ALIEN INVASIVE SPECIES

of the
North-east Tobago UNESCO
Man and the Biosphere Reserve
Management Plan

SUMMARY SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

Alien invasive species thrive, often uncontrolled, outside of their native distribution, and have caused or the potential to cause harm to indigenous biodiversity and ecosystems. AIS already impact NE Tobago's biodiversity, ecosystems, agriculture, fisheries and other livelihoods, economies, and public health.

Areas where communities and infrastructure, especially ports of entry, interface with the natural environment, create potential sites for the introduction of AIS. International vessels, especially in the port or Charlotteville, are critical introductory pathways in the marine environment as they inadvertently transport "stowaways" in bilge water.

Currently, AIS databases indicate 14 AIS for the NETMABR; however, they urgently require updating. For the NETMABR, the tropical kudzu, common bamboo, pitch apple (locally: parrot apple), and the lionfish are the primary species of concern. Unfortunately, as of 2023, there are no continuous and systematic programmes to address AIS issues in NE Tobago; especially, irregular and localised lionfish culling seems does not decrease the population, but rather encourage more, indiscriminate spear-fishing on our reefs. A new initiative of the IMA, using lionfish specific traps seems to be a new promising approach. A programme to use bamboo for commercial purposes and replant native trees is still outstanding and should be implemented under the Reforestation Programme of the THA.

HIGH LEVEL GOAL

Alien invasive species do not significantly impact ecosystem health and services in the NETMABR.

PRIORITY NEEDS

- The legal and regulatory framework for the management of AIS is improved and implemented.
- Direct and indirect threats of AIS to ecosystem health biodiversity and livelihoods are minimised.

STRATEGIES

- Adaptation and implementation of the National Invasive Alien Species Strategy;
- creation and maintenance of an open-access AIS database, linked to the national Biodiversity Information System;
- development of an AIS watchlist;
- implementation of species-specific biosecurity and control measures for priority species and habitats;
- implementation of local, community- and stakeholder-based monitoring programmes; and
- development and implementation of an AIS engagement and communication plan.

KEY PROPOSED ACTIVITIES

- appointing an AIS Advisory Committee;
- developing of a NETMABR AIS Management Policy and Action Plan;
- conducting regular baseline ecological socio-economic risk assessments;
- establishing a user-friendly AIS database and predictive monitoring tools;
- adopting of easily implementable and effective measures to contain, control, or eradicate priority AIS species
- implementing replacement and restoration programmes;
- improving research and educational opportunities and partnerships among AIS experts;
- executing a stakeholder engagement and communication plan; and
- securing sustainable financing mechanisms for the management of AIS.