

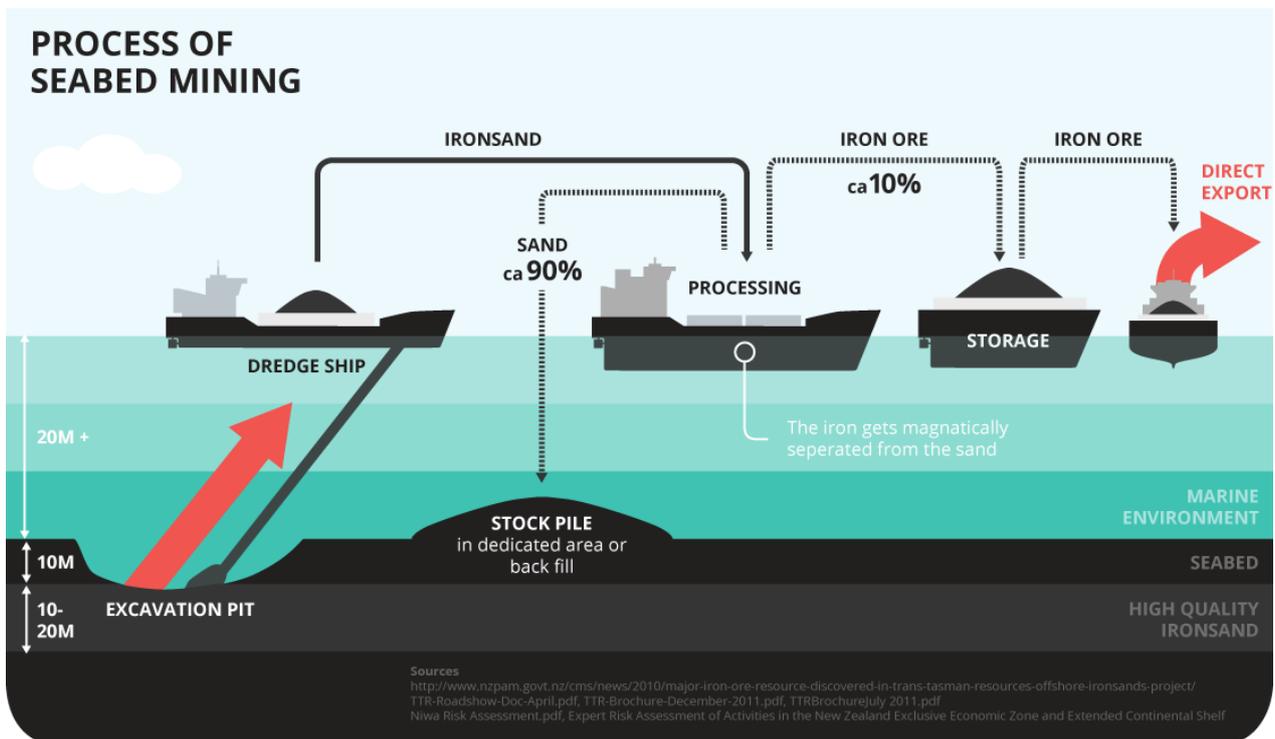
ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE – *Biodiversity.*

Summary: Black Sand Mining Fact Sheet, Votua, Ba.

WHAT IS BLACK SAND MINING?

Black sand mining involves extracting iron ore from magnetic sands. Iron ore is often used to make steel.

Black sand mining can be done in several different ways. The Ba Iron sands Project involves dredging sand from the sea floor onto a barge. Once on the barge, the iron ore is separated from the sand, and the remaining sand is returned to the sea floor. The below diagram illustrates a similar black sand mining project in New Zealand:



Source: Kiwis Against Seabed Mining (KASM)

WHAT ARE THE IMPACTS OF BLACK SAND MINING?

The environmental impacts of black sand mining can be different depending on the size, location and nature of the project. When the project is offshore, as in the Ba Iron sands project, impacts can include:

- **Damage to the river or ocean floor** where the dredging is taking place. This can damage surfaces that fish and sea creatures live in.
- **Sediment in the water**, making it cloudy. This can smother sea creatures on the ocean floor and change feeding behaviour of fish. It can also reduce the amount of light getting down to the sea floor, which can also impact on other natural processes.
- **Underwater noise**, which can change the behaviour of fish or other sea creatures.
- **Release of harmful or toxic materials**, either from the mining on the sea floor or from machinery that is part of the mining operation.
- **Changes to wave height and direction** or changes to the tides.
- **All the above impacts are currently being felt in Votua and the surrounding communities.**

Black sand mining that takes place onshore (for example, on riverbanks, beaches or dunes) can also cause loss of land (erosion) or sinking land (subsidence).

THE BA IRONSANDS PROJECT



Left: map of Special Prospecting License boundary, as attached to Special Mining Lease.

Right: magnetic separator barge

Project details	
Minerals to be extracted	Iron ore from iron sands. Estimated volume of dredged sand is 220 million tonnes with around 7% of magnetite rich sand to be extracted (source: Project EIA, 2011).
Project area	132 km ² at the mouth of the Ba river (see above map).
Project Status	A Special Mining Lease was granted in 2012 and mining commenced in 2019. There have been reports that the company wants to expand the project in future, potentially along the Ba River.
Project life	The mining lease is for 21 years, and expires in 2033. However, the licence for Lautoka Port is for 45 years, which suggests some kind of mining could continue until 2055 or longer.
Company	Amex Resources Ltd, an Australian company founded in 1999, and based in West Perth. Amex Resources is owned by Waratah International (Asia) Ltd, which was incorporated in the British Virgin Islands.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT PROCESS

If the Ba Iron sands project is expanded to new areas, it is likely to need a new Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). This is an important process, and affected communities have a right to be involved. Some important information to be aware of is:

- An EIA is required where a project will cause a significant environmental or resource management impact.
- The company proposing the mining has to conduct at least one public consultation while the EIA is being prepared. The results of this consultation should be summarised in the EIA.
- Once the EIA is written it has to be publicly available. You should be able to see a copy, consider the issues raised, ask questions and raise any concerns you have.
- The company also has to conduct a public consultation on the EIA within the project area.

Below are the pictures of Black sand mining in operation on the Foreshore of Ba river near Votua Village.



This picture clearly show the great danger to the environment as the Black sand, Mangrove and the Bio Diversity of life in these Eco System will be immediately impacted and affected for a very long period of time by which the damage will be irreversible.



The Black Sand mining Ship parades the foreshore destroying it away.



The ship of Destruction. Black sand Dredging ship.



These Dredging ship has been customed made in China and named after Tribes in Ba. Tiliva Bukuya Star. This is a great insult to the people and the Land to name such a Monster after them.



Foreign impact.

Chinese workers on a speed boat entering the river mouth with the operation site in the background.



Black sand Extraction waste being pumped back into the sea covering sea grass, reefs and increase sedimentation. This increases water turbidity and cuts off sunlight which stops the process of photosynthesis for plants leaving all marine animals with less oxygen.



Local Impact on Fisheries and communities.

Mother and daughter fishing.



Husband and Wife fishing.



Traditional fishing and Crabbing.



Indian Fishermen and all other communities draw life from this River and Sea.



The Children of Votua village in Ba asking for Government to save their future and stop mining.



The Impacts to the environment and Bio Diversity mentioned above are already happening and will be for the next 20 years and that is why it is a Priority Issue for JPIC and the Columban Mission.

This is also Priority for Pope Francis Laudato Si' and for the next 7 years we shall commit to the "Laudato Si' Action Platform".

Apart from the Environmental Impacts, Social Impacts takes its toll as these people live in community. Disputes and disagreement also happens and creates a conflict climate and brings Dis Unity. And those who are suffering most are the Women, Children and the future generation.

Loss of Traditional Fishing grounds means the loss of Traditional Wisdom, Knowledge and practice. This disconnects the Indigenous people from their Vanua – Land and Sea as their Identity and Responsibilities is connected with their Vanua and Natural surroundings.

Not only the indigenous are affected. Indian fishing communities and other sugar cane farmers who also uses the foreshore and sea to supplement their need and income.

It also disrupt and destroy the Chain of life and Bio Diversity which in turn changes the whole behaviour of the environment.

That is why Awareness, Advocacy and Education is vital so that people and communities are informed and can be made aware of the Risks and Impacts and not be bought away by the power of Money from these profit driven cooperation.

This is a Global Issue the reason we are having all these COP meetings and now we are at COP 26.

It is also personal one for all of us as we share the same planet and what affects one part will also affect the other. Covid 19 has just taught us that lesson and we should learn to make the necessary changes to our attitude and behaviour now.

We must not take these issues lightly for our own survival depends on it and there is only a certain stress limit or Tolerance our planet can take.

And we are already on that limit now. Let us not push it.

For further information:

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