

---

## Press Release

# Research Insight on Tailings Management - learnings and good practices

Nyon, Switzerland – February 11, 2019

**The Responsible Mining Foundation publishes new research insight on tailings management. The article highlights a key finding of the 2018 Responsible Mining Index report: the 30 large-scale companies assessed scored an average of only 22% on tracking, reviewing and acting to improve their tailings risk management.**

Tailings dam facilities – large surface impoundments of pulverised rock, water and processing chemicals – present some of the most common and most high-stakes risks to workers, communities and environments. The catastrophic failure of the Córrego do Feijão tailings dam in Brazil last month is not an isolated incident. Tailings management is an industry-wide issue and tailings dam failures are occurring at a predictable rate. Research by the World Mine Tailings Failures predicts 14 very serious failures this decade – 11 of which have already happened.

With readily accessible reserves of metals and minerals declining globally, the mining industry has begun to extract more lower-grade ores. The volume and nature of tailings produced by these operations make them much more challenging to store safely, significantly increasing the risk of more tailings dam failures. Tighter profit margins of low-grade operations also bring an added risk that cost-saving may compromise investments in tailings safety management.

The results of the RMI 2018 report show that companies often fail to adequately demonstrate how they are managing social and environmental risks involved in tailings management. Workers, mining-affected communities, governments and investors are often unaware of the risks involved and how well companies are addressing them. Companies may moreover be reticent to publicly reveal this potentially detrimental and sensitive information, yet it is workers and communities whose lives and livelihoods depend on adequate protection measures being in place.

According to the Responsible Mining Foundation, mining companies should be encouraged to consider a range of measures to ensure a more responsible tailings risk management including investment in research and technology for safer lower-risk approaches, removal of the known highest-risk dams, and use of the highest possible safety standards, beyond compliance with any legal requirements. Companies can also refrain from mining in areas where tailings dam failures are most likely, until safer tailings management technologies are developed.

The Responsible Mining Foundation supports calls for an international database of tailings dams and encourages open access to independent audits of tailings facilities to better manage risks for stakeholders.

### **About the Responsible Mining Foundation**

The Responsible Mining Foundation (RMF) is an independent not-for-profit organisation that encourages continuous improvement in responsible mining by transparently assessing the performance of mining companies, also at mine-site level, with a focus on leading practice and learning. The Foundation does not accept funding from the mining industry.

### **Contacts**

#### **Research contact**

Jennifer Rietbergen

[research@responsibleminingindex.org](mailto:research@responsibleminingindex.org)

#### **Media contact**

Inka Sayed

[media@responsibleminingindex.org](mailto:media@responsibleminingindex.org)

+41 22 361 1418