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## ARTISANAL GOLD MINING PROGRAM, ORO LEGAL

USAID’s “Oro Legal” Program is a bold response to the growing social conflict, environmental impact and governance challenges arising from the gold mining boom in Colombia. The Program acknowledges that uncontrolled artisanal gold mining is both a stimulus for illegality and wide-scale environmental degradation. The large numbers of artisanal mine operators are also vulnerable to extortion by the illegal armed groups that threaten Colombia’s peace-building efforts. The Program seeks to harness the growing awareness and action at all levels of government, and increasingly by large mining operations, to create a shared agenda for sustainable change in this economically important, yet much maligned, sector of the economy. “Oro Legal” acts as a neutral stakeholder, neither expanding nor reducing mining activity *per se*; rather supporting responsible mining where it is technically, financially and legally feasible to do so. In all cases, the Program works in concert with Colombian government entities, aligning itself with prevailing government policy on mining.

### OBJECTIVES & APPROACHES

The Program is focused on the regions of Antioquia and Chocó and has two main objectives. The first is to build effective governance capacity for gold mining activities via: (i) strengthening Colombian government capacity to enforce gold mining legislation; (ii) enhancing the participation of artisanal gold mining associations and Afro Colombian and indigenous communities in mining formalization programs, and (iii) providing training and technical assistance to artisanal miners. The second is to increase the capacity of Colombian government entities to address the environmental impact caused by illegal mining through: (i) reforestation of degraded areas; (ii) generating alternative livelihoods for communities that cannot or should not be involved in gold mining, and (iii) improve drinking water quality in mining areas.

## **EXPECTED RESULTS**

- Legalize/formalize 220 artisanal mining operations.
- Improve 11,500 hectares of degraded land.
- Produce 8 tons of legal gold.
- Eliminate 55 tons of mercury from the production process.
- Reduce airborne mercury contamination by 30%.
- Capture 3,000,000 tons of CO<sub>2</sub>.
- Train 2,200 miners in improved mining techniques.