

MINING

2.1 Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and monitoring of all phases of mining

In Mauritius, mining of ores is not a common activity in view of its volcanic origin. A few decades ago, lagoon sand mining was carried out by sand miners and boat owners in the shallowest parts of the largest lagoons on the north and east coast of the island. Coral sand was being removed from the lagoons by sand extractors in traditional pirogues and in some areas extractions were restricted to the occurrence of low tide. The extracted coral sand was used mainly as a raw material in the construction industry.

Coral sand extraction from the lagoon has been banned since October 2001. Following studies carried out by the University of Mauritius, basalt sand is being used as a replacement material for coral sand in the construction industry. A detailed GIS study for the estimation of rock reserves in Mauritius was commissioned by the Ministry of Environment in 2004. Quarrying of basaltic rocks is one alternative following the exploitation of all available surface rocks. Offshore coral sand mining is another alternative, as well.

As per the First Schedule of the Environment Protection (Amendment) Act 2008, both offshore sand mining and rock quarrying are undertakings that warrant an EIA licence. To date only two EIA licences have been granted for rock quarrying and one quarry site is presently operational. EIA licences are usually granted subject to terms and conditions. The conditions attached to the EIA licence granted for rock quarrying also require the proponent to, amongst others:

- Provide for earth bunds to inhibit dust emissions and noise propagation
- Provide for a buffer zone from public access road
- Provide for the reinstatement of the quarry zone concurrently with the progression of the quarry
- Exploit the quarry in conformity with the methodology proposed in the EIA report.
- Submit an environmental monitoring plan prior to starts of works with subsequent monitoring reports.

Use of explosive for blasting purposes is normally not allowed except under the control and supervision of a special branch of the Police Force. Information pertaining to the decommissioning of the project at the end of its life cycle and associated impacts and the reinstatement plan of the quarry zone should also be submitted to the Department of Environment for approval.

A Monitoring Committee comprising representative of the different ministries/authorities concerned has been set at the Department of Environment to follow up on the implementation of the project after issue of the EIA licence and to conduct monitoring exercises to ensure that the conditions of the EIA licence are being complied with.

2.2 Private Public Partnership PPP for sustainable mining

The legal and institutional framework for PPP in Mauritius (PPP Act and PPP Guidance Manual) does not have specific guidelines for mining. Rock and inland sand quarries are private activities.