



EVALUATION SUMMARY

COUNTRY: *Suriname, Guyana, French Guiana*



**Support for the Phase-Out of Mercury in the
Guianas**

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Evaluation date: *January 2026 – June 2026*

KEY DATA ON FFEM SUPPORT

Amount of FFEM funding: €1,037,500

Project grant date: 28 June 2019

Duration: 2019 – 2026

Project name: Support for the Phase-Out of Mercury in the
Guianas

Project number: CZZ2126

Context

Artisanal and small-scale gold mining (ASGM) is the primary economic activity for an estimated 20,000–50,000 workers across the Guiana Shield (Guyana, Suriname, French Guiana). Mercury use in ASGM is the dominant source of mercury contamination in the region; Suriname's 2024 National Action Plan estimates approximately 77.8 tonnes of mercury used annually in ASGM. Both Guyana and Suriname are parties to the Minamata Convention on Mercury and have adopted national action plans for mercury reduction. The gold-mining sectors of the three Guianas are highly interconnected through porous border rivers and a mobile workforce, yet no real regional coordination existed prior to the project.

Participants and operating procedures

WWF France served as primary beneficiary and project manager, with WWF Guianas as delegated project owner. ARM (Alliance for Responsible Mining) held technical responsibility for Component 2, on developing a technical and operational model for mercury-

free gold mining, and IRD for Component 3, on establishing a regional mercury observatory.

OBJECTIVES

The project aimed to reduce mercury contamination in the Guianas by phasing out mercury use in the artisanal and small-scale gold mining (ASGM) sector and contributing to a reduction in mercury emissions from mining-related deforestation by 2025.

Specific objectives:

It was expected to: (1) complement and reinforce national and regional mercury initiatives; (2) make mercury-free gold extraction techniques accessible, applicable, replicable and profitable, and build miners' interest in adopting them; and (3) produce and consolidate coherent, up-to-date regional data on mercury by 2025.

TESTED INNOVATION

The project promotes an innovative regional approach combining the coordination of public environmental policies on mercury, exchanges between national and regional actors and mining communities to disseminate the mercury-free model, and the creation of an academic and analytical network capable of generating mercury data.



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Relevance

The project demonstrated strong alignment with both countries' mercury-reduction frameworks. In Guyana, the 2021 National Action Plan under the Minamata Convention identifies mercury phase-out as a national priority, and the project also fits Guyana's Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS 2030). Suriname's 2024 NAP targets a 30% reduction in mercury use within ten years, aligning with the project's three-component structure. The regional approach targeting Guyana, Suriname and French Guiana was strategically sound given porous borders, a mobile mining workforce, interconnected supply chains and the prior absence of regional coordination mechanisms.

Coherence

The three components were complementary, with strong coherence with regional priorities for reducing mercury contamination, but synergies were constrained by delivery failures in Component 2, which disrupted feedback loops. External coherence with co-financed initiatives was stronger conceptually than operationally: Conservation International's Planet Gold project ended before this one gained momentum.

Effectiveness

Results were uneven across components. None of the governance structures originally planned were established, although the revised targets for facilitated dialogue were substantially met. Only one demonstration site is operational, at Campbelltown/Madhia in Guyana; the Suriname site flooded and was subsequently dismantled. Component 3 (monitoring/observatory) produced robust, high-quality scientific data in quantity, while the envisaged regional mercury platform did not materialise. It proved the strongest-performing component, bringing scientific evidence into policy dialogue.

ADDED VALUE OF THE FFEM

FFEM's grant was the critical enabling factor without which the project would not have materialised. While co-financing's direct impact on outcomes was limited, FFEM's funding made possible the mercury-free mining demonstration at Campbelltown/Madhia and IRD's robust scientific assessments—a foundational rather than merely additive contribution.

“We are seeing this willingness by miners to transition to mercury-free techniques.” (Guyana EPA Representative)

Efficiency

Total expenditure was €831,918 (80% of the €1,037,500 budget). Value for money was satisfactory for Components 1 and 2 and good for Component 3.

Impact

The project advanced the knowledge base, established institutional assets and demonstrated technical viability, but did not yet bend the mercury-use curve. IRD's mercury-exposure baseline work and serious game (now deployed beyond the region) were key contributions, and the Anton de Kom University Mercury Observatory is permanently institutionalised.

Viability/sustainability

Mercury-free processing was demonstrated as technically viable, and the Guyana Geology and Mines Commission's incorporation of the project-purchased concentrator into its equipment-loan programme is the most concrete sustainability mechanism achieved. However, economic and financial sustainability remains the principal barrier: mercury stays cheap and effective, concentrator equipment is costly, no financing products exist for mercury-free ASGM equipment, and there are no local suppliers from whom miners can independently buy equipment. Without these market and financing conditions, autonomous adoption at scale is unlikely. Thanks to the strong commitment and connections generated by the project, the institutions and participants involved in the regional mercury monitoring component will continue beyond project closure.

LESSONS LEARNED & RECOMMENDATIONS

The project proved mercury-free mining is technically viable; the remaining work is structural — building the financing, supply-chain, market, and governance conditions for autonomous adoption:

1. Produce a capitalization note on mercury-free technology transfer;
2. Design a follow-on phase targeting autonomous adoption — concessional equipment financing, an in-country supply chain, and a Gold Board premium for mercury-free gold, with feasibility tested at an early stage;
3. Make mid-term reviews mandatory and tied to disbursement triggers;
4. Require demonstrated in-country operational capacity for subcontractors on core technical components;
5. Adapt procurement to field realities via a streamlined, threshold-based approval pathway with pre-approved suppliers.

Find details of the project sheet by scanning the QR Code

