

**COMMON PROBLEMS FOR THE FOREST-DEPENDENT POOR:
RESULTS FROM 22 COUNTRIES**



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Introduction

1. FRP has now completed problem surveys in three regions: the Southern African region (12 April – 6 June 1999 – Macqueen, 1999), Belize Guyana and the Eastern Caribbean States (21 May – 16 July 2000 – Macqueen, 2000) and Central America (1 October – 30 November 2000 – Barrance, 2000). A total 361 informants were interviewed in 202 institutions in 22 countries. These included members of government ministries, research institutions, private enterprises, community organisations and indigenous peoples groups.
2. The aims of these surveys are to ensure that the resources of FRP are efficiently targeted towards poverty eradication; that resources address those problems which are expressly identified and prioritised by key informants within those countries; and that local institutions are involved in the research process from its very conception.
3. The structure of the semi-structured interviews which comprise the core of the surveys has been fluid. Nevertheless, at each interview an attempt was made to discuss the priority problems of four different groups of poor people as described in the revised FRP strategy (Palmer and Macqueen, 1999); small-scale poor farmers; artisans, traders and small-scale entrepreneurs; poor landless families employed within the broad forest sector; and the urban and peri-urban poor. Within each interview, the intent was to use a fourfold sieve that has included:
 - (a) The identification of national / regional priority problems in the management of forest and tree resources, cross-referenced to national priority setting documents and participatory poverty analyses.
 - (b) The national capability to solve these problems effectively;
 - (c) For those priority problems for which national capability alone is insufficient, whether other donors or international agencies are covering the gaps;
 - (d) By subtraction, what are the priority problems for which national capability alone is insufficient and for which other doors are not filling the gaps, and for which there is UK capability.
4. It has proved important to consult with different stakeholders, from policy level government ministries and technical and scientific institutions to direct representatives of poor communities. Representatives of the poor are undoubtedly most familiar with the problems of their constituency, but may not have sufficient grasp of the technical possibilities or policy context to identify innovative and profitable areas of research and development. Conversely, technical or policy level informants may be able to offer innumerable interesting innovations in a broader context, but be insufficiently familiar with poor communities to know which problems should receive priority
5. Where limited resources are confronted by numerous complex problems, the process of prioritisation becomes paramount. Two methods of prioritisation have been employed. The first method reflected the number of times a particular problem was identified independently by different key informants. This gave some degree of the severity and regional extent of the problem. The second method attempted to assess the degree to which the solution of that problem might be linked to an increase in

any one of five types of capital asset which the different focus groups of poor people possessed (Scoones, 1998). This method prioritised problems on the basis of the degree to which they reduced "net social value" for a specified group of poor people. For more detail on the method please see the full report (Macqueen, 2000) from project ZF0131 located on the Internet at www.nrinternational.co.uk / research management / forestry / programme news.

6. It was expected that, with such a diverse assemblage of continental and island states, there would be some difficulty in identifying researchable constraints common to all countries within the region. Problems faced in semi-arid South Africa or rain forest-rich Guyana might be expected to have little in common with those of islands such as Montserrat, except where agricultural diversification and alternative income generation are concerned. Yet, despite this, there was an unexpected number of common problems which related to different focus groups of forest-dependent poor people. At least a dozen of the most important problems identified were common to all three areas; these problems are shaded in grey in the two poverty maps.
7. The two simplified poverty maps which follow depict the composite complex and interrelated nature of poverty across the three study regions. The core problem (in this case poverty of forest-dependent people) is traced to its underlying causes from left to right by asking the question "Why"" between each tier.
8. For the purposes of this review only the first three tiers of underlying causes are shown. Much useful detail has been omitted, from which the more detailed and specific constraints can be deduced. Numbering in brackets on the branches indicates the number of regions (Caribbean, Central America and Southern Africa) to which the problems refer. Higher numbers (with the maximum of three equivalent to commonality across all three regions) relate to the more widespread problems.
9. In the poverty maps, the branch tips refer to a prioritised list of research and development themes shown in Table 1. For more detail on these problems and the research and development themes needed to resolve them, please consult the original reports from the three regions at www.nrinternational.co.uk / research management / forestry / programme news.

Figure 1. Poverty map for forest dependent poor people from the Caribbean, Central America and Southern Africa: low physical and natural capital

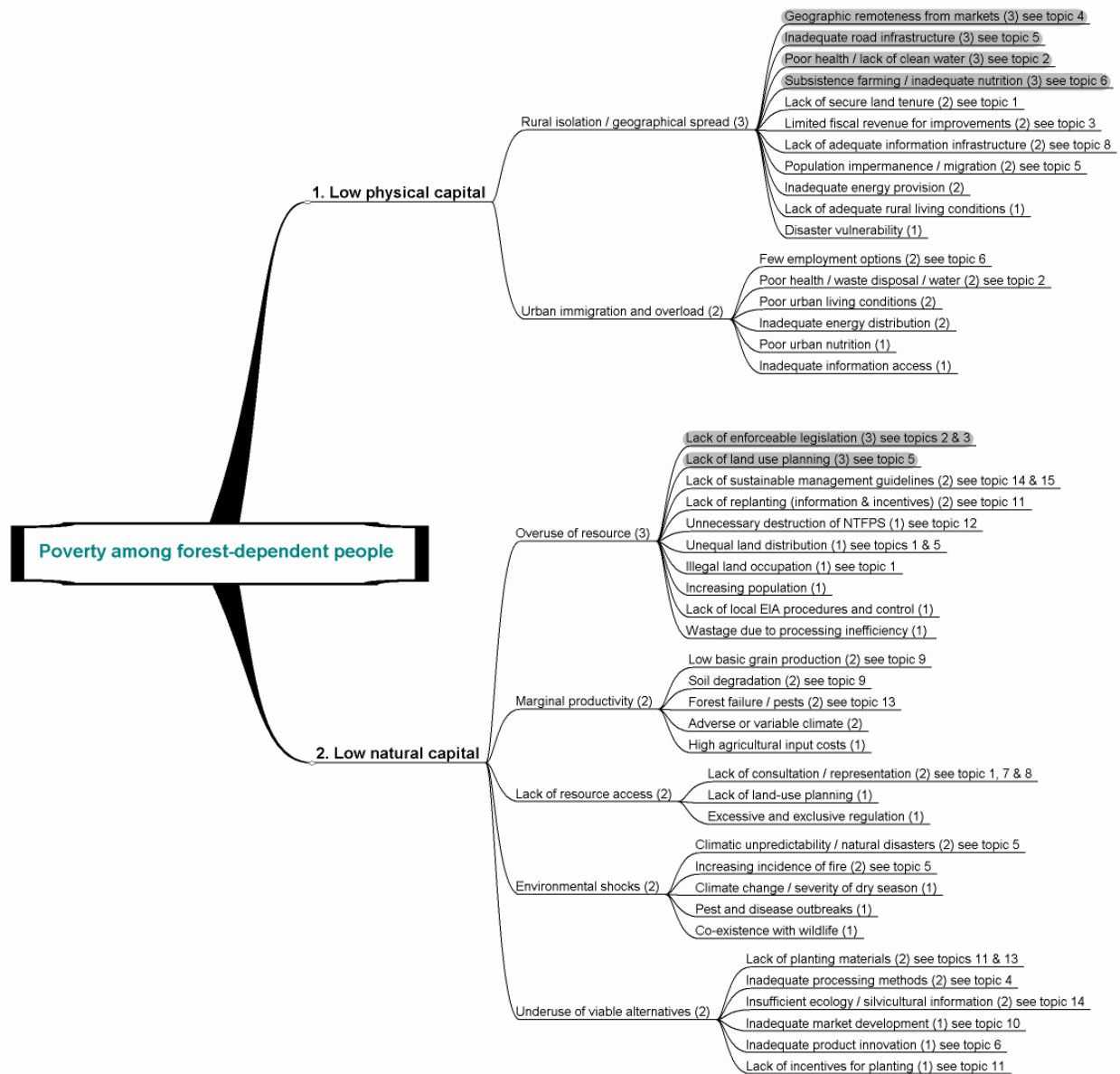


Figure 2. Poverty map for forest dependent poor people from the Caribbean, Central America and Southern Africa: low financial, human and social capital

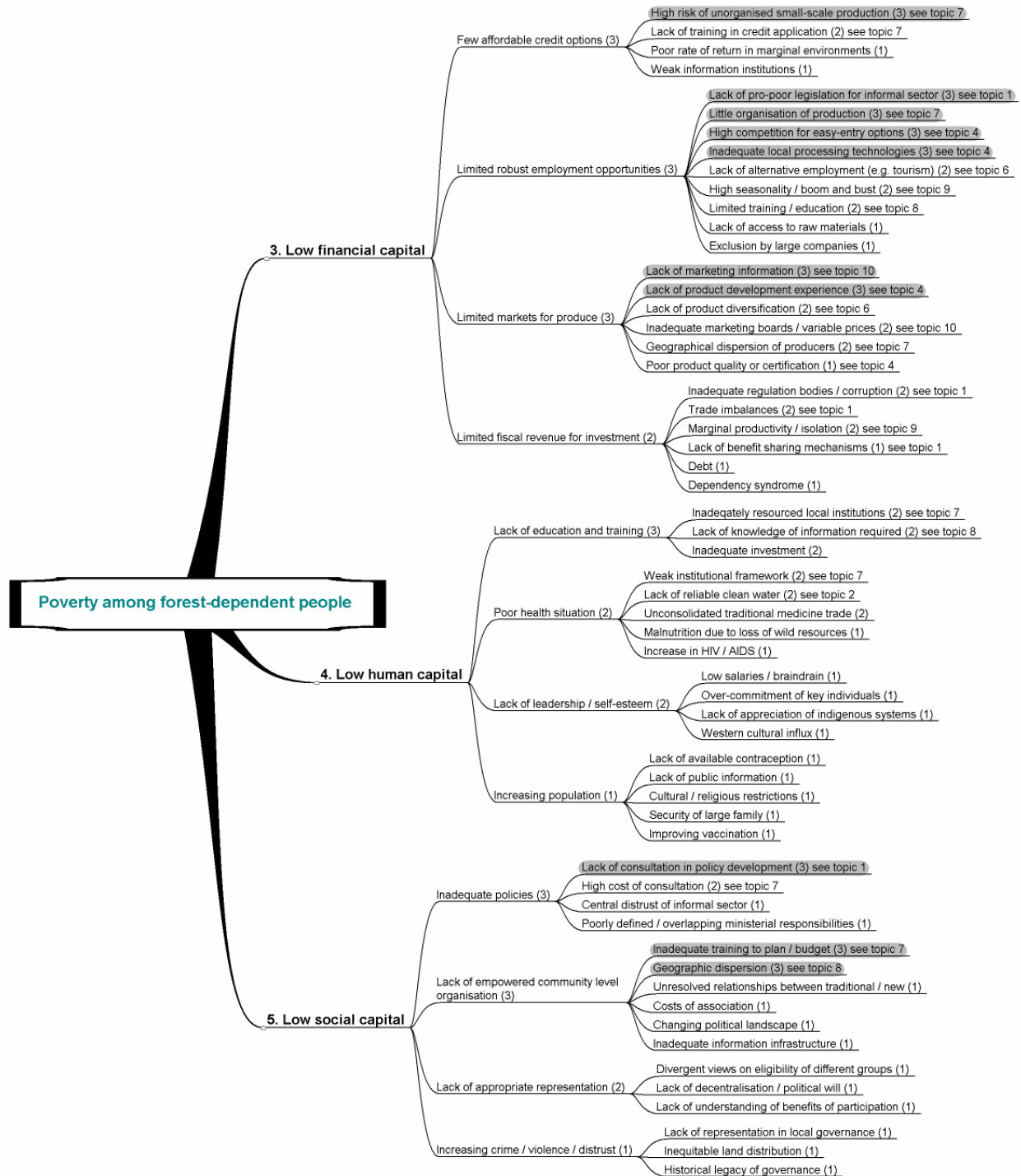


Table 1. Common research and development topics for the forest-dependent poor in order of priority: overlap and divergence between the Southern African, Caribbean and Central American regions

Summary (focus group in brackets)	Variation in priorities between regions		
	Southern Africa	The Caribbean	Central America
1. Methods for participatory pro-poor policy and forest law development (Cross cutting)	High	High	High
2. Alternative regulatory and financial compensation mechanisms for land use, especially in areas with open access or external linkages, e.g. watersheds. (Farmers)	High	High	High
3. Valuation methods for forest products and especially for environmental services (Farmers & landless)	High	Medium	High
4. Processing technologies for timber and non-timber forest products to improve market access (Artisans)	High	High	Low – Tourism and cottage industries not well developed. Some interest in properties of lesser known species
5. Policy analysis (through modelling) of trends in trade, population growth and land use change to improve land use planning (Farmers)	High	Medium	Medium
6. Alternative income generating opportunities such as pro-poor tourism (Artisans, landless and urban poor)	Low – Saturated or highly developed tourist infrastructure which excludes the poor?	High	Medium
7. Organisational models for forest communities to allow management / commercialisation (Farmers, landless and artisans)	High	Low – Highly diverse region in which resource use is varied and optimal organisational models will vary	High

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Summary (Focus group in brackets)	Variation in priorities between regions		
	Southern Africa	The Caribbean	Central America
8. The information needs and institutional structures to deliver them for disaggregated groups of poor people (Cross cutting)	High	Not mentioned, but many of the other identified constraints were primarily a function of inadequate access to information.	High
9. Optimising the integration of trees and crops through on-farm models for a variety of understudied tree species e.g. fruit tree planting (Farmers)	Medium	High	Low – Relatively low pressure on land and availability of adjacent natural woodland.
10. Market chain analysis and access for small-scale producers (Artisans and urban poor)	Low – Mentioned many times, but significant bodies of work already taking place in the region	Medium	High
11. Incentives to plant high value trees (Farmers)	Low – aridity makes high value tree planting (except fruits) unattractive.	Medium	Medium
12. Management requirements for NTFPs to maintain supply and product quality (Farmers and landless)	Medium	Medium	Low – see 3
13. Assessment of alternative species and provenances to overcome particular constraints (Farmers)	Medium	Not mentioned – there are abundant natural resources and the major constraints lie elsewhere.	Medium
14. Optimal woodland management – ecology and management (Landless)	High	Low – Only in Guyana and Belize were there significant areas of natural forest where this was an option	Low – Benefits limited to medium scale forestry operators and co-operatives rather than the very poor.
15. Hunting Guidelines (Landless)	Not mentioned – African game hunting subject to much research and viewed as outside the forestry sector	High	Not mentioned – low population densities (except El Salvador) might reduce the impact of over-hunting.

Conclusions

10. Changes at the policy and institutional level to create an "enabling" (rather than "disabling") environment are essential in overcoming the problems of forest-dependent people. This is particularly true for concession policies and practices. Technical knowledge of sustainable forest management already far exceeds the opportunities for practical implementation because of this disabling environment. This does not mean that *no* new technical knowledge is needed, rather that higher immediate priorities are found in the problems associated with the enabling environment.
11. Constraints faced by the forest dependent poor can rarely be solved by single-discipline research or development activities (see Figures 1 & 2). In order to make progress towards beneficial integration of forest-based activities by different stakeholders it may be necessary to draw upon expertise from a broader range of disciplines than has hitherto been the case (e.g. business studies, economics, law, politics, social sciences etc.)
12. Many of the constraints faced by disaggregated focus groups of forest-dependent poor are common across quite different climatic and cultural contexts. The commonality of problems indicates a need for strategic research and development together with lesson learning and promotion of relevant findings, plus more efficient use of the global knowledge base.

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