

TOOLKITS FOR INVASIVE PLANTS IN EAST AFRICA

Locations	Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania
Dates	01/01/2012 - 31/03/2018

Summary

Many plants introduced to East Africa have escaped cultivation and are wreaking havoc. These invasive species are reducing biodiversity and negatively impacting livelihoods. Little is known about the number of invasive plant species present here, or their impact. This project aims to use communication technologies to improve the ability of national authorities to access and manage data which allow them to identify and control invasive species that threaten biodiversity in East Africa.

The problem

Many exotic plants introduced to East Africa have subsequently escaped cultivation and become naturalized and/ or invasive reducing biodiversity and negatively impacting livelihoods.

Invasive alien plants out-compete indigenous species, often resulting in serious changes to the structure and composition of an ecosystem. The Eastern Arc

Mountains and Coastal Forests, a global Biodiversity Hotspot, and a number of World Natural Heritage Sites such as the Serengeti, Mount Kenya, Kilimanjaro and Bwindi Impenetrable Forest National Parks are also under threat from a host of invasive plants. These invasive species also impact on millions of people living in the region who are dependent on natural resources.

Little is known about the number of invasive plant species present here, or their impact. There are no databases, identification guides, or distribution maps. Though these countries are signatories to the CBD and IPPC, authorities are unable to effectively safeguard biodiversity without information and tools supporting identification and management of invasive alien species.

What we are doing

The overall aim of the project is to use communications technologies to improve the ability of national authorities to access and manage data which allow them to identify and control invasive species that threaten biodiversity in East Africa.

The project will be implemented in Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda. Road surveys will be undertaken throughout each country working in partnership with national agencies. This information will be supported by inputs from various stakeholders attending workshops, information obtained from national herbaria and literature searches.

We will identify and fill any existing knowledge gaps on the presence of invasive alien plants and the threats to biodiversity in East Africa. We will compile comprehensive data on their identification and management and make this freely and widely available.

We also hope to increase the use of information resources by national plant protection organizations, conservation organizations and other biodiversity stakeholders.

We also aim to increase regional cooperation amongst East African states to prevent the spread of invasive alien plants between countries.

Our activities:

- undertake surveys throughout the region to determine the presence and distribution of invasive and potentially invasive plants
- synthesize results into national invasive plant datasets
- integrate national datasets into CABI’s Invasive Species Compendium (ISC)
- produce distribution maps for identified invasive or potentially invasive species, to be freely available online
- produce identification toolkit for invasive alien plant species for East Africa, featuring 120 of the worst invasive plants, with distribution maps, line drawings, colour photographs, descriptions of each species and management options
- high profile national launches of datasets and the toolkit
- training workshops on identification of invasive plants and their threats to biodiversity

Ultimately this work will contribute to the global knowledge pool on the presence and distribution of invasive alien plants.

Results so far

The lack of information on the presence, distribution and impacts of invasive alien plants is one of the major impediments to their effective management in East Africa. The project data will enable biodiversity stakeholders in East Africa (national plant protection organizations, customs/ quarantine agencies, conservation organisations etc) to manage invasive alien plants more effectively. The information acquired will contribute to awareness and capacity building in

addition to the three main elements of any invasive alien species management strategy: prevention; early detection and rapid response; and control, all of which contribute to biodiversity conservation.

The data will contribute to biodiversity conservation at a national level by influencing policymakers and other stakeholders resulting in strengthened invasive alien species policies and allocation of resources for their management. They will also assist countries in meeting their obligations to the IPPC and CBD.

Donors	JRS Biodiversity Foundation
Partners	Various partners in each of the 6 countries working on IAS
CABI Project Manager	Arne Witt




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