

Survey of

Environmental & Socio-Economic Impacts of

Interim Ban on Mining in Goa

Goa’s mining operations were suspended by the Goa Government on 10.09.2012 after the Justice M. B Shah Commission Report was tabled in the Parliament three days earlier. This was followed by the Supreme Court order for ban on mining operations in the State on 5.10.2012, in the context of the Goa Foundation petition 435/2012 in the Supreme Court of India.

People’s perceptions of change in environmental and socio-economic scenario were reviewed across three daily newspapers from October 2012 to January 2013[[1]](#footnote-2).Views of about eighty stakeholders from twenty five villages in Goa have also been considered for the analysis.

**Present environmental scenario**

On the whole the environmental condition is on the road to recovery. Improvements in the states environment include:

1. Cleaner Air: Pollution due to suspended particles in mining operations, vehicular exhaust and ‘coating of roadside vegetation with dust’ has stopped.
2. Revival of water bodies: Springs, which were dry, have ‘begun to flow gradually’[[2]](#footnote-3).
3. Less noise: Teachers from schools in Chodea and Sonshi villages in North Goa report that ‘earlier with the noise of the trucks, the heavy machinery and the honking they could not hear the students nor the students could hear them.’ Since the ban people report that, they are ‘enjoying the noise free environment.’
4. Improvement of wildlife habitat: ‘Rare orchids are blooming’[[3]](#footnote-4) and a ‘tailing pond is slowly sprouting green’[[4]](#footnote-5). The number of wildlife sightings ‘has increased’[[5]](#footnote-6) on the whole and ‘the chirping of birds has replaced the roar of trucks.’[[6]](#footnote-7)

**Present social scenario**

The cultural scenario had been impacted by way of, ‘lack of water for celebrating traditional festivals’[[7]](#footnote-8), piling of a ‘reject dump at a crematorium plot’[[8]](#footnote-9) , ‘mining leases in sacred groves’[[9]](#footnote-10) and ‘youth being steered away from traditional occupations’[[10]](#footnote-11). Presently;

1. Health conditions in mining areas are improving: A doctor reports that earlier everyday 40 -50 patients on an average would report to be ‘suffering from respiratory, skin, hypertension, anxiety problems and sleeplessness.’[[11]](#footnote-12) Due to the decrease in dust pollution these instances may reduce.
2. Schools in mining areas are relieved: Teachers and students report a ‘better teaching and learning experience as there is less amount of noise from mining trucks.’ [[12]](#footnote-13)
3. Traffic conditions in mining areas are safer: Since the ban people report that there are less traffic jams. Commuting is reported to be safer and more convenient.
4. Unrest and protests, truckers threatening activists and media: People seeking resumption of mining in the state included some truck drivers/ owners who were responsible for instances of unrest related to the ban.

**Present economic scenario**

Residents from villages around the mines at Netravali in Sanguem, Goa, which were shut in the year 2003 have indicated positive results due to the stoppage of mining in the area by reporting, “…huge improvement in the quality of stream water and yield of local produce.”[[13]](#footnote-14) Their comments come 9 years after those mines shut down. The ban has forced people to re-think and venture into different occupations. Currently;

1. Agricultural produce is improving: Cultivators say that their ‘chilies and cashew produce has increased and they explain how earlier the dust would coat the plants and rot the flowers.’[[14]](#footnote-15)
2. Less polluted water bodies benefitting traditional fishing communities: ‘A rise in the ‘mendios’ (Window Pane Oysters)’[[15]](#footnote-16) was noticed in Chicalim, along the bank of River Zuari (through which transportation of ore by barges and hence water pollution was taking place prior to the ban).
3. Agriculture as an alternative: Some truck drivers say that ‘agriculture will help clear their loans from the banks and sustain them.’[[16]](#footnote-17)
4. Other livelihood alternatives: A truck driver, with the closure of mines in Sirigao, Bicholim, ‘has managed to bounce back as a motorcycle pilot.’[[17]](#footnote-18)

While some seek ‘controlled’ and ‘organized’ mining, this seems difficult to implement with the infamous environmental track record of mining companies in the state and the obvious lack of compliance to environmental laws. There are some who believe that ‘all the stakeholders of mining should come to terms that mining is not a sustainable business model and think of diversifying the local economy to make it less dependent on mining.’[[18]](#footnote-19)

The ban on mining has allowed for rejuvenation of the environment to some extent and many people are enjoying the peaceful and pollution free environment.

**EIA Resource and Response Centre (ERC)**

**Goa**

1. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. 2 Local, Herald and the Gomantak Times; and 1 National Newspaper, the Times of India, [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. 26.01.2013,http://madraswanderer.blogspot.in/2013/02/goa-post-mining-bans.html [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. 26.01.2013,http://madraswanderer.blogspot.in/2013/02/goa-post-mining-bans.html [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. 30.12.2012, Times of India, http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-12-30/goa/36063290\_1\_iron-and-manganese-ore-netravali-wildlife-sanctuary-western-ghats [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. 26.01.2013, http://madraswanderer.blogspot.in/2013/02/goa-post-mining-bans.html [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. 18.10.2012, Times of India, Page 1 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. 25.10.2012, Times of India, Page 1 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. 05.11.2012, Times of India, Page 6 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. 21.10.2012, Herald Review, Page 1 [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. 11.12.2012, Times of India, Page 2 [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. 12.10.2012, Times of India, Page 1 [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. 05.11.2012,Times of India, Page 1 [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
14. 12.10.2012,Times of India, Page 1 [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
15. 15.03.2013,Times of India,Page 3 [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
16. 24.03.2013,Herald Review Page 1 [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
17. 21.10.2012,Herald Review,Page1&2 [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
18. 22.10.2012,Times of India ,Page 2 [↑](#footnote-ref-19)