



# Mercury Use and Pollution in North- Western Zambia

Email: [sepazambia17@gmail.com](mailto:sepazambia17@gmail.com),  
Zambezi, North Western Province  
Cell Number: +260979320953,  
website: [www.sepaforzambia.org](http://www.sepaforzambia.org)

Presentation by : Mailes Zulu, Chief Executive  
Officer

# SAVE ENVIRONMENT AND PEOPLE AGENCY (SEPA)

- SEPA is a Zambian non-governmental organization established over 20 years ago.
- Mandate: transform rural communities by addressing climate change, environmental sustainability, and social enterprises.
- Empowers vulnerable households, especially women, with irrigation systems, land rights advocacy, and food security programmes.
- Memberships & Networks
  - AU African Union
  - SADC Great Green Wall Initiative
  - UN Environmental Governing Body (Observer status)
  - WECAN Global Network of the FAO (Focal Point)
  - International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)
  - GEF CSOs Network
  - Follower of Minamata
  - Pan African Network for the Conservation and Protection of Africa's Natural Resources. PANCANR

# Background

- ▶ Mercury is widely used in artisanal and small-scale gold mining (ASGM)
- ▶ Highly toxic: damages nervous system, kidneys, and environment
- ▶ Zambia signed the Minamata Convention to reduce mercury use
- ▶ In North-Western Province, discovery of new gold sites increases risk

# What is Mercury Used For?

- Gold extraction in ASGM (main use)
- Thermometers, fluorescent bulbs, Energy Savers bulbs and some medical devices
- Industrial processes (though less common locally)
- Waste Management

# Local Context - Kasempa & Mufumbwe

- North-Western Province has seen a rise in artisanal gold activity; reports indicate mercury use and river pollution in Kasempa (Dengwe, Lufupa river).
- Mufumbwe and Kasempa feature informal/illegal mining sites with environmental contamination reported in local media.
- Reliable epidemiological data specifically for Kasempa/Mufumbwe is limited evidence mostly from local reports and national action plans.



# Government & Partner Actions to Date

- National/regional data: planetGOLD Zambia aims to reduce ~1.14 metric tonnes of mercury and supports ~11,000 miners.
- The Zambia National Action Plan (2023) sets ASGM targets but local data in Kasempa/Mufumbwe remain sparse.
- Local reports document river pollution events and mining-related fatalities, but systematic counts of affected people are not publicly available.



# SEPA Interventions

- Sensitized communities in North-Western Province on dangers of mercury exposure from artisanal gold mining.
- Raised awareness on mercury in energy-saving bulbs, encouraging safer alternatives.
- Advocated for removal of mercury thermometers in Zambezi district hospitals.
- Focused sensitization on men but especially women and girls, who are most exposed due to domestic water use.
- Raised awareness through media campaigns to ensure wide coverage across the province.
- SEPA acted with its own initiative and limited resources
- Gold discoveries expanding → more districts at risk
- Support needed to:
  - Scale up advocacy
  - Introduce safer mining technologies
  - Strengthen community monitoring networks

# Results so Far

- ▶ Increased community awareness in Chavuma Kasempa, Kalumbila, Mwinilunga, Mushindamo, Manyinga, Kabompo, Mufumbwe and Solwezi.
- ▶ Households adopting safer alternatives
- ▶ Men, women, and youth engaging in mercury risk dialogue

# Recommendations

- Implement community biomonitoring (hair/blood) in Kasempa & Mufumbwe to quantify exposure and affected populations.
- Introduce mercury-free gold recovery methods with training and subsidies.
- Strengthen enforcement against illegal mercury use, while for malising ASGM sites.
- Health interventions: screening, maternal/child health follow-ups, and awareness campaigns.
- Environmental remediation for contaminated rivers and sediments; regular water/food testing and fish advisories
- Periodic reporting and a public dashboard with disaggregated data (age, gender, occupation).
- Partnership to raise more resources for advocacy and policy enforcement.

Thank you

“Protecting People and the Environment from  
Mercury Pollution”