



Artisanal and Small-Scale Gold (ASGM)

Responsible value chains

Rationale

Artisanal and small-scale gold mining (ASGM) is one of the world's largest sources of employment in the mining sector. It provides income for millions of people, especially in rural and fragile regions where few alternatives exist. Despite this, ASGM remains largely informal and labour-intensive: While it produces about 20% of the world's gold, it employs around 80% of the global mining workforce and the sector continues to grow due to economic instability, rising gold prices, and limited rural employment opportunities. Without better regulation and market access, informal ASGM results in environmental degradation, health and safety risks, and lost public revenues for producing countries. Supporting responsible ASGM is therefore both a social and environmental necessity and an economic opportunity.

Objectives and activities

The ASGM programme aims to make artisanal gold mining more responsible, transparent, traceable, and economically sustainable by aligning market incentives, public policies, and international standards. It uses public finance to catalyse private co-investment, supports governments in strengthening governance frameworks, and promotes learning and coordination across countries and stakeholders.

Governance Structure

The ASGM programme is implemented through a partnership model that brings together public authorities, the private sector, academia and international initiatives as well as small-scale mining operations and related communities. Governance mechanisms are established separately for each of the three components and ensure fair access to the Challenge Fund, transparency, coordination, and alignment.

Component 1 – Challenge Fund for responsible Gold Supply Chains

A Challenge Fund mobilizes private capital to co-finance investments that strengthen responsible artisanal and small-scale gold supply chains from mine to market. It supports traceability, environmental and social performance, and access to formal markets. It is managed by Baastel Consulting.

Country/region

Global

Partner/National Facilitator

Baastel, SBGA, ETH, Local Governments

Duration

2025-2029

Total budget

CHF 5,868,519

SECO contribution

CHF 4,000,000



Component 2 – Policy and Governance

Implemented in close partnership with national and subnational authorities in producer countries, this component fosters an enabling environment for ASGM formalization. It provides policy dialogue, technical assistance, and advisory support for regulatory reforms that improve sector governance. This component gets technical support from ETH Zurich.

Component 3 – Knowledge and Capacity Building

This component ensures that lessons from the field inform both policy and international responsible gold initiatives. It strengthens institutional capacities, promotes coordination among actors and donors, and facilitates knowledge exchange between producing countries and Switzerland. This component is a collaboration between SECO and the Swiss Better Gold Association.



© SBG: Group of miners in Peru

Maturity of Swiss Better Gold


The ASGM programme builds on the experience of the *Swiss Better Gold Initiative*, which demonstrated the potential of responsible artisanal and small-scale gold value chains in fostering and developing responsible practices. By 2025, the initiative had reached maturity as the Swiss Better Gold Association has developed into a robust private sector platform representing key downstream companies. Transferring ownership of the initiative from SECO to the Association was therefore a natural step. It ensures long-term sustainability, strengthens private-sector ownership, and allows SECO to concentrate its public resources where they add most value: on systemic improvements in governance and policy.


Results from previous phases

In Peru, the *Swiss Better Gold Initiative* supported the creation of the first-ever national sectoral policy for artisanal and small-scale gold mining. In Colombia, it contributed to the development and implementation of a comprehensive legal framework that advanced formalization, improved governance, and strengthened stakeholder coordination. In Bolivia, the initiative supported the successful modernization of the mineral trade system, enhancing efficiency and accountability. Overall, Swiss Better Gold enabled the export of 16.8 tons of responsibly mined gold, reached over 32,000 direct and indirect beneficiaries, generated USD 13.6 million in impact premiums, supported 128 mines, and helped 43 operations export through responsible value chains. It also gained international recognition among key partners.

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Integration in value chains



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