

DRAFT PRESS RELEASE:

NEW STUDIES LINKING MIGRATION, LAND ABANDONMENT AND FOOD SECURITY

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The number of people leaving Nepal from its hillsides and cities continues to grow every year, leading to both positive and negative consequences for those left behind. According to statistics as of 2014, every day about 1300¹ people are officially leaving Nepal for foreign employment. In the Panchase region studied, around 20-25 % of cultivable land has been abandoned. In parallel, soil fertility is declining as there are fewer livestock and manpower to provision the remaining fields with manure. However, the forest cover in the area studied has increased by 8.1% since 1996. Land abandonment is having negative consequences on the ability of some households to manage land and produce food locally, while many women have increased burdens of managing the land and their households.

Findings from two new studies on linkages between out-migration, land management and food security were presented today at a workshop organized by the Nepal Center for Contemporary Research (NCCR) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Nepal. The studies noted a greater increase of invasive species such as Banmara and Nilo gandha , in forest and rangeland, and in agricultural field respectively, which are also moving up the hillsides due to warmer temperatures. However, many positive aspects are also occurring such as the increase of income to those households receiving remittances and more empowerment to women who must make more decisions. The studies which focused on the Panchase region and Pokhara area were conducted by the University of Berne and University of Lausanne, Switzerland in collaboration with NCCR and IUCN and the Swiss Network for International Studies in Switzerland.

Participants also discussed the policy implications of migration on food security, women's' burdens and rights, land management and especially the need to create employment opportunities in Nepal. "We need to focus on small scale and women-friendly mechanization for agricultural production, establishment of enterprise, and create local level employments to attract our youth to stay in the rural areas, according to Dr. Devendra Gauchan, Chief, Socio-Economic Division, Nepal Agricultural Research Council, NARC."

Regarding the role of woman and migration, Ms. Saru Joshi of UN Women, said, "The cumulative frustration of not being rewarded, not being counted is one major push factor for migration of women, regardless of the risks. The popular slogan is 'fly now, pay later'". "However, we need more strong evidence to back our policies related to migration and this research is a useful contribution in that direction."

¹ Online Nepali News, 28 May 2014