

B-34: Collection of crop genetic resources in some remote villages in Badulla and Kandy Districts

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Sri Lanka has a great wealth of genetic resources with respect to many crops like rice, other cereals, grain legumes and vegetables. This richness of genetic diversity is subject to erosion due to deforestation and predominant use of commercial crop cultivars. Hence a systematic collection and conservation of land races and wild relatives of crops should receive high priority. Primitive cultivars, land races and wild relatives of crops are important genetic resources for crop improvement, because they may possess useful traits such as pest and disease resistance and adaptability to adverse soil and climatic conditions.

Two multi-crop exploration missions were undertaken in remote villages of Badulla (Perawella, Madawela, Dimbulana, Maspanna and Yalagamuwa) and Kandy (Kikawela, Mimure and Dandenikumbura) districts to collect these materials.

During these missions, 166 samples from 46 different species were collected. Passport data for all samples were recorded. This collection included cereals, grain legumes, vegetables, spices and condiments, root and tuber crops and fruit crops. Forty two samples of an indeterminate cowpea (*Vigna unguiculata*) showed high variability for seed colour, reflecting a richness of genetic diversity. Rice bean (*Vigna umbellata*) a rare grain legume was also collected. The acquisition of a local red onion (*Allium cepa* cv. *Aggregatum*) and a local garlic (*Allium sativum*) which have longer than usual storage life (8 months) was noteworthy. A rare wild relative of okra, *Abelmoschus angulosus*, was also collected.

This collection is conserved at the PGRC, Gannoruwa.