



Rainforest Action Group

SOLGOLD IN ECUADOR

**SOCIALISATION SUCCESS OR
ECOLOGICAL NIGHTMARE?**



**UPDATE
SEPTEMBER 2025**

*SolGold mural, Ari, Loja Province
Image credit: Frente Nacional Antiminero*

WHO IS SOLGOLD?

SolGold is an Australia-headquartered mining company, established in 2006. It conducts the majority of its activities in Ecuador. SolGold is a small company on the global scale with a market capitalisation of just over \$USD 600 million as of August 2025 and no operating mines as yet. However, with virtually all its assets concentrated in Ecuador, it has an oversized impact there – the largest footprint of any transnational company in that country.



Solgold hole near Gualiel, Loja Province
Image credit: Liz Downes

CORPORATE DETAILS

In August 2025, SolGold's directors resolved to move the company's tax domicile to Switzerland. This does not affect its stock market listings.

Listings

Listed on the London stock exchange (LSX - SOLG). Voluntarily delisted from the Toronto stock exchange in June 2025.

There is speculation that the company [may list on the ASX](#) (Australian Stock Exchange) in the near future.

Addresses

Australia office:

PO Box 7059, Cloisters Square PO, Perth, WA 6850

UK office:

1 Cornhill, London, EC3V 3ND

Ecuador office:

Avenida Coruña E25-58 y San Ignacio, Edificio Altana Plaza, piso 4 oficina 406, 170517, Quito

Management

CEO: Dan Vujcic, appointed in March 2025.

President of SolGold Ecuador (Quito):

María Amparo Albán

MAJOR INVESTORS:

BHP Group (Australia) owns around 14% of total shares in SolGold with approximately USD \$500M invested since 2018. BHP, the world's largest mining company, has a track record of serious environmental issues at its operations, including the Samarco dam collapse in Brazil, 2015.

Newmont Corporation (USA/Australia) owns 8% of total shares, following its acquisition of Newcrest in 2024. Newmont has inherited several problematic projects from Newcrest, including the Cadia gold mine in NSW, Australia (where chemical and dust pollution allegations at the nearby town of Orange have been brushed off by the company for years), and the Wafi-Golpu copper project in Papua New Guinea (which plans to dump its tailings directly into the sea).

Jiangxi Copper (China) owns 8% of total shares, following a strategic investment in 2023. An agreement to increase this investment to just over 12% was [initiated in March 2025](#). Jiangxi Copper is associated with numerous reported environmental and public health impacts around its operations in China and Kazakhstan.

PROJECTS IN ECUADOR

Prior to 2017, SolGold only owned the concessions covering what is now the Cascabel project. But the company bought up big during the sell-off of large tracts of Ecuador for mining exploration by the government in 2017.

SolGold now owns a total of 89 mining concessions in Ecuador. These amount to 16 priority projects, including an extra six acquired from their [merger with Cornerstone Capital Resources](#) in October 2023. All are in the initial phase of exploration, except for Porvenir in the province of Zamora Chinchipe, where advanced exploration activities begun in 2024.

At this stage SolGold plans to develop one grand-scale mine in northwestern Ecuador - the Cascabel project.

SOLGOLD'S PRIORITY PROJECTS

PROJECT	PROVINCE	SUBSIDIARY	STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT	REPORTED ISSUES TO DATE
Chical	Carchi	Carnegie Ridge	Exploration	Communities report concerns about lack of consultation and impacts of mining activities to local biodiversity hotspots, including the Bosque Protector Cerro Golondrinas.
Rio Amarillo	Imbabura	Carnegie Ridge Resources	Exploration	In 2022, criminalisation attempts by the company led to the unlawful arrests by police of 60 peaceful protestors in Cahuasquí against SolGold's exploration activities.
Chillanes	Bolivar	Green Rock Resources	Exploration	Communities report concerns about lack of consultation, water use and contamination.
Salinas	Bolivar	Valle Rico Resources	Exploration	Communities report concerns about lack of consultation, water use and contamination.
Cisne Victoria	Morona Santiago	Cruz del Sol	Exploration	
Coangos	Morona Santiago	Cruz del Sol	Exploration	Project is located in the Shuar Indigenous territory, which has been subjected to "divide and conquer" tactics by transnational mining companies and state-led militarisation since 2014.
Helipuerto	Morona Santiago	Cruz del Sol	Exploration	Project is located in the Shuar Indigenous territory, which has been subjected to "divide and conquer" tactics by transnational mining companies and state-led militarisation since 2014. Concessions are located north of Solaris Resources' conflict-ridden Warintza project.

SOLGOLD'S PRIORITY PROJECTS CONT...

PROJECT	PROVINCE	SUBSIDIARY	STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT	REPORTED ISSUES TO DATE
Cisne Loja	Loja	Green Rock Resources	Exploration	Community members being socialised by the company have made allegations of corruption, including an attempted \$60,000 bribe of a councillor in late 2024. Communities report concerns about water contamination and activities being conducted in significant archeological sites nearby.
Porvenir	Zamora Chinchipe	Green Rock Resources	Advanced Exploration	
Timbara	Zamora Chinchipe	Green Rock Resources	Exploration	
Bella Maria	El Oro	Cornerstone S.A.	Exploration	
Caña Brava	Loja/ El Oro	Cornerstone S.A.	Exploration	Concessions part cover the Fierro Urcu mountains, an important cultural site and water source for surrounding communities. Anti-mining resistance has been growing in the area since 2018, resulting in two legal cases.
Espejo	Carchi	Cornerstone S.A.	Exploration	
Playa Rica	Imbabura	Cornerstone S.A.	Exploration	Concessions are located near the Intag region, which has nearly four decades of resistance to mining.
Río Magdalena	Imbabura	Cornerstone S.A.	Exploration	Concessions cover most of the Los Cedros Reserve, which was the subject of a Constitutional Court ruling in 2021 invalidating the company's environmental and exploration license and banning all mining activities.
Vetas Grandes	Azuay	Cornerstone S.A.	Exploration	Anti-mining resistance is strong in the area, with a referendum to keep the area mining free won in the city of Cuenca in 2018. Protests have recently escalated over plans to develop Loma Larga, a large scale mine owned by Dundee Precious Metals, with Cuenca residents concerned about their potable water sources.

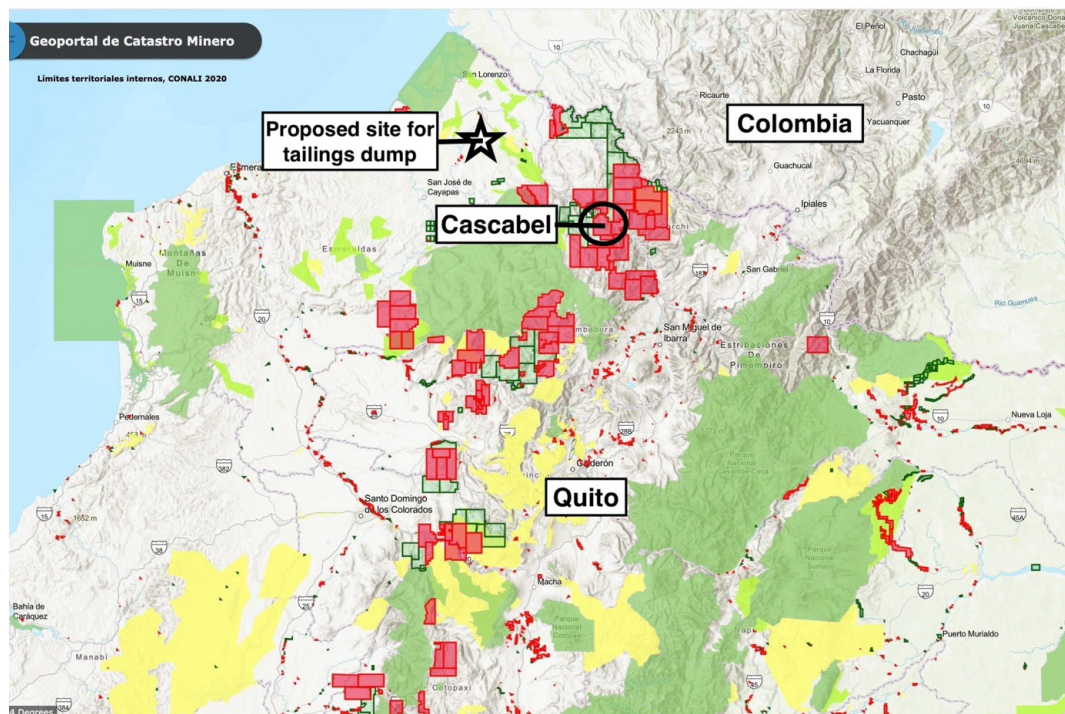
WHAT IS CASCABEL?

Cascabel (Alpala) is a planned copper, gold and silver mining operation located in the parishes of Lita and Carolina, near Ibarra, northwestern Ecuador. Approximately 7,000 people live in the 4,979 hectare concession. The project is 100% owned by SolGold.

Cascabel sits on the Alpala, Tandayama-America and Cacharposa gold-copper porphyry deposits. It is being touted by SolGold, industry allies and the Ecuadorian government as potentially one of the world's biggest copper and gold mines – statements to this effect range from “ranking in the top 20” to “the world's third largest.”

PLANNED INFRASTRUCTURE

Planned infrastructure includes an underground mine at Alpala, an open-pit mine at Tandayama, a processing plant, a tailings dam within the mining concession (exact location not yet confirmed), and an estimated 150-200 km long pipeline to transport ore slurry to the port of Esmeraldas. Two massive tailings dams are also planned 60km north west of the mine in sensitive catchment areas.



CASCABEL'S MAJOR INVESTORS

Franco Nevada (Canada; USA) is a global gold-focused royalty and streaming company with shares listed on the Toronto and New York stock exchanges. It has assets concentrated in North and South America, including investments in large mining companies such as Vale.

OR Royalties (previously Osisko Gold Royalties) is a Canadian speculative investment and royalty firm whose main asset is a 5% net smelter return on one of Canada's largest gold mines.

PROJECT TIMELINE

March 2024: The latest pre-feasibility study for Cascabel was published.

June 2024: SolGold signed an exploitation contract for Cascabel with the government of Ecuador.

April 2025: SolGold signed an [amended investment protection agreement](#) with the Ecuadorian government, soon after the swearing-in of incumbent president, Daniel Noboa.

May 2025: SolGold [accelerated its project development plan](#), with construction of the mine now projected to begin between mid-2026 and early 2027, and open-pit production projected to begin in 2028 at the Tandayama deposit.

August 2025 and ongoing: SolGold is currently applying for environmental permits and drafting the definitive feasibility study for the project. This process [must involve a “consultation”](#) of all 7000 people living in the area. In an [August interview](#), SolGold's Ecuador president, Maria Albán, noted that “normally a project of this magnitude will require 18-24 months for approval (of the environmental license) by the Ecuadorian Ministry of Environment. However, this process could now be drastically accelerated, due to a suite of presidential executive orders which have been applied by the government to fast-track mining across the country.”

INVESTMENT TIMELINE

The projected investment throughout the life of the Cascabel project is approximately \$USD 4.2b, of which \$USD 1.55b will be in the first four years of production.

15 July 2024: SolGold completed a \$750 million gold streaming deal with Franco-Nevada Corporation and OR Royalties Limited. This provides upfront capital in exchange for 1.5% of future gold production. The [second tranche](#) of \$33.3 million was paid to SolGold on 21 July 2025.

May 2025: SolGold embarked on an international investor engagement campaign, including meetings in China with Jiangxi Copper and upcoming discussions with European investors in Spain.

The company is seeking approximately \$1.2 billion in additional funding, including a plan to capital raise on the ASX (Australian Stock Exchange).

ISSUES WITH CASCABEL

Inflated resource estimates

Research by [Steven H. Emerman](#) raises concerns that SolGold may have significantly inflated the figures it states for the size and grade of the Alpala and Tandayama deposits in its 2024 pre-feasibility study.

Waste management issues

Both [Steven H. Emerman](#) and the [Yemanyá Corporation](#) highlight concerns that SolGold's waste management plan, as presented in their 2024 pre-feasibility study, are completely unfit for purpose and carry the risk of devastating waterways, ecosystems and the communities dependent on them. [here](#) for more details.

Electricity production concerns

SolGold plans to build two hydroelectric plants to power the Cascabel mine and infrastructure. The company has [made an agreement](#) with a consortium composed of two companies, one Ecuadorian and one US/Brazilian, to provide the required amount of over 220 megawatts of energy. [Steven H. Emerman](#) has flagged concerns based on the unreliability of existing hydroelectricity production in Ecuador (especially following a horrific four-month drought in 2024 which led to country-wide blackouts) and the impacts to the power supply for populations living in the region of the mine.

Displacement of the Santa Cecilia community

In an [interview](#) on 11 August 2025, SolGold's Ecuadorian president, María Amparo Albán, explains that in order to allow mine construction at the Cascabel site, the community of Santa Cecilia – which has 304 residents - must be relocated to another site. She claims that this is due to “human rights standards” stated by the World Bank, and justifies the relocation on the grounds that 40% of families currently live in poverty, with only 57% having access to potable water.

She also says: “This is not a forced situation. I can't say that all the community is in agreement, nor do we decide for them. But I can say that most of the community is in agreement.” Albán could not give a figure for the cost of relocating the community, including construction of new houses for each family and essential services, merely saying “It will be a high sum.”

FURTHER READING

[Rainforest Action Group 2024 report](#) on Cascabel's waste management issues

[Friends of the Earth article](#) on Cascabel

[Reports by Yemanyá Corporation](#) – an Ecuadorian conservation group