

MINERAL AND GROUNDWATER RESOURCES

Fact Sheet

BACKGROUND

Fiji's approach to mineral and groundwater resource management reflects a holistic approach, balancing economic development with environmental preservation and social welfare. Fiji's mineral and groundwater resources are at the forefront of the country's development landscape, forming crucial links between social well-being, environmental integrity, and economic progress. The Government believes that well-managed mineral sector developments contribute positively to national growth and social welfare improvements for all of Fiji's citizens; hence, actively supports mineral and groundwater sector developments. Government recognises that the private sector is the most able developer of Fiji's mineral resources, and so, confers mineral exploration and development rights on private sector developers.

CURRENT STATUS

Fiji's mining and quarrying sector contributes to 0.5 percent of real GDP and recorded a 14.6 percent decline in 2022. The Government's initiative in groundwater development aims to provide clean, safe drinking water to rural areas. Recognizing the importance of equitable benefit sharing, the "Fair Share of Mineral Royalties Act 2018", states that 80% of mineral royalties be given to landowning units or customary fishing rights holders and 20% to be retained by the State.

CHALLENGES

1. *Review the legal framework:* Amendments of the legal framework will suit the current development climate and address issues like more stringent penalties on breeches, approval for non-commercial gravel extraction, land allocations, lease offer timeliness, foreshore lease issues and soil accretion.
2. *Regulations governing mining operations are inadequate:* The Mining Act has remained

pretty much unchanged since the mid-1960s despite many government-commissioned reports recommending proper environmental standards, pollution control, and other improvements to legislation.

3. *Safety precautionary measures:* Safety rules exist in all work environments to keep both employees and the company safe. These regulations can help prevent and mitigate accidents and minimize risk, which in turn support employee well-being and workplace effectiveness.
4. *Undertake Environment Impact Assessment (EIA):* EIA assists in preventing long-term harm to ecosystems, habitats, and natural resources by identifying these risks early in the planning process.
5. *Demand for mineral resources is likely to remain high:* Significant challenges include meeting future demand with new discoveries and developing the resources in environmentally, socially, and economically sustainable ways.
6. *Sustaining the quantity of groundwater:* Understanding of this trend in Fiji has created concern that groundwater abstraction could increase beyond sustainable limits.
7. *Lack of professional and technical capacities:* Training is vital for these professionals to overcome this challenge.

OPPORTUNITIES

1. *Potential for expansion of a mineral sector:* The interest for evaluating offshore deep-sea minerals has attracted few companies and will attract more in long term.
2. *Consistent exporter of minerals:* The sector is primed for further growth with a number of international companies applying for rights to explore for geothermal resources.
3. *Value-Added Processing:* Leveraging these mineral resources can contribute to the growth of the economy and employment opportunities, foreign exchange earnings and incomes earned can have a multiplier effect on the community.

4. *Human Capital Development*: Implementing comprehensive training programs and promoting entrepreneurship.
5. *Infrastructure Development*: Developing and upgrading transportation networks, storage facilities, and marketplaces.
6. *Legislative Reform*: Updating laws and regulations to reflect evolving economic landscapes and support sector growth.

- **Establish monitoring and evaluation system:**
 - ✓ Conduct public awareness on mining, through community visitations and relevant stakeholders.

FUTURE POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

- **Sustainable development of groundwater resources:**
 - ✓ Review Groundwater and borehole drilling assessment for water bottling plants
 - ✓ Review of idle boreholes throughout Fiji
 - ✓ Empower communities in safe water management and resource protection.
 - ✓ Improve analysis of water and geochemical samples quality
 - ✓ Improve access to clean drinking water in rural areas.
 - ✓ Strengthen legislation on water quality control, standards, and use.
- **Review on the licensing, compliance and monitoring:**
 - ✓ Improve in the maintenance of mineral exploration and licenses structure.
 - ✓ Streamline quarry approval and licensing process.
 - ✓ Improve the drilling activity to build mineral resource confidence.
 - ✓ Review the procedure of mining quarry, river gravel extraction and sand extraction to ensure compliance with license conditions.
 - ✓ Monitor of operation for compliance with environmental law
 - ✓ Conduct geological mapping, update Fiji's geological information.
 - ✓ Update Fijis Inventory for Hard rock and river gravel resource, hydrocarbon data, geothermal energy data, Deep Sea Mineral inventory
 - ✓ Develop and promote GeoData Packages