



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



# INNOVATING SOLUTIONS FOR GOLD MINING IN THE AMAZON

Artisanal and small-scale gold mining (ASGM) is a threat to biodiversity across the Amazon region, causing habitat destruction, sedimentation, and mercury accumulation that harms human health and ecosystems. Partnering with Conservation X Labs, USAID will engage with diverse innovators across the region, and, with support from the private sector, will develop and implement solutions to make legal ASGM operations more environmentally responsible and socially equitable.

Conservation X Labs (CXL) is a technology and innovation company harnessing a global community of solvers and entrepreneurs to incentivize bold, unconventional approaches to conservation. CXL operates Grand Challenges, which are global competitions that reward monetary prizes to the best solutions for specific conservation problems. Grand Challenges source scalable solutions from individuals and teams with diverse backgrounds, leading to new ideas, increased global attention, and strong resource partnerships. The ASGM Grand Challenge will bring together leading conservation organizations, world class health and scientific institutions, governments, as well as technology, manufacturing and mining companies to conserve biodiversity and improve the health and security of communities living in the Amazon basin.

PHOTO: CINCIA/USAID

## HOW DOES THE ACTIVITY WORK?

With support from the U. S. Agency for International Development (USAID), CXL launched the Amazon Region Grand Challenge competition, open to applicants until November 2021. The goal of the Challenge is to provide promising innovators with funding and support to generate solutions that will achieve environmental and social impact, become financially sustainable, and operate at an effective scale. The competition seeks solutions that contribute to: (1) Safeguard ecosystems and prevent, remediate, and restore impacts from ASGM on biodiversity, water resources, and human health; (2) Optimize responsible supply chains to increase transparency, traceability, and enable gold purchasing that is environmentally responsible and socially equitable from the point of origin to its final sale; and (3) Promote and sustain formalization of miners in the ASGM sector so that they operate legally in accordance with laws and regulations. Participation in the Challenge offers a number of benefits beyond just funding and monetary prizes, including access to a network of experts and leaders; the chance to meet and learn from peers working on cutting-edge products and tools; mentorship on business and product development; opportunities to conduct field-testing; and recognition and validation from our world-class evaluation panel. The activity will include various entry points for winners. First, up to 10 subawards will be made for field testing in partnership with local NGOs. From those 10, between four and six innovators will be chosen for acceleration. Finally, two winners will receive larger monetary prizes along with tailored acceleration and scale up support. For innovations that advance to the acceleration stage, CXL will connect winners with its global network to help design, test, improve, adopt, and scale the ideas. This partnership between USAID and CXL is a Global Development Alliance (GDA) that will award \$1 million in prizes and will leverage significant private sector investments.

## WHAT RESULTS ARE EXPECTED?

- Acceleration and scale up of between 10 and 15 innovations to aid in more environmentally responsible and socially equitable ASGM practices
- Increased collaboration with local and regional NGOs to support field testing of innovations and with the private sector to scale up solutions
- Launch of virtual and in-person science and innovation exchanges to foster the creation of a community of practice
- Launch of the Amazon CoLab, a six-month acceleration program to support innovator teams developing, testing, and advancing solutions to protect people and ecosystems in the Amazon
- Increased access to financial services and markets for artisanal mining solutions
- More environmentally responsible and socially equitable ASGM operations in the Amazon

## PROJECT INFORMATION

**IMPLEMENTER:** Conservation X Labs

**DURATION:** July 2020 - January 2023

**USAID FUNDING:** \$2,252,265

**LEVERAGE:** \$5.5 million total with investments from Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation (\$3.325 million), esri (\$1.845 million) and Microsoft (\$360,000).

**LOCATION:** Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru and Suriname

**COORDINATOR:** Dino Delgado

**EMAIL:** [didelgado@usaid.gov](mailto:didelgado@usaid.gov)