

Nepal

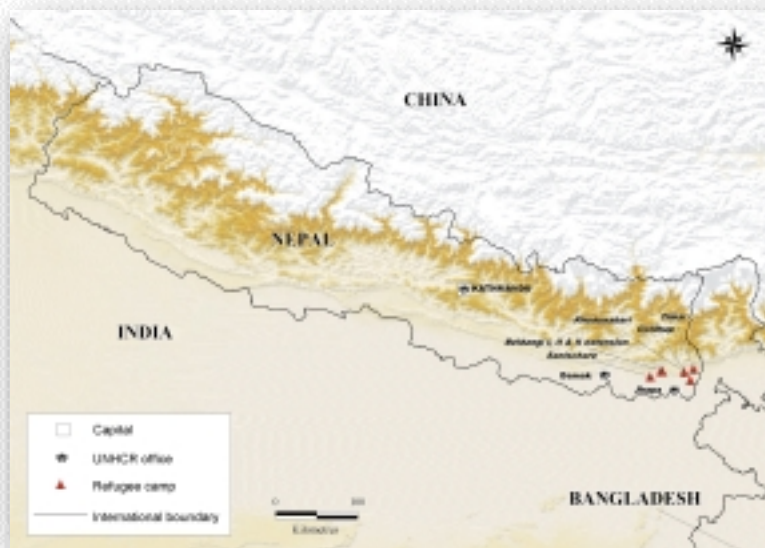
AT A GLANCE

Main Objectives and Activities

Protect and assist Bhutanese refugees until a durable solution is found; support bilateral efforts by the Governments of Bhutan and Nepal to identify such a solution; emphasise self-help activities and encourage the active involvement of refugees in the management of their daily lives; assist newly arrived Tibetans in transit, and advise other asylum-seekers on legal matters linked to their right to international protection.

Impact

- An agreement was reached between the Governments of Bhutan and Nepal to commence the verification of refugees in order to determine who could repatriate.
- Adequate protection and assistance were provided to some 98,900 Bhutanese refugees in seven camps reliant on external aid. Refugee women became more involved in self-help activities and in the management of their daily lives.
- Any negative effects of the refugees' presence were minimised through environmental projects and assistance to communities hosting refugee.
- UNHCR assisted 2,272 newly arrived Tibetans to transit safely through Nepal to a third country.
- In the absence of a national legal framework, UNHCR conducted refugee status determination and recognised refugees were provided with legal and financial assistance.



| Persons of Concern | | | | |
|--|------------------|------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| Main Refugee Origin/Type of Population | Total in Country | Of whom UNHCR assisted | Per cent Female | Per cent under 18 |
| Bhutan (Refugees) | 108,900 | 98,900 | 49 | 45 |
| Tibetans (Refugees) ¹ | 20,300 | 320 | - | - |

¹In 2000, UNHCR assisted the transit of 2,272 Tibetans. At the end of the year, there were still 320 Tibetans in transit at Kathmandu transit centre.

| Income and Expenditure (USD) | | | | |
|------------------------------|--|------------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| Annual Programme Budget | | | | |
| Revised Budget | Income from Contributions ¹ | Other Funds Available ² | Total Funds Available | Total Expenditure |
| 5,451,478 | 3,601,982 | 1,968,459 | 5,570,441 | 5,432,383 |

¹Includes income from contributions earmarked at the country level.

²Includes allocations by UNHCR from unearmarked or broadly earmarked contributions, opening balance and adjustments.

The above figures do not include costs at Headquarters.



WORKING ENVIRONMENT

The Context

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. Following the request of the Nepalese Government in 1992, UNHCR started to provide assistance to refugees. According to Nepalese law, refugees were considered to be foreigners without property ownership rights or the right to engage in economic activities. In 2000, some 98,900 Bhutanese refugees were hosted in seven camps in Jhapa and Morang Districts and were dependent on external aid.

Approximately 20,000 Tibetans, who had arrived in Nepal before 1 January 1990, were given permission to stay in Nepal by the Nepalese Government. They are now self-sufficient and do not require financial 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

The arrival of the 17th Tibetan Karmapa (spiritual figure in Tibetan Buddhism) to India (via Nepal) in December 1999 led to tighter border controls on Tibetans entering Nepalese territory across the China-Nepal border. In

2000, some of these Tibetans were deported, despite UNHCR's interventions. Others were arrested and detained for being in Nepal illegally. Since December 1999, UNHCR has not been able to conduct border monitoring missions without authorisation from the Nepalese authorities.

Funding

Due to the overall funding shortfall during the year, the scope of certain planned activities had to be restricted. This applied to the distribution of clothing, the construction of shelter, classrooms and latrines, the replacement of project vehicles, and the production of relief items. All public information and training activities were cancelled, including workshops on protection and the promotion of refugee law among government officials and within the NGO community.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND IMPACT

Protection and Solutions

During the High Commissioner's official visits to Bhutan and Nepal in the spring of 2000, UNHCR offered its technical expertise and support to facilitate the verification process for Bhutanese refugees. The disagreement between the two Governments had centred on how to define the family unit upon which the whole verification exercise would be based. The tenth round of ministerial talks in December finally yielded significant results. Agreement was reached on the defi-



dition of a family unit and the establishment of a joint verification team to validate family relationships and then undertake verification of the camp population. UNHCR shared its electronic database on the Bhutanese refugee population with both Governments to facilitate their discussions.

UNHCR reached an agreement with the Nepalese authorities on the issuance of a proper travel document for Tibetans who entered the country before 1 January 2000. The document would replace the earlier simplified one-page document, which had been considered insufficient by many countries, thus hindering Tibetans' travels. During the year, 2,272 Tibetans arriving in Nepal were transferred to the Tibetan transit centre in Kathmandu where they received assistance and were prepared for onward travel to a third country. UNHCR also facilitated the issuance of identification cards for Tibetan children who reached the age of 16.

UNHCR conducted refugee status determination for urban asylum-seekers under its mandate as Nepal is not a signatory to the 1951 Convention nor to the 1967 Protocol, and does not have a national refugee law. At the end of the year, there were 34 recognised refugees. Urban refugees were tolerated by the Government, but had no right to work. UNHCR intervened in cases where urban refugees, who entered Nepal illegally, were arrested, sentenced, fined and/or detained for a long period. In most cases, UNHCR was able to obtain their release and prevent their deportation. As there was no scope for local settlement, resettlement was the most favoured option. UNHCR resettled two refugees to third countries.

Activities and Assistance

Community Services: Bhutanese refugee women were assisted in running an association called the Refugee Women's Forum. Women were helped to market their handicrafts internationally by NGOs working in the camps and received training in business management. Child-care centres run by refugees themselves provided refugee children with early childhood stimulation and child-care services for refugee families headed by a single adult. Awareness-raising programmes on topics such as gender, domestic violence, and leadership training were organised for adult refugees and adolescents. Adult literacy classes in the Bhutanese language were conducted and in-camp libraries were maintained. Counselling and medical treatment were provided for newly arrived Tibetans who were traumatised and/or required medical attention. As part of a scheme to rehabilitate areas affected by the large presence of Bhutanese

refugees, a post office was constructed in Morang District for the benefit of 29,150 local people.

Crop Production: To protect vulnerable land from floods during the rainy season, UNHCR purchased seedlings for planting in the refugee-affected areas. Due to budgetary constraints, this activity was merged under the forestry sector in the second half of the year.

Domestic Needs/Household Support: A total of 777,500 bars of soap, 19,250 jerry cans, more than 3.5 million litres of kerosene, 5,500 cooking stoves and limited quantities of clothing were provided for refugees to cover essential household needs. The distribution of kerosene was effective in curtailing the use of traditional fuels such as wood. Single heads of households were entrusted with the production of relief items such as sanitary napkins, baby blankets, and jute mats, to be sold (and used) in camps to boost household income. Financial assistance was provided to 2,272 newly arrived Tibetans to meet their food, transportation and other initial expenses for their journey to a third country. A total of 29 urban asylum-seekers and refugees were provided with financial assistance to improve their living conditions.

Education: A total of 37,571 Bhutanese refugee children received primary education (100 per cent enrolment in the refugee camps: boys and girls). A total of 978 refugee teachers taught the Bhutanese curriculum. Books, classroom supplies, teaching materials and other operational support costs were provided. Education was also provided for 1,085 refugee children with disabilities or special needs. UNHCR also supported academic and vocational scholarships for 24 refugee students. Local communities hosting refugees were assisted through the construction of 24 new classrooms for use by 1,200 local students (plus 336 sets of classroom furniture). Sixty local women benefited from vocational and skills training. Five urban refugees received foreign language or vocational training while waiting for resettlement to third countries.

Food: A total of 3,502 tons of seasonal vegetables and condiments were supplied and distributed to Bhutanese refugees on a weekly basis to complement the basic food rations provided by WFP. The nutritional status of refugee children under five was regularly monitored, and supplementary food was provided where necessary. An average of 418 malnourished children, 645 pregnant women and 1,647 nursing mothers benefited each month from supplementary feeding.

Forestry: In order to rehabilitate the environment affected by the presence of large numbers of refugees, 200,000 seedlings were raised and 92,000 trees were transplanted in refugee-affected districts. Six forestry management training events were attended by 406 local

participants; 1,400 fruit trees were distributed to local communities. All activities were co-ordinated with the Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation.

Health/Nutrition: General health services were provided through 19 health centres, six mother-and-child health clinics and six community health units in all camps. Immunisation, antenatal and postnatal care, child health, family planning, and ambulance services were provided (plus the maintenance of health facilities). Contraceptives were distributed and education on sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS was offered to adolescents in the camps, as well as in five local communities. Mental health services were also made available. Local hospitals were repaired and maintained in areas affected by the presence of large numbers of refugees. Basic health services were provided for a total of 2,711 Tibetans. Twenty-six Tibetan emergency medical cases were referred to local hospitals in Kathmandu. Fourteen urban refugees received financial support for medical treatment.

Income Generation: In the areas affected by the presence of large numbers of refugees, 350 local women were provided with micro-credit facilities through a local micro-finance institution. A total of 213 local women received advanced training on growing vegetables.

Legal Assistance: The refugee screening centre at the Indian-Nepalese border post in Kakarvitta was maintained and staffed by government officials, who received on-the-job training on refugee status determination by UNHCR staff. Legal assistance was provided for urban refugees. Interpretation costs were covered for status determination interviews with urban asylum-seekers.

Operational Support (to Agencies): Operational support costs were provided for all implementing partners for the smooth delivery of assistance activities. Regular monthly co-ordination meetings were held, in addition to day-to-day communication.

Sanitation: A total of 3,682 family latrines in camps were repaired. Provision of insecticide helped to prevent malaria and Japanese Encephalitis. A total of 201 family latrines, five school latrines and one public latrine were constructed in local villages surrounding the refugee camps. A total of 150 persons from the local community participated in a sanitation awareness session.

Shelter/Other Infrastructure: Nearly 9,000 huts (as well as implementing partners' offices) were repaired or renovated in refugee camps. The work was conducted by refugee volunteers who received incentives. The Tibetan reception centre was repaired and seven camp police posts were upgraded.

Transport/Logistics: Timely delivery of relief items and services to the camps was ensured through the hiring of warehouses, the maintenance of camp warehouses and distribution centres, and a centralised mechanical workshop, where 45 project vehicles and 34 motorcycles were regularly serviced and repaired. Access roads to refugee camps were maintained. Transportation costs were covered for 950 newly arrived Tibetans, and daily subsistence allowances for police escorting Tibetans.

Water: Water systems were regularly overhauled in all the camps. Three old water tanks were replaced by ferrocement tanks. Over 22 litres of potable water per person per day were supplied without interruption. The risk of water borne diseases was reduced through regular water testing in the camps. In the areas around the refugee camps, 142 shallow tube wells were installed, benefiting 426 local families.

ORGANISATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

Management

UNHCR worked with 34 staff in Nepal, consisting of six international, one JPO and 27 national staff. The office in Jhapa maintained daily contacts with the refugee population and implementing partners working in the camps, while the office in Kathmandu liaised with the central authorities.

Working with Others

UNHCR worked with two government counterparts, five international NGOs, and three local NGOs. UNHCR also worked closely with WFP in the provision of basic food items in the camps. In addition, UNHCR liaised with UN sister agencies (UNFPA, WHO, UNICEF) involved with Bhutanese refugees in the camps.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT

The year 2000 was one marked by hope and frustration for the Bhutanese refugees, who have been in Nepal for almost a decade. Hopes were high that a verification process would start preparations for organised repatriation. Yet, protracted disagreement between the two Governments over the definition of a family unit, which would underpin the verification process, was the cause of frustration. Finally, at the end of year, they managed to reach an agreement, allowing for the verification process to begin in 2001.

Although lasting long-term solutions were still out of reach, UNHCR and its partners provided effective

protection and assistance for Bhutanese refugees in camps, maintaining high standards, as in previous years, despite funding constraints. Stable indicators of health for the refugee population were evidence not only of an effective primary health care system, but also of effective food distribution, sanitation, and housing, enhanced by supplementary income-generating activities.

UNHCR's activities in Nepal have already been pared back to a minimum workable level. There are positive signs of a solution to this long-standing refugee problem. UNHCR will continue to support the efforts of the Governments of both Nepal and Bhutan to hasten the long-awaited return of Bhutanese refugees to Bhutan.

Offices

Kathmandu

Jhapa

Partners

Government Agencies

Ministry of Home Affairs

Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation

NGOs

Association of Medical Doctors of Asia

CARITAS Nepal

Grameen Bank Nepal

Lutheran World Federation

Nepal Red Cross Society

OXFAM

Save the Children Fund (UK)

Tibetan Refugee Welfare Office

| Financial Report (USD) | | | | |
|---|-------------------------|----------------|-----------------------|-------|
| Expenditure Breakdown | Current Year's Projects | | Prior Years' Projects | |
| | | notes | | notes |
| Protection, Monitoring and Co-ordination | 642,592 | | 2,671 | |
| Community Services | 82,522 | | 15,089 | |
| Crop Production | 2,057 | | 14,715 | |
| Domestic Needs / Household Support | 705,463 | | 383,269 | |
| Education | 467,689 | | 181,848 | |
| Food | 379,834 | | 165,578 | |
| Forestry | 66,481 | | 23,434 | |
| Health / Nutrition | 537,855 | | 118,680 | |
| Income Generation | 32,719 | | 0 | |
| Legal Assistance | 85,468 | | 3,679 | |
| Operational Support (to Agencies) | 239,511 | | 61,276 | |
| Sanitation | 55,337 | | 48,023 | |
| Shelter / Other Infrastructure | 192,270 | | 50,295 | |
| Transport / Logistics | 185,423 | | 67,358 | |
| Water | 97,485 | | 50,684 | |
| Instalments with Implementing Partners | 879,677 | | (738,189) | |
| Sub-total Operational | 4,652,383 | | 448,410 | |
| Programme Support | 666,470 | | 37,379 | |
| Sub-total Disbursements / Deliveries | 5,318,853 | (3) | 485,789 | (6) |
| Unliquidated Obligations | 113,530 | (3) | 0 | |
| Total | 5,432,383 | (1) (3) | 485,789 | |

Instalments with Implementing Partners

| | | | | |
|--------------------------------|----------------|--|------------------|--|
| Payments Made | 3,679,830 | | 249,595 | |
| Reporting Received | 2,800,153 | | 987,784 | |
| Balance | 879,677 | | (738,189) | |
| Outstanding 1 January | 0 | | 754,541 | |
| Refunded to UNHCR | 0 | | 13,917 | |
| Currency Adjustment | 0 | | (2,435) | |
| Outstanding 31 December | 879,677 | | 0 | |

Unliquidated Obligations

| | | | | |
|--------------------------------|----------------|------------|----------|------------|
| Outstanding 1 January | 0 | | 581,023 | (6) |
| New Obligations | 5,432,383 | (1) | 0 | |
| Disbursements | 5,318,853 | (3) | 485,789 | (6) |
| Cancellations | 0 | | 95,234 | (6) |
| Outstanding 31 December | 113,530 | (3) | 0 | (6) |

Figures which cross reference to Accounts: (1) Annex to Statement 1 – (3) Schedule 3 – (6) Schedule 6