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**Socio-economic impact of transferring from river sands to deposit sands with government policies: A case in lower Walawa valley**

L M Abeywickrama<sup>1\*</sup>, W D C S Abeywickrama<sup>1</sup>

*<sup>1</sup>Dept. Agriculture Economics, University of Ruhuna, Mapalana, Kamburupitiya*

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Extraction of sand from river beds has become a serious threat to the environment and infrastructure during the last decade and intensified with the reconstruction of Tsunami damaged structures in the

Southern province. Recently, the government imposed strict rules and regulations regarding mining, transportation and related activities of sand mining. As a result, in the Walawa river basin, especially in Ambalantota area, mining activities were transferred from river to nearby sand deposits in agricultural and residential lands. This study focused on the impacts of sand deposit mining in the Ambalantota area. Almost all sand miners (32) engaged in deposit sand mining and river sand mining in the area, 18 land owners who have rented their lands for sand mining activities, 17 transporters of both river sand and deposit sand and investors in the industry were interviewed. In addition to that a sample of 25 affected farmers a sample of 25 general public and stake holders in several stages were interviewed to find the positive and negative impact on the affected party. The Wilcoxon sign rank test was employed to test the hypothesis of different impacts.

Results of the study revealed that 56% of the deposit sand miners were previously engaged in river sand mining while the rest were new comers reflecting the river sand mines have shifted away from river sand mining. The biggest issue in sand mining was the lowering of ground level and consequential drainage problem in agricultural and residential lands. Only in 62% of mining sites, the top soil removed is used to refill the mining pits while about 13% is used for brick the industry. The average on site prices of deposit sand and river sand were Rs. 2000.00 and Rs. 2300.00 respectively while prices for final buyers were Rs. 5000.00 and Rs. 5500.00 respectively. This price difference is mainly due to the poor quality of the deposit sand. The results of the Wilcoxon Sign Test revealed that the declining water table, soil erosion, crop damage, destruction of roads and increasing mosquito population were the major significant negative impacts while the increasing income for land owners, improvement of infrastructure in the area, employment generation and lowering the prices of sand for constructors were the main positive impacts.

It can be concluded that blanket rules and regulations on river sand mining and transportation has created on adverse impact on both the users of sand and other affected parties in the Walawa river basin.