

MORE SHINE THAN SUBSTANCE:

How Responsible Jewellery Council certification fails to create responsible jewelry

Full report: <http://bit.ly/RJC-MoreShineThanSubstance>

As currently structured, the Responsible Jewellery Council's (RJC's) certification cannot provide consumers with meaningful reassurance about the ethical antecedents of the jewelry and minerals produce by its member companies. In effect, the RJC is the industry acknowledging the risk of irresponsible practice to its brand by attempting to police itself.

Without significant improvements, RJC risks tarnishing, rather than burnishing, the reputations of its member companies.

Among the significant problems with RJC's certification system:

- **Governance:** RJC governance excludes impacted communities, labor, and environmental representatives. Civil society's role is consultative; final decisions re standard creation and enforcement are controlled by industry.
- **Misplaced priority:** RJC appears to address crucial issues (e.g. FPIC) without actually requiring good practice in so many cases, one is led to conclude that its primary purpose is to provide public relations benefit, not create Responsible Jewellery.
- **Standards:** The standards are often weak compared to internationally accepted guidelines from the UN, OECD and other agencies, as well as those of more robust, inclusive certification bodies, such as the Forest Stewardship Council.
- **Loopholes:** RJC has many loopholes that allow certification of member companies without meeting RJC's own standards.
- **Indigenous peoples:** RJC fails to require members to obtain free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) of indigenous peoples. There is a proposed revision to require FPIC, but the proposal fails to acknowledge the need to apply FPIC throughout all stages of mining.
- **Communities:** RJC fails to require and verify that companies engage with impacted communities throughout the mineral development process. While companies are supposed to seek 'broad community support' before they develop mines, there is no requirement to publicly disclose evidence showing that broad support has been obtained prior to development. RJC certification also allows members to involuntarily resettle communities
- **Mining in conflict zones:** RJC allows mining in conflict zones, and fails to require adequate due diligence to ensure that mining in these controversial locations does not contribute to conflict. Companies are also allowed to mine diamonds in areas where governments are inflicting human rights abuses on local populations.

- **Workers:** RJC does little to protect workers' rights to join trade unions, do not require worker input on important issues such as working hours, fly-in/fly-out operations and retrenchment, do not require RJC members to provide a 'living wage', contain weak grievance provisions, enable children as young as 14 to be employed by RJC members if allowed by national law, and allow RJC members to do business with suppliers and others who use forced or child labor.
- **Environment:** RJC's certification fails to place any concrete targets or limits on water and air pollution such as mercury emissions. It allows unlimited consumption of water and energy. It also allows toxic tailings disposal into lakes and ocean environments, and mining in legally protected areas.
- **Transparency:** RJC requires very little transparency. RJC certification audits are cursory, with no details as to whether standards were breached and whether the company is taking corrective action.
- **Auditors:** Independent third parties don't accredit auditors, RJC selects its own. Auditors rely mostly on company-provided information. Consequently, perverse incentives encourage certification no matter actual company behavior.

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