners by the Central Bank or other national institutions should be introduced as several countries have already implemented this approach. Other options to be considered at the national and local level, for example, is promotion of value-added forms of gold such as jewelry made by local communities, which will also be a good example of sustainable local economic development. Another option is an intervention of the Central Bank to purchase gold from small-scale miners as practiced in Ethiopia, the Philippines, and Zimbabwe. That way, gold production from ASGM sector will be also formally recorded.

I thank you Mr. Chair.