Prepared by Gaea Seychelles with input from the
Ministry of Environment, Climate, Energy and Natural Resources

POLICY BRIEF 6

Safeguarding rivers from invasive aquarium fish

Preventing the silent invasion of Seychelles' freshwater ecosystems



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Executive Summary

Introduced aquarium fish are an escalating threat to the Seychelles' freshwater health. Species like guppies and swordtails, often released accidentally or deliberately, rapidly outcompete native fauna, spread diseases, and degrade water quality. This brief, mandates a 'Prevention-first' strategy, combining stricter trade regulations with community-led early detection to protect the nation's unique aquatic heritage.

The Problem: Why 'pet' fish are predators

Once released into the wild, ornamental species transition from pets to pests.

Resource competition: Invasive fish consume the food and space required by endemics like the Golden Panchax (Gourzon).

Egg predation: Many aquarium species prey directly on the eggs and juveniles of native crabs and fish.

Biosecurity risk: Introduced fish are high-risk carriers of parasites and pathogens that can devastate local aquatic populations.

Habitat alteration: Species like Catfish/Gourami uproot aquatic plants and destabilise riverbanks through burrowing.

The Economic Risk



'The cost of inaction: Controlling established invasive fish populations is far more expensive than preventing their entry. Once an invasive species takes hold, it can cause millions of rupees in damage to river systems annually.'

The Problem:

Loss of native fish. High eradication costs.

The Solution:

Enforce a national list of permitted species.

The Outcome:

Protect our sentinels.

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Priority recommendations

PREVENTION AND REGULATION

- The 'White List': Enforce a national list of permitted species; all others are prohibited from import.
- Trade permits: Mandate licensing for all aquarium vendors, including strict biosecurity audits of their facilities.
- Ban on release: Legally prohibit the discharge of any aquarium water or animals into natural waterways.

EARLY DETECTION AND RESPONSE

- Community watch: Launch a 'Citizen Science' reporting app for unusual fish sightings.
- Rapid response: Establish a dedicated task force equipped for localised eradication (netting/trapping) before populations establish.

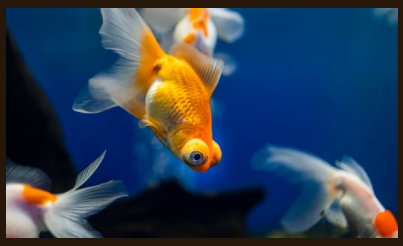
PUBLIC AWARENESS: 'DON'T RELEASE YOUR PET'

- Education: Partner with schools and aquarium fish suppliers to provide safe 'surrender stations' for unwanted fish.
- Media campaigns: Use national TV and social media to link aquarium dumping to the loss of Seychelles heritage.

Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for vendors

DO (Best practice)	DO NOT (Prohibited)
Check all imports against the Whitelist.	Dump tank water into storm drains or rivers.
Screen tanks to prevent escape during rain	Sell invasive species.
Offer a 'Take-back' service for unwanted fish.	Import live fish without valid permits.

Don't Release Your Pet



The Problem:
Pets become pests



The Solution:
Safe disposal sites



The Outcome:
Protect our sentinels

About Gaea Seychelles
Gaea Seychelles is a research and citizen science-based organisation launched in 2018. Its mission is to empower and mobilise actions by local actors to undertake impactful environmental community-based projects which creates significant and sustained change for the betterment of people's lives and their environment.

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