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AWARENESS AND DISTRIBUTION OF INVASIVE ALIEN SPECIES (IAS) OF FLORA IN GALIGAMUWA AREA

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Biological invasions happen either deliberately or accidentally and are considered as serious threats to the biodiversity and its irreversible impact to the biodiversity is second only to the habitat loss. Thirty common IAS of plants were selected and the study inquired whether the local people were well aware about IAS of flora and if so, whether these species have badly influenced the environment and farming activities and its distribution in Galigamuwa area. Primary data were collected through a pretested self-administered questionnaire and 65 households were selected by using Multi stage random sampling technique. Analysis was carried out based on descriptive statistics together with graphical interpretation.

According to the depicted results, all the respondents (100%) were aware about IAS of flora. Majority of the respondents (46%) educated through newspapers. Only few respondents (6%) were aware about Guinea grass (*Panicum maximum*), one of the prominent IAS of flora in Sri Lanka. Moreover, very few respondents were aware about Rila Thana (*Pennisetum polystachion*) 2% , Wal Sudda (*Austroeupatorium inulifolium*) *12%*, Mist flower (*Ageratina riparia*) 3%, Gal Goraka (*Clusia rosea*) 7%, welvet tree (*Miconia calvescens*) 6*%,* Kikiyu grass (*Pennisetum clandestinum*) 2%, Parthenium (*Parthenium hysterophorus*) 12%, Kattakumanjal (*Myroxylon balsamum*) 8%, Yellow cestrum (*Cestrum aurantiacum*) 3%, Blue stars *(Aristea ecklonii)* 2% and Arunadevi *(Sphagneticola trilobata)* 2%. According to the depicted results, respondents have not observed Kikiyu grass (*Pennisetum clandestinum*) and Rila Thana (*Pennisetum polystachion*) in their surroundings. Moreover, no respondents (0%) were aware about Gorse (*Ulex europaes*). Results revealed that, majority of the respondents have seen water hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*) 69%, salvinia (*Salvinia molesta*) 54%, Katu pathok (*Opuntia dilenii*) 57%, Katakalu Bovitiya (*Melastoma hirtum*) 60%, Wathupalu (*Mikania micrantha*) 72%, Mahogani (*Swietenia macrophylla*) 74%, Lantana (*Lantana camara*) 55%, Podisingnomaran 62% in their surrounding environments. While 69% of the respondents were aware about pinus (*Pinus caribaena*), only 25% of them have seen pinus in their surroundings. Of the sample, majority of the respondents were aware about Ginikuuru Gas (*Alstonia macrophylla*) 51%, Wild sunflower (*Tithonia diversifolia*) 58%, Para (*Dillenia suffruticosa*) 58% and Yoda nidikumba (*Mimosa pigra*). Very few of the respondents were aware about Katu Andara (*Prospis juliflora*) 35%, cuscuta (*Cuscuta compestris*) 40%, Kadadasi Mal (*Antigonon leptopus*) *and Cheena Pera* (*Psidium littorale*) *25%.*

Of the sample, majority of the respondents (58%) were facing difficulties in their day to day lives due to IAS of flora and most of them (52%) try to control these plants. Majority of the respondents (43%) have observed the reduction of native plant species due to IAS of flora and 37% of the respondents do not have clear idea about the adverse impacts of IAS of flora. According to the results, 45% of the respondents have reported that IAS flora have badly affected to their aquatic environments.