SBG SWISSBETTERGOLD

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Guidance for Verifiers v2.0

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Swiss Better Gold verification programme complements the Swiss Better Gold sourcing strategy. It is designed to balance credibility, practical application in the field and cost. The approach is guided by four principles:

1. Continuous Monitoring: The Swiss Better Gold approach is rooted in the engagement of field-based implementing partners who maintain a continuous site-level monitoring of artisanal, small- and medium-scale gold mining producers.
2. Independent Verification: The Swiss Better Gold verification programme relies on qualified independent verifiers that validate the information generated by the implementing partners and, where necessary, gather additional data to determine performance against the Swiss Better Gold sourcing criteria.
3. Efficiency & Agility: Working with implementing partners is efficient as the flow of monitoring information is used by independent verifiers to inform the scope of verification events, to prioritise aspects of a mining producer, and provide data for compliance determination. It is an agile approach as it enables the Swiss Better Gold Association to respond swiftly to events or emerging trends at mining operations that might risk members' reputations or supply surety.
4. Interoperability: Coordination and coherence of procedures and protocols between the participants of the Swiss Better Gold verification programme (the Association secretariat, mining producers, implementing partners, independent verifiers and Swiss Better Gold Assocation members) is essential to its success and is therefore embedded in its online and paper-based management systems.

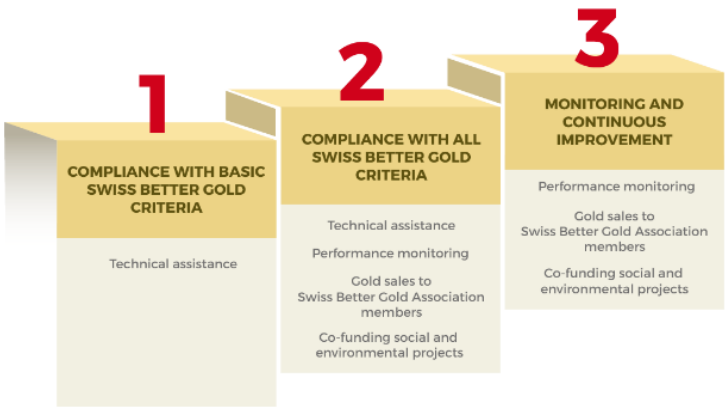
Continuous improvement is a core and immutable principle of Swiss Better Gold and fundamental to its success. Participating mining producers are incentivised to continually improve their practices and, step-by-step, gain access to the international gold market by demonstrating their compliance with the Swiss Better Gold sourcing criteria. This progressive approach is known as the Swiss Better Gold Continuous Improvement Escalator (the Swiss Better Gold escalator) and is depicted in *Figure 1*. The Swiss Better Gold escalator has three steps: from a first selection of eligible producers, to making improvements in order to meet the Swiss Better Gold sourcing criteria, to be a verified Swiss Better Gold supplier and, for some producers, who aspire to gain entry to specialist markets, an additional stage of certification by Voluntary Sustainability Standards (VSS).

There are 27 Swiss Better Gold criteria applied across Steps 1 and 2 of the Swiss Better Gold escalator, which are organised in three topic areas or "aspects" – ESG: environmental, social, and governance & organisational capacity. It is important to note that although the basis for each criteria is the legislation in the producing country, the Swiss Better Gold criteria aim at going beyond compliance with legal requirements and generally seek to promote good practices by mining producers.

To support a verification programme that is consistent and fair, the Swiss Better Gold Association has authored this guidance for assurance professionals, known as "verifiers", to enable a sound understanding of each of the aspects and criteria. The guidance aims to assist verifiers to better understand the Swiss Better Gold verification programme and, through the evaluation process, to make a determination on the performance of

participating mining producers. The guidance sets out the Association's expectations of verifiers and provides instructions on how they should report to the Association secretariat on their conclusions and findings during the verification process.

FIGURE 1: THE SWISS BETTER GOLD CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT ESCALATOR AND ITS INCENTIVES



II. PARTICIPATING ENTITIES' ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

There are four key entities that participate in the Swiss Better Gold verification programme, each of which have particular roles and responsibilities:

A. Mining producers
B. Swiss Better Gold implementing partners
C. The Swiss Better Gold Association secretariat
D. Swiss Better Gold verifiers

A. MINING PRODUCERS

Swiss Better Gold works with artisanal and small-scale gold mining (ASGM) producers , who might be organised as co-operatives, small enterprises, or family businesses. It also works with ASGM producers on or near concessions of medium and large-scale mining operations, who might have sourcing or production contracts with the owners of such concessions. In the case, where there is considerable potential to work with these ASGM producers, the Association might collaborate with medium or large-scale producers in order to create supply chains that include these producers. Finally, Swiss Better Gold also works with medium-scale producers when there is an added value of SBG intervention in terms of environmental, social or governance impact.

For the purposes of the Swiss Better Gold verification programme, the mining producers, who Swiss Better Gold directly engages with, are categorised into three size- and organisational-based categories:

TABLE 1: PRODUCER CATEGORISATION

Artisanal mining group	The operation is owned and run by men and/or women working on an individual basis as well as those working in family groups. The level of organisation ranges from no recognisable organisational structure to active formal partnerships or membership of co-operatives and other types of associations and enterprises potentially involving hundreds of individuals. Where there are many individual diggers working an area, there is sometimes an individual businessman or trader that collects, aggregates and markets the gold recovered by the artisanal miners. In such cases, the aggregator is the potential Swiss Better Gold Association counterpart and Swiss Better Gold criteria would apply to his or her organisation. In other cases, workers will take their gold to local towns or trading posts and transfer recovered gold for cash with little or no transfer documentation. In these instances, it is unlikely that workers would be eligible for participation in the Swiss Better Gold programme.
	The operation does not structurally rely on permanent hired labour.
	The operation's production capacity at the mine falls below the national threshold for large, industrial or medium-scale mining.
	The operation has predominantly simplified forms of extraction, processing and transportation.
	The operation has low capital intensity (little mechanisation) and uses high labour-intensive technology (panning, hand-picking and crushing).
Small-scale producers	The operation is most often owned and run by partnerships or individuals that are members of co-operatives or other types of associations and enterprises. There is an easily recognisable structure to the organisation.
	The operation structurally relies on permanent or temporary hired labour.
	The operation's production capacity at the mine falls below the national threshold for large, industrial or medium-scale mining.
	The operation has some sophisticated equipment (which may include partial mechanisation of some activities) for extraction, processing and transportation.
Medium-scale producers	The operation can be a co-operative or similarly structured association or structure, or a privately incorporated business, sometimes with investing shareholders, who might not be workers at the operation.
	The operation structurally relies on permanent hired labour.
	The operation's production capacity at the mine falls below the national threshold for large or industrial scale mining.
	The operation relies on sophisticated equipment, including partial mechanisation of some activities for one or more activity during exploration, extraction, processing and transportation.

It is important to appropriately categorise the producers into different categories, because they are subject to different verification methodologies. These are further explained in Section D. This categorisation is also a useful way of communicating each producer's level of capacity and the expectations that Swiss Better Gold Association members can reasonably have for the progress in ascending the Swiss Better Gold escalator.

The Swiss Better Gold verification programme applies to all types of producers previously described.

Mining producers should understand their responsibilities when participating in the Swiss Better Gold programme. The responsibilities include:

- Choosing and articulating a commitment to participate in the Swiss Better Gold programme (or a programme of a Swiss Better Gold approved VSS);
- Nominating and providing an appropriate level of support and resources to a contact person who will coordinate with the Swiss Better Gold Association;

- Committing the required resources to meet basic Swiss Better Gold criteria (Step 1) and over time meet the full Swiss Better Gold criteria (Step 2);
- Participating in trainings as required by the implementing partner and/or the Association;
- Maintaining basic records and a functional internal management system;
- Completing self-assessment surveys, and receiving independent checks on this information and verification visits at their operating sites;
- Making available information for entry into the Swiss Better Gold monitoring system.

Verifier Expectations and Guidance: Verifiers are expected to be knowledgeable about the Swiss Better Gold producer categorisation and can assign a category to the producer. In the Swiss Better Gold verification programme, the mining producer is the counterpart of the Swiss Better Gold Association and the unit that is visited and whose practices are verified. For avoidance of doubt, verifiers are assessing the performance of an operating unit, the boundaries of which need to be established from the outset. Normally, this is identifiable by the ownership and governance structure (i.e., who owns or controls the mining operation). In the artisanal miners' category, ownership and governance can be loose or impossible to determine. In such cases, the entity that controls the collection, aggregation and commercialisation of the gold should be considered the "unit of assessment".

B. SWISS BETTER GOLD IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

A fundamental structural element of the Swiss Better Gold verification programme is the role of the Swiss Better Gold implementing partners. Implementing partners work with and support mining producers to achieve more responsible practices. They are linked to the Swiss Better Gold Association through a management agreement and are selected by the Association using criteria that include experience, presence in the relevant regions of interest, knowledge of the ASGM and mining sector in general, and familiarity with the Swiss Better Gold sourcing criteria and verification system. They are responsible for creating an environment that enables mining producers to participate in the Swiss Better Gold programme and sell Swiss Better Gold. Implementing partners are also responsible for on-going monitoring and periodic evaluation of mining producers (at least every six months) and for reporting their findings and conclusions to the Swiss Better Gold Association through its monitoring platform.

In the case of artisanal and small-scale operations, implementing partners are responsible for "ASGM clusters" – countries or sub-country regions – that are delineated by the Swiss Better Gold Association and comprise several ASGM operations. This cluster approach allows for more efficient delivery of capacity development programmes, and also facilitates monitoring and assessment of an operations' performance. All other categories of producers cannot be gathered in a cluster and need to be assessed individually.

Implementing partners have the following responsibilities:

- To identify mining producers with the potential to participate in the Swiss Better Gold programme;

- To categorise mining producers into appropriate categories;
- To support mining producers in their activities and to take full responsibility for their training and development in operating practices for achieving the Swiss Better Gold criteria, and to conduct monitoring activities;
- To facilitate Swiss Better Gold verifiers' site visits to mining operations;
- To facilitate the gap analysis and the collection of data from mining producers (at least) every six months and the submission of progress (monitoring) reports, and the status of continuous improvement plans (CIP);
- To recommend Step 1 and Step 2 approval to the Swiss Better Gold Association secretariat;
- To co-ordinate with local and national mining authorities in order to formulate and articulate producers' needs and to enhance formalisation.

TABLE 2: SWISS BETTER GOLD MONITORING EVENTS

Monitoring event*	Monitoring intensity	Regularity of monitoring
Swiss Better Gold implementing partner		
Producer eligibility	Desk check & site visit	Once, to participate in the Swiss Better Gold programme
Gap analysis	Desk check & site visit	Once, to participate in the Swiss Better Gold programme Repeated after verification, if necessary
CIP	Desk check & site visit	Once, on development of CIP and then as dictated by the CIP Implemented after verification, if necessary
Progress report	Desk check & site visit	Depending on the implementing partner's work plan with each operation
Step 1 confirmation	Desk check & site visit	Once, to become a Step 1 confirmed supplier
Step 2 accreditation	Desk check & site visit	Once, to become an accredited Swiss Better Gold supplier Repeated after verification, if necessary
Step 3	Desk check & site visit	Continuously, 1-3 times per year depending on the size of the operation

*A monitoring event may always be accompanied by an optional independent verification if desired/recommended by the Swiss Better Gold Association.

C. SWISS BETTER GOLD ASSOCIATION SECRETARIAT

The Swiss Better Gold Association secretariat is responsible for the planning, execution and reporting of the Swiss Better Gold verification programme. It oversees the delivery of verification activities, including the selection of implementing partners and independent verifiers, six-monthly monitoring and reporting, and verification events. It is accountable for all compliance and "approved supplier" decisions.

The secretariat has the following responsibilities:

- To select implementing partners and Swiss Better Gold verifiers;
- To identify and delineate implementing partner "clusters";
- To work with implementing partners to ensure consistent implementation of monitoring and reporting (M&R) in all countries;
- To confirm "approved supplier" decisions for mining producers and issue accredited supplier certificates;
- To approve cancellations of "approved supplier" status;
- To maintain a log for gap analyses, six-monthly monitoring reports, CIP reports and independent verifier reports;
- To identify the need for, and oversee the implementation of, programme improvements;
- To develop continued demand for gold from Swiss Better Gold producers.

D. SWISS BETTER GOLD INDEPENDENT VERIFIERS

Verifiers are independent parties approved by the Swiss Better Gold Association to carry out verification activities. Verifiers provide external validity to the Swiss Better Gold verification programme through desk checks and on-site visits to mining operations that verify the results and findings of the implementing partners.

The Swiss Better Gold Association selects verifiers using criteria approved by its Board of Directors (see Table 2).

Verifiers have the following responsibilities:

- To complete the Swiss Better Gold approval process for verifiers;
- To participate in any required induction or refresher training conducted by the Swiss Better Gold Association secretariat;
- To complete desk checks on progress reports;
- To conduct verification site visits and prepare verification reports;
- To provide feedback and recommendations on CIP, progress reports and findings from site-visits;
- To confirm Step 2 eligibility of the mining operations according to the Swiss Better Gold Association's verification programme.

Verification intensity: Independent verifiers conduct "desk checks" on mining producer reports (gap analyses, CIP reports and progress reports) and on-site verification visits. The implemented verification methods, such as interviews, should cover all levels of the operation from management to the workers. Furthermore, the number of, for instance, interviews is subject to the verifier's criteria but should be proportionate to the size of the operation.

Verification scope: Rather than requiring verifiers to review each and every producer in an "ASGM cluster", the Swiss Better Gold Association has adopted a pragmatic approach and allows verifiers to visit a sub-set of ASGM sites in a cluster and generalise the results to all the producers within the cluster. The sites visited will be selected by applying a sampling methodology that is approved by the secretariat. The credibility of applying a sampling methodology to verify ASGM producers draws on the logic that ASGM clusters are managed and continuously monitored by a single implementing partner and so there will be a consistency in reporting of site-level assessment that the verifier can evaluate. This approach follows established good practice and is intended to control costs while maintaining the credibility of the verification system. Larger ASGM or medium-scale mining operations, however, always require a site visit by an independent verifier.

Regularity of the verification: The frequency of desk checks and site visits depends on the size category of the mining producer, and the perceived risk by the Swiss Better Gold Association. The Association decides upon the regularity of the verifications and plans their implementation. A verification takes place at least once during the 24 months after Step 2 has been accredited (see Section III). The verification process' results are shared and discussed with the local implementing partner who follows-up on them together with the respective mining producer.

The Swiss Better Gold Association appoints a small number of independent verifiers to provide external validation of the practices and performance of accredited mining producers. The Association identifies and selects individual verifiers, or specialised agencies, who are selected for their personal and professional qualities and against a set of criteria developed by the Swiss Better Gold Association.

Eligible verifiers may be independent, employed by a firm or affiliated with a professional or academic institution. They may be located in a mining region, including within a Swiss Better Gold country. Verifiers selected by the Association are appointed for a period of two years after which they may re-apply to the Swiss Better Gold Association.

Verification site visits may require one or more verifiers, and the Swiss Better Gold Association determines and issues instructions for the composition of verification teams required for particular events. Verifiers are expected to be fully knowledgeable of the Swiss Better Gold verification programme and to follow the policies and guidelines developed and published by the Swiss Better Gold Association.

TABLE 3: SWISS BETTER GOLD VERIFIER SELECTION CRITERIA

Core principles	• Ethical conduct • Fair presentation • Due professional care • Independence (no conflict of interest in working for the Swiss Better Gold Association or mining producers) • Evidence-based approach • Integrity
Personal competencies	• Ability to apply knowledge and skills • Specialist knowledge, experience and competence in assessment skills and techniques • Ability to apply reporting and assessment practices and standards • Experience in the local (regional) context of the mining producer being verified • Report-writing skills
Subject matter expertise	• At least five years' experience in assessment or site-level consultation • Knowledge of and experience in the small-scale gold mining sector • Knowledge of and experience in corporate sustainability and HSSE management • Experience in the engagement of community, corporate and government actors • Knowledge of local context, including social, economic, political, and cultural considerations • Knowledge of international standards, standard setting and market entry expectations for gold products
Familiarity with Swiss Better Gold criteria	• Completed requisite Swiss Better Gold Association training on the Swiss Better Gold verification programme
Country expertise	• Demonstrated experience of operating in Swiss Better Gold focus countries is preferred; verifiers with comparable experience in other (ASGM) gold-producing countries will also be considered
Language expertise	• Demonstrated language proficiency in the country where Swiss Better Gold verification takes place
Medical fitness	• Physically able to work in and travel to (sometimes remote) mining operations (including underground mines)

III. THE SWISS BETTER GOLD MONITORING AND VERIFICATION CYCLES

Monitoring

Swiss Better Gold monitoring of a mining producer from selection to accreditation as a Swiss Better Gold supplier, follows a process that takes up to, but no longer than 24 months. The process begins with implementing partners identifying eligible producers and completing a gap analysis on their practices against the Swiss Better Gold sourcing criteria. Those mining producers, who are considered to have the capacity and interest in becoming Swiss Better Gold suppliers, are supported by the implementing partners to achieve the basic Step 1 criteria of the Swiss Better Gold escalator within 12 months. When compliant with these basic criteria, the mining producer is confirmed as a Swiss Better Gold participant. Mining producers then have a further 12 months to reach compliance with the full Step 2 Swiss Better Gold criteria and be accredited by the Swiss Better Gold Association as a Swiss Better Gold supplier. It should be noted that these 12-month periods for each step in the escalator are targets for compliance with the criteria and might vary. In some cases, producers might meet the criteria sooner, in other cases they might take longer for each step. Overall, however, a 24-month period to achieve Step 2 Swiss Better Gold criteria is considered by the Swiss Better Gold Association to be achievable and a reasonable expectation to demonstrate compliance. During their engagement with Swiss Better Gold, the mining producers are continuously accompanied and monitored by the implementing partner.

Independent verifications

Once the implementing partner has recommended Step 2 for a mining producer and they have been accredited by the Swiss Better Gold Association as Swiss Better Gold suppliers, a verification is mandatory within two (2) years of the accreditation in order to confirm the accreditation status. The independent verification is repeated every two (2) years. If a gap is identified during the verification process, the Swiss Better Gold implementing partner works with the producer to close this gap within a timeframe that is defined together with the Swiss Better Gold Association. An extraordinary verification by independent verifiers may occur at any time at the discretion of the Swiss Better Gold Association, for instance, when the producer's business circumstances change significantly, when there is a physical alteration of the operation, such as a mine expansion or introduction of new equipment, regular monitoring information suggests that the performance of the mining producer is continually falling below expectations set out in the Swiss Better Gold sourcing criteria, or an allegation connected to the producer is deemed to represent a risk to the Swiss Better Gold Association and its members.

Figure 2 illustrates the Swiss Better Gold monitoring and verification process and the regularity of monitoring and verification events.

FIGURE 2: THE SWISS BETTER GOLD MONITORING AND VERIFICATION PROCESS

IV. THE SWISS BETTER GOLD SOURCING CRITERIA AND GUIDANCE

1. Aspect: Governance & Organisational Capacity

ASGM Legitimacy (Basic) 14
National Legal Obligations (Swiss Better Gold) 16
Guaranteeing Traceability (Basic) 17
Implementing a Traceability System (Swiss Better Gold) 18
ASGM Enterprises (Basic) 20
Organisation's Structure (Swiss Better Gold) 22
No Bribery and Corruption (Swiss Better Gold) 23
Armed Conflict (Basic) 25
Conflict Due Diligence (Swiss Better Gold) 27
Continuous Improvement Plan (Basic) 30

2. Aspect: Social

No Worst Forms of Child Labour (Basic) 32
No Child Labour (Swiss Better Gold) 35
No Forced Labour (Basic) 37
Minimum Wage (Swiss Better Gold) 38
Right to Organise (Swiss Better Gold) 39
Safe Work (Swiss Better Gold) 41
Gender Equality (Swiss Better Gold) 42
Human Rights (Basic) 45
Security and Human Rights (Swiss Better Gold) 46
Community Relations (Swiss Better Gold) 50

3. Aspect: Environmental

Areas of High Ecological Value (Basic)	53
Waste Management (Swiss Better Gold)	55
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No Worst Forms of Mercury Use (Basic)	58
Mercury Management (Swiss Better Gold)	59
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KEY TERMS AND PRESENTATION OF CRITERIA

The Swiss Better Gold criteria and the guidance for their verification are presented in the following organisational structure:

- **Aspect:** ESG areas under which the Swiss Better Gold criteria are grouped (environmental, social, and governance & organisational capacity).
- **Objective:** Explanations of Swiss Better Gold intentions based on global environmental and social concerns.
- **Criterion:** A statement of the requirement the mining producer is expected to meet.
- **Step:** Basic criteria (Step 1) or Swiss Better Gold criteria (Step 2).
- **Explanation:** Further elaboration on how the criterion should be interpreted.
- **Verifier Expectations and Guidance:** Instructions for verifiers regarding data capture and assessment preparation.
- **Data Collection Method:** Desk research – site inspection – document review – observation – interviews.
- **Examples and Sources of Evidence:** Non-exhaustive list of potential sources of evidence, such as recommended interview partners or documents and permits.
- **Performance Determination:** After gathering and evaluating evidence, the verifier should arrive at a conclusion regarding the level of performance achieved by the mining producer against specific Swiss Better Gold criteria. There are three possible levels: “meets”; “partially meets”, or “misses”.

1. ASPECT: GOVERNANCE & ORGANISATIONAL CAPACITY

Objective 1.1 – Legal Compliance: It is of utmost importance to Swiss Better Gold Association members that Swiss Better Gold suppliers are operating legally. Many ASGM producers, however, operate informally. This may be because they are purposefully operating outside the law and are even involved in organised crime; because they are not aware of their legal obligations or the laws that apply to them; or because laws and regulations are absent for the ASGM sector in their country of operation, or are inconsistent, overly complex or prohibitively expensive to apply. Most ASGM producers engaging in the Swiss Better Gold programme fall into the second and third categories. The objective of the following criteria is to compel and enable mining producers, who want to participate in the Swiss Better Gold programme, to demonstrate that they comply with all the legal requirements of their country or, if they are currently not compliant, to commit to and become compliant as soon as feasible.

CRITERION: ASGM LEGITIMACY

Producers are legitimate ASGM operations.

Step: Step 1 – Basic criteria

Explanation: In some countries the legal status of ASGM can be vague and changeable or the regulatory framework is in flux as it passes through a process of sector formalisation. In Step 1, the Swiss Better Gold Association therefore adopts the industry-accepted norm and accepts ASGM producers that are "legitimate". The notion of "legitimacy" follows the Due Diligence Guidance from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD DDG)[1], viz: "*The legitimacy of artisanal and small-scale mining is a difficult concept to define because it involves a number of situation-specific factors. For the purposes of this Guidance, legitimate refers, among others, to artisanal and small-scale mining that is consistent with applicable laws. When the applicable legal framework is not enforced, or in the absence of such a framework, the assessment of the legitimacy of artisanal and small-scale mining will take into account the good faith efforts of artisanal and small-scale miners and enterprises to operate within the applicable legal framework (where it exists) as well as their engagement in opportunities for formalization as they become available (bearing in mind that in most cases, artisanal and small-scale miners have very limited or no capacity, technical ability or sufficient financial resources to do so). In either case, Artisanal and small-scale mining, as with all mining, cannot be considered legitimate when it contributes to conflict and serious abuses associated with the extraction, transport or trade of minerals as defined in Annex II of the Guidance.*"

For avoidance of doubt, an ASGM producer cannot be "legitimate" if it is defined as *illegal* by national law. Conversely, if an ASGM producer has full legal documentation and registrations, it is clearly "legitimate".

Verifier Expectations and Guidance: Verifiers are expected to be knowledgeable about the legal requirements for ASGM and other mining producers in the country of operation, and have a check list or registry of all applicable laws and regulations and

[1] OECD Guidance for Responsible Supply Chains from Conflict-Affected and High-Risk Areas, page 69 (https://www.oecd.org/corporate/mne/GuidanceEdition2.pdf).

all mandated royalty and tax payments. Verifiers should check the legal status of a producer based on the initial gap analysis at the earliest stages of engagement with the producer -if possible, prior to a site visit. Evidence that shows the producer is operating legally should be noted. Similarly, if the producer is found to be operating illegally this should also be noted. Verifiers should check key relevant documents relating to the legality/formal registration of the mining producer for the previous year. Where such documents are available for periods greater than one year, the verifier should note the historical availability of such documents and the date of the earliest documents.

In cases where no documents can be easily identified, the verifier should interview the responsible personnel to establish the location of such documents and to ascertain the producer's understanding of the legal compliance of their operation. Where possible it may also be necessary to interview local authorities and regional representatives of relevant national government agencies/departments to confirm the legal status of the mining producer. Determining the legal status of the producer is a basic and critical data point and the verifier will be expected to find sufficient evidence and to come to a clear determination (see below).

Data Collection Method: Desk research, document review, interview.

Examples and Sources of Evidence: Some government agencies maintain databases with registries of legal mining producers that can be accessed by internet searches or by contacting the relevant agency or department. Producers should keep physical or electronic copies of formal registration papers at their operating sites or in an administrative office. Notes from interviews with the producer's management are also valid forms of evidence and should be checked and noted.

Implementing partners complete a gap analysis of the mining producer's performance, continuous improvement plan, and monitoring reports, all of which can provide evidence useful for verifiers.

Performance Determination:

- **Meets:** There is evidence to show that the mining producer is operating legally or, in the absence of an enforceable legal framework mandated by a government agency, the producer is operating within the national legal framework (see Explanation), and that its actions and activities cannot be deemed to be "illegal".

- **Partially Meets:** There is evidence to show that the producer is making good faith efforts to align its practices and operation with the national legal framework, but not all aspects of the operation are currently fully conformant.

- **Misses:** There is evidence to show that the producer is operating "illegally" under national law.

- **Insufficient Information:** The verifier is unable to gather sufficient evidence to determine whether the mine is acting legally or illegally or within the national legal framework for the country of operation.

Assessment Notes: The verifier should record in the form provided in Annex 1 of this guidance the date of the assessment, the assessment determination and any information (including evidence and source) that has informed the determination.

CRITERION: NATIONAL LEGAL OBLIGATIONS

Producers comply with all national legal obligations.

Step: Step 2 – Swiss Better Gold criteria

Explanation: Operating in conflict with the national legal framework puts any organisation at risk of legal prosecution, extortion by corrupt officials and criminals as well as expropriation or forceful eviction by state authorities. Operating in full compliance with legal requirements on the other hand, creates an operational environment that allows investment in the long-term sustainability and profitability of a mining producer and promotes its social license to operate.

A mining producer may be subject to many different legal requirements including mining permits, environmental licenses, trading licenses, export licenses, licences to handle and store chemicals and explosives, and registration with labour authorities. Producers will also have a responsibility to pay royalties and taxes levied by central and local governments.

Verifier Expectations and Guidance: Verifiers should be aware, and hold a registry, of all requisite legal requirements for mining producers in their country of operation. Verifiers check in the Swiss Better Gold monitoring system all necessary permits or licenses for the activities of an operation and any other relevant documents (see Explanation) or proof of regular royalty payments made for all of the previous year's production, specifically noting the validity or expiration date of licenses and permits that demand periodic renewal. The historical availability of royalty payment receipts should be checked and the date of the first royalty payment noted.

Verifiers should check proof of all the necessary permits or licenses that grant the producer the right to carry out activities at its operation including, but not limited to, environmental licenses, mining or exploration permits, land tenure documents or permits to cross private land, water abstraction or discharge permits, licenses to hold or trade explosives, etc.

Verifiers should check annual financial records as submitted to the government taxation authority. Financial records should be in full and include information on: (1) the mining producer's net income; (2) a breakdown of the cost of goods sold, such as an inventory made by the producer at the beginning and end of the year showing cost of labour, materials and supplies and purchases made; (3) a breakdown of business expenses, such as utilities, business insurance, supplies, interest on loans, meals and petty cash; (4) a record of all business assets retained at the beginning and end of the year.

The mining producer can provide a copy of recognition from the taxation authority showing that all taxes due have been paid in full.

Data Collection Method: Document review.

Examples and Sources of Evidence: Financial records, receipts for royalty payments, confirmation of tax payments, all applicable permits and licences.

Implementing partners complete a gap analysis of the mining producer's performance, continuous improvement plan, and monitoring reports, all of which can provide evidence useful for verifiers.

Performance Determination:

- **Meets:** There is evidence to show that the mining producer holds all necessary permits or licenses, a copy of its annual financial records, and a copy of recognition from the taxation authority showing that all taxes and royalties have been paid in full.
- **Partially Meets:** There is evidence that the producer holds most of the licenses and permits required to carry out its activities and can provide proof of regular tax and royalty payments. At the point of assessment, however, financial records appear incomplete or specific licenses or permits require renewal as their validity has expired.
- **Misses:** There is evidence to show that the producer is missing necessary permits or licenses that grant it the right to carry out the activities of its operation and a copy of recognition from the taxation authority showing that taxes have been paid.
- **Insufficient Information:** The verifier is unable to gather sufficient evidence to determine whether the producer complies with all national legal obligations.

Assessment Notes: The verifier should record in the form provided in Annex 1 of this guidance the date of the assessment, the assessment determination and any information (including evidence and source) that has informed the determination.

CRITERION: GUARANTEEING TRACEABILITY

Producers have a system in place or hold a registry that guarantees traceability based on the legality of their operations (origin/provenance, processing/ transformation and commercialisation/export).

Step: Step 1 – Basic Criteria

Explanation: Traceability is the ability to track minerals/gold by monitoring and controlling the chain of custody. It provides information on the trajectory of the mineral/gold along the supply chain at any given point in time and about the origin and characteristics of the ore/doré. Traceability has become a fundamental element of responsible mineral supply chains, so mining producers must ensure that their operations are legal and valid, and that their product has the necessary backup.

Verifier Expectations and Guidance: The verifier should have solid knowledge about mineral traceability and should review the producer's documents that guarantee the legality of the operational processes and their validity.

The verifier should be able to assess whether the declared volume of average production is geologically and technically viable in order to ensure that the volume stems from the operation and there is no infiltration of mineral from elsewhere.

Data Collection Method: Interview, document review, site visit.

Examples and Sources of Evidence: Permits and authorisations of the operation and its commercialisation process in updated physical or digital form.

Implementing partners complete a gap analysis of the mining producer's performance, continuous improvement plan, and monitoring reports, all of which can provide evidence useful for verifiers.

Performance Determination:

- **Meets:** The mining producer has a traceability system or record in place based on the legality of its operations that guarantees the origin of the ore/doré.
- **Partially meets:** The producer manages a traceability system or record in which the legality of the operation and the origin of the ore/doré is not clearly provided.
- **Misses:** The producer does not have a traceability system nor a record in place that ensures the legality of its operations and the origin of the ore/doré.
- **Insufficient information:** The verifier is unable to collect sufficient information to determine whether the producer guarantees traceability of the ore/doré.

Assessment Notes: The verifier should record in the form provided in Annex 1 of this guidance the date of the assessment, the assessment determination and any information (including evidence and source) that has informed the determination.

CRITERION: IMPLEMENTING A TRACEABILITY SYSTEM

Producers implement a traceability system that allows the mineral to be tracked from the point of extraction, through the beneficiation process, to its commercialisation/export.

Step: Step 2 – Swiss Better Gold Criteria

Explanation: The *OECD Due Diligence Guide for Responsible Supply Chains of Minerals from High-Risk and Conflict-Affected Areas* highlights the importance of companies implementing a traceability system[2].

2 OECD Guidance for Responsible Supply Chains of Minerals in Conflict-Affected or High-Risk Areas, p.17 (https://www.oecd.org/daf/inv/mne/OECD-Due-Diligence-Guidance-Minerals-Edition3.pdf).

Traceability comprises a set of procedures that allow gold to be recorded and identified throughout the entire chain of production (extraction and processing) and commercialisation (local sale, export, refining). This process involves knowing and tracking the origin, current location and trajectory of the product at all times, using procedures, records and files.

In the mining operation, traceability not only allows to demonstrate the legality of the mineral to the authorities, but also enables the evaluation of the operation, thereby increasing its efficiency and resulting in greater profitability.

Verifier Expectations and Guidance: The verifier must have a working understanding of traceability within the different areas of the mining operation and the business process.

The verifier should analyse all elements of the traceability system and speak with the responsible personnel to determine if it adequately ensures traceability throughout the entire operation.

Data Collection Method: Interview, review of production and commercialisation documents, site visit.

Examples and Sources of Evidencev Procedures, records, forms, reports, digital system.

Implementing partners complete a gap analysis of the mining producer's performance, continuous improvement plan, and monitoring reports, all of which can provide evidence useful for verifiers.

Performance Determination:

- **Meets:** The mining producer has a traceability system and/or records in place that is adequate for the size of the operation and covers all the stages of the operation, including commercialisation. The producer also has qualified personnel to monitor traceability (may include trainings for personnel in charge). The producer always provides accurate information about the origin of the mineral it sells.

- **Partially meets:** The producer has a traceability system and/or records in place, which partially cover the operation. The system is manual, and the producer does not have suitable or trained personnel to monitor traceability.

- **Misses:** The producer lacks a traceability system or records that cover the operation, and there is no knowledge of traceability. The producer is furthermore not interested in implementing a traceability system.

- **Insufficient information:** The verifier cannot collect enough information to determine whether the producer has a traceability system in place or if it is adequate.

Assessment Notes: The verifier should record in the form provided in Annex 1 of this guidance the date of the assessment, the assessment determination and any information (including evidence and source) that has informed the determination.

Objective 1.2 – Organisational Capacity: ASGM is a broad term that applies to a range of different situations from individuals working independently, gathering and crushing gold ore using only hand tools, to more mechanised operations using modern techniques to recover precious metals. The Swiss Better Gold Association categorises ASGM producers as outlined in Section II of this document, which also contains characteristics of medium-scale producers. The Swiss Better Gold Association recognises the organisational form and resident skills and knowledge of a mining producer as important indicators of the ability of that producer to manage the risks its activities pose to workers, neighbouring communities and the environment. They also indicate the potential for association with money laundering activity and support of non-state armed groups or public private security forces. A well-organised and governed producer can more easily demonstrate its ability to meet international standards and expectations of gold buyers globally. Improving the organisational capacity of mining producers is a key objective of the Swiss Better Gold Association. The following criteria are designed to provide an incentive to producers to consolidate their organisations, opening the door to trusted partnerships in international supply chains, better stewardship of their workforce, and the forging of strong relations with local populations.

CRITERION: ASGM ENTERPRISES

Producers are ASGM enterprises.

Step: Step 1 – Basic criteria

Explanation: The Swiss Better Gold Association adopts the definition of the OECD DDG for ASM Enterprises[3], viz: "*ASM Enterprises – Artisanal and small-scale entities that are sufficiently formalized and structured to carry out this (OECD DDG) Guidance. As per the Appendix, all artisanal and small-scale miners are encouraged to formalise in this regard*."

ASGM producers must be sufficiently formalised into a cohesive and defined structure to be recognised by a government agency in the country of operation, for example a co-operative, a limited company or an association. Loose, unconnected congregations of workers digging independently for precious minerals in one location, and unable to self-identify as a functional organisation, are not considered ASGM enterprises.

All other mining producers have to demonstrate that they apply a business structure that is legally recognised.

Verifier Expectations and Guidance: Verifiers should establish the producer's business structure (e.g. co-operative, limited company, or association) at earliest stages of the verification process, and if possible, prior to a site visit. The verifier must note the business structure that the mining producer has registered (if it is registered) as well as an accurate description of this structure. The verifier should know what legal documents they need to review to confirm the legally-specified definition of the entity

[3] OECD Guidance for Responsible Supply Chains from Conflict-Affected and High-Risk Areas, page 65 (https://www.oecd.org/daf/inv/mne/OECD-Due-Diligence-Guidance-Minerals-Edition3.pdf).

(e.g. the business's registration document) and understand the available entity definitions.

The business's legal incorporation or registration will generally be published either as a description of the business on the business registration document and business tax certificate or be identified by the entity that provided the registration document. For example, a limited company may be registered with the "Companies Registration Authority", whereas a co-operative may be registered with the "Co-operatives Registration Authority". Note that these are simply examples, and names and remits of the various registration authorities in the country of jurisdiction may vary.

The mining producer's actual business structure will be evidenced by their management structure and the profit-sharing mechanism used. If not documented, the producer's management could draw up an organigram to illustrate organisational structure, dependency on external investors and distribution of responsibility, decision-making power and profit within the organisation.

Data Collection Method: Document review, interview.

Examples and Sources of Evidence: Copy of company or co-operative registration, organigram, interview transcripts.

Implementing partners complete a gap analysis of the mining producer's performance, continuous improvement plan, and monitoring reports, all of which can provide evidence useful for verifiers.

Performance Determination:

- **Meets:** The mining producer has a discernible business structure that is recognised legally.
- **Partially Meets:** The producer has a discernible business structure, but its structure type is not recognised legally. Note: some minor discrepancy between what is recognised legally, and the actual business structure is acceptable.
- **Misses:** The producer has no discernible business structure and consists of a number of individuals that work in a single location without any clearly identifiable form of management structure.
- **Insufficient Information:** The verifier has been unable to identify the business structure or whether the business structure is recognised legally.

Assessment Notes: The verifier should record in the form provided in Annex 1 of this guidance the date of the assessment, the assessment determination and any information (including evidence and source) that has informed the determination.

CRITERION: ORGANISATION'S STRUCTURE

Producers have a clear and transparent structure and decision-making process appropriate to their size that enables the documentation and effective control and monitoring of activities to implement the Swiss Better Gold sourcing criteria.

Step: Step 2 – Swiss Better Gold criteria

Explanation: In order for the Swiss Better Gold Association to effectively communicate information and expectations with the mining producer, the producer's organisational structure and internal controls must be sufficient for its size. The larger the producer and the more diverse its operational activities, the more complex the organisational structure generally needs to be. At the very least, the producer must have a single person in charge of decision-making in the organisation. This may be the chair of a board, the CEO or a director.

The following roles must also be assigned to one or more people in the operation: accountant, operations manager (management of the operation's workers and production). The mining producer must also have at least one manager for each shift of work who ensures that the organisation's objectives and internal controls are upheld. The following mechanisms should be in practice: reporting to the operations manager on issues and production volumes from each shift; taking affirmative action on issues that arise; and reporting at least monthly to the organisation's leader or management committee.

Verifier Expectations and Guidance: Interview workers and management in the operation to see whether they have a similar understanding of the structure and decision-making process. In interviews with workers and management, the verifier should attempt to run through several scenarios where information needs to be relayed to management for a decision to be made. This will test whether individuals have a working understanding of the operation's internal controls and decision-making structure, and whether these sufficiently cover the range of decisions that the operation will be expected to make.

Review legal documents that require the names of those legally accountable for the actions of the producer. Check that they match the names of leaders given in the interview. If different, ask management to explain why.

The verifier should check the full names, job titles, phone numbers and copies of passports or identification documents of all members of the management team, owners and major investors.

Data Collection Method: Document review, interview.

Examples and Sources of Evidence: Interview transcripts, organigram, index of management, owners and investors (see Verifier Expectations and Guidance).

Implementing partners complete a gap analysis of the mining producer's performance, continuous improvement plan, and monitoring reports, all of which can provide evidence useful for verifiers.

Performance Determination:

- **Meets:** The mining producer has a management structure that is understood by its workers, and decisions are communicated and made in a timely and consistent fashion.
- **Partially Meets:** The producer has a management structure, but this is not fully understood by workers, and while there is a process for communicating and making decisions, in practice they are not always made in a timely or consistent fashion.
- **Misses:** The producer has no clear management structure and there appears to be no process to communicate or make decisions in a timely or consistent fashion.
- **Insufficient Information:** The verifier was unable to conduct interviews with workers to establish the management and decision-making structure in the operation.

Assessment Notes: The verifier should record in the form provided in Annex 1 of this guidance the date of the assessment, the assessment determination and any information (including evidence and source) that has informed the determination.

CRITERION: NO BRIBERY AND CORRUPTION

Producers implement an anti-corruption policy that forbids bribery and corruption.

Step: Step 2 – Swiss Better Gold criteria

Explanation: As per the OECD DDG, bribery, extortion and corruption constitute "red flags" in supply chain due diligence and warrant immediate corrective action. It is of utmost importance that mining producers understand the need to refrain from unethical business conduct by adopting and demonstrating implementation of an organisation-wide commitment to mitigate, investigate and penalise either the offering or acceptance of bribes.

The mining producer's management, members or employees should refrain from making any payments, or in-kind contributions, to manipulate the outcome of business dealings with government authorities, officials or other business relations. Furthermore, nobody in the operation should accept a bribe offered by another entity to manipulate a decision made by the operation.

Verifier Expectations and Guidance: The verifier should have a practical working knowledge of the methods used to manipulate an outcome through bribery or corruption and should be able to recognise the signs of bribery and corruption. Prior to visiting the mining producer, the verifier should carry out desk research to identify whether bribery and corruption are commonplace in the operation's setting.

Workers can demonstrate a basic understanding of the producer's policy and know where to find a written copy of the policy forbidding bribery and corruption.

During interviews with workers, instances may come to light where an allegation of bribery was made, investigated internally and the perpetrator disciplined as a result, which would imply that the producer's management upholds its obligation to implement an anti-corruption and anti-bribery policy.

The presence of unexplainable cost items on the producer's balance sheet or financial records, might be a sign that bribery has occurred and is a systemic problem in the operation.

Data Collection Method: Interview, document review.

Examples and Sources of Evidence: Written anti-corruption policy, interview transcripts.

Implementing partners complete a gap analysis of the mining producer's performance, continuous improvement plan, and monitoring reports, all of which can provide evidence useful for verifiers.

Performance Determination:

- **Meets:** There is no evidence that the mining producer is involved in the perpetration of bribery or corruption and it has a policy that forbids bribery and corruption.
- **Partially Meets:** There is no evidence that the producer is involved in the perpetration of bribery or corruption, but it does not have a policy that forbids bribery and corruption.
- **Misses:** There is evidence to show that the producer is involved in the perpetration of bribery or corruption.
- **Insufficient Information:** The verifier is unable to gather sufficient evidence to determine whether the producer implements an anti-corruption policy or is unable to sufficiently substantiate claims of bribery or corruption.

Assessment Notes: The verifier should record in the form provided in Annex 1 of this guidance the date of the assessment, the assessment determination and any information (including evidence and source) that has informed the determination.

Objective 1.3 – Conflict Minerals: Gold and other minerals have been associated with armed conflict in some parts of the world, most notably East African countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo and bordering nations. Where they are mined at operations that are controlled by non-state groups for the purpose of generating income to finance armed campaigns and political ambitions, minerals are generally known as "conflict minerals". In some jurisdictions (including the US, UK and EU), legislation has been passed and "conflict minerals" regulation enacted requiring companies that buy gold to show that they have carried out research to establish the origin of the gold they have purchased and to confirm that it is not associated with conflict. Many industry standards and certification schemes also require a "due diligence" practice for the entities they are certifying. The regulations and standards systems generally adopt the approach set out in the OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Supply Chains of Minerals from Conflict-Affected and High-Risk Areas. In order to secure commitment from its members to buy gold from mining producers, the Swiss Better Gold Association aims to assure that Swiss Better Gold suppliers have met such requirements and can reasonably demonstrate that the gold they sell is not in any way supporting non-state armed groups.

CRITERION: ARMED CONFLICT

Producers do not directly or indirectly support non-state armed groups.

Step: Step 1 – Basic criteria

Explanation: Mining is often used as a means to fund conflict and illicit activity controlled by non-state armed groups (NSAGs). The UN definition of NSAGs is deliberately broad in order to encompass the diverse range of organisations that make use of violence to achieve political power and economic benefit, religious mobilisation, terrorism, etc. NSAGs, therefore, include organisations whose structure, goals and means are not yet well-defined and are currently referred to by some of the following, and often overlapping, terms:

- Paramilitaries;
- Criminal networks;
- Rebels and insurgent groups;
- Vigilante groups;
- Drug cartels;
- Mafias;
- Youth gangs;
- Warlords;
- Private security companies;
- Pirates;
- Terrorist groups.

The mining producer must not knowingly finance or provide in-kind support directly to, or through procurement of goods and services from, or sale to traders involved in illegal activities or armed conflict, or in any other way support those involved in these activities.

Verifier Expectations and Guidance: The verifier is expected to be able to determine whether the respective country is considered to be conflict-affected or high-risk area (CAHRA) by consulting with the Swiss Better Gold Association secretariat on their process for CAHRA determination. The verifier should be able to identify the difference between armed security and NSAGs and know how to sensitively identify whether NSAGs benefit directly or indirectly from the operation.

During the initial stages of screening the verifier should undertake desk research to identify whether there is a history of NSAGs in the region, and whether these NSAGs are known to use mining to fund their activity. They should also research the mechanisms through which NSAGs are able to tap into the revenue of mining operations for their benefit.

Data Collection Method: Interview, desk research, observation.

Examples and Sources of Evidence: The verifier should look out for armed personnel at the operation. During interviews, management and workers might seem cautious about revealing the identity or any contractual relationship with such armed personnel, and the verifier might have reason to believe from interviews and desk research that the armed personnel are not armed guards working to keep workers safe but members of a NSAG exerting control over the operation.

To determine whether any link exists between the mining producer's production and NSAGs, buying logs can be inspected. To determine whether there is a link through the share of profits, shareholder logs and logs of the persons who most benefit from the operation's profits can be reviewed. Checking official government lists can reveal whether customers, owners and shareholders are directly or indirectly linked to NSAGs.

Implementing partners complete a gap analysis of the mining producer's performance, continuous improvement plan, and monitoring reports, all of which can provide evidence useful for verifiers.

Performance Determination:

- **Meets:** There is evidence that the mining producer has policies and procedures in place to ensure it does not directly or indirectly support NSAGs.

- **Partially Meets:** The producer has policies in place to ensure it does not support non-state armed groups, but there is evidence to show that the producer may be indirectly supporting NSAGs. It is unclear, however, whether this relationship is controlled or can be changed by the producer.

- **Misses:** The producer's policies and position on supporting NSAGs is not documented or made clear in interviews and there is evidence to show that the producer is directly or indirectly supporting NSAGs.

- **Insufficient Information:** There is insufficient evidence to determine whether the producer is committed to putting policies and practices in place to ensure it does not fund NSAGs.

Assessment Notes: The verifier should record in the form provided in Annex 1 of this guidance the date of the assessment, the assessment determination and any information (including evidence and source) that has informed the determination.

CRITERION: CONFLICT DUE DILIGENCE

Producers follow a risk management approach consistent with the OECD Guidance for Responsible Supply Chains of Minerals from Conflict-Affected and High-Risk Areas including the Annex II Model Supply Chain Policy.

Step: Step 2 – Swiss Better Gold criteria

Explanation: The OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Supply Chains of Minerals from Conflict-Affected and High-Risk Areas outlines a five-step mechanism for risk-based due diligence in the mineral supply chain to identify connections with:

- Any form of torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment;
- Any form of forced or compulsory labour, which means work or service that is exacted from any person under the menace of penalty and for which said person has not offered him/herself voluntarily;
- The worst forms of child labour;
- Other gross human rights violations and abuses such as widespread sexual violence;
- War crimes or other serious violations of international humanitarian law, crimes against humanity or genocide;
- Support of non-state armed groups;
- Support of private security forces acting illegally;
- Fraudulent misinterpretation of the origin of minerals;
- Money laundering;
- Avoidance of taxes, fees and royalties due to the government;
- Bribery.

The five steps are:

1. Establish strong company management systems to allow information and data on the origin of materials produced by the operation to flow easily along the supply chain.

2. Identify and assess any risks in the supply chain as outlined by the OECD guidance.

3. Design and implement a strategy to respond to any identified risks in the supply chain.

4. Carry out an independent third-party audit of supply chain due diligence at identified points in the chain to verify whether the strategies implemented to manage the risks were effective.

5. Report on the actions taken to complete and the results of supply chain due diligence.

The OECD makes a number of recommendations and stipulations which mining producers should become familiar with and implement at their site, unless there is good reason not to. These include:

- The need for the producer to have a (ideally documented) system to control the sources and transfer of gold at its operation that is transparent and able to collect and provide information easily.
- The need to show that the producer engages with business partners – suppliers, contractors, traders and investors – to encourage them to commit to addressing risks noted in OECD DDG Annex II.
- The need for the producer to establish a mine-level grievance mechanism.
- The recommendation that the producer assigns unique reference numbers to the mine's product (concentrate, doré, container of alluvial gold flakes, etc.) to avoid tampering and possible influx of gold from outside the control of the operation.
- The recommendation that the producer puts in place appropriate security measures to avoid the removal of gold product during storage or transport.
- The recommendation that the producer records and discloses information to verifiers regarding to whom gold is sold and under what terms.

Verifier Expectations and Guidance: The verifier should have a working knowledge of the use of the OECD's five-step, risk-based due diligence process for the artisanal mining environment (OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Supply Chains of Minerals from Conflict-Affected and High-Risk Areas (OECD DDG), Third Edition). In particular, verifiers should be familiar with the OECD DDG's Supplement on Gold and guidance given on the engagement of ASGM producers. They should also be familiar with specific recommendations for ASGM producers (referred to as ASGM enterprises by the OECD). Verifiers should also consult with the Swiss Better Gold Association on their process for determining CAHRAs and its guidance on other aspects of the OECD DDG five steps.

Generally, all mining producers that form part of the Swiss Better Gold programme have to apply a due diligence procedure proportionate to their capacities and size.

Data Collection Method: Document inspection, interview.

Examples and Sources of Evidence: Information on a material's origin is vitally important in helping to identify associated risks. The mining producer may be able to demonstrate that it provides this information to purchasers of its goods through a purchasing note that gives details of where the material was extracted.

The producer may also maintain a log of the entities to whom it sells material and may even carry out due diligence on those entities. This may be recorded in the form of due diligence notes, memos or reports. Interviews with management personnel and their business partners may also confirm that policies are implemented.

Implementing partners complete a gap analysis of the mining producer's performance, continuous improvement plan, and monitoring reports, all of which can provide evidence useful for verifiers.

Performance Determination:

- **Meets:** The mining producer always provides its buyers with accurate information on the origin of the material it sells and carries out due diligence on all its buyers, suppliers and business partners.

- **Partially Meets:** The producer sometimes provides its buyers with accurate information on the origin of the material it sells and carries out due diligence on some but not all of its buyers, suppliers and business partners, but the generation and flow of information is ad hoc and cannot be considered systemic.

- **Misses:** There is evidence to show that the producer does not make reasonable efforts to communicate information on the origin of the mineral it produces (or sells) to the next entity in the supply chain and does not carry out due diligence on the entities to whom it sells, procures or its partners.

- **Insufficient Information:** It is unclear whether the producer provides accurate information on the origin of the mineral it sells and whether it has adequate internal controls and systems to facilitate the generation, analysis and storage of that information.

Assessment Notes: The verifier should record in the form provided in Annex 1 of this guidance the date of the assessment, the assessment determination and any information (including evidence and source) that has informed the determination.

Objective 1.4 – Continuous Improvement: A key principle of Swiss Better Gold is to include as many responsible mining producers as possible and to encourage them to improve their practices over time. It is not the expectation of the Swiss Better Gold Association that all producers wishing to be Swiss Better Gold suppliers meet all Swiss Better Gold requirements from the outset, but rather that they commit to meeting those requirements within a reasonable period of time. To that end, the Association has developed the escalator approach, the intention of which is to give clear indications to producers on the standards, practices and timeline for meeting Swiss Better Gold requirements. Swiss Better Gold implementing partners are responsible for elaborating a continuous improvement plan (CIP) for each mining producer, supporting them in meeting its targets, and reporting the results of the CIP to the Swiss Better Gold Association.

CRITERION: CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Producers commit to a measurable time-bound continuous improvement plan to achieve compliance with the Swiss Better Gold criteria.

Step: Step 1 – Basic criteria

Explanation: Once the mining producer's practices and performance have been assessed, the implementing partner elaborates a Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP), which contains the actions needed in order to reach full compliance with the Swiss Better Gold sourcing criteria. The CIP lists a number of achievable and measurable improvements that the producer commits to implement within a specified period. The producer must demonstrate that they are making every attempt to achieve the agreed changes in a timely manner. Failure to meet the expectations specified in the CIP can result in suspension from the Swiss Better Gold programme.

Verifier Expectations and Guidance: The verifier should review the CIP of the mining producer in order to understand where the producer showed gaps. During the site visit, the verifier should confirm whether the expected changes have been adequately implemented.

Data Collection Method: Site inspection, document review, interview.

Examples and Sources of Evidence: Evidence of the change will depend entirely on the nature of the improvement expected. Interviews with management and workers combined with observations and document reviews will help determine whether the improvement has been implemented or whether it has been started and the end result is pending.

Implementing partners complete a gap analysis of the mining producer's performance, continuous improvement plan, and monitoring reports, all of which can provide evidence useful for verifiers.

Performance Determination:

- **Meets:** The mining producer has formally committed and documented its commitment to implement and complete the CIP, and there is evidence to

show that the CIP is being implemented in a timely fashion, or where targets have not been achieved it is clear that reasonable efforts have been made to do so.

- **Partially Meets:** The producer has formally committed and documented its commitment to implement and complete the CIP, but there is evidence to show that the CIP is not being implemented in a timely fashion and that reasonable efforts have not been made to do so.
- **Misses:** The producer has not formally committed and documented its commitment to implement and complete the CIP, or there is evidence to show that the CIP is not being implemented in a timely fashion and that reasonable efforts have not been made to do so.
- **Insufficient Information:** It has not been possible to obtain information that clarifies whether the operation has made reasonable efforts to achieve timely implementation of the expected changes.

Assessment Notes: The verifier should record in the form provided in Annex 1 of this guidance the date of the assessment, the assessment determination and any information (including evidence and source) that has informed the determination.

2. ASPECT: SOCIAL

Objective 2.1 – Labour Rights and Terms: Decent work and working conditions are broadly accepted as developmental and ethical goals all should strive to achieve (see, for example, the UN Sustainable Development Goals). In the industrial mining sector, productivity has increased while the need for a large workforce has fallen. ASGM on the other hand employs millions of workers while producing just 20% of the global gold supply. It is a considerable contributor to rural employment in many mining nations. Progress is needed in the ASGM sector to reduce informal employment and labour market inequality, promote safe and secure working environments, and improve access to economic safeguards such as insurance and pensions. The Swiss Better Gold Association supports the implementation of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and all other applicable ILO Conventions as references for decent working conditions. Decent work involves opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, and includes the protection of peoples' rights at work, upholding fair employment terms, protecting vulnerable populations and promoting equality, and the opportunity for dialogue between workers and managers.

CRITERION: NO WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOUR

Producers are not linked in any way to the worst forms of child labour.

Step: Step 1 – Basic criteria

Explanation: A child's right to education and a life of dignity is universally accepted as unalienable and of the highest importance. Children are required to attend school until they reach the national minimum age for employment to ensure they acquire an educational level that supports self-determination and opens the door to employment offering decent working conditions. Child labour takes away a child's right to an education and, depending on the activity, puts children at risk of suffering negative health impacts, both mental and physical.

Generally, the worst forms of child labour have been defined by the International Labour Organisation (Article 3 of ILO No. 182)[4] as follows:

a) *all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom and forced or compulsory labour, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict;*
b) *the use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances;*
c) *the use, procuring or offering of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs as defined in the relevant international treaties;*
d) *work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children.*

[4] See ILO C182 (http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO:12100:P12100_INSTRUMENT_ID:312327:NO).

Because many activities at mining sites are considered hazardous and have the potential to harm the health or safety of children, they are considered to be the worst forms of child labour even if the person is over 15 years old, the age below which the ILO defines as child labour. The OECD provides the following table (Table 4) with common mining tasks, hazards and possible consequences as a guide for identifying the worst forms of child labour at mining operations.

TABLE 4: MINING TASKS AND WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOUR

Tasks	Hazards	Injuries and potential health consequences
Tunnelling, diving into muddy wells	Drilling equipment; explosives; confined spaces; faulty supports; stagnant air; poisonous gases; dust; darkness; dampness; radiation	Death or traumatic injury from tunnel collapse; suffocation from compressor mining; injury from explosions; silicosis and related respiratory diseases; nausea; exhaustion
Digging or hand-picking ore, slabs, rock or sand	Heavy tools; heavy loads; repetitive movements; dangerous heights; open holes; falling objects; moving vehicles; noise; dust	Joint and bone deformities; blistered hands and feet; lacerations; back injury; muscle injury; head trauma; noise-induced hearing loss; breathing difficulties; frostbite, sunstroke and other thermal stresses; dehydration; blunt force trauma, loss of digits, limbs; eye injuries and infections from shards, dust
Crushing and amalgamating; sieving, washing and sorting	Lead, mercury and other heavy metals; dust; repetitive movements; bending; squatting or kneeling	Neurological damage; genito-urinary disorders; musculoskeletal disorders; fatigue; immune deficiency
Removing waste or water from mines	Heavy loads; repetitive movements; chemical and biological hazards; dust	Musculoskeletal disorders; fatigue; infections; skin irritation and damage; respiratory issues from exposure to chemicals and dust
Transporting materials via carts or carrying	Heavy loads; large and unwieldy vehicles	Musculoskeletal disorders; fatigue; crushed by vehicles
Cooking and cleaning for adults	Physical and verbal abuse; unsafe stoves; explosive fuels	Injury from beatings; sexual abuse; burns
Selling goods and services to miners	Physical and verbal abuse	Injury from beatings; behavioural disorders, sexual abuse or harassment
Mining and quarrying in general	Remote locations; lawless atmosphere; poor sanitation; lack of protective gear; contaminated drinking water; stagnant water and mosquitoes; inadequate nutrition;	Death for lack of medical treatment; behavioural disorders; addiction; sexually transmitted diseases; pregnancy; stunted growth; diarrhoea and digestive disorders; malaria and

	degraded environmental conditions in air, water, soil, food; recruitment into sex trade; human trafficking and forced labour; gambling, drugs and alcohol	mosquito-borne diseases

PLEASE NOTE: SHOULD A VERIFIER WITNESS OR SUSPECT THAT A CHILD IS IN DIRECT DANGER OF PHYSICAL MENTAL OR SEXUAL ABUSE, IT IS THE VERIFIER'S RESPONSIBILITY TO TAKE APPROPRIATE ACTION TO MITIGATE FURTHER HARM AND ADDRESS ANY HARM THAT HAS ALREADY OCCURRED. THIS MAY INVOLVE ALERTING LOCAL AUTHORITIES, THE CHILD'S PARENTS OR TRUSTWORTHY COMMUNITY MEMBERS. THE VERIFIER MUST NOT LEAVE THE CHILD UNSUPERVISED AND MUST DISCONTINUE THE VERIFICATION ACTIVITIES UNTIL THE SITUATION IS RESOLVED.

Verifier Expectations and Guidance: The verifier should review the mining producer's worker registry and randomly interview several workers currently operating at various workstations and with different levels of management responsibility to test the registry's completeness. Each worker profile should include a photograph of the worker, their name, emergency contacts/next of kin, as well as a copy of an official identification document that confirms date of birth.

The verifier should further review the accuracy of daily logbooks, which should include the full name and internal ID number of all workers as well as the times workers enter and exit mine shafts or pits.

The verifier should record and archive any occurrences of child labour, noting the nature of activity and approximate age and sex of the child. The goal is to ensure that the producer has a system in place that prevents children from engaging in any mining activity or activities that may cause them physical or mental harm. Should children be on the processing site, even if they are not engaging in any work, the producer must ensure that they are not in contact with mercury at any time.

If observations and evidence warrant the belief that child labour might occur on the site, the verifier is advised to extend the scope of interviews to local NGOs, community members and local educators, and review logbooks for school attendance, if accessible.

Data Collection Method:: Site inspection, interview, document review.

Examples and Sources of Evidence: Worker registry, photographs, school attendance register, interview transcripts.

Implementing partners complete a gap analysis of the mining producer's performance, continuous improvement plan, and monitoring reports, all of which can provide evidence useful for verifiers.

Performance Determination:

- **Meets:** There is evidence to show that the mining producer has implemented policies to ensure there is no risk of association with child labour. The verifier did

not observe children at the operation, and interviews uphold the observation that no children are working at the site in hazardous conditions.

- **Partially Meets:** There is evidence to show that the producer has a management system in place, but the system and procedures are incomplete or insufficient to mitigate and prevent the worst forms of child labour.
- **Misses:** The producer has no clear policy on child labour, children are observed at the mines, or interviews confirm that children are working at the site in hazardous conditions.
- **Insufficient Information:** The verifier is unable to gather sufficient evidence to determine whether the producer is linked in any way to the worst forms of child labour.

Assessment Notes: The verifier should record in the form provided in Annex 1 of this guidance the date of the assessment, the assessment determination and any information (including evidence and source) that has informed the determination.

CRITERION: NO CHILD LABOUR

No children under 15 working and no child under 18 carrying out hazardous work at the operation.

Step: Step 2 – Swiss Better Gold criteria

Explanation: As explained under Criterion "No Worst Forms of Child Labour" (pages 32-35), it is of upmost importance to ensure that a child's right to education is not compromised by engagement in any operational activities. The universally accepted minimum age for engagement in professional work is 15 years, and that nobody under the age of 18 should engage in hazardous work that poses a threat to mental or physical health.

It is the goal of the Swiss Better Gold Association to ensure that mining operations have a system in place to prevent the occurrence of child labour on a mining producer's concession. In general, this means that no one under the age of 18 should engage in underground mining activity or mercury amalgamation.

PLEASE NOTE: SHOULD A VERIFIER WITNESS OR SUSPECT THAT A CHILD IS IN DIRECT DANGER OF PHYSICAL MENTAL OR SEXUAL ABUSE, IT IS THE VERIFIER'S RESPONSIBILITY TO TAKE APPROPRIATE ACTION TO MITIGATE FURTHER HARM AND ADDRESS ANY HARM THAT HAS ALREADY OCCURRED. THIS MAY INVOLVE ALERTING LOCAL AUTHORITIES, THE CHILD'S PARENTS OR TRUSTWORTHY COMMUNITY MEMBERS. THE VERIFIER MUST NOT LEAVE THE CHILD UNSUPERVISED AND MUST DISCONTINUE THE VERIFICATION ACTIVITIES UNTIL THE SITUATION IS RESOLVED.

Verifier Expectations and Guidance: The verifier should review the mining producer's worker registry and randomly interview several workers currently operating at various work stations and holding different levels of management responsibility to test the registry's completeness. Each worker profile should include a photograph of the

worker, their name, emergency contacts/next of kin, and a copy of an official identification document that confirms date of birth.

The verifier should further review accuracy of daily logbooks, which should include the full name and internal ID number of all workers as well as the times miners enter and exit mine shafts and pits.

The verifier should record and archive any occurrences of child labour, noting the nature of activity and approximate age and sex of the child. The goal is to ensure that the producer has a system in place that prevents children from engaging in any mining activity or activities that may cause them physical or mental harm. Should children be on the processing site, even if they are not engaging in any work, the producer must ensure that they are not in contact with mercury at any time.

If observations and evidence warrant the belief that child labour might be an issue, the verifier is advised to extend the scope of interviews to local NGOs, community members and local educators, and review logbooks for school attendance if accessible.

Data Collection Method: Document review, site inspection, interview.

Examples and Sources of Evidence: Worker registry, photographs, school attendance register, interview transcripts.

Implementing partners complete a gap analysis of the mining producer's performance, continuous improvement plan, and monitoring reports, all of which can provide evidence useful for verifiers.

Performance Determination:

- **Meets:** All workers on site are 15 or older and are identifiable through the mining producer's worker registry. Workers in the mine and handling mercury are 18 or older.

- **Partially Meets:** Children have been observed on-site but do not engage in hazardous work according to interviews with NGOs, community members or educators in the region. Workers are generally registered, and the producer can produce proof of age.

  OR No children have been observed on the ground, but the producer lacks some elements of a formal system to record workers' ages and identities.

- **Misses:** Children engage in hazardous work, i.e. underground mining or mercury amalgamation. Their engagement in work is resulting in non-attendance of school.

- **Insufficient Information:** The verifier is unable to gather sufficient evidence to determine whether children engage in hazardous work. The worker registry is not accessible at the time of assessment.

Assessment Notes: The verifier should record in the form provided in Annex 1 of this guidance the date of the assessment, the assessment determination and any information (including evidence and source) that has informed the determination.

CRITERION: NO FORCED LABOUR

No forced or compulsory labour at the operations.

Step: Step 1 – Basic criteria

Explanation: Instances of forced labour, abuse and modern-day slavery have been associated with ASGM operations around the globe. Swiss Better Gold Association members are committed to ensuring that human rights are respected throughout their supply chains and that people engage voluntarily in work that offers them decent working conditions and a long-term livelihood.

The ILO defines forced labour as "*all work or services* which is exacted from *any person* under *the menace of any penalty* and for which the said person has not offered himself/herself *voluntarily*" (Article 2.1 of the Forced Labour Convention No. 29[5]).

Forced and bonded labour can take various forms and may not be easily detectable during an on-site visit. Known practices include:

- Withholding worker's identity documents;
- Withholding due pay;
- Expecting workers to pay off accumulated debt through their work (possibly accrued in the form of a recruitment fee);
- Intimidating workers through the presence of (armed) guards who oversee their work.

Verifier Expectations and Guidance: Verifiers are expected to review existing secondary sources of information, including national surveys and reports on forced labour published by relevant NGOs, international organisations and governmental organisations, to gain a basic understanding of the regional risk level and how forced labour might materialise in the local context.

The verifier should interview the management team about the conditions of engagement of miners and hiring procedures. The verifier should also interview a selection of workers (from different workstations or activities) investigating their understanding of the remuneration system, working conditions and possible debt owed to the mining producer.

It is advisable to review existing employment contracts and the requirements for and consequences of termination by the employee. It might also be necessary to interview workers' family members, community leaders or individuals from the community to take into account not only on-the-job working conditions but also the conditions surrounding termination of workers' contracts.

The verifier should further investigate practices concerning the storage of identity documents. Note that storing identity documents for security reasons is not equivalent

[5] See ILO C029 (https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C029#A29).

to withholding them if workers have access to their documents upon request within a reasonable time frame, subject to the verifier's judgement.

Data Collection Method: Desk research, interview, document review.

Examples and Sources of Evidence: Employment contracts, hiring policy, interview transcripts.

Implementing partners complete a gap analysis of the mining producer's performance, continuous improvement plan, and monitoring reports, all of which can provide evidence useful for verifiers.

Performance Determination:

- **Meets:** The mining producer's hiring process adheres to a transparent process; contracts ensure a workers' right to terminate his or her engagement without being penalised and workers appear to be working voluntarily, without fear of corporal or financial punishment.
- **Partially Meets:** Interviews and site inspections yield no indication that forced labour has occurred, but contracts and policies lack specificity around the topic of contract termination.
- **Misses:** There is evidence to show that the producer is withholding identity documents and/or passports and not paying wages; workers are forced to work to pay off debt.
- **Insufficient Information:** The verifier is unable to gather sufficient evidence to determine whether the producer is withholding identity documents and/or passports and not paying wages, or whether workers are forced to work to pay off debt.

Assessment Notes: The verifier should record in the form provided in Annex 1 of this guidance the date of the assessment, the assessment determination and any information (including evidence and source) that has informed the determination.

CRITERION: MINIMUM WAGE

Workers receive at least the minimum legal wage.

Step: Step 2 – Swiss Better Gold criteria

Explanation: An important part of guaranteeing decent working conditions is the provision of an adequate wage for workers in the form of a fixed salary or day wage. The mining producer is expected to pay wages in line with, or exceeding, national laws and agreements on minimum wages.

Verifier Expectations and Guidance: Verifiers are expected to be knowledgeable about the minimum legal wage in the country of business. The producer must provide a full record of payments made to workers that shows all workers receive a wage equal to, or above the national wage.

Where workers are paid through a profit-sharing agreement this must be congruent with the work performed and, on an annualised basis, must not be less than the equivalent annual wage.

In addition to reviewing financial records, verifiers should interview workers from various work stations (mining, crushing, transport, washing, etc.) to confirm the amounts stated in the financial records and to enquire about timeliness of payments.

As wage information might be perceived as a sensitive subject, the verifier might devise a line of questioning around household spending to determine available income. The verifier should note whether workers are solely reliant on the activity in question or have other sources of income as part of a diversified livelihood strategy.

Data Collection Method: Document review, interview.

Examples and Sources of Evidence: Wage slips, financial records, interview transcripts.

Implementing partners complete a gap analysis of the mining producer's performance, continuous improvement plan, and monitoring reports, all of which can provide evidence useful for verifiers.

Performance Determination::

- **Meets:** There is evidence to show that the mining producer is paying at least the minimum legal wage to its workers and payments are made on time.
- **Partially Meets:** There is evidence to show that the producer is paying at least the minimum legal wage to its workers, but payments are not made regularly and in a timely manner.
- **Misses:** There is evidence to show that the producer is paying less than the minimum legal wage to its workers.
- **Insufficient Information:** The verifier is unable to gather sufficient evidence to determine whether the producer is paying at least the minimum legal wage to its workers.

Assessment Notes: The verifier should record in the form provided in Annex 1 of this guidance the date of the assessment, the assessment determination and any information (including evidence and source) that has informed the determination.

CRITERION: RIGHT TO ORGANISE

Producers recognise the right of all workers to organise and to join workers' organisations and to collectively negotiate their working terms and conditions.

Step: Step 2 – Swiss Better Gold criteria

Explanation: Workers should be given the opportunity to join together in groups to advocate for the terms that they believe make for dignified work. The mining producer

should protect the right of workers to do this even if it is not directly in its interest. If there is no union that is recognised and active in the producer's jurisdiction, if unions are forbidden by law, or if unions are managed by government and not by members, then workers should be allowed to democratically elect a form of independent workers organisation.

Verifier Expectations and Guidance: The verifier should have knowledge of the types of workers' organisations typically active in the country of operation and of the laws of that country regarding worker's rights and company obligations to worker's organisations.

Note that certain entity types, such as co-operatives, are run in a democratic manner by their members, and elected leaders are automatically assumed to hold the right to negotiate working conditions on behalf of the group. Where an entity exists as a co-operative or similar type, but some or all of its workers are not members of the group, these workers should be granted the right to organise for the purpose of collective negotiation.

The mining producers might have policies that allow workers to organise. This is an indication that the producer understands its obligation to allow workers to organise and the implementation of such policies should be verified through interviews with workers.

During interviews, workers might indicate that in the process of organising for the purpose of collective bargaining they were subject to harassment, or alternatively were supported by the producer's management. This will provide an indication of the producer's intent to permit its workers to organise.

Data Collection Method:: Interview, review of policies.

Examples and Sources of Evidence: Policy on collective bargaining and workers unions, interview transcripts.

Implementing partners complete a gap analysis of the mining producer's performance, continuous improvement plan, and monitoring reports, all of which can provide evidence useful for verifiers.

Performance Determination:

- **Meets:** The mining producer allows workers to organise, and there are no allegations of harassment or resistance by the operation's management when workers have attempted to organise for the purpose of collective bargaining.

- **Partially Meets:** The producer does allow workers to organise, but there are some minor allegations of harassment or resistance by the producer's management when workers have attempted to organise for the purpose of collective bargaining.

- **Misses:** The producer does not allow workers to organise, or there are significant allegations of harassment or resistance by the producer's management when workers have attempted to organise for the purpose of collective bargaining.

- **Insufficient Information:** Interviews with workers alleging harassment or resistance by the producer's management when attempting to organise for the purpose of collective bargaining cannot be triangulated with accounts from other workers.

Assessment Notes: The verifier should record in the form provided in Annex 1 of this guidance the date of the assessment, the assessment determination and any information (including evidence and source) that has informed the determination.

CRITERION: SAFE WORK

Producers provide a safe working environment.

Step: Step 2 – Swiss Better Gold criteria

Explanation: Mining, particularly ASGM, is a highly hazardous industry, but with appropriate safety measures the health and safety risks can be significantly reduced. It is the responsibility of everyone who works at the operation to ensure that safety measures are maintained. Key safety measures relate to:

- The use of personal protective equipment;
- The use of explosives;
- Ground stability;
- Ventilation;
- First aid and emergency response;
- Appropriate training for the hazards of the work;
- Access to water and energy for hot or heavy labour;
- Physical barriers to prevent contact with hazardous items or areas.

The degree to which these measures require implementation depends upon the severity of the hazard at the particular operation.

Verifier Expectations and Guidance: The verifier must have a good working knowledge of the hazards present and appropriate safety measures to be taken in mining operations. The verifier should determine the particular hazards and safety measures in place to ensure that risk mitigation systems are operating.

The verifier should investigate the frequency and severity of accidents and fatalities over the last two to three years to identify (a) any systemic accident patterns arising from organisational negligence, and (b) whether the producer has a system in place to assess the cause of an accident and build in a prevention mechanism to avoid future such accidents.

The use of mercury amalgamation and cyanidation plants warrants a particularly high level of attention due to the hazardous nature of the chemicals involved. This is addressed separately in Criteria "No Worst Forms of Mercury Use" (pages 58-59), "Mercury Management" (pages 59-62), and "Cyanide Management" (pages 62-63).

Data Collection Method: Interview, site inspection.

Examples and Sources of Evidence: In addition to walking the site to observe the implementation of safety measures and checking these measures to ensure they are fit for purpose, the verifier should gather data from interviews with workers to determine whether the use of safety measures is (a) sufficient and (b) regularly implemented or temporarily implemented for the inspection.

The verifier should also check compliance of health and safety measures with corresponding laws and regulations.

Implementing partners complete a gap analysis of the mining producer's performance, continuous improvement plan, and monitoring reports, all of which can provide evidence useful for verifiers.

Performance Determination:

- **Meets:** The mining producer has clearly made an attempt to identify and control hazards across the operation and safety measures are as sufficient as can be expected within the budget available to the producer. Past accidents have resulted in a re-assessment of existing practices to reduce the risk of similar incidents occurring again. The measures in place comply with local laws and regulations.
- **Partially Meets:** The producer has clearly made an effort to identify and control hazards across the operation, but the safety measures in place are either insufficient, or not consistently maintained. The measures in place partially comply with local laws and regulations.
- **Misses:** There appears to be little or no attempt to identify and control hazards, and those measures that are in place are insufficient to prevent an accident.
- **Insufficient Information:** The verifier was not able to identify hazard-control measures across the operation.

Assessment Notes: The verifier should record in the form provided in Annex 1 of this guidance the date of the assessment, the assessment determination and any information (including evidence and source) that has informed the determination.

CRITERION: GENDER EQUALITY

Producers demonstrate a clear commitment to identify and address gender inequality.

Step: Step 2 – Swiss Better Gold criteria

Explanation: In order for mining producers to reach their full developmental potential it is important to ensure that economic benefits reach women as much as men. In ASGM, for instance, female workers can comprise anywhere between 30-60% of the workforce. Generally, the Swiss Better Gold Association expects producers to show a commitment to gender equality regarding all rights, including access to resources, the use of earnings and participation in, and impact on, decision-making processes.

In practice this means that the mining producer has a policy in place that addresses gender equality, women are represented in management and, if the producer is a cooperative, cooperative membership is available to both men and women under the same terms.

While some activities, due to their physical nature, might almost exclusively be performed by male workers, men and women should receive equal pay when executing the same or similar tasks. Furthermore, pregnant women should be protected from exposure to hazardous substances and mothers provided a safe and private space in which to feed their children.

Importantly, the producer must forbid sexual harassment in the workplace.

Verifier Expectations and Guidance: Verifiers should review the financial records of wage payments looking at any gender-related discrepancies. The verifier should review and note the mining producer's policy on gender equality and investigate during a site inspection that (a) pregnant women are not exposed to hazardous materials and (b) that women are permitted to (breast) feed their children in an appropriate private space. The verifier should note the proportion of female management members and their position within the team.

During interviews with women, the verifier should enquire about the perception of equality between men and women in the operation, as well as whether women feel safe at work.

Data Collection Method: Document review, interview, site inspection.

Examples and Sources of Evidence: Management or leadership list, documented gender policy, interview transcripts.

Implementing partners complete a gap analysis of the mining producer's performance, continuous improvement plan, and monitoring reports, all of which can provide evidence useful for verifiers.

Performance Determination:

- **Meets:** There is evidence to show that the mining producer implements a policy to promote equal treatment between men and women regarding all rights including access to resources, equal pay for equal work, and participation in, and influence on, decision-making processes. Pregnant women and women with small children are particularly cared for.

- **Partially Meets:** While the producer does not have a specific policy or programme that actively address gender-related issues, interviews with female workers confirm that workers are generally content with their conditions and feel that they could complain if they were not being treated fairly. Alternatively, there is a documented policy in place but evidence to suggest that it is not fully implemented.

- **Misses:** There is evidence to show that the producer is not taking steps to respect the rights of women, or women's income opportunities are limited by

restricting or prohibiting them from engaging in certain activities or joining miners' organisations.

- **Insufficient Information:** The verifier was not able to gather sufficient evidence to determine whether men and women are treated equally.

Assessment Notes: The verifier should record in the form provided in Annex 1 of this guidance the date of the assessment, the assessment determination and any information (including evidence and source) that has informed the determination.

Objective 2.2 – Human Rights: Responsible mining respects human rights, a concept that is enshrined in a number of international conventions and legal instruments including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and related UN declarations regarding the cultural, social and economic rights of individuals, among others. The objective of the following criteria is to bring awareness to mining producers of the importance of respecting human rights as a moral imperative and as a requirement of international buyers. The Swiss Better Gold Association expects producers to respect human rights, the social, economic, cultural and labour rights of every person involved and the rights of the local community as fundamental principles. The rights of women, disadvantaged groups and individuals, including migrant workers, are specifically included. Of particular relevance is the upholding of human rights on sites or in situations where mining producers employ or contract armed security personnel to protect their equipment, access to their site or shipments of gold.

CRITERION: HUMAN RIGHTS

Producers are not linked in any way to any forms of torture, cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment; gross human rights abuses; war crimes or other serious violations of international humanitarian law, crimes against humanity or genocide.

Step: Step 1 – Basic criteria

Explanation: In some regions, mining, particularly ASGM, has been associated with serious human rights abuses and other unacceptable and illegal behaviour towards workers as groups seek to exert control over their workforces and the revenue they produce. This may not occur in the operation itself but in operations that supply it with material to sell on, or in auxiliary businesses that provide labour or another service to the operation. The producer must demonstrate that they are not complicit in human rights abuses or connected with an entity that carries out these practices.

Verifier Expectations and Guidance: The verifier should be able to identify signs of torture; cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment; gross human rights abuses; war crimes; genocide and other violations of international humanitarian law. Prior to visiting the mining producer, the verifier should conduct desk-based due diligence to identify whether the region is associated with such unacceptable behaviours.

If workers, local community members or other local stakeholders indicate that they must take care in expressing opinions about the operation's management or other groups, this could indicate that they are being coerced. Similarly, if workers act in a way that suggests they are afraid of the management or of other people in the operation, this can indicate that those people use psychological or physical aggression against them.

Data Collection Method: Interview, site visit, document review.

Examples and Sources of Evidence: Interview transcripts, observations, human rights policy.

Implementing partners complete a gap analysis of the mining producer's performance, continuous improvement plan, and monitoring reports, all of which can provide evidence useful for verifiers.

Performance Determination:

- **Meets:** There is no evidence or reason to believe that the mining producer employs, or is linked to, unacceptable behaviour that could be, or lead to, a human rights abuse.
- **Partially Meets:** While the producer is not directly linked to unacceptable behaviour, the area in which the operation is located has been associated in the recent past with unacceptable behaviour such as armed conflict, and the producer's policies and practices are not sufficient to rule out complicity.
- **Misses:** There is evidence that the producer employs or is associated with the use of unacceptable behaviour and potential human rights abuses.
- **Insufficient Information:** There is reason to believe that the producer may employ or be linked to unacceptable behaviour, but insufficient evidence exists to either validate or disprove the claim.

Assessment Notes: The verifier should record in the form provided in Annex 1 of this guidance the date of the assessment, the assessment determination and any information (including evidence and source) that has informed the determination.

CRITERION: SECURITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Producers engaging security personnel effectively align their practices with the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights.

Step: Step 2 – Swiss Better Gold criteria

Explanation: The Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights[6] (Voluntary Principles) were established in 2000 as a multi-stakeholder initiative (MSI) involving governments, companies, and non-governmental organisations that promotes implementation of a set of principles that guide companies in the industries of extracting, or developing natural resources or energy on providing security for their operations in a manner that respects human rights. Specifically, the Voluntary Principles guide companies in conducting a comprehensive human rights risk assessment in their engagement with public and private security providers to ensure human rights are respected in the protection of company facilities and premises.

The Voluntary Principles provide a framework for producers to manage risk effectively by:

- Conducting a comprehensive assessment of human rights risks associated with security;

[6] The Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights (https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/f623ce_140f17e29c644887bb5c4b5ffb627e92.pdf).

- Engaging appropriately with public and private security service providers and surrounding communities in complex environments;
- Instituting human rights screenings of and trainings for public and private security forces;
- Developing systems for reporting and investigating allegations of human rights abuses.

A list of actions and activities taken from the Voluntary Principles is provided in *Figure 3*. The list describes the roles and responsibilities for companies and is intended to provide an implementation guide for the implementation of the Voluntary Principles. It is relevant for, and applicable to some ASGM producers, large small-scale and medium-scale mines that employ security at their operations. For artisanal groups and less capacitated small-scale mines, it would be difficult to apply this list in many settings due to its significant reliance on documented policies and procedures. However, it should be followed by mining producers where applicable and appropriate.

FIGURE 3: SELECTED GUIDANCE FORM THE VOLUNTARY PRINCIPLES ON SECURITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Rule of Law

- Record and report credible allegations of security-related incidents with human rights implications by public security forces (in areas of operation related to company activities) to appropriate host government authorities and, where appropriate, urge investigation and that actions be taken to prevent any recurrence;
- Actively monitor investigation status and press for their proper resolution;
- Support efforts by states and civil society organisations to strengthen state institutions to ensure accountability and respect for human rights.

Risk

- Undertake risk assessments as outlined in the Voluntary Principles and integrate the findings into management systems.

Policies, Procedures & Guidelines

- Incorporate the Voluntary Principles into company policy framework and business practices;
- Develop supporting implementation and guidance documents/tools for on-the ground operations;
- Develop indicators and use relevant processes to assess and address the company's implementation of the Voluntary Principles at relevant levels – e.g., facility, country, regional, etc.

Public Security Engagement

- Manage interactions with public security providers in accordance with the Voluntary Principles and, when feasible, include references to the Voluntary Principles in agreements for the provision of public security;
- Take appropriate measures to avoid the use of individuals who are credibly implicated in human rights abuses to provide security services;
- Take appropriate measures to encourage appropriate use of force only when strictly necessary and to an extent proportional to the threat and that the rights of individuals are not violated.

Private Security Engagement

- Manage sourcing, contracting, service delivery, and other interactions with private security providers, so that they are conducted in accordance with the Voluntary Principles.

Accountability

- Prepare annual reports and communicate on Voluntary Principles implementation, consistent with the reporting guidelines and verification framework;
- Participate in dialogue with fellow participants and external stakeholders around the VPI, implementation, and experience;
- Consult and encourage engagement with host governments and local communities about company security arrangements;
- Actively cooperate through legitimate processes (e.g., existing grievance mechanisms) to respond to and remediate adverse impacts which have been identified as being caused by or contributed to by the company's actions.

Verifier Expectations and Guidance: The verifier should have a working understanding of the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights. Prior to the site visit, the verifier should make enquiries about the security used by the mining producer (if any is used). Background checks on any security force present should be conducted either at the operation in question, or at any other operation.

Interviews with local community members may reveal allegations of abuse by the producer's security force. These should be triangulated for validity with other community members, relevant government officials, the management of the operation and (if necessary) the security force.

Data Collection Method: Interview, document review.

Examples and Sources of Evidence: Interview transcripts, human rights policy.

Implementing partners complete a gap analysis of the mining producer's performance, continuous improvement plan, and monitoring reports, all of which can provide evidence useful for verifiers.

Performance Determination:

- **Meets:** There are no significant allegations of abuse that have not been disqualified by an independent investigation and, where applicable and appropriate, the mining producer implements the criteria listed where applicable and appropriate.

- **Partially Meets:** There are significant allegations of abuse committed by the producer's security force which are under independent investigation. The producer implements the criteria listed where applicable and appropriate.

- **Misses:** There are significant allegations of abuse committed by the producer's security force, or the producer does not implement all of the criteria listed where applicable and appropriate.

- **Insufficient Information:** Interviewees were unwilling to comment on or acknowledge allegations of abuse by the producer's security force.

Assessment Notes: The verifier should record in the form provided in Annex 1 of this guidance the date of the assessment, the assessment determination and any information (including evidence and source) that has informed the determination.

Objective 2.3 – Community Relations: Mining activity has an impact on surrounding communities and can cause tensions, which need to be carefully addressed. Some communities near to mining operations are home to a large number of people who work at the operation or at neighbouring operations. These "mining communities" may have grown up around the operation and have no or few other economic alternatives to mining. Other communities may have a long history of making a living from non-mining economic activities, such as agriculture, and might not be familiar with mining. In such cases, the owners of a mining operation, and workers at it, often come from outside the area seeking employment. Their migration significantly increases the size of the local population and changes its cultural and ethnic composition. Furthermore, mining activity might clash with indigenous territory or with local beliefs and customs. Whatever the history of communities living near a mining operation, there is the possibility for social tension born out of the reality, or perception, that those involved in mining activity are benefitting more than others, or are negatively impacting the local environment, social structure or local economy. When a mining producer's legality is unclear, tensions can deepen and result in conflict between mining and local populations. The objective of the following criterion is to highlight the importance of good community relations and incentivise producers to build good relations with local communities, local authorities, individuals and families.

CRITERION: COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Producers demonstrate a clear commitment to the building of positive, mutually beneficial and peaceful relations with communities affected by their activities and provide access to an appropriately designed grievance mechanism.

Step: Step 2 – Swiss Better Gold criteria

Explanation: An "affected community" generally refers to a place-based grouping of people who live in close proximity to a mining operation and are presumed to have some sense of shared identity and common concerns/challenges caused by the operation's activities. Communities affected by transport routes where trucks carry mined products or people and equipment to and from a mining operation would also be considered "affected".

Affected communities should have a positive experience of mining, even if there are significant changes to the social and natural or environment and temporary inconveniences from mining activities. Mining producers should strive to create respectful and courteous relationships with local communities and authorities. This can be achieved in most locations through frequent interactions, being open and transparent about the operation's activities, including the community in decision-making processes related to the mining activity, and planning and looking for opportunities to involve affected communities in the economic opportunities at the operation, such as jobs and supplier relationships.

Mining producers should pay particular attention to the dissimilar effects the mining activity can have on marginalised groups, such as women and Indigenous Peoples. In the case of the latter, the producer needs to ensure that their is Free, Prior and Informed

Consent (FPIC) by the affected indigenous group and ensure their collective and customary rights, culture and connection to the land.

An effective grievance mechanism gives affected communities the opportunity to raise their concerns with mining producers and the opportunity for producers to address these concerns and mitigate or prevent adverse impacts.

Verifier Expectations and Guidance: Verifiers are expected to be knowledgeable about the operationalisation of effective grievance mechanisms appropriate for mining producers, including how they are presented to local populations and how producers should respond to complaints. Verifiers should interview community members (especially marginalised groups such as women, Indigenous Peoples, young adults and disabled people) about their understanding of the grievance mechanism and its effectiveness (whether the mechanism accessible, their understanding of it and whether the system is actually used by the community). Examples of grievances should be recorded, including how the producer responded to address these concerns.

Verifiers are also expected to have a working understanding of participative community consultation processes and how they can be implemented, taking into account varying social structures and needs of different communities, such as farming or indigenous communities.

Data Collection Method: Document review, interview.

Examples and Sources of Evidence: The mining producer should be able to provide evidence in the form of resources delivered to the affected community, including simple, visual materials in an understandable format and language that describe the process for addressing people's concerns and the benefits that can result. Such material should also include information about where to go and who to contact if there is a complaint. The producer can provide evidence in the form of minutes from company-community meetings that are scheduled on a regular basis. Notes from interviews with community members, community leaders and with leaders of the mining operation should be documented and archived as well as minutes from regular company-community meetings.

Implementing partners complete a gap analysis of the mining producer's performance, continuous improvement plan, and monitoring reports, all of which can provide evidence useful for verifiers.

Performance Determination:

- **Meets:** There is evidence to show that affected communities are aware of and understand the grievance mechanism, and that the mining producer ensures the mechanism records and (where possible) resolves grievances effectively. There is no evidence of negative relations or materials issues between the producer and affected community, such as protests or pickets.

- **Partially Meets:** There is evidence to show that the producer is making good faith efforts to promote the grievance mechanism, but the community is generally unaware of the mechanism, or their experience of the mechanism has not resulted

in resolution. There is evidence of minor but persistent protests mobilising affected communities against the producer.

- **Misses:** There is evidence to show that affected communities are not aware of the grievance mechanism and the producer does not attempt to resolve grievances. There is evidence of negative relations and of frequent major protests mobilising affected communities against the producer.

- **Insufficient Information:** The verifier is unable to gather sufficient evidence to determine whether the producer provides an appropriately designed grievance mechanism or whether there exist negative relations between the producer and affected community.

Assessment Notes: The verifier should record in the form provided in Annex 1 of this guidance the date of the assessment, the assessment determination and any information (including evidence and source) that has informed the determination.

3. ASPECT: ENVIRONMENTAL

Objective 3.1 – Environmental Management: Gold mining involves the extraction of mineralised ores from below the Earth's surface, the recovery of precious metals from those ores - very often using chemicals, and the transport of the operation's output to customers. All of these activities affect the physical environment and potentially result in adverse impacts on local ecosystems. They also contribute to global environmental issues, such as climate change. Although some short-term impacts of mining are inevitable, many can be avoided or reduced when good practices are applied and, in the long term, can be mitigated through careful planning and restoration of mining areas. Where mining takes place in areas that are valued for their biodiversity, such as national parks and remote mountain areas, impacts can be particularly devastating and result in the loss of a species population locally or even globally. The objectives of the following criteria are to drive the adoption of responsible environmental practices by mining producers that help avoid the worst environmental impacts of mining and significantly reduce the residual effects. The Swiss Better Gold Association is careful not to apply the same standard for environmental management to ASGM producers as that applied to industrial mining. There is an emphasis on the gradual adoption of better practices and on an appropriate level of effort invested in environmental management commensurate with the scale and location of the producer.

CRITERION: AREAS OF HIGH ECOLOGICAL VALUE

No operations in designated areas of high ecological value, including in natural World Heritage Sites, Key Biodiversity Areas, Alliance for Zero Extinction sites, and protected areas categorised I to IV by the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

Step: Step 1 – Basic criteria

Explanation: A "World Heritage Site" is a site or property of outstanding universal value recognised and designated by the World Heritage Convention. See UNESCO's World Heritage List for more information: http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/.

"Key Biodiversity Areas" are sites that contribute significantly to the global persistence of biodiversity. Such areas of international importance are identified nationally using globally standardised criteria and thresholds. See the "World Database of Key Biodiversity Areas" and "A Global Standard for the Identification of Key Biodiversity Areas" for additional definitions.

The Alliance for Zero Extinction (AZE) comprises more than 100 non-governmental biodiversity conservation organisations working to prevent species extinction. Eight hundred and fifty-three sites have been evaluated as "endangered" or "critically endangered". A map and list can be found here: https://zeroextinction.org/.

IUCN protected area management categories classify protected areas according to management objectives. These categories are recognised by international bodies including the United Nations. Category information can be found here: https://www.iucn.org/theme/protected-areas/about/protected-areas-categories.

Mining activities carried out by producers of any size or level of capacity are generally considered incompatible with the protection of these designated areas. Some consider

such areas to be categorical “no go” areas. The Swiss Better Gold Association will not source gold from mining producers that undertake activities in these areas.

Moreover, Swiss Better Gold lies a special focus on primary forests. Primary forests are the most biodiverse and carbon-dense form of forest and they play a crucial role in the conservation of the Earth’s biodiversity and as an agent against climate change. Mining activities undertaken in such areas heavily affect primary forests through deforestation, contamination and aridification. Swiss Better Gold does not accept mineral sourced from producers operating in and, thus, causing degradation of primary forests.

Verifier Expectations and Guidance: Verifiers are expected to be familiar with the various designations of areas of high biodiversity importance listed here (see Explanation) and to have accessed appropriate online databases and resources to establish whether the mining producer is active in one of these areas.

Data Collection Method: Observation, desk research.

Examples and Sources of Evidence: Review online maps or lists to establish whether the mine is operating in an area designated under this criterion.

Implementing partners complete a gap analysis of the mining producer’s performance, continuous improvement plan, and monitoring reports, all of which can provide evidence useful for verifiers.

Performance Determination:

- **Meets:** The mining producer is not active in any area designated as being of high ecological importance.
- **Partially Meets:** The producer has limited activities in one or more of the designated areas recognised as being of high ecological importance, or, operates outside one such area but has significant impacts on its ecological integrity, or is in the process of moving its operations outside the area but this process has not been completed.
- **Misses:** The producer is active in one or more designated areas that are recognised as being of high ecological importance.
- **Insufficient Information:** There is no geographical information to determine the location of the producer in relation to those of areas designated as being of high ecological importance.

Assessment Notes: The verifier should record in the form provided in Annex 1 of this guidance the date of the assessment, the assessment determination and any information (including evidence and source) that has informed the determination.

CRITERION: WASTE MANAGEMENT

Producers demonstrate effective management of mining, processing, and other wastes to reduce negative environmental and health impacts.

Step: Step 2 – Swiss Better Gold criteria

Explanation: In the course of mining and mineral processing, hazardous (e.g. acids) and non-hazardous (e.g. overburden rock) wastes are generated which can cause significant harm to humans and wildlife in and around the mining operation if not carefully managed. Criterion "Tailings Management" (pages 56-58) focus specifically on tailings and criteria "Mercury Management" (pages 59-62) and "Cyanide Management" (pages 62-64) focus specifically on the use of mercury and cyanide in gold processing and therefore are not considered in this criterion. Of note are:

- Oil or fuel spills;
- Acid rock drainage (created by oxidising sulfide minerals naturally present in some rocks);
- Heavy metal dusts;
- Human waste.

With appropriate management these hazards can be controlled, and the risk of their causing ill effect significantly reduced. While some hazards can be eliminated by switching to alternate methods others cannot and should be constrained at source, for example, by regularly inspecting and maintaining all mechanical equipment to ensure oil or fuel leaks are prevented.

Verifier Expectations and Guidance: The verifier must have a good working knowledge of environmental hazards in mining, especially in ASGM. A site visit to assess the hazards present and control measures in place will be necessary.

Data Collection Method: Observation.

Examples and Sources of Evidence: While on site, the verifier should check for signs of hydrocarbon (oil, diesel, gasoline) leaks in pools of water and around mechanical equipment.

Where toxic chemicals are used in mineral processing, check the suitability of the containment system during their use and disposal. Ask the mining producer to explain the chemical and contaminated waste disposal system and find out whether there are any weak links or parts in the system that might lead to accidental release of contaminated waste. Check for cracks in containing ponds or tanks.

Where sulphides are present in the ore, understand whether the disposal system adequately dilutes any acids produced and determine whether acid drainage accumulates anywhere.

If the ore contains a high quantity of heavy metals such as lead, inspect the crushing plant to ensure that dusts are adequately contained and that workers are wearing appropriate personal protective equipment.

Understand where people defaecate and whether there is runoff of human waste into waterbodies or local areas that may pose a health risk.

Implementing partners complete a gap analysis of the mining producer's performance, continuous improvement plan, and monitoring reports, all of which can provide evidence useful for verifiers.

Performance Determination:

- **Meets:** There is evidence to show that the mining producer implements an approach to identify and control the generation, disposal and management of waste across the operation, and related health and safety measures are adequate to protect people and the environment commensurate with the producer's budget.
- **Partially Meets:** There is evidence to show that the producer has attempted to put in place an approach to identify and control the generation, disposal and management of waste across the operation as well as related health and safety measures, but the measures in place are either insufficient or not consistently implemented.
- **Misses:** There appears to be little or no attempt to identify and control the generation, disposal and management of waste or related health and environmental hazards, and those measures that are in place are insufficient to prevent or respond to an incident.
- **Insufficient Information:** The verifier was not able to access information on the control of waste or the management of related environmental hazards across the entire operation.

Assessment Notes: The verifier should record in the form provided in Annex 1 of this guidance the date of the assessment, the assessment determination and any information (including evidence and source) that has informed the determination.

CRITERION: TAILINGS MANAGEMENT

Producers properly plan the disposal of tailings and associated wastewater and their discharge into other waters is effectively avoided.

Step: Step 2 – Swiss Better Gold criteria

Explanation: Tailings (the ground down, non-valuable by-product of mining) can contain a number of toxic elements including chemicals used for mineral processing (e.g. mercury or cyanide), oxidising sulphides (which cause acid drainage) and heavy metals. If these are released either directly or as runoff in water allowed to percolate through the tailings, they can have a harmful effect on both humans and wildlife. In general, the wastewater produced by the mining activity should be treated and discharged in ways that minimise harm to surrounding communities and the environment. The fine tailings themselves, while not toxic, can also have a harmful impact. If released into water bodies, they can block flowing water, cause canalisation, make water too cloudy for fish to survive or cause silt deposits that prevent the accumulation of water in ponds.

Verifier Expectations and Guidance: The verifier should have a basic knowledge of the principles of tailings management in mining and be able to apply this knowledge to the mining, especially the ASGM, setting. A site visit is needed to verify that disposal of toxic tailings and associated wastewater is properly planned and that discharge of tailings into waterbodies is effectively avoided.

The verifier should first determine whether the tailings and waste water are toxic. If highly toxic, then tailings should be contained in a way that prevents leaching of the toxic elements by percolating water. This may include capping off the waste with an impermeable membrane. If the waste water is of low toxicity, it may be diluted with non-toxic tailings to reduce toxicity to a level that no longer presents a hazard. Similarly, any wastewater that is generated should be assessed for toxicity. Wastewater with high toxicity should have the toxic elements remove or neutralised. If the wastewater is of low toxicity, it can be released into a waterbody that will sufficiently dilute it to a harmless level.

Data Collection Method: Site inspection, observation.

Examples and Sources of Evidence: The most reliable evidence is found by observing the waste management system used at the operation. The storage system should have sufficient capacity and permanence to remain effective until the hazard has reduced to a negligible potential impact. It should remain effective through flooding or ground tremors.

In some jurisdictions, mining producers are required to develop (or have developed on their behalf) an environmental management plan, which might include a plan for the disposal of waste. Although there is no guarantee that were the waste disposal management plan to be implemented it would be effective, it will nevertheless provide an indication of the level of consideration that has gone into waste management at the operation. Always check whether the waste management plan is carried out in practice.

Implementing partners complete a gap analysis of the mining producer's performance, continuous improvement plan, and monitoring reports, all of which can provide evidence useful for verifiers.

Performance Determination:

- **Meets:** There is evidence to show that tailings and wastewater are being disposed safely and do not present a hazard to human health or wildlife.
- **Partially Meets:** Neither tailings nor wastewater are being released into waterbodies and are not an immediate hazard to human health or wildlife. The controls and systems for the management of tailings and wastewater are not systemic and not adequately overseen by management, however, there is no immediate hazdard to human health and wildlife.
- **Misses:** There is evidence to show that tailings and wastewater are released in an uncontrolled manner and their disposal presents an immediate hazard to human health and wildlife.

- **Insufficient Information:** It is not possible to gather information on how the tailings and wastewater disposal system functions or whether it is functioning effectively.

Assessment Notes: The verifier should record in the form provided in Annex 1 of this guidance the date of the assessment, the assessment determination and any information (including evidence and source) that has informed the determination.

CRITERION: NO WORST FORMS OF MERCURY USE

Producers do not apply the worst forms of mercury use in the recovery of gold.

Step: Step 1 – Basic criteria

Explanation: Mercury is a toxic element used in the extraction of gold from ore. It has been shown to severely inhibit healthy cognitive development. Mercury bioaccumulates in the bodies of humans and animals so that even low exposure over an extended period of time can cause harm. 128 countries have signed, and 107 ratified, a convention to eradicate anthropogenic releases of mercury into the environment. The Minamata Convention on Mercury came into force in August 2017. One of the actions being taken by signatory countries is to make the use (and sale) of mercury illegal in ASGM.

Mercury amalgamation to recover gold is still the most widely used method in artisanal and small-scale mining, and there are few other readily available and affordable options for artisanal miners. While the Minamata Convention requires a phased approach to the reduction and eventual eradication of the use of mercury in ASGM, it clearly identifies actions that should be taken to eliminate certain forms of mercury use in gold recovery. These are (i) whole ore amalgamation; (ii) open burning of amalgam or processed amalgam; (iii) burning of amalgam in residential areas; and (iv) cyanide leaching in sediment, ore or tailings to which mercury has been added without first removing the mercury[7]. The Swiss Better Gold Association considers these worst forms of mercury use in ASGM as not acceptable and requires that participating mining producers do not apply them in order to be eligible to participate in the Swiss Better Gold programme.

Verifier Expectations and Guidance: The verifier should have a sound comprehension of the worst forms of mercury use in the recovery of gold and be able to identify by sight processes that involve whole ore amalgamation, open burning of amalgam or processed amalgam, and the use of mercury in cyanide leaching processes.

A site visit is needed to verify the extraction and control methods used where gold is recovered using mercury.

Data Collection Method: Site inspection, interview.

[7] See the Minamata Convention on Mercury, Annex C (https://www.mercuryconvention.org/sites/default/files/documents/information_document/Minamata-Convention-booklet-Sep2019-EN.pdf).

Examples and Sources of Evidence: The full gold processing circuit should be inspected to understand where mercury is applied to ore and how the mercury and gold are separated once the amalgamation has taken place. Where mercury is used, check for any indications that the operation is employing the worst forms of mercury use. Interview the producer's management to understand why they are using mercury and what knowledge they have of transitioning to reduced mercury use and of controlling mercury emissions.

Where it is identified that the producer employs one or more of the worst forms of mercury use to recover gold, inform the producer that this is strictly prohibited by the Swiss Better Gold programme and explore opportunities for immediate transition to alternate recovery methods.

Implementing partners complete a gap analysis of the mining producer's performance, continuous improvement plan, and monitoring reports, all of which can provide evidence useful for verifiers.

Performance Determination:

- **Meets:** There is no evidence to show that the mining producer recovers gold through any of the worst forms of mercury use.
- **Partially Meets:** There is evidence to show that the producer employs one or more of the worst forms of mercury use to recover gold, but they are making reasonable attempts to transition to a processing system that does not involve these practices within six months of the verification event.
- **Misses:** There is evidence to show that the producer employs the worst forms of mercury use to process ore and recover gold, and there is no evidence to show that reasonable attempts have been made to transition to a system free of such processes.
- **Insufficient Information:** From the information the verifier was able to gather it is unclear whether the worst forms of mercury use are employed to process gold recovered from the mine as several methods are used, or the processing method was not verified, or it was not possible to determine whether the operation has made reasonable attempts to transition away from the use of mercury.

Assessment Notes: The verifier should record below the date of the assessment, the assessment determination and any information (including evidence and source) that has informed the determination.

CRITERION: MERCURY MANAGEMENT

Producers demonstrate a commitment consistent with the mercury-eliminating actions noted in Annex C of the Minamata Convention.

Step: Step 2 – Swiss Better Gold criteria

Explanation: The Step 1 criterion "No worst forms of mercury use" makes reference to the worst forms of mercury use in ASGM identified by the Minamanta Convention on Mercury and the Convention's goal of reducing and eventually eradicate the use of mercury in ASGM. Although mercury amalgamation to recover gold is still widely used in ASGM, other processes, such as gravimetric methods, are becoming more widely adopted in the industry. Mining producers should demonstrate that they are moving towards the adoption of alternate methods.

To reduce and eventually eliminate the use of mercury and manage harm to people and environment from it Annex C of the Minamata Convention[8] promotes the following five actions: (a) strategies for promoting the reduction of emissions and releases of, and exposure to, mercury in artisanal and small-scale gold mining and processing, including mercury-free methods; (b) strategies for managing trade and preventing the diversion of mercury and mercury compounds from both foreign and domestic sources to artisanal and small scale gold mining and processing; (c) a public health strategy on the exposure of artisanal and small-scale gold miners and their communities to mercury. Such a strategy should include, inter alia, the gathering of health data, training for health-care workers and awareness-raising through health facilities; (d) strategies to prevent the exposure of vulnerable populations, particularly children and women of child-bearing age, especially pregnant women, to mercury used in artisanal and small-scale gold mining; (e) strategies for providing information to artisanal and small-scale gold miners and affected communities.

The Swiss Better Gold Association requires that ASGM producers have in place and are implementing the necessary policies, procedures and practices that demonstrate their commitment to the five actions identified in the Minamata Convention. In particular, the Swiss Better Gold Association expects the producer to:

- Implement a policy that researches, reviews and where possible puts in place gold recovery and processing methods that reduce emissions and releases of, and exposure to, mercury;
- Have researched and reviewed options for using mercury-free methods of gold recovery and where feasible installed such methods at their operations;
- Have the requisite licenses to buy and use mercury, the internal controls to manage and monitor the use and transfer of mercury to parties outside of its operation and to ensure that no mercury leaves the site without authorisation from senior management and with full documentation;
- Fully train all workers who handle or are exposed to mercury in the health risks and risks to nature and wildlife and how to avoid and manage such risks;
- Have in place emergency health care provisions to treat accidental and potentially harmful exposure to mercury;

[8] See https://www.mercuryconvention.org/sites/default/files/documents/information_document/Minamata-Convention-booklet-Sep2019-EN.pdf.

- Prohibit, and have adequate internal controls to prohibit, the exposure of children, pregnant women, people suffering from illness or any vulnerable population to mercury and mercury emissions and releases.

Verifier Expectations and Guidance: The verifier should have an understanding of the Minamata Convention, especially Annex C, and of how mercury is used in ASGM, including closed circuit techniques such as the use of retorts to prevent release of mercury into the environment. They should also have a working knowledge of mercury-free alternatives for recovering gold.

The verifier should seek to identify whether the producer has in place, and is implementing, actions that align with the objectives of Annex C of the Minamata Convention.

A site visit is needed to verify the extraction and control methods used where gold is recovered using mercury.

Data Collection Method: Site inspection, interview.

Examples and Sources of Evidence: The full gold processing circuit should be inspected to determine where mercury is applied to ore and how the mercury and gold are separated once amalgamation has taken place. The storage of mercury should also be inspected. Interview workers or those handling mercury to determine whether the tools used in the mercury process are also used in the home setting, which would expose individuals to mercury poisoning. For example, are the basins used for mixing the mercury with the gold ore also used to bathe babies, or for cooking?

Where mercury is used, check for any indications that the operation is making an effort to transition to gravity concentration methods using a concentrating device such as centrifugal separator, shaking table or effective sluice before mercury is applied to the ore. In all cases where mercury is used, a closed-circuit processing technique must be applied.

Interview the ASGM producer's management to determine why they have not transitioned to a full mercury-free system and whether reasonable attempts have been made to do so.

Interview the ASGM producer's management to determine what policies and procedures are in place to manage mercury purchases and sales, on-site management, training and health care and emergency treatment provision.

Implementing partners complete a gap analysis of the mining producer's performance, continuous improvement plan, and monitoring reports, all of which can provide evidence useful for verifiers.

Performance Determination:

- **Meets:** There is evidence to show that the mining producer has in place the policies, provisions and practices to demonstrate commitment to Annex C of the Minamata Convention.

- **Partially Meets:** There is evidence to show that the producer uses mercury to process ore and recover gold but has in place some, but not all or sufficient policies, provisions and practices to demonstrate commitment to Annex C of the Minamata Convention.

- **Misses:** There is evidence to show that the producer uses mercury to process ore and recover gold, and there is no evidence to show that reasonable attempts have been made to put in place the policies, provisions and practices that demonstrate commitment to Annex C of the Minamata Convention.

- **Insufficient Information:** From the information the verifier was able to gather it is unclear whether mercury is still used to process gold extracted from the mine as several methods are used, or the processing method was not verified, or it was not possible to determine whether the operation has made reasonable attempts to transition away from the use of mercury.

Assessment Notes: The verifier should record in the form provided in Annex 1 of this guidance the date of the assessment, the assessment determination and any information (including evidence and source) that has informed the determination.

CRITERION: CYANIDE MANAGEMENT

Producers' cyanide leaching plants are constructed to effectively avoid environmental contamination and are operated by trained adult personnel.

Step: Step 2 – Swiss Better Gold criteria

Explanation: Cyanide, which is sometimes used for the recovery of gold, is a toxic substance and hazardous to human health and wildlife. Unlike mercury, however, it quickly deactivates in sunlight and does not bioaccumulate in the bodies of animals. It can be highly effective in the recovery of gold from ore and if appropriate control measures are in place can be used safely and efficiently. As it is generally used in large volumes, however, a spill has the potential to cause significant harm.

Verifier Expectations and Guidance: The verifier should have a basic knowledge of the operational procedure of cyanide leach pads, ponds and tanks and a practical understanding of their application at mining operations.

A site visit is needed to inspect the control measures used, and staff operating the leach system should be interviewed to assess their knowledge of cyanide management and competency.

Data Collection Method: Site inspection, observation, interview.

Examples and Sources of Evidence: To assess whether the cyanide leach pads, ponds or tanks are fit for purpose, the verifier should inspect for cracks and/or leaks in the system. The verifier should carry out basic calculations to ensure that the leach system is able to maintain its integrity in the event of heavy rainfall or flooding. To cope with these events, the leach system should be designed to ensure it never reaches its full capacity (i.e. ingress of water doesn't cause it to overflow), or there should be

catchment ponds or ditches around the leach system to prevent cyanide from entering the surrounding environment.

To assess whether the mining producer proactively identifies breaches in its leach system, establish whether it has a regular schedule for maintenance, whether this schedule has been implemented and whether it has proactively identified any potential safety breaches. Producers should have a documented record of inspections and the findings of those inspections.

There should be a physical barrier around the leach system to prevent humans or animals from accidently falling into or drinking from it.

Working to manage a leach system, or in near proximity of it, is considered “hazardous work” and therefore inappropriate for people under 18 years of age. The age of workers exposed to the leach system can be verified through interviews and inspection of workers’ identity cards.

The producer should require that all workers who work with, or in the vicinity of a cyanide leach system undergo training on health and safety so they can protect themselves and others from harm. Training registers should provide evidence of who on the site has undergone appropriate training. The best method of determining whether staff managing cyanide leach pads are competent is to interview them about the procedures that they use to control cyanide and protect themselves, other workers and the local community and environment.

Implementing partners complete a gap analysis of the mining producer’s performance, continuous improvement plan, and monitoring reports, all of which can provide evidence useful for verifiers.

Performance Determination:

- **Meets:** There is evidence to show that the mining producer’s cyanide leach system is managed by trained competent personnel and has in place provisions that ensure people and the environment are protected, including a functional hazard management system suitable for all likely weather conditions.

- **Partially Meets:** There is evidence to show that the cyanide leach system and hazard management system is functional under normal conditions, but control measures may be compromised if a secondary event such as heavy rainfall or flooding was to occur.

- **Misses:** There is evidence to show that the producer’s cyanide leach system is not managed by competent personnel and does not have in place adequate provisions to ensure the protection of people and the environment. An effective hazard management system is absent or not fit for purpose, and there is a high risk of cyanide being released into the environment.

- **Insufficient Information:** It is not possible to gather information to clarify whether the cyanide leach management system is fit for purpose.

Assessment Notes: The verifier should record in the form provided in Annex 1 of this guidance the date of the assessment, the assessment determination and any information (including evidence and source) that has informed the determination.

Objective 3.2 – Climate Change: Climate change caused by human activity related to the release of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, such as carbon dioxide and methane, poses one of the most serious challenges to human and ecosystem survival in the world today. Global concern over greenhouse gas emissions and climate change has led to the development of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UN FCCC) and spurred the establishment of targets for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, that are applicable in over 196 countries, during the UN FCCC Conference of the Parties (COP) 21 or the Paris Agreement. The Paris Agreement is a legally binding international treaty on climate change with a goal to limit global warming to well below 2°C compared to pre-industrial levels.

The Convention advocates for a holistic approach to addressing climate change, emphasising the critical connection between climate, water resources, and biodiversity. Global warming, driven by GHG emissions, directly affects the availability and quality of water, disrupts ecosystems, and threatens biodiversity. Conversely, water scarcity and pollution further degrade ecosystems and reduce species diversity, while biodiversity loss weakens ecosystem resilience to climate change, creating a harmful cycle. Due to these interdependencies, mitigation and adaptation strategies for mining producers must integrate the three concepts.

The Swiss Better Gold Association requires mining producers to contribute to these global objectives by adopting practices that reduce GHG emissions, ensure the efficient and responsible use of water, and protect biodiversity. These efforts align with international commitments and comply with national regulations in each country.

CRITERION: CLIMATE CHANGE

Mining producers demonstrate their commitment to tackle climate change by identifying, documenting (reporting), and implementing measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions; managing water resources efficiently, minimising pollution, overuse, and ensure water quality, recovery, and availability; and protecting biodiversity through soil conservation, mine site restoration, and the understanding, preservation and protection of local flora and fauna—all to the best of their ability.

Step: Step 2 – Swiss Better Gold criteria

Explanation: Mining, smelting and refining operations consume energy and emit greenhouse gases (GHG). The mining industry's **GHG emissions** are often categorised as coming from two major sources. The first (referred to as Scope 1 emissions) are direct emissions as a result from sources that are owned or controlled by a mining operation, such as fossil fuel use in the recovery and processing of minerals, transportation of ore and electricity generation on site. The second (referred to as Scope 2 emissions) are emissions that result from the generation of purchased or acquired electricity, heating, cooling, and steam consumed by an organisation, primarily in refining and smelting operations. Indirect GHG emissions that occur outside of the organisation, including both upstream and downstream emissions, are referred to as Scope 3. Due to the high complexity of ASGM as well as given the fact that these represent the biggest emissions in the mining sector, the Swiss Better Gold Association focusses only on Scope 1 and 2 emissions.

Mining producers' GHG emissions reduction journey has two main steps. The first one is to reduce their GHG emissions by:

- Reducing fuel and energy consumption by adopting energy efficiency practices;
- Increasing use of renewable energy sources, where available.

After reduction, the producer can go further in their climate strategy, offsetting remaining emissions by, for example, planting trees or restoring wooden areas.

The Swiss Better Gold Association requires that all mining producers participating in the programme are clearly demonstrating a commitment to identify and document where GHG emissions are most likely to occur in their operations, and recommends a stepwise approach to reduction that might include the following actions:

- Establish, measure and share results with the Swiss Better Gold Association on the major sources of Scope 1 and 2 GHG emissions in the operation and across all business activities (for example, generators fuelled by diesel, trucks used for transport, equipment using electricity);
- Evaluate which Scope 1 and/or Scope 2 emissions have the highest reduction potential;
- Use this analysis to develop a plan aimed at reducing GHG emissions;
- Specify concrete actions and deadlines (targets) for the plan's implementation, including the responsible staff and/or production areas;
- Allow for changes and growth of the operation when setting targets;
- Allocate staff time to monitor the identified sources of emissions and the measures taken to reduce GHG emissions to evaluate progress on the plan's implementation and towards targets.

Secondly, this criterion evaluates usage of **water resources**, acknowledging the critical role water plays throughout the mining process. However, the intensive use and potential contamination of water in mining operations present significant challenges. Poor management can lead to the depletion or pollution of nearby water sources.

Given the increasing global scarcity of water, efficient water management in mining is essential for promoting environmental and social sustainability. By optimising water use, mining producers can reduce negative environmental impacts and help safeguard this vital resource. Additionally, responsible water management supports climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts.

The Swiss Better Gold Association requires mining producers to demonstrate a clear commitment to minimising—and ultimately eliminating—harmful practices, such as excessive water consumption and contamination, through one or more of the following actions:

- Harvesting water in compliance with national environmental regulations;

- Implementing actions and management systems for water reuse or recirculation (domestic/industrial);
- Harvesting and utilising rainwater;
- Monitoring and addressing leaks in water recirculation, collection, and/or storage systems;
- Treating water before discharging it into the ground or water bodies;
- Monitoring water quality to ensure compliance with national regulatory standards;
- Setting and working towards water recirculation targets within mining operations;
- Training relevant personnel in water resource management, conservation, and control measures;
- Implementing measures to protect and preserve water sources near the mining unit or those essential to the local community, where applicable.

Finally, regarding **biodiversity**, this criterion considers the potential impacts of gold mining and processing—particularly alluvial mining—on habitat destruction and biodiversity loss. The removal of vegetation and soil disturbance disrupt wildlife, forcing many species to migrate or face extinction. Furthermore, biodiversity loss weakens ecosystem resilience, reducing their ability to adapt to changing environmental conditions.

Effective management and best practices for biodiversity protection in mining are crucial for climate change mitigation and adaptation, ensuring the conservation of local ecosystems and species. This, in turn, enhances ecosystem resilience against threats such as soil erosion, habitat loss, and species decline. Maintaining biodiversity is essential for preserving environmental balance, including the water cycle and natural pest control. By implementing biodiversity protection measures, mining producers help create resilient ecosystems that support sustainability and contribute to slowing down climate change.

The Swiss Better Gold Association requires mining producers to demonstrate a clear commitment to mine rehabilitation and conservation (closure plans) by implementing measures to halt and reverse environmental degradation and restore ecosystems. This can be achieved through one or more of the following actions:

- Managing and conserving organic soil resources;
- Rehabilitating and restoring mining areas within the operation or its area of influence;
- Implementing conservation, protection, rehabilitation, and restoration initiatives for wildlife, flora, and ecosystems;

- Providing training for personnel on biodiversity protection and sustainability strategies of the mining operation.

Verifier Expectations and Guidance: The verifier should have an understanding of the common sources and relative intensity of **GHG emissions** in mining operations, including the extraction, processing and transportation of ore and the mined product. They should also have a working knowledge of GHG accounting protocols of Scope 1 and 2 emissions when applied to identifying emission sources.

The verifier should seek to identify whether the producer has in place, and is implementing, actions that can help to reduce GHG emissions and substitute fossil fuels used in the generation of energy with methods that emit less GHG emissions.

A site visit is needed to verify that the mining producer has adequately and appropriately identified Scope 1 and 2 GHG emissions and that efforts have been made to put in place equipment and practices to reduce emissions.

The verifier should have a comprehensive understanding of various mining and processing methods, as well as knowledge of the **water** cycle within each mining type. This includes identifying methods of water harvesting, use, treatment, and disposal—such as recirculation and reuse—along with knowledge of technologies and control measures used to optimise water management.

Additionally, the verifier should assess whether the producer has adopted and is actively implementing measures to minimise negative impacts associated with water use and pollutant discharge.

The verifier must also have a foundational understanding of **ecosystem conservation** methodologies and evaluate whether the producer has taken steps to mitigate adverse effects on soil, vegetation, and wildlife. This includes determining whether the producer maintains protected or conserved forest areas, has rehabilitated or restored land using native vegetation, and aligns these efforts with the geophysical characteristics of the region in which the mining operation is located.

Data Collection Method: Site inspection and observation, interviews, document review (e.g., available water quality monitoring, forest rehabilitation programs, organic soil conservation programmes, wildlife monitoring), quantitative data collection (e.g., energy use).

Examples and Sources of Evidence: The full gold mining, processing and transport system for the operation should be inspected to determine:

- Where **GHG emissions** occur and compare those results with the documented analysis and plan that the mining producer is required to develop;
- The **water** cycle in the mining operation, compared with the documented water quality analysis results and the plan the producer is required to develop in compliance with applicable national regulations;
- The plans, programmes, and/or activities related to **biodiversity**.

During the site walk, the verifier shall:

- Observe the actions that have been put in place by the producer to monitor and reduce **GHG emissions**. The Swiss Better Gold Association recognises that in many cases it is important to take into account the mining producers' reality and their capacities to make incremental improvements to their current practices because of their circumstances, unfamiliarity with GHG emission-reducing practices, or lack of capital to replace energy-generating equipment. In such cases, the site or facility's overall efforts to reduce or maintain emissions levels will be taken into account for the determination of compliance with the criterion.

- Identify and analyse aspects related to **water use** and management at the mine and/or processing plant, including potential impacts on water sources within the mining operation's area of influence. This includes reviewing possible effects of mining waste on water sources or assessing any reduction in water quality due to sedimentation or chemical runoff. Additionally, the verifier shall observe and evaluate the operational and environmental aspects of wastewater treatment systems (both domestic and industrial) used in the mining operation, with a focus on the actions outlined in the producer's plan to improve water resource efficiency.

- Identify and analyse the presence and condition of: designated forest protection and conservation areas, or zones critical for **biodiversity** preservation; rehabilitated areas with morphological and landscape restoration; forested, reforested, or revegetated sites; areas designated for the collection or protection of organic soil layers; signage prohibiting wildlife hunting; and signs indicating protection measures of flora and fauna.

The verifier should interview the producer's management and/or technical staff to determine the following:

- Their understanding of the producer's efforts to identify sources of **GHG emissions**, plans to reduce such emissions, and to monitor progress to meet reduction targets. Management should be able to describe the assessments that are conducted to identify sources of GHG and the measures to reduce emissions. During the documentation review and interviews with key staff, the verifier should determine how targets were defined and whether the analysis was reasonable.

- The producer's strategies and actions for the efficient management of **water resources**. Interviews must include workers or staff responsible for water catchment, usage, and discharge systems at the mine site to determine whether they have the necessary knowledge, training, and tools to manage water resources effectively at each stage of the mining operation.

- The plan or related activities developed by the producer for **biodiversity** protection and the extent to which related activities, programs, and programs have been implemented.

The overall efforts made by the producer and its employees, as well as the resources available to achieve targets related to emissions reduction, water resource management, and biodiversity conservation will be taken into account for the determination of compliance with the criterion.

Implementing partners complete a gap analysis of the mining producer's performance, continuous improvement plan, and monitoring reports, all of which can provide evidence useful for verifiers.

Performance determination: The mining producer has to demonstrate commitments in each of the three themes.

- **Meets:** There is evidence to show that the mining producer has identified and documented the points at which Scope 1 and 2 GHG emissions do or are likely to occur and has put in place measures and practices that effectively reduce GHG emissions proportionate to its size and resources.

  There is evidence to show that the producer has made its best efforts to identify actions for improving water use efficiency and has put in place relevant measures and practices.

  There is evidence to show that the producer has made its best efforts to identify actions for the protection of biodiversity and has put in place relevant measures and practices.

- **Partially Meets:** There is evidence to show that the producer has identified and documented the points at which GHG emissions do or are likely to occur, but there is no evidence to show that the producer has put in place measures and practices that effectively reduce GHG emissions proportionate to its size and resources.

  There is evidence to show that the producer has identified actions to improve water use efficiency; however, there is no evidence to show that measures and practices have been put in place by the producer to effectively improve water use efficiency.

  There is evidence to show that the producer has identified actions for the protection of biodiversity; however, there is no evidence to show that measures and practices have been put in place by the producer to effectively protect biodiversity.

- **Misses:** There is no evidence to show that the producer has made reasonable attempts to identify GHG emissions at the operation and/or put in place measures or practices that demonstrate a commitment to reduce GHG emissions; that they have made attempts to identify and/or implement actions in reference to water use efficiency; or that they have made an attempt to identify and/or implement actions for the protection of biodiversity.

- **Insufficient Information:** From the information the verifier was able to gather it is unclear whether the producer has made a commitment to identify,

document and reduce GHG emissions at the operation; actions in reference to water use efficiency; and/or actions in reference to biodiversity protection.

Assessment Notes: The verifier should record in the form provided in Annex 1 of this guidance the date of the assessment, the assessment determination and any information (including evidence and source) that has informed the determination.

ANNEX 1 – Example of Record of Assessment Determination and Notes

The verifier should record **for each criteria** his or her determination, and all other relevant information that enables a third party to understand how and why that determination has been made. This should include, but not be limited to, the number of the criteria, the date of the assessment, the assessment determination, and any comments and evidence or sources that have informed the determination. The form below is a template that can be used by verifiers to record and store this information.

Criteria	DD / MM / YY	Comment:	Evidence and Source	Determination (Misses/Partially Meets/Meets)