

Potential for a community based management system for four selected non-timber forest (NTF) species in the buffer zone of Sinharaja MAB reserve

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Caryota urens (kithul), *Calamus ovoideus* (cane), *Coscinium fenestratum* (weniwel) and *Elettaria cardamomum* (wild cardamom) are four widely used non-timber forest (NTF) species around Sinharaja. Two peripheral villages (Kudawa and Pitakele) of the Sinharaja were surveyed to gather information on a suitable community based buffer zone management system using these species.

Tea is the major cash crop of both villages. There is a considerable dependency of villagers on the forest for fuel wood and medicinal plants but not for the above NTF species. In each village more than 25% of the households tapped kithul and more than 1/3 of the households use *Coscinium fenestratum* for its medicinal value. With respect to cane only 6% of the households in Kudawa used it for basketry. None of the surveyed households in either village collected the wild cardamom on a commercial scale. More than 85% of the households in each village responded positively to develop a community management project with these NTF species in the buffer zone of Sinharaja. The majority of the households in both villages were willing to obtain renewable permits for harvesting these NTF species. The proportion of households interested in cultivating cardamom or kithul in the buffer zone was 80% in Pitakele and 37% in Kudawa.

The results suggest that a community management project using these NTF species will be successful in the buffer zone of Sinharaja forest and that it could be developed using indigenous knowledge to combine biodiversity conservation with economic benefits.

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