

Press Release

February 24, 2020.

RMI Report 2020: Largest mining companies in danger of perceived ‘SDG-washing’ over selective reporting

Many of the world’s largest mining companies risk the perception that they are ‘SDG-washing’ through selective reporting of their impacts on these universal goals. Companies often highlight in their Sustainability Reports the positive contributions they make to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, while generally omitting any mention of negative impacts that would impede achievement of the SDGs. This one-sided reporting fails to present stakeholders with a true picture of the challenges the mining sector faces in its support of the SDGs, according to the [RMI Report 2020](#), which was released today by the Responsible Mining Foundation (RMF).

Hélène Piaget, CEO of the RMF said: “The SDGs provide a valuable societal framework for reporting and action on economic, social and environmental concerns, but an unbalanced emphasis on the ‘good’ that companies do may obscure the negative impacts, be they inherent or unintentional, that may impede the achievement of the SDG goals.”

The RMI Report 2020 is an evidence-based assessment of the economic, environmental, social and governance (EESG) policies and practices of 38 large-scale mining companies that operate in more than 780 mine sites and together account for 28 percent of the world’s mining activity by value of production. In addition, the Report assesses 180 individual mine sites in 45 countries against 10 basic indicators of responsible mining. The one-year study consists of a deep-dive into each company, with approximately two months spent reviewing and assessing each company.

The RMI Report 2020 shows a modest overall improvement on many issues by most of the companies previously assessed in the RMI Report 2018. However, much of the improvement is due to companies making commitments, with markedly less evidence of progress in following-up these commitments with concrete actions. And the weakest results relate to companies’ efforts to track, review and act to improve the effectiveness of their actions on EESG issues. So while commitments are a step in the right direction, the mining sector as a whole would benefit – both in terms of its performance and its trust-building with other stakeholders – from being able to demonstrate more consistent implementation of commitments across operational portfolios and across issues.

According to the International Labor Organization, mining remains one of the top three most hazardous sectors. During the two years since the last RMI assessment, several large-scale mining companies have been at the centre of major controversies as mine tailings failures have claimed scores of lives, devastated whole communities and caused major environmental disasters. Afshin Mehrpouya, Associate Professor at HEC Paris and member of the Board of the RMF said: “Such tragedies reflect very poorly on the sector as a whole and put into stark perspective companies’ claims of responsible mining. The industry must redouble its efforts to prove that it prioritises broader ESG responsibilities over short-term considerations”.

The RMI Report 2020 highlights a disconnect between company-wide policies and standards versus on-the-ground actions at mine sites, where the impacts of mining are most evident. Companies often show little or no evidence of sharing mine-site-level information on issues of strong public interest for neighbouring communities, workers, governments and investors. Likewise, there is scant evidence of companies engaging with local stakeholders on these issues, which include for example local procurement, grievance mechanisms or air and water quality. Of the 180 individual mine sites assessed, only one site scores more than 50 percent, while 145 sites score less than 20 percent and 45 sites score zero on all 10 indicators. None of the companies shows consistent performance across the mine sites they own or operate.

As with the 2018 assessment, the RMI Report 2020 shows that it can be done: mining can meet society's expectations. If one company were to achieve all the highest scores recorded in each of the 71 indicators, it would reach more than 70 percent of the maximum achievable score. Similarly, if one mine site were to achieve all the highest scores seen for the asset-level indicators, it would score over 80 percent. All companies are encouraged to adopt more systematically the good practices already being demonstrated across the sector.

The RMI Report 2020 shows that requirements set by home or producing countries or by investors drive stronger company action and transparency on EESG issues. For example, investor-led demands for disclosure of the location and safety of mine tailings storage facilities have prompted more complete and more publicly available data of critical interest to share- and bondholders, insurers and governments.

“While the trust-deficit with society is recognised as the number one risk for mining companies, the RMI Report 2020 acts as a prompt to the industry to eliminate the need to respond to multiple information requests. By proactively making EESG data available – starting at individual mine sites and in open data formats companies can help to build trust, limit risk, and show respect. In fact, more proactive data disclosure will reduce the demand for companies' reporting”, said H el ene Piaget.

As part of its commitment to sharing leading practice and learning, open data principles and transparency, the RMI Report 2020 is available online in seven languages and contains detailed results covering more than 6,000 data points. In addition, 69 leading practices, the scoring framework, 3,800 source documents collected from the public domain or submitted by companies during the review period, together with contextual data for each company (including searchable tables of 3,500+ shareholders, 3,000+ subsidiaries, 1,000+ mine sites, 1,200+ tailings storage facilities, and fatality reporting) are all available online.

LIST OF COMPANIES ASSESSED IN THE RMI 2020

Anglo American, AngloGold Ashanti, Antofagasta, ArcelorMittal, Banpu, Barrick Gold Corp, BHP, Buenaventura, Bumi Resources, China Shenhua, Coal India, CODELCO, ERG, Evraz, Exxaro Resources, First Quantum Minerals, Fortescue, Freeport-McMoRan, Glencore, Gold Fields, Grupo M xico, Industrias Pe oles, MMG, Navoi MMC, Newcrest Mining, Newmont, NMDC, Nordgold, Orano, Peabody Energy, Polymetal, Rio Tinto, RUSAL, Sibanye-Stillwater, Teck, Vale, Vedanta Resources, Zijin.

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Editor's Notes

THE RESPONSIBLE MINING FOUNDATION

The Responsible Mining Index (RMI) assessment and summary report are produced by the Responsible Mining Foundation (RMF), an independent research organisation that encourages continuous improvement in responsible mining across the industry by developing tools and frameworks, sharing public-interest data and enabling informed and constructive engagement between mining companies and other stakeholders.

The Foundation supports the principle that minerals and metals mining should benefit the economies, improve the lives of peoples and respect the environments of producing countries, while allowing companies and their investors to make a fair and viable return.

The Foundation's work and research reflect what society at large can reasonably expect from mining companies on economic, environmental, social and governance matters. The RMF does not accept funding from the mining industry and receives the majority of its funding from the governments of Switzerland and The Netherlands and from the Triodos Foundation.

THE RMI REPORT 2020

The Summary provides high-level results and extracts from the RMI Report 2020. The Summary, full results for individual companies, and all 180 mine-site reports, are available in Chinese, English, French, Indonesian, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish, as of February 24, 2020, at www.responsibleminingindex.org.

GRAPHICS AND CHARTS FOR DOWNLOAD

- [RESULTS FOR ALL THEMATIC AREAS ON ONE PAGE](#)
- [EACH THEMATIC AREA ON A SINGLE PAGE EACH](#)
- [COMPANIES' AVERAGE MINE SITE SCORES](#)
- [WORLD MAP SHOWING HOME/PRODUCING COUNTRIES AND MINE SITES](#)

LIST OF COMPANIES' HOME COUNTRIES

Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, France, India, Indonesia, Luxembourg, Mexico, Peru, Russian Federation, South Africa, Switzerland, Thailand, UK, USA, Uzbekistan.

LIST OF COMPANIES' PRODUCING COUNTRIES

Argentina, Australia, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Dominican Republic, DRC, Finland, Ghana, Guinea, Guyana, India, Indonesia, Jamaica, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Mexico, Mongolia, Mozambique, Namibia, New Caledonia, Niger, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Spain, Suriname, Tajikistan, Tanzania, Turkey, Ukraine, USA, Uzbekistan, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

The analytical framework comprises six thematic areas: economic development, business conduct, lifecycle management, community wellbeing, working conditions and environmental responsibility – and 76 (73 in 2018) individual indicators, distributed among three measurement areas:

- **Commitment** indicators assess the extent to which companies have: (i) formalised their commitments on particular issues; (ii) assigned responsibilities and accountabilities for the implementation of these commitments; and (iii) provided resources and staffing to operationalise the commitments;
- **Action** indicators assess the extent to which companies have developed systematic approaches to address particular issues and disclose key aspects of their activities;
- **Effectiveness** indicators assess the extent to which companies track, and report on, their performance in managing particular issues and demonstrate continuous improvement on these issues.

- [DOWNLOADABLE GRAPHIC OF THE RMI ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK](#)

MINE-SITE-LEVEL INDICATORS

In addition, 10 (six in 2018) mine-site-level indicators were used to assess the selected 180 (127 in 2018) mine sites in 45 producing countries, on local employment, local procurement, post-closure plans, community grievances, worker grievances, air quality, water quality, water quantity, tailings management and emergency preparedness.

RMI FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY 2020

The RMI Framework is available in Chinese, English, French, Indonesian, Russian and Spanish and the RMI Methodology is available in English. All available via:

<https://www.responsibleminingfoundation.org/rmi-framework-2020/>

The RMI Framework has been mapped to approximately 50 international initiatives, standards or guidelines related to responsible mining or corporate accountability:

https://www.responsibleminingfoundation.org/app/uploads/2019/12/RMI_Methodology2020_Mapping_EN_WEB.pdf

DISCLAIMER

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