



# TV UNITED NATIONS NATIONS UNIES

## UN IN ACTION

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### GUYANA: THE GOLD RUSH

#### VIDEO

#### AUDIO

##### NARRATION

NATURAL SOUND (POT OF GOLD)

MOLTEN GOLD BEING Poured  
INTO MOLD

Gold. This precious metal is in great demand as financial markets teeter. (6.5")

WATERFALL

Here in the sizzling and sweltering heat of the rainforest, men in the Caribbean country of Guyana gamble everything searching for bits of gold. (10")

MINERS AT WORK

They're looking to share in the more than 200 million US dollars that Guyana took in as revenue from gold last year. (8")

But mining gold is tough work, bringing huge risks to miners and the environment. (6.5")

CHARLES MINING GOLD

Charles Daniels started prospecting for gold when he was just a teenager. About four years ago Charles noticed his hands began to tremble softly. He thought it was nothing but over time the shaking became worse. (14.5")

LAB TESTS

DANIELS: (English) **M**

*“They advised me to go to Georgetown and see if they could find anything. I had to wait for two weeks“ (4.5”)*

CHARLES AT HOME

NARRATION

The diagnosis – mercury poisoning. Charles blames one thing for his illness. (5.5”)

CHARLES ON CAMERA

DANIELS: (English) **M**

*“The gold work. I never took precautions.” (3.5”)*

MERCURY IN USE

NARRATION

Mercury is used to separate gold flakes from silt during the mining process. A fast and effective tool, if handled carelessly it can be poisonous. (11”)

WASH DOWN PROCESS

Breathing in mercury vapours causes dizziness and damages the nervous system. Too much exposure could cause death. (8”)

RAMSAMMY ON CAMERA

RAMSAMMY: (English) **M**

*“Mercury has been used in our country for a long time.” (3”)*

NARRATION

Guyana’s Health Minister, Dr. Leslie Ramsammy. (3.5”)

RAMSAMMY ON CAMERA

RAMSAMMY: (English) **M**

*“I am certain that it has led to various neurological and other chronic conditions.” (5.5”)*

NARRATION

MINERS AT WORK

According to a UN report, an estimated 100 million people in developing countries may be facing health challenges from using mercury in mining operations. The United Nations Environment Programme, UNEP, agreed this year to seek a global agreement to monitor the use of mercury. Brenda Koekkoek [**pronounced coo-cook**] is Environmental Engineer and Programme Officer at UNEP. (24.5")

BRENDA AT OFFICE

BRENDA: (English) **F**

BRENDA ON CAMERA

*"The treaty is set to reduce international trade in mercury and to reduce emissions of mercury."*  
(4")

NARRATION

GGMC & MINING BOOKLET

To protect its people and the environment, the Government of Guyana enacted new laws. Now miners are required to use gloves and masks when handling mercury. (11.5")

MINERS WITH GLOVES AND MASKS

But some miners don't believe that mercury is harmful. Ronald Remy has been mining for more than 40 years in Mahdia. (7.5")

REMY: (Creole) **M**

REMY ON CAMERA

*"I have been using mercury from 1960 until now. I never had any effects from it. If mercury was something against people's health, three-quarters of these people would have been dead by now."*  
(13.5")

NARRATION

RIVER DREDGE

Mining officers visit every three months. If caught committing violations, miners are slapped with steep fines. For years miners in Guyana operated without any respect for human health or the environment says Noel Ramkarran, General Manager of Sahadeo Mining Company. (25")

RAMKARRAN: (In English) **M**

RAMKARRAN ON CAMERA

*"Before we used to put the gold into the pan and burn it with the mercury. That was not healthy. "*  
(8")

NARRATION

RIVER DREDGE / FISHING

The open burning process allowed mercury vapours to travel for miles, polluting waterways and contaminating fish. (8")

RETORT IN USE

But now that's changing. As part of the new rules, gold amalgam is now sealed in a retort or metal container, and heated with a blowtorch to evaporate mercury. Its vapour is trapped in a bowl of water, where it can't escape.  
Commissioner at the Guyana Geology and Mines Commission, William Woolford. (20")

WOOLFORD: (English) **M**

WOOLFORD ON CAMERA

*"As a country we have been encouraging miners to improve their methods... We are promoting responsible mining and we think the miners are responding."* (8")

NARRATION.

REMY AT HOME

Survival of the gold mining industry in Guyana is critical to its economy and long-term development. Miners like Remy will have to abide by the new rules ...and for Charles, whose condition has become so debilitating that he can no longer fend for himself, it's too late... (19")

UN LOGO

This report was prepared by Mary Ferreira for the United Nations.