

**B-41: Factors influencing the dependency of peripheral communities of Knuckles on forest resources**

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The Knuckles range, which is the 2nd most important forest reserve, has been identified as a watershed to the Mahaweli, the longest river in Sri Lanka, a climatic moderator, and a rich biological resource housing a large number of floral and faunal species. There are about 48 villages located in the periphery of the forest. Communities in these villages have a high degree of dependency on the forest. The objective of this study was to identify the socio-economic factors affecting the level of forest dependency in the Knuckles Region.

The total sample was stratified into 3 villages and 20 families from each were randomly selected. Three multiple regression models were used to explain total

income from the forest, total forest income excluding cardamom and total income from non-timber forest products (N.T.F.P.). The results reveal that total household income is positively related to the income from forest resources. However, income from forest resources excluding cardamom, which is a commercial activity, shows an inverse relationship with total income. Non-agricultural activities show less dependency on forest resources in all models. Extraction of N.T.F.P. and level of debts are positively related,, reflecting that the poor groups have greater dependency on forest.

The results indicate that with overall development i.e. when people get higher incomes they will depend less on forest resources. Therefore, the conservation plan can include such measures to reduce the forest dependency of the community in the long run.