

Biodiversity Conservation and Female Role : A case study in the bordering villages of the Mihintale Sanctuary, Sri Lanka

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Women have a profound knowledge on the biodiversity from their role as care takers and have contributed in many ways for the conservation of biodiversity. Hence this study focused on the contribution of females towards the conservation of biodiversity in the bordering villages of the Mihintale sanctuary. The study was conducted in the bordering villages of the Mihintale sanctuary; Ihala Mudawa, Katukaliyawa, Kudakirindagama, Kumarasirigama and Mihintale Purawidiyagama and was implemented from October 2010 to May 2011. A community survey of questioner was done to gather the information on the involvement of females in the conservation of biodiversity in the sanctuary and their traditional knowledge. The total population of 384 people was composed of 53% women. Literacy rate of the females were 94%. 74% of women are employed and their main employment is agriculture. 84% of the houses are located at a distance less than 0.5 km to the sanctuary. Females are traditionally involved in the paddy cultivation (75%) in home gardens (90%). Majority of the fringe women do their domestic cooking with the use of fire wood collected from the sanctuary(96%-100%). *Grewia polygama*, *Drypetes sepiaria*, *Manilkara hexandra* species were used as firewood while *Drypetes sepiaria*, *Manilkara hexandra*, *Schleichera oleosa*, *Pometia Tomentosa* species were use as fruits. Various species of medicines, fiber *Ichnocarpus frutescens*, and timber *Pterospermum canescens*, *Grewia polygama*, *Azadirachta Indica*, *Evolvulus alsinoides* collected from the sanctuary. The dominant crop species in Chena cultivation is *Zea mays*. Seeds to be cultivated for the next season are purchased (57%) from the market. 79% women use the harvest for day to day life. In the home gardens 95% work is done by women. The attitudes towards the conservation of biodiversity from the females are 100%. Women contribution to the biodiversity conservation is at a high rate. So, their contribution should not be neglected.
