

ABSTRACT

Introduction: Sri Lanka is an island, predisposed to natural disasters. Badulla district is highly prone to landslides annually with the activation of monsoon rainfalls. The aim of this study is to assess the knowledge about landslides, mitigation and Disaster preparedness among Grama Niladharis in Badulla district.

Methodology: A community based descriptive cross-sectional study was carried out among 286 Grama Niladharis working in seven divisional secretariat areas of Badulla district. A pre-tested self-administered questionnaire was used to collect data. A descriptive method of statistical analysis was undertaken in presenting the findings in relation to the specified objectives.

Results: A total of 286 respondents participated for the study. The non-response rate was 7.75%. (n=16). Majority of participants were male (53.5%, n=153) and 85.3% (n=244) were Sinhalese. In this population many (36%, n=103) had work experience of five months to five years and many were in grade III career state (53.5%, n=153). The mean income of the population was Rs.34,748.00. Majority of participants (82.2%, n=235) had prior experience in management of a landslide with 231 (80.8%) Grama Niladharis having identified land slide prone areas in their divisions. Some had (17.7%, n=49) self-experience of losing their own properties or houses due to landslides also 21.7% participants (n=62) living in the same working division. Television is the still main mode (94.1%, n=269) of media of getting news by the participants and only half of them (50.7%, n=145) used internet. Majority of participants (98.3%, n=281) use a mobile phone and almost all (97.6%, n=279) of them displayed its' number in their office. Majority of the participants (90.2%, n=258) had received some training of disaster management in their working years and 78.7%(n=225) of them had conducted training programmes to their villages. In this study, 30.1%(n=86) participants had good knowledge on landslides and mitigation. The Grama Niladhari's who were above 40 years had significantly good knowledge on landslides and mitigation ($p = 0.046$) and those who had work experience more than 20 years also had good knowledge on mitigation ($p = 0.001$). The knowledge about preparedness was good in 29.7% (n = 85) participants towards landslides. Significantly good preparedness was observed among those who had own experience of managing a landslide ($p = 0.002$). Working experience had a significant association ($p = 0.034$) with preparedness.

Conclusion: Overall our study concludes preparedness, mitigation and knowledge on landslides among Grama Niladharis in Badulla district is not sufficient. Age, ethnicity, education qualifications and working experience significantly associated with the level of knowledge on landslides and mitigation. Majority of participants had poor preparedness towards landslides. Training programmes based on hands-on training may benefit the Grama Niladharis's in this district.