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Strategies to reduce mercury use in the Artisanal and Small-Scale Gold Mining sector - evidence from Bolivia.



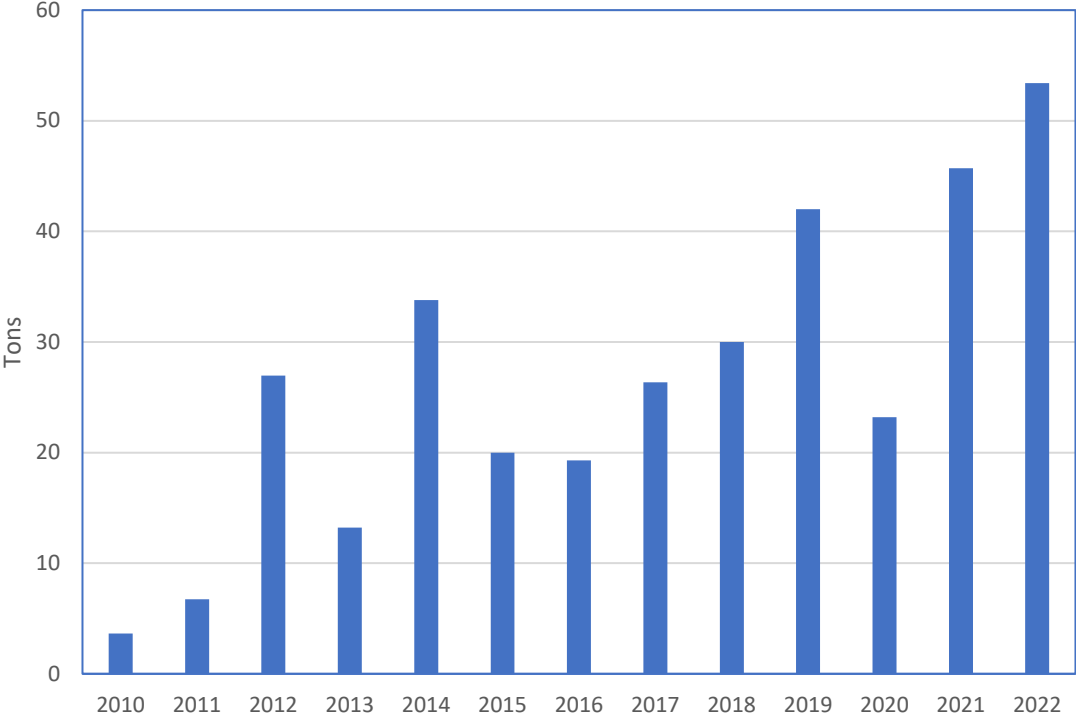
ASGM, Bolivia & Hg

- ASGM = largest source of Hg
- Bolivia imports Hg (200 tons/yr.)
- ASGM dominated by cooperatives (>1,800 & >120,000 people)
- Hg well known, easy to use, but inefficient
- Hard rock & alluvial mining
- Whole ore amalgamation common, retorts are uncommon...
- CN^- of waste with Hg on the rise...
- General env. & social challenges



Gold & Bolivia

Bolivia - annual gold exports (tons)



Regulation of Hg & ASGM in Bolivia (sticks)

- Minamata ratified (2016) -> domestic law
- Import and use of Hg is legal, control has improved somewhat...
- Hg use in mining is regulated, specifically
- Cooperative mining enjoys special and supporting legislation
- ASGM is comparatively well "formalized", but few have environmental permits
- The cooperative mining sector has strong political & economic position
- Concern over Hg in mining is growing..



Support to ASGM in Bolivia (carrots)

- Technical advise has been provided from projects and government institutions -> improve efficiency to do away with Hg
- Limited success with responsible supply chains (SBGI, Fair trade gold, Fairmined)
- Financial support (FOFIM)



Policy failure – why?

- Institutional capacity
- Traditions & customs
- Conflicting regulations – “*what is not prohibited is allowed..*”
- Political power of the cooperatives
- Changes in leadership – cooperatives and state
- Lack of expertise – cooperatives and state
- The gold price...



What now?

Institutional strengthening & regulatory reform

- Supervision and control
- Pro-active, responsible cooperatives
- Streamlining & fill gaps in env. leg.
- Ensure Hg is less easily available.

Technical support

- Pilot projects / Hg free supply chains (grav. and/or CN)
- Technical training

Financial mechanisms

- Enable funding for technical transition, and better management/control of ASGM operators

Strengthening awareness & knowledge of risks

- Miners
- Communities
- Public at large

-> planetGOLD...



The longer term?

- Evaluate preference for AS(G)M critically
- Consider encouraging small operators to become larger, better organised entities, that can engage in more responsible mining practices.



Thank you for listening!

