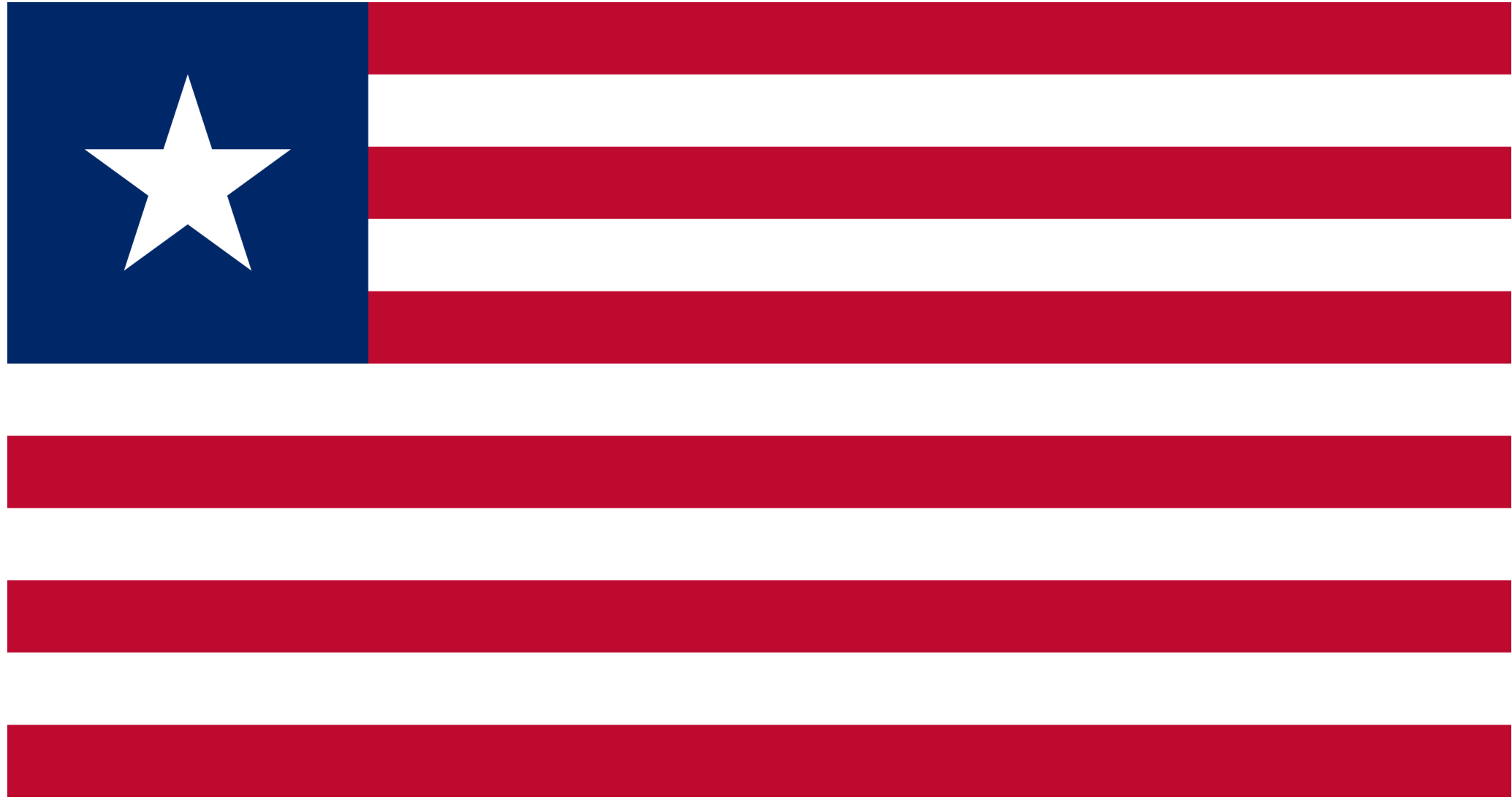


LIBERIA



Regulations and guidelines for the management of tailings storage facilities in Liberia

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

Love Allison
Gabriel H. Jasper
Gregory R. Morris

Ministry of Mines and Energy (MME)

Jefferson T. Chea
Tanyenoh Jlateh
Arthur T. Cooper

INTERNATIONAL TRAINING PROGRAMME 308

Mine Water & Mine Waste Management



THE CHANGE PROJECT

Mining operations play a crucial role in the economic growth of Liberia, but they can also have significant negative environmental and social impacts if not managed correctly. The extraction of minerals often lead to environmental degradation, pollution of soil, water and air and the displacement of local communities. Some of the most notable mining related incidents in Liberia includes failures of tailings storage facilities (TSFs). Several dam failures have occurred at separate mine sites, mining different commodities, since 2017 causing fatalities and disruption to the local environment.

The increasing number of TSF failures underscores the need for robust regulations and guidelines to ensure safety of people, and the protection of the environment through responsible mining practices and sustainable management of tailings in Liberia. To ensure that large-scale mine operators within Liberia will comply with national regulations and related international standards of the management of their tailings storage facilities (TSFs), government officials from the EPA and MME are collaborating and developing a national regulatory framework for the operation and management of TSFs.

Preparations of national regulations take years, and for one, single, ITP 308 participating group to carry it out on its own is impossible. Thus, this project is a continuation of a previous International Training Programme 308's change project, which started in 2023 (prior to the latest TSF failures in Liberia) and the two organisations' teams have worked hard on developing a working document that will serve as national regulations for TSFs in Liberia.



The New Liberty Gold Mine TSF, Liberia, which has failed twice in the course of a year.



New Liberty Gold Mine TSF, Liberia.

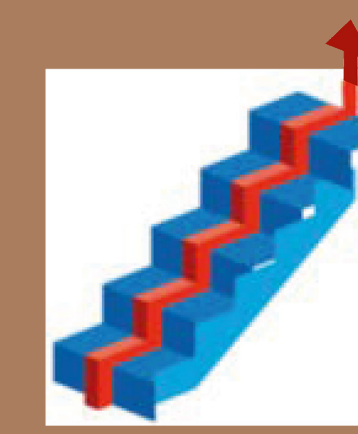


SIGNIFICANCE FOR THE PEOPLE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

During the most recent years, TSF dam failures in Liberia have resulted in groundwater and surface water pollution which have negatively affected nearby communities, local ecosystems, aquatic species and the surrounding environment.

Despite this, the current project is primarily aimed towards mining companies and the regulators, MME and EPA. However, the outcome of the regulations will be of significant benefit to the environment, nearby communities, authorities and the mining companies themselves. This is evident from the stakeholder engagements meetings with representatives from both the mining companies and the communities. While TSF failure affected communities reveal disrupted livelihoods (e.g. fishing and farming) the mining companies shared challenges they face in keeping the TSFs stable and safe.

With improved regulations and guidelines, the companies can enhance their sustainable mining practices and the nearby communities will be less negatively impacted by the mining. The involved government organisations also increase their knowledge about TSF management, collaboration with other relevant authorities and stakeholders, as they are involved in the process of writing the regulations. An inclusive and transparent process in creating the new regulations will increase the positive outcomes of the project, i.e. the final TSF regulations and guidelines.



RESULTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

During the ten month change project work, the group has worked in a structured manner to advance the developing of a working document that will serve as national regulations for management of TSFs in Liberia. They have picked up the reins from the previous group and continued with a large number of activities including a comprehensive literature review in continuation of the work done and presented by group 7 on TSF regulations.

The literature review considered case studies from other countries in the sub-region that have, and are, implementing regulations on TSF management as well as guidance documents from the International Council on Mining and Metals (ICMM) and the Global Industry Standard on Tailings Management (GISTM) to incorporate international perspectives. This ensures that the regulations are aligned with global best practices while being adopted to the local context.

Additionally, the team engaged local industry experts on TSF management who are currently working or consulting with mining companies in Liberia.

The continued collaboration on government levels, as well as the ongoing building of capacity on the topic of TSF management and design, within the relevant government organisations, are two key outcomes of the change project to date.



THE WAY FORWARD

The natural way forward is for two pivotal government organisations to continue their collaboration on the project. In fact, it is necessary, as the one cannot complete the regulations and guidelines without the other, due to different mandates.

The organisations, under new leadership after the recent elections, have made initial commitments to secure some funding for the project going forward, and groups 7 and 8 will continue to support group 9 in their efforts to find funding and with their work.

The absence of regulations regarding TSFs is something that will have to be resolved even after the Sida sponsored ITP 308 Mine water and mine waste management comes to a close. However, it is the aim of group 9 to reach as far as possible to rectify the gap in regulations with the continued support from their fellow ITP alumni colleagues and the organisations.