



Expert report: proposed gold mine in Brazilian Amazon presents unacceptable risk

Hydrogeologist recommends that Canadian company Belo Sun's licence be revoked

(Altamira, Brazil, June 17, 2020) An [expert study released today](#) reveals serious deficiencies in the environmental impact assessment submitted to Brazilian authorities by Canadian mining company Belo Sun. The analysis exposes an unacceptable degree of risk that the tailings dam at the proposed Volta Grande gold mine will fail, contaminating the Xingu River and harming nearby indigenous and other communities.

The report's author, Dr. Steven Emerman, explains that despite the presence of geological faults at the mine site, the company has not produced any seismicity studies. Nor has the dam been designed with seismic safety in mind, in violation of Brazilian tailings dam regulations.

Dr. Emerman also raises concern about the company's use of its tailings reservoir to capture water. Industry best practice is to prevent the flow of surface runoff into tailings ponds in order to minimize the risk of dam failure. Moreover, the report reveals that Belo Sun has provided contradictory information regarding its tailings storage plan to investors and Brazilian regulatory authorities. Dr. Emerman recommends that the project's licence be revoked.

Brazilian courts suspended Belo Sun's installation licence in 2017 because the company failed to study the project's impact on indigenous and other traditional communities, or to consult these populations.

Belo Sun has been [criticized](#) for publishing misleading statements to bolster sagging interest in the project among potential investors, amidst growing evidence of social, environmental, financial and reputational risks.

Last week local movements Rede Xingu+ and Xingu Vivo para Sempre [submitted](#) Dr. Emerman's report to government agencies responsible for project licensing. These organizations demand that additional studies be undertaken, which they argue are "indispensable to assess the social and environmental viability of Belo Sun's mining project considering the grave risk to indigenous and other river-dwelling communities located next to the project and its tailings dam."

This initiative is supported by local and international organizations, such as ISA, International Rivers, Above Ground, Amazon Watch and the Inter-American Association for the Defense of the Environment (AIDA).

Rede Xingu+ is an articulation of indigenous, riverine and partner organizations that work in the Xingu River basin.

Movimento Xingu Vivo para Sempre is a collective formed in 2008 by local, national and international civil society organizations; threatened indigenous and non-indigenous communities; and social, human rights and environmental movements that oppose the construction of hydroelectric dams on the Xingu River and that fight in defence of the rights of local people.

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