



## **Illegal / informal forms of gold mining devastating the amazon forest**

### **The Problem**

A gold rush, fueled by high gold prices, has become the biggest threat to the conservation of the Amazon forest in Peruvian region of Madre de Dios (MDD). Known for its incredible biodiversity, it is home to over 1000 species of birds, 200+ mammals, several thousands of plants. An estimated 300 000 hectares have been hit so far by deforestation, with more than 6000 added every year. The water and air are being polluted with dangerous levels of mercury. 77.8% of inhabitants of Puerto Maldonado, capital of MDD, register higher levels as those permitted by the WHO.

The high profitability of gold prices has led to an uncontrolled growth of illegal mining, that now represents 52% of MDD's GDP, employing 50 000+. MDD has the lowest monetary poverty rate of the country, and illegal gold mining has now surpassed drug trafficking as the main illegal activity of Perú, the world's top producer of cocaine. Additional problems are the continuous social conflicts, human trafficking and underaged prostitution.

### **Current situation / What is being done?**

The government has put forward a comprehensive package of decrees that aim at regulating the activity, pursuing legal and law enforcement actions. Numerous different organization (NGOs), national and international, are conducting diverse activities trying to halt deforestation, contamination with mercury and other problems caused by mining. Despite their efforts, they haven't been able to reverse the trend of expansion.

### **How to contribute:**

- 1. Combined Open Data from government, NGOs and research institutions**

The complexity of the situation calls for a comprehensive approach and many levels of action by a diverse group of actors – government, NGOs and other institutions contributing in different areas of expertise, taking action, and mapping out possible solutions. Their activities include law enforcement, monitoring, promotion of sustainable alternatives, and research. Their papers and investigations, including the data, is spread in many different places around the web, mostly in pdf format, which makes them hard to find, organize and reuse. Raw data is almost not available.

In this context open data could:

- substantively ease the access to data sources and help organize them.
- foster a better coordination between the institutions, creating shared indicators.
- help validate the data by various actors.
- help create a culture of more continuous data gathering, shared methodologies, promote standards, fill in the blanks.

The government is putting forward an open data agenda, but the effort will require a longer period of time. The question remains, how to include data produced by other institutions, which the government continuously uses to back up their claims?

Thus, this proposal calls for a preliminary research involving relevant institutions, to assess the possible benefits, actual demand, and finding relevant data sets. It involves an effort to explain open data to institutions, finding areas for implementation, create strategies and procedures for publishing data, and if necessary, deploy a specialized open data platform.

## **2. Creating a web dedicated to visualizations and infographics**

This proposal is inspired by the experience of yourbudget.com, a platform that helps understand the Nigerian budget using simple infographics that put numbers into context (for example, how many classrooms could have been built with the oil revenues). We envision the creation of a similar site, gathering infographics and visualizations backed up by solid data sources and tailored towards different audiences, to be used informing and advocating about this serious problem in different contexts (social networks, press, print etc).

Opening data could be a good first step, but it is not enough. There is no central place on the web where a non-expert audience can have access to an organized set of visualizations and infographics about this topic using continuously updated data, that might help to easily understand the size and scope of the problem, the current trends (or trends over time), and also have an insight of the actual effectiveness of government measures and other institutions.