

## ENVIRONMENT IN POST-WAR DEVELOPMENT: ROAD EXPANSION AND LOSS OF TREES IN BATTICALOA

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Road expansion is one of the post-war development activities in the northern and eastern provinces of Sri Lanka. A survey was carried out to find out loss of trees along the A15 road (5-6 km) from Pillayarady to Kallady Bridge, due to road expansion. Initially the said road was about 10 m wide and had many trees on either side. It further widened into double. All trees were cut down within the limits. The age of the lost trees was between 1 – more than 100 years. Among them *Samania saman* (Vaakai), *Nauclea orientalis* (Vammi), *Sterculia foetida* (Kaatu thengai) and *Tamarindus* (Puli) were historically important.

About 40 tree species and 400 individual trees were lost. The majority of lost species were *Borassus flabellifer* (palmyrah), *Cocus nucifere* (coconut), *Albizzia*, *Azadirachta indica* (neem), *Mangifera indica* (mango), *Terminalia catappa* and *Thespesia populnea*. Among them, 72% of individual trees were privately owned and 28% were in road sides. Higher percentage of palmyrah (22%) and coconut (17%) were lost in the process of road expansion. Trees provide a base for biodiversity of the region including nesting for endemics and indigenous species, beyond providing a shady environment. It is argued that more public consultation could have altered some of the plans and save many trees. Lack of participatory planning and involvement of public has been seen as a negative aspect of Post war development. How do we engage us in future expansion activities? Are defined development approaches appropriate in reality? Should we pay a huge price for unjustifiable development in future and for being silent?

**Key words:** Post-war development, Road expansion, Tree loss