

Visit to Votua Black Sand Mine Site. – Friday 8th April 2022

“Good and Evil are two forces always opposing each other. We are given the Freedom to Choose which side to take and our choices have consequences and even greater risks if we choose to stand with the Oppressed and the Vulnerable.”

Even though we knew that it is already a risky situation for the trip that we are about to take, we took the risk anyway as this is what we believe in and work for. To stand for Justice for all People and Creation. “Be the change you wish to see in the world”



Sevusevu and presentation to the Catechist council with parish priest Fr Pat Colgan.



We had a very fruitful and lively discussion on the issues on Ecological justice and our responsibilities towards the Care of Creation. We thank Fr Pat Colgan for his support and his Council of Catechist together with his parish Chairman that enable us to us reach Votua village and right to the mining site at the foreshore of the Ba River mouth.



The Ba River looking up inland from Votua village.



Travelling down the Ba River from Votua village.



The sacredness, beauty, resourcefulness, and the necessity of this ecosystem is necessary for the wellbeing of the Ba people and its future. That is why we need to protect this environment from the destructive effects of black sand mining.

Looking at the river mouth where the actual mining lease area begins and where mining has already started.



Life along the River

Nawaqarua village is just next to Votua village and is already feeling the impacts of the mining on their fisheries as their village banks is now fast eroding away and their seawall and a house has already fallen into the river. Women and fisherman have started to see the decrease in numbers of crabs and fishes and the increase in flooding and sea level rise is a reality for them.



River wall falling off and riverbank breaking off at Nawaqarua.



Nawaqarua village entrance -- breaking off.



Agricultural land is also affected and trees that protect the riverside are falling victims.



The Ba River provides for the Ba people. A fisherman fishes close beside his village at Nawaqarua. Nawaqarua is about 2km away from the river mouth



Another fisherman fishes at the river mouth close to the mining site.



Sea of Tears.

Numerous sea animals and marine life have perished from this mining, and we have almost no way of monitoring and evaluating the Impacts. The mining barge can be seen in the background.



The sea looks bleak and no longer blue as it used to because of sedimentation and the disturbance of the sea floor caused by the suction of sand being dredge unto the ship where magnetite is separated, and rest is pumped back into the sea. These causes buildup of sand mounts underwater and this can be seen even at high tides. The changes to this environment are going to be drastic and if this operation of destruction continues for the next 20 years this place will be totally ruined.

Sea of Tears

A pole marks the mining lease perimeter and even from this distance we could see sand mounts that have been excreted through those tubes floating on the sea.



Entry to this point is now prohibited and illegal as Amex Limited has already leased this area which of course is approved by the Mineral Resources Department of Fiji. This is the fishing area for these coastal communities and the nursery homes for all other marine species with the reefs just nearby.

Yet, not all is lost,

...As long as we have people of Faith and a willingness to stand for Justice.

Our group of Environmental Defenders.



In blue t - shirt is Mr. Pio White who has been very vocal and a strong advocate for Environment protection and preservation from Votua village. Fyfe Strachan is our partner organization representative from Jubilee Australia who has supported us in research, analysis, training and reporting on this issue and we have already produced a published report in May 2021. We are indeed thankful to them.

The parish Chairman of Christ the King parish in Ba together with the Catechist of Votua village who have stood on the principal of the Care of Creation as they now stand on their home ground and as always with Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation from the Columban Mission here in Fiji and the Oceania region.

Vinaka Vakalevu & A Blessed Easter celebration. ---T.Naiksowalu. JPIC, Fiji.