

2.2 Gem Mining and Environmental Degradation in Sri Lanka (with reference to Rathnapura District)

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ABSTRACT

Soil erosion, deforestation, and pollution of water and soil often occur as a result of gem mining. These impacts are relatively simple, easy to control, and non-toxic. Deforestation results from clearing land to mine; erosion and epidemic results from abandoned mining pits; and pollution is due mainly to washing schist near streams and scattering debris from the schist into soils. Implementation of policies to control these problems is needed to control the degradation in Sri Lanka due to gem mining. The number of informal (unregistered) mines, pressure from unionized gem miners, lack of capital in the small mines, and a lack of cohesion in gem mining policies are the threat for controlling the environmental degradation due gem mining. Environmental agencies have begun to crack down on enforcing clean-up policies. The creation of a series of common washing sites for gem miners indicates that municipal government agencies are making some investments toward reducing pollution due to gem production. An environmental NGO should involve in environmental education for small miners and others in the gem production chain.

Key words: Gem mining and Environmental Degradation