



UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

UNHCR IN NEPAL

FAST
FACTS
UNHCR

Refugees and Persons of Concern:

Refugees from Bhutan

Currently, some 94,809 refugees from Bhutan reside in seven refugee camps in eastern Nepal: Beldangi I, Beldangi II, Beldangi II Extension, Khudunabari, Timai and Goldhap in Jhapa district, and Sanischare in Morang district in eastern Nepal

Tibetan New Arrivals

Some 2,500 Tibetan New Arrivals transit through Nepal every year.

Urban Refugees and Asylum-seekers

There are approximately 300 refugees and asylum-seekers from 11 countries

Statelessness

There is an estimated population of some 800,000 de facto stateless persons in Nepal

Background

UNHCR provides international protection and works to ensure respect for human rights while providing basic humanitarian assistance to refugees and other persons of concern pending durable solutions.

UNHCR first opened its office in Nepal in the early 1960s and carried out its operations until 1973. At the request of the Government of Nepal (GoN), UNHCR later returned in 1989 to assist in meeting the protection and material needs of refugees arriving from southern Bhutan.

Refugees from Bhutan

By the end of 1990, large numbers of refugees from Bhutan had arrived in Nepal and were living in ad-hoc encampments in desperate conditions along the banks of the Kankai River in south-eastern Nepal. The influx of refugees from Bhutan peaked during the first half of 1992, when up to 1,000 persons arrived daily, with the number of arrivals lessening by 1993.

By early 1992 at the request of the GoN, UNHCR launched a major emergency assistance programme together with the World Food Program (WFP) and various non-governmental partners. The refugees have since been accommodated in seven camps in the Jhapa and Morang districts.



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Protection and Assistance

For one of the region's most protracted refugee situations, UNHCR, in co-operation with the National Unit for Co-ordination of Refugee Affairs (NUCRA) of the Ministry of Home Affairs, GoN, are responsible for providing protection to the refugees and assisting with health care, education and vocational training, water supply, sanitation, shelter, domestic needs and legal assistance.

Basic food rations and supplementary food items are provided by WFP. In the delivery of assistance and protection UNHCR works closely with the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), Caritas Nepal, the Association of Medical Doctors of Asia (AMDA) – Nepal, Nepal Bar Association (NBA), and Transcultural Psychosocial Organisation (TPO).

The office also conducts promotional activities, protection and outreach sessions on various health and social issues, while facilitating targeted trainings and educational programmes (particularly for women and at risk members of the refugee community) so that refugees may acquire useful skills that will help them during their remaining time in the camps as well as in the future to become productive and integrated members of society.



UNHCR also works to address issues like substance abuse, sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) such as domestic violence and trafficking, while promoting a peaceful camp existence. UNHCR will further promote the response to and prevention of SGBV, while also continuing to provide legal, medical and psycho-social support to survivors.

Who is a refugee?

Article 1 of the Convention defines a refugee as "A person who is outside his/her country of nationality or habitual residence; has a well-founded fear of persecution because of his/her race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion; and is unable or unwilling to avail himself/herself of the protection of that country, or to return there, for fear of persecution."

Census

UNHCR in cooperation with the GoN conducted a census of all refugees in camps from November 2006 to May 2007. This census data has aided the GoN and UNHCR in providing better protection, security and support to the refugees on the basis of improved documentation, enhanced information surrounding individual protection and assistance needs was also recorded during



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the census for systematic follow-up by the office and our partners. At the time of the census, there were some 107,000 refugees from Bhutan residing in Beldangi I, Beldangi II, Beldangi II extension, Sanischare, Khudunabari, Timai and Goldhap refugee camps.

Following the census, UNHCR and the GoN distributed individual photo ID cards to all registered refugees above the age of 16 years, identifying them as persons of concern under international protection. When refugees below the age of 16 years reach the age of 17, they will receive their own identity card. To date over 75,000 individuals have received ID cards.

Third Country Resettlement

Resettlement as a durable solution began in mid-November 2007, with the GoN's announcement in the camps that resettlement was to commence for all interested refugees from Bhutan. The GoN announcement was accompanied by a mass information campaign in all the camps organized by UNHCR to assist refugees in making an informed decision surrounding resettlement as a durable solution.

The United States of America announced that it would resettle over 60,000 refugees, and other resettlement countries including Australia, Canada, Denmark, the Netherlands, New Zealand and Norway expressed a willingness to offer resettlement to refugees from Bhutan.

As of 15 June 2009, some 70,994 refugees have expressed interest in resettlement and Working closely with resettlement countries, the GoN and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), as of 15 June 2009, 15,924 refugees have departed on resettlement to the USA, New Zealand, Canada, the Netherlands, Norway and Denmark. Many other refugees are currently in various stages of the process, ranging from interviews to extensive medical screening, processing of travel documents and cultural orientation before departure.

UNHCR continues to ensure that refugees are able to make a free and informed decision regarding solutions. Comprehensive and transparent information on resettlement and other durable solutions are provided to the refugees via regular information sessions in the camps and through individual counseling sessions.

UNHCR, together with the international community, will continue its efforts to achieve lasting solutions to the plight of refugees from Bhutan, including voluntary repatriation as and when return conditions permit.



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Tibetan new arrivals

For Tibetan new arrivals, UNHCR facilitates their safe transit through Nepal to a third country. UNHCR also ensures that their protection and material needs are addressed while in Nepal. This programme is implemented through the LWF, at the Tibetan Reception Centre (TRC) in Kathmandu. An average of 2,500 Tibetans transit through Nepal annually.

There are also approximately 20,000 Tibetan refugees who arrived in Nepal before 1990 and who are allowed to remain in the country. However, they do not have access to citizenship and their rights in Nepal are limited. Improvements are needed in registration, the issuance of identity documents, and access to citizenship and civil registers for this group.

What is protection?

Governments are responsible for enforcing a country's laws. When they are unable or unwilling to do so, often during a conflict or civil unrest, people whose basic human rights are threatened flee their homes, often to another country, where they may be classed as refugees and be guaranteed basic rights.



Urban refugees and asylum seekers

UNHCR also provides protection and assistance to around 300 individuals, from some 11 countries, who are not from Tibet or Bhutan. In the absence of national refugee legislation or asylum procedures for these individuals, UNHCR determines whether these asylum-seekers fall under its mandate. Monthly financial assistance, medical care through identified facilities and educational assistance is provided for urban refugees. UNHCR's implementing partner for this program is Pro Public.

UNHCR continues to promote Nepal's accession to international refugee instruments and advocate with the GoN to develop a national legal framework.

Presence in Nepal

- UNHCR Representation in Nepal, Kathmandu
- UNHCR Sub-Office in Damak, Jhapa district

The total annual programme budget for Nepal in 2009 amounts to some US\$ 5 million.

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Statelessness

In addition to UNHCR's statutory function of providing protection for refugees, UNHCR has a specific and global mandate to prevent and reduce statelessness.

In 2006-2007, UNHCR carried out a thorough and comprehensive survey of the citizenship/statelessness issue in Nepal. The survey acknowledged the very positive results of the campaign for the distribution of citizenship certificates conducted by the GoN between January and April 2007, while also identifying follow-up action still required on this issue. In 2008, with a view to further reducing the number of stateless person in the country UNHCR undertook the following two pilot projects aimed at ensuring that citizenship certificates were distributed to several groups of people who remain effectively stateless.

- Muslim women in Banke and;
- Chepang indigenous community in and around Chitwan

To reduce statelessness and the risk of it, UNHCR continues to seek further amendments to the law and improvements in its application through advocacy and technical assistance to GoN.

UNHCR, established on December 14, 1950 by the United Nations General Assembly, is mandated to lead and co-ordinate international action to protect refugees and resolve refugee problems worldwide. Its primary purpose is to safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees. It strives to ensure that everyone can exercise the right to seek asylum and find safe refuge in another State, with the option to return home voluntarily, integrate locally or to resettle in a third country.

UNHCR's efforts are mandated by the organization's Statute, and guided by the 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol.

Number of staff at UNHCR Kathmandu:

- International: 13
- National: 18

Number of staff at UNHCR Sub-Office, Damak:

- International: 18
- National: 118

Representative: Ms. Daisy Dell

**Head of UNHCR Sub-Office Damak:
Ms. Rianawati**

*There are approximately 31.7 million people of concern to UNHCR around the world
Some 11.4 million refugees
Some 13.7 million internally displaced persons
12 million stateless people*

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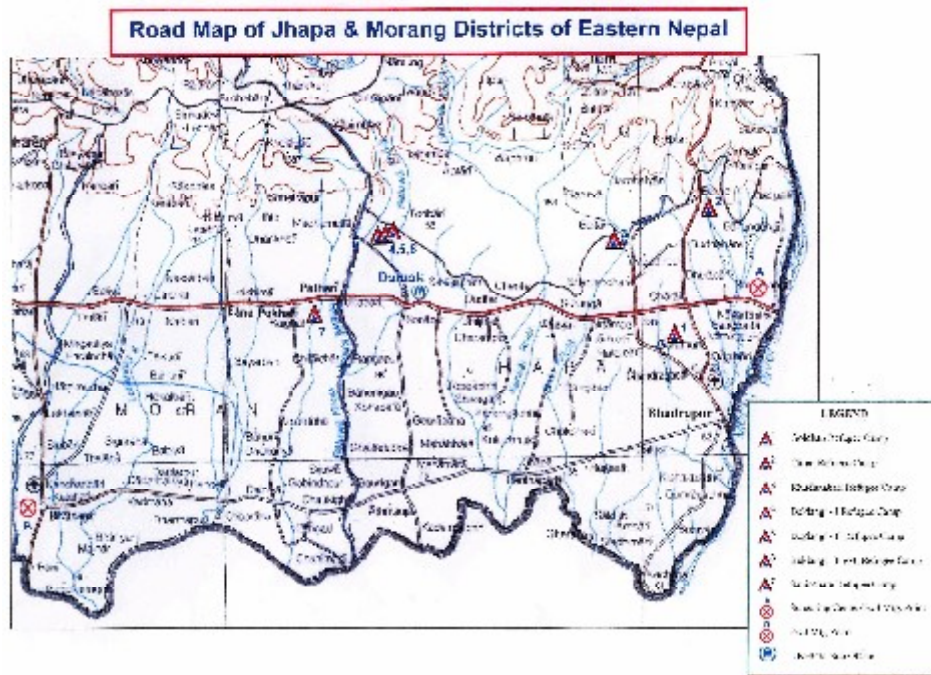
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