Water Scarcity and its Impacts on Rural Livelihoods in Eastern Mid-Hills: A Case Study of Kurule Village, Dhankuta District, Nepal

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Water scarcity is an acute emerging issue in many parts of rural hilly Nepal and migration to the flat plains and peripheral cities appears as a major coping strategy to this. This is a case study of Kurule Village, Dhankuta district where water scarcity has become a major push factor for migration. It attempts to find the causes responsible for scarcity, its impacts on the livelihood activities especially agriculture and identify the responsive coping measures of the people.

Analysis of rainfall data and social research methods (KII, household questionnaire surveys) were adopted to find the severity of scarcity. Analysis shows the amount of rainfall is gradually decreasing and the number of dry months is increasing. Factors such as population growth, post road construction and geographical orientation of the place are the main reasons due to which springs and other natural water sources are either disappearing permanently or not getting opportunity to be recharged sufficiently.

Scarcity has heavily impacted the farming practices adopted by the people resulting in rain-fed mono-crop cultivation, low productivity, heavy insect-pest infestation and thus low yield. Livestock too has been affected due to which people are slowly switching from big milch animals to small poultry and meat animals.

Two types of coping strategies are adopted by people: resilience building and preventive. Findings also include gender role exchanges to meet the water demands and migration of the severely affected families. The demand and supply management of the existing water resources can help solve the problem of scarcity sustainably.

Keywords: Water scarcity, Rural livelihood, Coping strategy, Migration