



Saving the Next Generation: Restoration of degraded sites at the Knuckles Forest Reserve

FIELD VISIT: JULY 14TH 2018





AWARENESS PROGRAM

An awareness program for local villagers about the reforestation program was conducted at the Malakotuwa Sri Sumana Maha Vidyalaya on the 14th of July 2018. Mr. B.G. Chandrarathne Bandara (Principal of the school), Dr. Thilanka Gunaratne (University of Peradeniya), Mr. Ananda Subasinghe (Noritake Porcelain (Pvt) Ltd and Mr. Kingsley Illukumbura (Forest Department) and Mr. Ruwan Wijerathne (Village Coordinator) spoke about their role in the project. The members of the Botanical society of the University of Peradeniya collected information from villagers on uses of forests, native plants for reforestation, enrichment of home gardens, environmental issues in the area and recommendations in order to address their suggestions/needs in the project.

ENVIRONMENT CONSERVATION SOCIETY

An Environment Conservation Society was formed consisting of 15 local villagers in order to promote their participation for reforestation activities.



COMMENTS & IDEAS OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

Uses of forests to local community

- Collect fuel wood
- Construct farming tools (Welang, Damunu, Ataweera)
- Collect fruits (Nelli)

Suggested tree species for reforestation

- *Nelli (Phyllanthus emblica)*
- *Bulu (Terminalia bellirica)*
- *Aralu (Terminalia chebula)*
- *Madu (Cycas circinalis)*
- *Kahata (Careya arborea)*
- *Mee (Madhuca longifolia)*

Tree species suggested for enrichment planting of home gardens

- *Pepper/Gammiris (Piper nigrum)*
- *Kithul (Caryota urens)*

Problems faced by villagers

- Banning of fuel wood collection
- Pollution of water ways by visitors
- Environmentally unfriendly behavior of visitors to the Knuckles Conservation area
- improper waste disposal from hotels located within the reserve

SITE SELECTION FOR 2018 PROGRAM

The team, consisting of members representing the Botanical Society (UoP) Department of Zoology (UoP), the Forest Department, Noritake Lanka Porcelain (Pvt) Ltd. and the local community selected 4 ha closer to the Pitawala Patna as the reforestation site this year.



Monitoring of the 2017 restoration plot

The team visited the restoration site of year 1 (2017) and listed recommendations for site maintenance.



Comments from participants



'My dream to initiate a restoration project came to reality due to team work. This is not an easy task someone can achieve alone. So we invite all of you to join with us and to pay our gratitude to mother nature.'

Chinthani Malsha Eeriyawala (Teaching Assistant, UoP)



'The project "Saving the next generation" not only helps to protect the nature by increasing the green cover of Sri Lanka, but also inspire people to look for more sustainable ways to make a positive effort to environment conservation and to live connected with nature.'

Dilan Chathuranga (Research Assistant, PGIS/UoP)



'I am happy to see that our effort to restore degraded sites in 2017 has succeeded to a great extent. Discussions with villagers helped us to connect this program with the livelihood of the local community living closer to the sites.'

Chandima Samarasinghe (Research Assistant, PGIS/UOP)



'Members of our society enthusiastically participate for different activities of the program. I feel this is the way to educate younger generation on conservation of biodiversity.'

Upeksha Wanasinghe (President, Botanical Society, UoP)



'In this program we got the opportunity to transplant some useful native plants to degraded site at Knuckles Forest Reserve.'

Charuni Kulathunga (Vice President, Botanical Society, UoP)



I happy that I got chance to participate in the reforestation programme that aims to conserve forests and support livelihoods of locals.

Suranga Madhawa (3rd year undergraduate student, Faculty of Science, UoP)



'We have to protect trees since they offer many services to all living organisms. This reforestation program is beneficial to Sri Lanka in many ways.'

Sanka Priyanath (1st year undergraduate student, Faculty of Science, UoP)



'I gained a lot of knowledge and lot of experience from this program. Reforestation is very important to address global environmental problems such as climate change.'

Gayan (1st year undergraduate student, Faculty of Science, UoP)