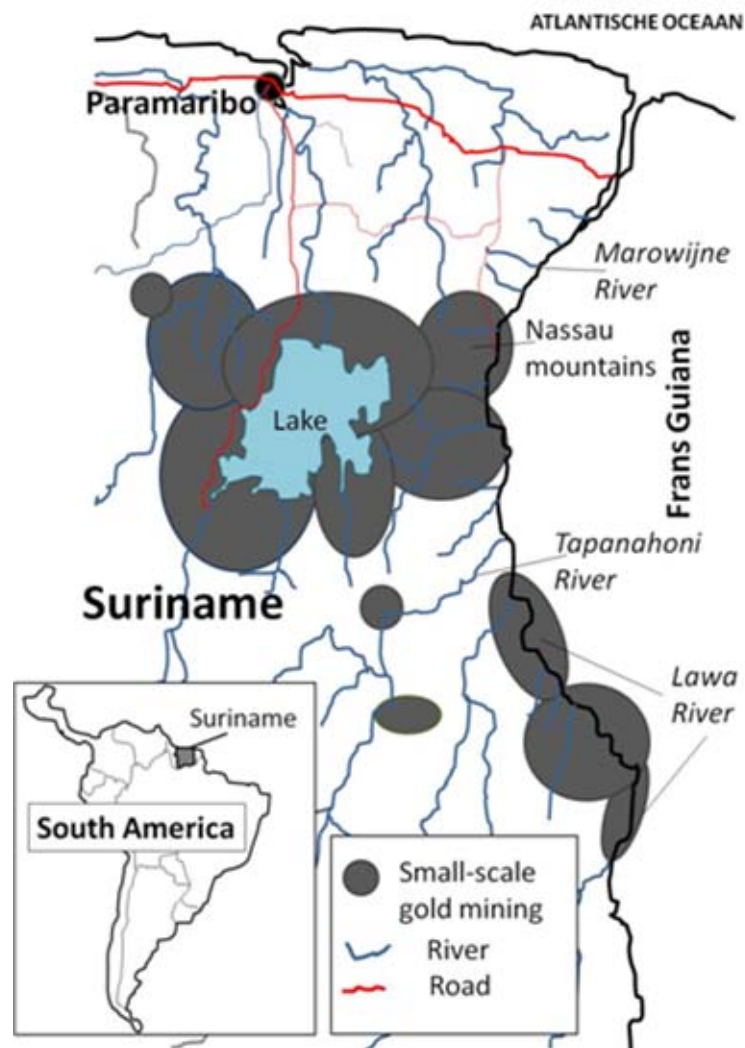


Fact sheet

Small scale gold mining in Suriname

General information	
Population Size/density	Pop: 492,829; Density:
GNP per capita	US\$ 5,791 (2010)
% of population below poverty line	59,2% in Paramaribo and Wanica (data from 1999/2000; no nation-wide estimates exist)
Child Mortality	23.4 per 1000 live born (2008)
Legal minimum wage	No legal minimum wage established

Map of locations where small scale gold mining takes place



History of Small scale gold mining

Since the first recorded gold exploration in 1718, various private and state parties have explored and exploited Suriname's gold deposits. After the abolition of slavery (1863) the Dutch colonial government encouraged gold exploration to provide employment for former plantation workers. These efforts sparked a gold rush at the turn of the century (1890-1910).

In the 1970s, rapidly rising gold prices renewed Suriname government interest in the national gold deposits. Governmental geological activity ended abruptly though during the interior war (1986-1992); a civil conflict between a military government and the Jungle Command, a group of Maroon insurgents. The Jungle Command partly financed its struggle with gold and possibly invited the first Brazilian miners to Suriname. At the same time, more stringent restrictions on SSM in Brazil drove thousands of *garimpeiros* to the Guianas. Brazilians mechanized and modernized Suriname's SSM sector. Soon thousands of young Maroon men with limited formal employment options joined them.

Socio-economic aspects of small scale gold mining

(Estimated) number of persons involved in ssm	12-15 thousand
Number ssm miners/Number of people involved through secondary activities related to gold mining	1:1
Number of medium/large mining companies (registered and unregistered)	2 medium-scale companies; 2 active LSM (multinational) companies; several junior exploration companies.
Civil society actors involved in ssm	WWf Guianas
% ssm migrant miners	75%
% ssm miners who are women	5%
% ssm miners who are children under the age of 16	<2%
Annual gold production total	28.6 tonnes (2009)
Annual gold production large scale mining (LSM)	12.1 tonnes (2009)
Annual gold production small-scale mining	16.5 tonnes (2009); 57.7 % of total
Proportion gold mining revenues in GNP / export	Mining (alumina, gold, oil) accounts for 80-85% of exports (2009-2010). SSM accounts for 4% of GDP.

Are certain ethnic groups more than others involved in small scale gold mining?

Virtually all Suriname (not migrant) miners are Maroons; tribal peoples of African descent. Maroons traditionally live in the Suriname interior where the country's gold reserves are located. Throughout history, Maroons have mined for gold when they needed cash to supplement subsistence resources. Today small-scale gold mining has become the primary source of subsistence for large share of Maroon households. A major driver of current maroon involvement in SSM is the interior war (see above). During this period of civil conflict, schools were destroyed, the interior became isolated, and Maroons were stigmatized. Many young Maroon men of today have no or low levels of education, do not adequately speak the national language Dutch, and denied jobs because of discrimination. Gold mining is appreciated for its low entree requirements, a decent income, and relative freedom from formal urban employers. In addition to Maroons, some Hindustani and others work in mining as equipment operators and owners. The concessionaries are typically urban Surinamers.

The gold market chain: where is small scale mined gold traded?

Gold earned by a mining team is shared according to the following key: 70-80% for the equipment owner and 20-30% for the workers (5-6). The cook usually receives fixed pay (50-60 g/month) and excavator drivers are paid by the hour (6 gr/hr). Miners and service providers typically sell their gold in Paramaribo, where they receive the world market price minus \pm 3% (1% royalty, 2% admin. & overhead). There are 8 formal buyers in Suriname, five of which also export gold. Gold for export is controlled, registered, and sealed at the Central bank of Suriname, after which it is prepared for export. Most gold is exported legally, to Dubai.

Environmental aspects of small scale gold mining	
Annual area deforested due to small-scale and large-scale gold mining	SSM: 48–96 km ² of old-growth forest/yr. LSM: ?
Annual import of mercury for mining and other purposes	No data available
Annual mercury use	Considering 1 Kg Hg: 1 kg Au; annual Hg use may be about 16,000 kg
% of mercury recovery	Very little mercury is recovered; few miners work with retorts

Effects of gold mining on the watershed(s) and its resources

The most severe impact of SSM, as perceived by local people, is the increased sediment level in rivers and creeks. Water that previously was used for drinking and cooking is no longer suitable for human consumption. Virtually all watersheds in the vicinity of SSM activities are visibly turbid and of a coffee-with-milk non-transparent color. Fish that depend on visibility for hunting are no longer able to live in these watercourses. In addition, fish breeding and spawning places are being destroyed. Mercury contamination of waterways affects people as inorganic mercury spills into the watercourses during washing or deposits after evaporation. Inorganic mercury transforms into the highly toxic methyl-mercury, when it leaches into rivers, is absorbed by ground-feeding organisms, and moves up the food chain through carnivorous fish.

How is mining titling arranged?

Mining titles are extended by the Suriname Ministry of Natural Resources and the Geology and Mining Department (GMD) (see below). In theory, all Suriname citizens have equal access to mining rights through the application process. In practice, political liaisons, favoritism, and corruption determine who has, and who does not have, access to mining lands. Acquisition of a mining title comes with rights and duties. Among others, the concessionaries have to submit quarterly reports and pay taxes, and they are not allowed to sublet their concession to third parties (i.e. Brazilians). In practice there is widespread violation of these regulations. The GMD does not have the resources (human and material) to execute effective control. Moreover, due to corruptive practices, concessions that should have been withdrawn for a long time continue to be in the hands of political allies and powerful Surinamers and their family members.

Who has access to mining lands?

Prior to placing a mining machine somewhere, Brazilian *garimpeiros* will seek out who is the formal (or informal) concessionary and strike a deal with this person. Informal concession holders are traditional inhabitants of the land (Maroons or Amerindians) who claim (customary) rights to the land. Typically, the miner pays 10 percent of his earnings to the concession holder (or 2x10% with a formal and an informal claimant), who in turn is supposed to offer a certain level of safety and infrastructure. Maroon miners may be asked by local leaders to pay a percentage share, but often refuse if they consider themselves rightful heirs of the land. Maroon miners from ethnic groups other than the one claiming the area may pay a percentage share or give 'presents' to the community and/or the tribal leaders (i.e. outboard motor, barrels of fuel, generator, etc).

National environmental legislation, particularly with regard to gold mining

National environmental legislation with regard to small-scale gold mining is extremely limited. The current mining code dates from 1986, and has only a few unspecified lines on environmental issues. The new draft mining law has been awaiting approval in parliament since 2003. Suriname does not have a specific environmental law. There is a draft environmental law which has been awaiting approval from parliament since 2002.

National policy regarding gold mining, large scale and small scale

Mining policy in Suriname has primarily focused on LSM. Since the 1960's, the GOS (Min. Natural Resources) has closed several contracts with LSM companies (bauxite, gold). When SSM started booming in the early 1990s it was long ignored in government policies. Exceptions were an effort of the Wijdenbosch administration (1996-2000) to register Brazilians against a USD200- fee (this money

disappeared) and several “clean-sweep” actions by the Venetiaan government (2005-2010) aimed at “criminals” in SSM areas (none were caught). The current installed a Commission Regulation Gold Sector to regulate and formalize SSM. The Commission explicitly does not want to criminalize SSMers and aims to develop mining service centers in the interior of Suriname where miners can go for all their needs (gold selling, technical assistance, registration). To date the Commission has made an effort to register all gold miners and mediated in tensions between LSM and SSM in the Meriam area.

Legal organization of gold mining industry (formal)

The legal organization of gold mining is noted down in the Mining Code of 1986 (Decree E-58, 1986). A new draft mining law is awaiting approval from the National Assembly. According to the valid (1986) law, only persons who obtained a concession from the right authorities (Min. Natural Resources/GMD) are allowed to execute mining activities. There are five types of mining rights: discovery (max. 200,000 ha, 2 yr), exploration (max. 40,000 ha, 3 yr), exploitation (max. 10,000 ha, 25 yr), small-scale mining (max 200 ha), and construction materials. These rights may not be sublet to third parties. The holders of mining rights are obliged to submit quarterly reports to the Geology and Mining Department (GMD). So far in 2010-2011, a total of 6 (six) quarterly reports have been submitted by the holders of, in total, 1 mln. ha in exploration rights, 211 thousand ha in exploitation rights, and 2,600 small-scale mining titles. Given its lack of resources and under current conditions the GMD is unable to adequately execute control on SSM.

Actual organization of gold mining industry (informal)

Formal concession rights are mostly in the hands of powerful urban individuals with ties to the government. Gold miners pay 10-15% of their earnings to work on the concession. This system is illegal. Tribal Maroons and Indigenous peoples have no formal rights to the land they inhabit and use, but they claim customary rights to their ancestral lands. Gold miners who work on those lands may be asked for a percentage share of their earnings or other forms of payment (fuel, infrastructure). Local miners are less likely to pay than migrant miners. In the case of an actively present concession holder, the concession holder is the area manager and determines who stays, who leaves, how conflicts must be resolved, and which rules apply. Often, however, the concessionary is mostly absent and does not actively manage mining activities on the concession – he only sends in guards to get the money.

Existence and severity of gold mining related conflicts

The following conflicts have been experienced in the past decade are primarily:

- Between LSM and SSM: Multinationals have acquired concessions in the areas of Gros Rosebel (Iam Gold) and Meriam (Newmont), where SSM have been –and still are- working first. The SSM have been removed with force and threats of force.
- Among local authorities: Some village chiefs allow miners to work on their village lands against payment of a fee or other form of material compensation. Not all traditional leaders agree with these practices. In the Ndyuka territory, village heads (*kapiteins*) were reprimanded by the paramount chief (*granman*) for allowing mining in the Mama Ndjuka creek, a ceremonially important ancestral site.
- Between local authorities and community members: Local authorities do not distribute the compensation they receive from miners working on village land equally to all villagers who are affected. This creates tension.
- Among SSM (local-local; local-migrant; migrant-migrant): Non-gold related conflicts (i.e. over women) seem to be the most likely causes of physical fights. Yet conflicts also exist over mining rights, access to land, payment, etc.. For example, in some areas tribal leaders have decided that all migrant miners need to leave to allow local men to earn a living.
- Between SSM and park management (Brownsberg national park): Miners are working in the national park, which is not in agreement with the park management guidelines
- Between SSM and national government: related to all of the above, and primarily to access to land and mining rights.