

# **Depopulation and Rural Land Abandonment in the Hills of Western Nepal**

Chhabi Lal Chidi  
Central Department of Geography  
Tribhuvan University, Kirtipur, Kathmandu  
chidichhabilal@gmail.com

## **Abstract**

Decreasing population leads to changes in local patterns of land uses due to abandonment of agriculture land which increase in fallow lands and wild vegetation. In recent decades hill areas of Nepal has lost greater proportion of population resulting labour deficit on hill agriculture. The study area of this paper is Andhikhola watershed of Syangja, western hill of Nepal which district has population change rate nearly negative one during last two censuses. Population census, Landsat image and topographic maps are data sources. DEM was generated from contour of topographic map. Altitude, slope gradient and slope aspect were derived from Digital Elevation Model (DEM). Land use data was derived from Landsat image. Land use maps were intersected with maps of altitude and slope gradient (slope angle) and slope aspect (slope direction) maps. These intersected maps generate landuse change data by different wards, altitudinal range, slope gradient and slope aspect categories. Tables, maps and different statistical tests have been used to identify the relation between population and landuse change. In general decreasing population has greater impact on decreasing cultivated land but local variability of population change on cultivated land is not regular pattern. In fact, the regular relation of population change and cultivated land is much better determined by slope gradient than altitude and slope aspect. The greater regularities of spatial pattern of cultivated land and vegetated area indicate the conversion of cultivated land into vegetated area.