Knowing Climate Change in the Trans-Himalayan Region of Nepal: Perspectives from Local Narratives

Jiban Mani Poudel, PhD, Tribhuvan University, Nepal; Email: jmpo483@gmail.com; p.jiban@anthropologytu.edu.np

Some facts on climate change in Nepal and study Area:

Increased temperature trends in Nepal

(Source: Aase, Chaudhary and Vetaas, 2009)

Melting of glacier in the Himalaya

Increased average monsoon rain

Increased temperature trendsin Nhason

Objectives

- To document how people tell about climate change that is taking place in their localities,
- To assess the climate change through documentation of native terminologies

Methods

Ethnography collection of local narratives & experiences in 2012-2014 and 2017 & 2018

Findings: local are key eyes witness of climate change in their environment

Pond becomes a lake – "In 1955, my father and I were in the *goth(cow shed)* at Wagreche pastureland which is nearby Dona *Pokhari* (a small pond) that covered a space occupied by a house. … In 1982, I again visited Dona Lake with my herd. At that time, it took me more than one and half hours to walk round the Dona *tal"* (Tek Bahadur Gurung male b. 1939) (Figs. 1 to 3). Started to form new lake (Fig. 4).

"Oh! What's rain? It looks like '*Lamjunge-rain*'. The *Lamjunge-rain* begins to fall in our village. I have not seen such rain in our village before,' Sol Bahadur exclaimed."

Soil forgets to cry: "Our *sa*(soil) used to cry in winter due heavy snowfall, but now forgets to do."

Consequences of vegetation landscape: both benefit and loss

Shifting in habitat of livestock and crisis in its management

Conclusions:

- Climate change is a global phenomena, but its consequences are local; and local people are the key eye witness of the changes
- Local people have multiple ways of explaining and understanding climate change in which exploring and speaking with local terms and narratives can be one.
- Local narratives can be important sources to understand climate change where scientific records are insufficient and incoherent