

Does the Market Economy Save the Local Natural Resources While Improving Human Welfare? The Case of 101 Natural Forests in the Middle Hills of Nepal

*Takeshi Sakurai¹, Towa Tachibana², Santosh Rayamajhi³

1. The University of Tokyo, 2. Chiba University, 3. Tribhuvan University

To pursue a sustainable human development, while expanding human frontiers into space, we need to conserve the natural environment of our mother planet. In low-income countries, deterioration of local natural resources such as forests for firewood, inshore fishery for home and local consumption has been the most urgent environment issue. Various measures have been taken to stem excessive harvesting of local natural resources in the course of the population increase: e.g., community management. Little attention has been paid, however, to the seemingly most powerful lifesaver for the overuse of local natural resources: the market economy. Out-migration from the marginally productive rural areas along with the investments in urban areas would attain both the conservation of natural resources and improvements in human welfare. With 101 randomly-sampled natural forests in the Middle Hills of Nepal, we compare the impacts of community management and those of out-migration on forest conditions. Forest condition was evaluated by forest inventory conducted in 1997-1999 and 2014-2016.