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In any correspondence on  
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**Subject:** Funding from Global Environment Facility for Development of Artisanal Small-scale Gold Miners National Action Plan for Uganda in support for the Ratification and Implementation of the Minamata Convention on Mercury

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Reference is made to the above subject matter regarding available funding from Global Environment Facility (GEF) to assist developing countries to undertake activities related to development of Artisanal Small-scale Gold Miners (ASGM) National Action Plans.

In Uganda gold mining is an important activity for the Artisanal Small Miners (ASM) which supports livelihood incomes and creates employment for people, mainly in the districts of Bushenyi, Mubende, Busia and the Karamoja Region where Gold is found. However, some of the miners are ASGM who use mercury to separate gold from other minerals, yet this metal mercury is toxic and has both health and environmental effects. The people involved in gold mining include adults and children, but mainly women. The methods used to recover mercury that include amalgamation are rudimentary and expose the miners to health impacts from mercury as well as resulting into significant impacts on the environment that include: land degradation, destruction of vegetation, contamination of water and silting of rivers, as well as occupational hazards related to mercury use.

The Government of Uganda through the Department of Geological Surveys and Mines of the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development has in general terms undertaken studies on the ASM and developed a simple *Small Scale Mining Handbook*. Furthermore, not many studies have been done to obtain baseline data on the use of mercury in gold processing, assess the organization of the miners including methods of production; marketing among other issues. In effect there are no adequate management mechanisms to address this challenge of mercury use in the ASGM Sector. In addition, it is not known where the miners get the mercury and what quantities are used. This is, in the long run likely to have long term effects on the public health, environmental health and socio-political status of our population and therefore calls for urgent practical interventions such as development of National Action Plans.

Uganda has started implementing a number of projects in support of early implementation and ratification of the Minamata Convention on Mercury. These projects include *Phase-down of dental amalgam* in the Health Sector and Mercury *Initial Assessment project* which will provide data on mercury use and management for policy and decision makers. The project on Preparation of ASGM National Action Plan will come in handy to provide more information about the ASGM Sector and support the country efforts toward early ratification of the Minamata Convention on Mercury.

From the foregoing, we believe artisanal and small-scale gold mining and processing is "*more than insignificant*" in Uganda; and would like to express our desire to benefit from the GEF for development of the National Action Plan. This will provide us with more information regarding the use of mercury in the ASGM sector and facilitate the process of taking steps to reduce and where feasible eliminate the use of Mercury in this sector.

Please contact the National Focal Point for the Minamata Convention on Mercury at the address below for correspondence and implementation of the project:

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I look forward to our continued collaboration.



Professor Ephraim Kamuntu  
**Minister for Water and Environment**

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