

# Consequences of Rural to Rural Migration in Nepal

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## INTRODUCTION

Permanent internal migration within Nepal has become a significant population redistributing phenomenon. Out of a total of 216,853 people counted as being absent from their home for 6 months or more in 1952/54 Population Census, only 18,733 (9 percent) were internal migrants compared to 198,120 migrants living outside Nepal. By 1961, the total number of people absent from their home 6 months or more had reached 386,824. Of this number, 58,354 (15 percent) were internal migrants and the rest went abroad mainly to India. Although the 1971 internal migration volume (506,921) showed a considerable increase over the 1961 volume, this change represented the volume of life-time internal migrants and should be interpreted cautiously because of the definitional change in data reporting in 1971. Although, the 1971 Census did not report any estimates of migrants outside Nepal, the 1971 Indian Census reported 486,600 (6800 less than in 1961) Nepal born persons in India.

In 1952/54, rural to rural migration accounted for 65 percent of the total migration volume. This figure increased to 91 percent in 1961 and 93 percent in 1971. Moreover, in 1952/54 only 30 percent of the total internal migrants were recorded as having migrated into Terai and this proportion had increased to 61 percent in 1961 and 81 percent in 1971. In this context, two major developments, resettlement programme and malaria eradication programme, were associated with the influx of hill migrants into the Terai plains. The resettlement programme of Terai became an important strategy for attempting to increase production and generate economic growth in Nepal. Especially, the land resettlement programme of Terai was designed to combat the problem of population pressure in the hills and resettle the landless and victims of natural disaster in the Terai plain.

Accompanying the resettlement schemes and malaria eradication, however, is an increase in the rate of immigration to Terai from the hills. The consequences of such rural to rural migration have not been thoroughly investigated previously. The study of West-central Nepal where the earliest land resettlement efforts were carried out by the Nepalese government allows us to clarify some issues regarding landownership and landlessness as consequences of rural to rural migration in Nepal.

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## CONTEXT OF THE PROBLEM

A noticeable volume of migration into West-central Nepal coincided with the opening of the Rapti Valley in Chitwan district in 1954. The Resettlement Project of Rapti Valley was initiated as a response to massive floods and landslides in the central hills of Nepal in 1954. The overall objectives of this project were to resettle natural disaster victims, the poor, and the landless people and to increase Nepal's agricultural production. At the beginning of this project's implementation, a malaria control programme was 'a must'; therefore, malaria eradication accompanied the resettlement project in Chitwan.

During 1954-1956, a small number of migrants moved into Chitwan from the neighbouring hills. Some of them settled permanently where they had lived previously as seasonal labourers during the winter when malaria was not so much of a threat. Land acquisition was more a matter of personal or family endeavour than social status of cleaning the Terai Jungle.

The second phase of the project started with Rapti Valley Development Programme (RVDP) in 1956. The RVDP was responsible for carrying out the government's stated objectives which emphasized the provision of land for the landless, the poor, and other disadvantaged groups who had lost most or all of their lands in the hills to floods and landslides. The distribution of land was controlled and the size of holdings ranged from 2.7 hectares to over 37.8 hectares. Social and class positions emerged as an important element in the acquisition and distribution of land. The overall implementation was heavily influenced by nepotism, patronage, and corruption. As a result, landless migrants and natural disaster victims were unable to acquire land through the process of RVDP. After the malaria eradication programme launched by WHO and USAID, information about Terai as a whole as an area of economic opportunities spread among the hill villages. The result was a continued in-migration of households and individuals to Chitwan and other Terai areas for acquiring land. It is the specific objective of this paper to investigate consequences of hill to Terai migration in terms of landownership and landlessness in Chitwan and Nawalparasi districts of Terai plain.

## METHODOLOGY

The specific objective and the nature of this micro-level analysis required field surveys, interviews, and primary data acquisition in both the destination and source districts. The research design involved the selection of two destination districts, Chitwan and Nawalparasi, in the Terai and two source districts, Lamjung and Syangja, in the hills. Conducting interviews was the prime method.

**First Phase Sample Design:** A four stage hierarchical sampling scheme was conducted in two destination districts, Chitwan and Nawalparasi. The districts were purposively selected on the basis of the following criteria: (1) government resettlement schemes have been conducted in the last 25 years; (2) districts have been recipients of a continuous flow of migrants from hill areas to areas under government resettlement schemes;

(3) districts have experiences of seasonal and semi-permanent migration from hill areas; (4) conduct surveys in an area where previous research emphasized little on rural to rural migration; and (5) accessibility consideration in terms of getting to villages.

The design of the sample was based on: (1) stratification of districts by Malaria unit sub-areas to include resettlement communities and non-government village settlements; (2) selection of villages from within the Malaria unit sub-areas with a probability proportional to size of a ten percent sample of villages; (3) selection of households from within the selected villages representing eight percent of the total households in the Malaria unit sub-areas; and (4) interview of the head of the household, or in his/her absence, of a representative adult of the household.

Second Phase Sample Design: The responses of the sampled migrant household heads in Chitwan and Nawalparasi helped to identify important source areas regarding their origin home villages in Lamjung and Syangja districts. A stratified sample of wards from within selected panchayats of these districts was selected and nine percent of the total households in the selected panchayats was interviewed. Responses again were solicited either from the head of the household or from the representative adult of the household.

#### SURVEY OPERATION

Two malaria units (Bharatpur and Prasadhap) in Chitwan consist of 8 and 10 villages respectively were sampled randomly. This study utilized malaria office census records because they provided a detailed record of names of household heads and number of households by villages. Thus, a random sample of 10 percent of villages within each of the two malaria units was selected. As a result, a random sample of 40 percent of the households in each of the 8 and 10 villages was selected. The total number of households selected was 661 and the interviews of 511 households were completed (response rate was 77 percent). The same procedure and criteria were followed in Nawalparasi except that only one malaria unit was selected in Nawalparasi. The most appropriate unit in the Nawalparasi district was Damkauli unit from where 11 villages (excluding 25 hill villages) were randomly selected. A random sample of 40 percent household in each village resulted in 717 households. The completed number of interviews was 593 households (response rate was 83 percent). This represented approximately 8 percent of the total households in Damkauli unit.

In Lamjung district, three village panchayats (Jita, Chandreswori and Rainas) were identified as those which contained the most commonly referenced home villages or communities. Three wards from Jita, four wards from Chandreswori and four wards from Rainas were randomly selected. A 40 percent random sample of household in each sampled ward was selected on the basis of the household lists obtained from the panchayat ward office. This sample was approximately 11 percent of the total number of households in the three panchayats. The total number of completed interview was 273 households (response rate was 80 percent).

In Syangja district, five village panchayats (Kolma Barahachaur, Daraun, Panchamul, Rupakot, and Arjunchaupari) were selected. Four wards in Kolma Barahachaur, one ward in Daraun, two wards in Panchamul, one ward in Rupakot, and one in Arjunchaupari were randomly selected. From each of these sampled wards a 40 percent random sample of households from the records of panchayat office were selected. This resulted in a total of 254 completed household interviews (response rate was 80 percent), which was 8 percent of the total household numbers in the five panchayats of the Syangja district.

#### HOUSEHOLD SITUATION OF PERMANENT MIGRANTS IN TERAI

By contrasting the land holding acquired at the time of arrival with the land holdings owned at the time of the survey (October through December 1979 in destination districts and February through March, 1980 in source districts), this study assesses the long-term attainment as well as the short-term attainment of improved household situations.

Among the Terai sample, 15.9 percent had not acquired any land on their arrival in Chitwan and Nawalparasi (Table 1). The remainder were able to buy some land or acquire a holding from the government resettlement schemes. Approximately, 60 percent of the acquisitions were of landholdings in lots of less than 2 hectares. By the time of the survey this percentage had dropped to 4.8 percent (Table 2). More of the permanent migrants became landowners. In terms of landownership change there was a decrease in overall lot size among the permanent migrant households with larger land lots being sub-divided and redistributed.

The hill landownership is one which had evolved over generations, while Terai settlement is merely 25 years old. Although not all the Terai migrants originated from Lamjung and Syangja, these districts represented the place of most migrants in Terai. It is very clear that many migrants acquired larger amounts of land than they had owned in the hills (Table 3). These evidences concentrated on landownership as a major indicator of the attainment of an improved household situation in Terai.

#### LANDLESS AND RURAL SQUATTING IN CHITWAN AND NAWALPARASI

At the time of the survey, a significant proportion (11.8 percent) of migrants in Chitwan and Nawalparasi were landless. On the other hand, 28.3 percent had acquired land by self-occupation (Table 4). Almost half (46 percent) of the sample households in Nawalparasi had acquired land by self-occupation, while only 8 percent in Chitwan had acquired land by self-occupation. Thirty six percent had purchased their land with their own capital and 18 percent had obtained land through government resettlement agencies while land inherited was only 2.5 percent. However, more households (16.5 percent) remained completely landless in Chitwan than in Nawalparasi (7.9 percent). Forty percent of migrant households in hills had not obtained any land in West-central Terai, or are squatting on land illegally. Chitwan had more landless households while there were five times more squatters in Nawalparasi than the officially resettled

Table 1  
Land Acquired by Respondents in Chitwan and Nawalparasi on Their Arrival  
According to Intentions of Permanent Settlement

Land Acquired on Arrival (in Hectare)	Intentions of Permanent Settlement			
	Yes	No	Total	Percent
No land owned	106 (15.9)	111 (35.7)	217	22.2
0.01-0.51	97 (14.6)	104 (33.4)	201	20.6
0.52-1.02	110 (16.5)	68 (21.9)	178	18.2
1.03-2.03	142 (21.4)	18 (5.4)	160	16.4
2.04-3.05	82 (12.3)	5 (1.6)	87	8.9
3.06-5.09	95 (14.3)	3 (1.0)	98	10.0
Over 5.10	33 (5.0)	2 (0.6)	35	3.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>665 (68.1)</b>	<b>311 (31.9)</b>		<b>100.0</b>

Figures in the parentheses indicate percentage.

Table 2  
Land Ownership of Respondents in Chitwan and Nawalparasi at the time of  
Survey According to Their Intentions of Permanent Settlement

Land Ownership (in Hectare)	Intentions of Permanent Settlement			
	Yes	No	Total	Percent
No land owned	32 (4.8)	83 (26.7)	115	11.8
0.01-0.51	140 (21.0)	124 (39.9)	264	27.0
0.52-1.02	169 (25.4)	79 (25.4)	248	25.4
1.03-2.03	182 (27.4)	22 (7.1)	204	20.9
2.04-3.05	69 (10.4)	3 (1.0)	72	7.4
3.06.5-09	54 (8.1)	0	54	5.5
Over 5.10	19 (2.9)	0	19	2.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>665 (68.1)</b>	<b>311 (31.9)</b>	<b>976</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Figures in the parentheses indicate percentage.

Table 3  
Land Ownership in Hills Prior to Moving in Chitwan and Nawalparasi Accord-  
to Intentions of Permanent Settlement

Land Ownership (in Hectare)	Intentions of Permanent Settlement			
	Yes	No	Total	Percent
No land owned	175 (26.3)	171 (55.0)	346	35.4
0.01-0.51	276 (41.5)	114 (36.7)	390	40.0
0.52-1.02	99 (14.9)	9 (2.9)	108	11.1
1.02-2.03	57 (8.6)	6 (1.9)	63	6.4
2.04-3.05	21 (3.2)	4 (1.3)	25	2.6
3.06-5.09	15 (2.2)	0	15	1.5
No. response	22 (3.3)	7 (2.2)	29	3.0
Total	665 (68.1)	311 (31.9)	976	100.0

Figures in the parentheses indicate percentage.

Table 4  
Method of Land Acquisition by Migrant Households in Chitwan and Nawal-  
Parasi

Method of Land Acquisition	Chitwan	Nawalparasi	Total	Percent
No land acquired	75 (16.5)	41 (7.9)	116	11.8
Land granted by Govt. Agency	129 (28.4)	48 (9.2)	117	18.1
Land purchased by private means	174 (38.3)	176 (33.7)	350	35.9
Land partly purchased and partly Govt. granted	24 (5.3)	15 (1.5)	32	3.3
Land acquired by self-occupation	36 (7.9)	240 (46.0)	276	28.3
Jamindar sub-renting	0	2 (0.4)	2	0.2
Total	454	522	976	100.0

Figures in the parentheses indicate percentage.

families and those who paid for their land. Overall, the pattern of self-occupancy has been one of the modest acquisitions and this differs markedly from the range of land sizes acquired. This applies to both those groups who either purchased land or who were granted land from settlement agencies.

The landless or a squatting migrant households are of owning no land in the hills (50 percent), of loss due to indebtedness (13 percent), of loss due to natural calamities, floods, and landslides (6 percent), and of the need to sell land to repay debts (10 percent).

Among the resettled households, loss of land due to indebtedness was lower (5 percent); a much smaller proportion indicated as they had been landless in the hills (20 percent). The data also showed that their land retention was much higher (19 percent) and many more had sold their lands to raise capital (26 percent). The common experience to all households appeared to be the loss of land due to natural calamities (Table 5).

Table 5  
Land Holding Patterns in Hills of Landless, Squatter, and Government  
Resettlement Households in Terai

Reasons for Changes in Land Holdings in Hills	Terai Households		
	A Landless	B Squatter	C Resettled
No difference with land	13 (11.2)	15 (5.4)	12 (6.8)
No difference without land	51 (44.0)	138 (50.0)	35 (19.8)
Indebted and lost land to creditor	13 (11.2)	42 (15.2)	9 (5.1)
Lost land due to natural calamities	6 (5.2)	19 (6.9)	10 (5.6)
Sold land	12 (10.3)	32 (11.6)	46 (26.0)
Land left back in hills	5 (4.3)	12 (4.3)	33 (18.6)
Do not know*	13 (11.2)	18 (6.5)	23 (13.0)
Others*	3 (2.6)	0	9 (5.1)
<b>Total</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>276</b>	<b>177</b>

\*Added together to validate the Chi-Square test.

Figures in the parentheses indicate percentage.

No significant difference between A and B but significant difference between A+B and C at 0.05 level.

Altogether, there were 276 (28.3 percent) squatter households, 116 (11.9 percent) landless households, 559 (57.3 percent) households who owned land, and 25 (2.5 percent) households were amongst other categories (Table 6). Among the squatters land occupancy of smaller size holding increased between the time of arrival and the time of the survey.

Table 6  
Pattern of Self-occupancy of Squatter Households in the Terai

Amount of Land Occupied (in Hectares)	Land Occupation on Arrival	Land Occupation at the Time of Survey	Percent Change
No land occupied	59 (21.4)	3 (1.1)	-20.3
0.01-0.51	115 (41.7)	143 (51.8)	+10.1
0.52-1.02	75 (27.2)	98 (35.5)	+8.3
1.02-2.03	23 (8.3)	31 (11.2)	+2.9
2.04-3.05	4 (1.4)	1 (0.4)	-1.0
Number of Squatter Households 276		276 (28.3)	
Number of Landless Households		116 (11.9)	
Number of Household Who Own Land		559 (57.3)	
Others		25 (2.5)	
Total Sample Households		976	

Figures in the parentheses indicate percentage.

#### CONCLUSION

More migrants acquired land as a consequence of remaining in the Terai destination areas. Some households who were unable to purchase land on their arrival had become landowners ultimately. Although a reduction in the distribution of land lots among the permanent migrants was noticed, the proportion of landless in Terai was twice that of the hills. Many migrant households who were migrants in the hills also remained landless in the Terai. The major consequence of hill to Terai migration is the continuation of landless and rural squatting in Terai.



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