Geographical Analysis on the Impact of Land Cover Changes on Socio-Economic Conditions of Bawlakhe District, Kayah State in Myanmar: A Case Study of Four Villages

Khin Sandar Aye
Geography Department, Loikaw University

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to analyse how land cover changes related to socio-economic conditions in four villages located in Bawlakhe District, Myanmar. Two important methodologies were used to gather and analyze data for this research: 270 individual in-depth interviews with villagers were conducted to capture information about land cover changes and its effects on the local economy. Secondly, using GIS and RS satellite technologies, land cover imagery was analyzed in ten year intervals between 1995 and 2015.

The main economy of local people in these areas depends primarily on forest production. According to the field surveys, questionnaires and satellite images analysis, land cover conditions of this area dramatically changed from 1995 to 2015, especially after 2010. Before these periods, ethnic conflict in Kayah State prevented easy to assess in this area but after the peace agreement was reached in 2010, many people from others areas were able to come to work in forest production throughout the region. There currently exists a lack of planning for forest conservation and management partly due to low education levels in most of the communities. Today, there exists many challenges for the natural environment and local communities such as forest depletion and its impacts on livelihoods. Some people have changed livelihoods to agriculture and while others have relocated to work in neighbouring countries like Thailand.

This is the first paper to report on how land cover changes are related to socio-economic conditions of Bawlakhe District, covering a large gap in the knowledge of the local people. Moving forward the author hopes to provide local and regional decision makers with accurate information in order to better understand the advantages and disadvantages of land use changes and the need for guidelines for sustainable development of the area.