

National legislation on Biodiversity conservation and awareness among stakeholders

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Abstract

The country's fauna, flora, land, soil, water bodies, ocean belt, air and every other part of the environment is meant to be protected by national legislation. However, there had been instances in which such legislation was violated. This study aims to identify the degree of awareness on biodiversity related legislation among stakeholders whose job responsibilities were related with biodiversity conservation. An analysis was done to find out possible reasons for stakeholders being aware or not aware on such legislation using a questionnaire distributed among academics, researches, administrators and professionals engaged in biodiversity related work. The survey attempted to identify any relationships with the professions, willingness towards further reading, being educated, the effect of legal language and/or rarity of documentation written in a simple language style, material availability in working places. The most preferred mode to be educated on biodiversity related legal matters was also recognized.

A total of 280 questionnaires were circulated and 154 responses were received achieving a despondence rate of 55%. The questionnaire enclosed a list of 26 biodiversity related legislation applicable to all dimensions of biological diversity. Statistical software SPSS (version 16.0) was used to conduct Pearson's chi square test at 5% significance level to find the relatedness between above aspects considered.

The awareness of stakeholders on biodiversity related legislation was at a satisfactory level as the study revealed that > 70% were aware of legislation directly related to their job responsibilities. It was identified that most of them have been participated in workshops organized for these job sectors. Nearly half of the respondents thought that if the legal material was available in simple language it would have helped them in understanding more clearly. Only one third of the respondents had legal documents at their working places. More than 70% of the respondents preferred to be engaged in encouraging the practice of biodiversity related legal matters relevant to their job responsibilities. The awareness level of the stakeholders was significantly related with the willingness and interest to engage in such practices.

Nearly 90% of the respondents thought that awareness on legislation related to biodiversity conservation had helped them to enhance their efficiency and quality of work. The most preferred modes of information gathering methods were printed material and participation in workshops. This can be considered as a positive attitude development towards upgrading the awareness on biodiversity related legislation of general public of Sri Lanka.