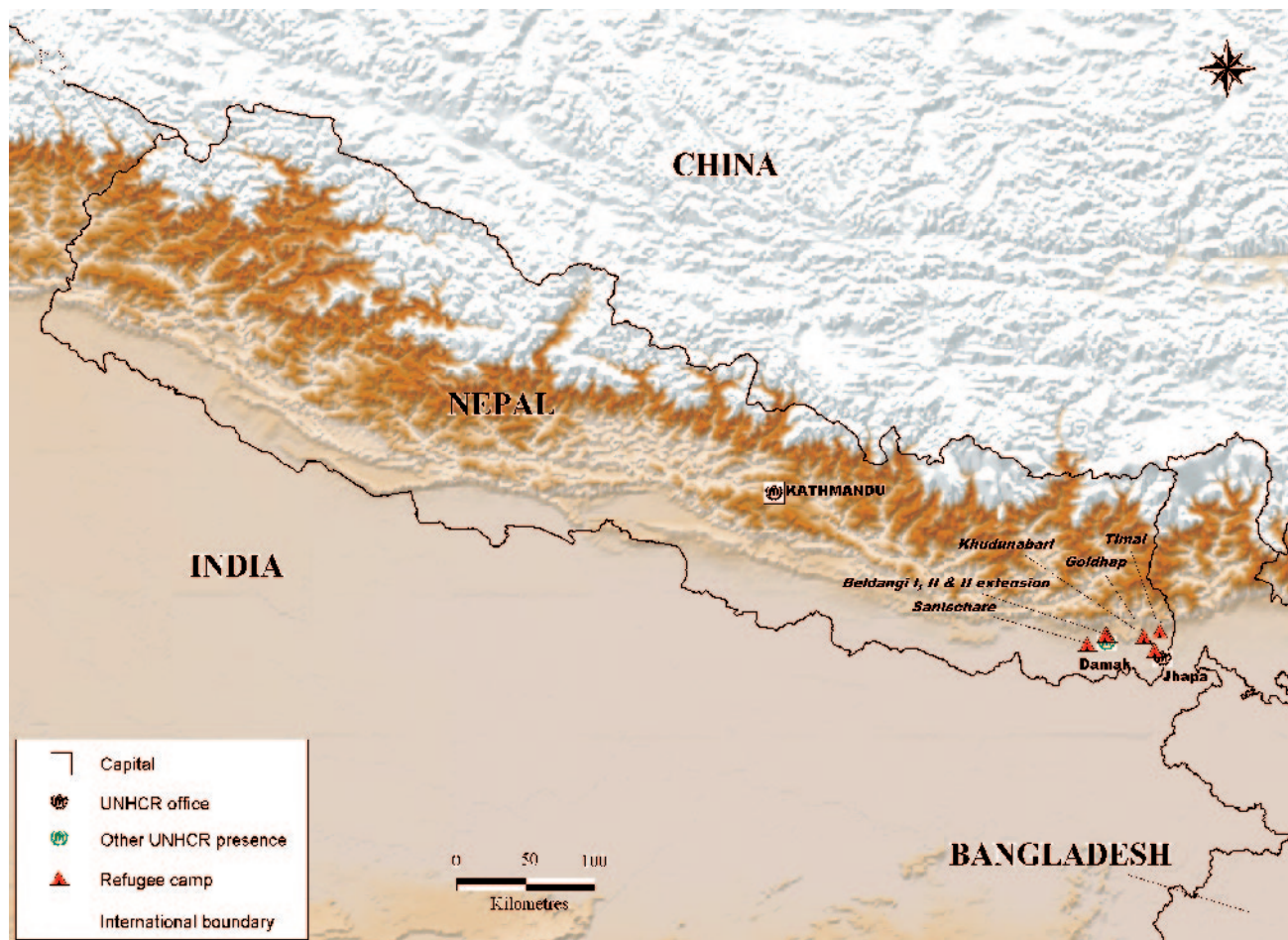


Nepal



Main Objectives

The Bhutanese refugees remained the single largest refugee group in the region. As lasting solutions are not yet in prospect, UNHCR's initial objectives remained to facilitate bilateral discussions between the Governments of Bhutan and Nepal; to explore possible future solutions for Bhutanese refugees; provide protection and assistance to Bhutanese refugees and encourage their active involvement in camp management; assist Tibetan arrivals in transit and provide legal advice and assistance to other asylum-seekers; and promote the adoption of a national law on refugees.

Impact

- After a decade of bilateral negotiations, the Bhutanese and Nepalese Governments finally undertook a joint verification exercise, whereby Bhutanese refugees were assessed for their eligibility to return. It is intended that this exercise now serve as a pilot project to be scaled up to cover the entire refugee population.
- All Bhutanese refugees in seven camps had access to protection and assistance. Refugees were increasingly involved in the administration of the camps and worked in education, health-care, camp maintenance and construction. They were made responsible for food distribution, water supply systems and camp hygiene.
- UNHCR assisted 1,381 newly arrived Tibetans

and facilitated their safe passage to third countries.

- In the absence of a national legal framework, UNHCR conducted refugee status determination for asylum-seekers and provided recognised refugees with legal and financial assistance.
- The text of the National Model Law on refugees adopted at the 1997 Regional Consultations on Refugees and Migratory Movements in South Asia was translated into Nepalese and shared with interested parties.

Working Environment

The Context

Nepal is not a signatory to the 1951 Convention nor to the 1967 Protocol relating to the status of refugees, and still lacks a national refugee law. However, the Government continued in 2001 to show its generosity by offering temporary asylum to specific groups of people such as the Bhutanese refugees. For other asylum-seekers, UNHCR conducted refugee status determination; those who were then recognised under the UNHCR mandate were granted temporary asylum by the Nepalese Government. The influx of Bhutanese refugees into Nepal began in late 1991 and peaked in 1992 reportedly due to strict enforcement of citizenship and immigration laws by the Bhutanese authorities. UNHCR started to provide assistance to refugees following a request by the Nepalese Government in 1992. In 2001, 100,800 Bhutanese refugees, hosted in seven camps in Jhapa and Morang districts, were dependent almost entirely on external aid.

Main Origin/ Type of Population	Persons of Concern			
	Total in Country	Of whom UNHCR assisted	Per cent Female	Per cent under 18
Returnees (from Bhutan)	110,800	100,800	49	43
Tibetans (Refugees)	20,100	140	-	-

Income and Expenditure (USD) Annual Programme Budget				
Revised Budget	Income from Contributions ¹	Other Funds Available ²	Total Funds Available	Total Expenditure
5,593,981	3,102,445	2,293,307	5,395,752	5,395,752

¹ Includes income from contributions restricted at the country level.

² Includes allocations by UNHCR from unearmarked or broadly earmarked contributions, opening balance and adjustments.
The above figures do not include costs at Headquarters.

The authorities allowed approximately 20,000 Tibetans, who had arrived in Nepal before 1 January 1990, to stay in Nepal; they are largely self-sufficient and do not require assistance from UNHCR. New arrivals were brought to the Tibetan reception centre in Kathmandu pending transfer to a third country. UNHCR provided Tibetan arrivals with temporary assistance such as food, shelter, medical treatment and transportation before they proceeded to a third country.

Constraints

Nepal experienced a series of tragic events in 2001: the killing of the Nepalese King and most of the royal family in June, the volatile political situation, national strikes, sharp economic decline, and the Maoist insurgency. The combined result was reduced public confidence in democratic institutions, heightened insecurity and deep discontent.

Although these events did not affect UNHCR's day-to-day operations, the authorities took a stricter approach towards asylum-seekers, and larger numbers of asylum-seekers were detained purely for illegal entry and, or stay.

The deteriorating security situation obliged UNHCR to step up security measures to ensure the safety of refugees and aid workers.

Funding

Earmarked contributions covered approximately 70 per cent of total requirements, and the programme was implemented without disruption within the allocated budget and without compromise to the overall quantity and quality of services provided to refugees.

Achievements and Impact

Protection and Solutions

As a result of the tenth round of ministerial level talks between Nepal and Bhutan, held in December 2000, agreement was

reached on the definition of the family unit. This cleared the way for a joint exercise to verify the camp population. The two countries formed a Joint Verification Team in January 2001. The exercise began two months later, in Khudunabari camp, and was completed at the end of the year, by which time all 12,000 refugees at that camp had been covered. The process was slow, but continued without major disruption, even after the announcement in late November of a national state of emergency.

Although UNHCR had no direct role in this verification process, it supported the Government of Nepal with funds to cover logistics and other related expenses. UNHCR also facilitated the exercise by providing technical advice to both governments on legal issues related to the status of refugees and durable solutions. UNHCR reduced anxiety among the refugees through counselling.

A total of 1,381 Tibetans were assisted in transiting Nepal to a third country. UNHCR provided temporary shelter, food, medical services, counselling and facilitated transit arrangements for those Tibetans deemed to be persons of concern to UNHCR. In September 2001, UNHCR received authorisation from the authorities to resume monitoring (suspended since December 1999) of the situation of Tibetan arrivals at the border.

UNHCR processed 37 asylum applications, recognised seven refugees under its mandate, and rejected 12. As there was little scope for local settlement, UNHCR assisted the seven refugees to settle in third countries.

Activities and Assistance

Community Services: Through operational partners, a number of community service projects were run by trained refugees. These included gender-awareness training, skills training, child care centres, income generation for women, and fire prevention. Training and support provided to the camp management committees led to improved day-to-day camp services and activities. A part-time medical/social counsellor was hired to assist Tibetan new arrivals and refer them if necessary to the local hospitals in Kathmandu.

Domestic Needs/Household Support: The Refugee Women's Forum in the camps mobilised vulnerable women refugees for the in-camp production of relief materials such as cotton cloth (used as sanitary napkins), woollen baby blankets, jute mats, and blackboard chalk. Subsequently, the cotton cloth was distributed to some 15,000 refugee women, with woollen blankets for all newborn babies, and 9,000 jute mats and 249 boxes of chalk were given to camp schools. All school-age children received uniforms. Kerosene and cooking stoves were provided to discourage refugees from collecting firewood. Bathing and laundry soaps, jerry cans for water, clothes, and blankets were also distributed. Tibetan new arrivals were given a one-off cash payment to meet their immediate needs while in Kathmandu, plus the cost of transportation to a third country and incidental expenses during the journey. 139 vulnerable Tibetan new arrivals received assistance at the Chialsa Tibetan Settlement at the northern border. A total of 29 asylum-seekers and urban refugees of various nationalities also received assistance while waiting for a durable solution.

Education: Almost all Bhutanese refugee children aged 6 to 18 had access to education, and a total of 40,047 refugee children from primary school up to grade 10 were enrolled in camp schools. Under the DAFI (Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Programme) scholarship scheme, nine students received tertiary education. Primary schools for refugee children used the Bhutanese curriculum and enjoyed the services of 1,053 refugee teachers. UNHCR provided books, classroom supplies, teaching materials and defrayed other costs. The literacy rate in the camps was estimated at 70 per cent (compared to an average of 45 per cent for Nepal). Six urban refugees received assistance to improve their foreign language skills and two received primary education.

Food: To complement the basic food basket provided by WFP, UNHCR distributed a total of 3,215 tons of fresh vegetables and condiments on a weekly basis. Six tons of dried skimmed milk were distributed to more than 3,000 vulnerable refugees (children, pregnant or lactating women, the sick or chronically ill).

Forestry: To protect the environment surrounding refugee camps, UNHCR assisted the local commu-

nities in growing 63,000 tree saplings in tree nurseries, planting out a total of 58,440 saplings of different types, and 1,300 bamboo trees. A total of 50 local officials received training in forest management and nursery development.

Health/Nutrition: Basic preventive and curative health services were provided to all Bhutanese refugees through a primary health care programme which mobilised 370 trained health workers and 1,700 community health volunteers, all of them refugees themselves. Vaccination campaigns, antenatal and postnatal care, child health care activities, family planning, ambulance services and efficient upkeep of facilities kept mortality rates (and birth rates) among refugees lower than national levels. Basic preventive and curative health services were also provided to newly arrived Tibetans and other urban refugees.

Income Generation: To assist local communities affected by the presence of large numbers of refugees, 350 local women continued to receive loans under a micro-credit scheme designed to help them

raise their socio-economic status. A total of 213 local women also underwent three-day training on goat farming.

Legal Assistance: Law and order in the camps and the maintenance of refugee statistics and records were the responsibility of government officials who received indemnities from UNHCR. Interpreters were hired to facilitate the refugee status determination of individual cases of different nationalities. UNHCR organised a workshop on “UNHCR and its Role in Nepal” in October 2001 with the active participation of the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Department of Immigration, the Police Service, and the Tibetan Refugee Welfare Office. This served as a useful forum for the discussion of refugee-related issues in Nepal. UNHCR also provided assistance to facilitate the joint verification exercise.

Operational Support (to Agencies): In order to sustain programme implementation and the overall delivery of assistance, UNHCR defrayed the operational support costs of all operational partners.

Many of the women did not attend school before they left their country. Here, school is organised for Bhutanese refugee women in Jhapa District. *UNHCR / A. Hollmann*



Sanitation: UNHCR carried out all necessary solid waste management and vector control measures in all camps.

Shelter/Other Infrastructure: UNHCR provided locally available shelter materials to repair refugee houses and agency offices. Over 15,500 refugee shelters were repaired in 2001. The Tibetan Reception Centre was re-decorated and furniture, linen and kitchen equipment was replaced as necessary.

Transport/Logistics: Camp warehouses and distribution centres were maintained and a centralised mechanical workshop regularly serviced 45 vehicles and 34 motorcycles. Spare parts and tyres were procured. The impact of this activity was evident in the smooth delivery of assistance and services throughout the year. The purchase of ten new vehicles was initiated in September 2001 to replace the old vehicles used by operational partners. UNHCR provided transportation costs for newly arrived Tibetans and daily subsistence allowances for police escorts traveling from the border to Kathmandu. This was instrumental in facilitating access for the Tibetans to the Department of Immigration in Kathmandu and to UNHCR for refugee status determination.

Water: The water system in all camps was maintained by 78 trained refugee workers using materials and tools provided by UNHCR. Each refugee had access to over 22 litres of potable water per day.

Organisation and Implementation

Management

UNHCR operated with 34 staff consisting of six internationals, one JPO, and 27 national staff. The office in Kathmandu oversaw the overall management of the programme and liaised with the Government, diplomatic missions and NGOs. Activities for the Bhutanese refugees were co-ordinated through the office in Jhapa, and supported by a field presence in Damak. Refugees actively participated in camp management, skill development, health and sanitary services, and fire prevention through the management committee, refugee women's forum, and sub-committees, which were well established in each refugee camp.

Working with Others

On all refugee matters, UNHCR co-ordinated with the Ministry of Home Affairs. UNHCR worked with two government counterparts, two international NGOs and four national NGOs fully or partially funded by UNHCR. UNHCR worked closely with other UN agencies including WFP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNAIDS and WHO, all of which provided other forms of assistance to refugees and gave advice to UNHCR in their respective fields of expertise.

Overall Assessment

After almost a decade of bilateral negotiations, March 2001 finally saw the commencement of joint verification of Bhutanese refugees to determine who was eligible to return. This was a significant step toward the eventual voluntary return of refugees. It is hoped that the next round of ministerial level meetings will be held soon to discuss how to proceed with the verification of the remaining refugees and the harmonisation of positions regarding categories of persons eligible for return.

The escalation of violence and political and socio-economic developments, coupled with global events (notably the September 11 attacks) created an environment less receptive to asylum-seekers and less conducive to the attainment of durable solutions for refugees. There was a rise in the detention of asylum-seekers and more cases of *refoulement* at the borders. In this sense, UNHCR worked in increasingly challenging circumstances. UNHCR will continue to highlight the plight of the Bhutanese refugees and urge the international community to support a speedy resolution of the issue, while supporting the efforts of the Governments of Bhutan and Nepal to bring about the early return of Bhutanese refugees.

Financial Report (USD)				
Expenditure Breakdown	Annual Programme Budget		Annual Programme Budget	
	Current Year's Projects	notes	Prior Years' Projects	notes
Protection, Monitoring and Co-ordination	594,196		2,314	
Community Services	64,905		15,804	
Crop Production	0		(1,976)	
Domestic Needs / Household Support	831,025		399,050	
Education	380,604		79,493	
Food	351,146		156,017	
Forestry	28,151		46,104	
Health / Nutrition	473,564		89,708	
Income Generation	21,217		2,090	
Legal Assistance	228,681		289	
Operational Support (to Agencies)	208,971		38,748	
Sanitation	39,600		10,458	
Shelter / Other Infrastructure	135,043		3,668	
Transport / Logistics	253,703		44,216	
Water	68,245		6,622	
Instalments with Implementing Partners	987,591		(860,231)	
Sub-total Operational	4,666,642		32,374	
Programme Support	578,790		989	
Sub-total Disbursements / Deliveries	5,245,432	(3)	0	(5)
Unliquidated Obligations	150,320	(3)	0	(5)
TOTAL	5,395,752	(1) (3)	0	

Instalments with Implementing Partners

Payments Made	3,560,472		9,003	
Reporting Received	2,572,881		869,234	
Balance	987,591		(860,231)	
Outstanding 1st January	0		879,677	
Refunded to UNHCR	0		22,980	
Currency Adjustment	0		3,534	
Outstanding 31 December	987,591		0	

Unliquidated Obligations

Outstanding 1st January	0		113,530	(5)
New Obligations	5,395,752	(1)	0	
Disbursements	5,245,432	(3)	0	(5)
Cancellations	0		80,167	(5)
Outstanding 31 December	150,320	(3)	0	(5)

Figures which cross reference to Accounts:

- (1) Annex to Statement 1
- (3) Schedule 3
- (5) Schedule 5

Offices

Kathmandu

Jhapa

Partners

Government Agencies

Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation

NGOs

Association of Medical Doctors in Asia

CARITAS (Nepal)

Grameen Bank Nepal

Lutheran World Federation

Nepal Red Cross Society

Tibetan Refugee Welfare Office