

# Safe livelihoods for informal gold miners in South and Southeast Asia

July 22 2013

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Safer ways for informal miners in South and Southeast Asia to prospect for gold will be investigated under an Australian Government grant won by The Australian National University (ANU) and Minelab.

The research is led by Dr Kuntala Lahiri-Dutt, a senior fellow at ANU with Minelab as a commercial partner, and will look at the risks taken by Artisanal Small Scale Gold Miners (ASM).

"Millions of people throughout the Asia-Pacific region still dig and pan for mineral resources, producing a very large amount of minerals this way. It is risky, speculative and precarious work," says Dr Lahiri-Dutt.

Traditional practices employ dangerous methods for detecting and mining alluvial gold then use [toxic chemicals](#) to refine the metal. This frequently leads to injury and death amongst ASM communities.

"Efforts undertaken so far to improve the lives of artisanal miners had focused on 'downstream' areas (such as the reduction in mercury use). My research will explore if the use of better technology can indeed improve the 'chances' of 'gold strikes'. It will work to build better awareness about safety and care for the environment in order to improve overall livelihood outcomes."

Through Dr Lahiri-Dutt's work, safer and more effective ways for [gold mining](#) can be found, preventing unnecessary risk to personal health and preserving the environment from the consequences of using mercury as a

key refiner.

The funding was granted under the Australian Research Council Linkage program, which supports collaboration between public researchers and private industry.

Gary Shmith, Minelab's Region Director for Asia Pacific congratulated Dr Lahiri-Dutt on being able to pursue such a valuable project.

"Minelab is committed to improving the welfare and well-being of Artisanal Small Scale Gold Miners by providing training and technology to safely and efficiently find gold. We are also committed to supporting Dr Lahiri-Dutt with Minelab's resources and expertise to assist her research in South and Southeast Asia and look forward to sharing the positive outcomes of the project."

Provided by Australian National University

Citation: Safe livelihoods for informal gold miners in South and Southeast Asia (2013, July 22) retrieved 19 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2013-07-safe-livelihoods-gold-miners-south.html>

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