

# NEPAL

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## INITIAL OBJECTIVES

- Facilitate bilateral discussions between the Governments of Nepal and Bhutan to seek durable solutions for Bhutanese refugees.
- Provide protection and assistance to Bhutanese refugees until a lasting solution is found.
- Promote self-reliance for 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.
- Promote the adoption of a national law on refugees.

## MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS, ACHIEVEMENTS AND CONSTRAINTS

### *Bhutanese Refugees*

There has been a positive development towards voluntary repatriation of Bhutanese refugees. As a result of the tenth round of bilateral talks held between the Governments of Nepal and Bhutan in December 2000, the two sides formed a Joint Verification Team (JVT) in January 2001, consisting of five representatives from each government. The JVT started verifying the status and eligibility for return of refugees in Khudunabari camp on 26 March 2001. The verification is carried out at the JVT office in Damak, some 40 kilometres from Khudunabari camp. So far, the pace of verification has been very slow and only some 3,600 refugees have been verified over a three-month period. UNHCR has been providing mainly logistical support for this process.

While the verification process is seen as an important step towards the eventual voluntary repatriation of Bhutanese refugees, it may take some time for the

actual repatriation movement to commence. In the meantime, refugees have no option but to remain in the camps, where they will continue to require UNHCR's assistance.

The Home Ministry, through its Refugee Co-ordination Unit (RCU) in Jhapa, is responsible for the registration of refugees and the overall administration of the camps.

UNHCR continued to provide assistance to refugees in the camps. During the first six months, UNHCR procured a total of 1,746.5 metric tons of fresh vegetables, and distributed condiments to all refugees in the camps, complementing the basic food basket provided by WFP. UNHCR also provided dried skimmed milk to malnourished refugee children under five years of age and UNHCR carried out routine maintenance and repair of refugee shelters. In order to discourage refugees from collecting firewood in areas surrounding the camps, UNHCR regularly distributed kerosene as cooking fuel to all households. Basic hygiene standards were upheld through the repair and maintenance of latrines, garbage collection and vector control. Refugee children continued to receive education in camp refugee schools staffed by refugees.

Basic preventive and curative health facilities operated in all camps. UNHCR closely monitored medical referral cases from camps to district hospitals in Jhapa and provided financial support to those hospitals, enabling them to procure medicine and cover related costs.

The launch of the Refugee Affected Areas Rehabilitation Programme, which aims at providing assistance to the local communities, has been delayed. Nevertheless, a number of projects have already started, such as the repair and maintenance work on the access roads between camps, the construction of classrooms and toilets at three local schools,

a reforestation project and the preliminary work on river bank protection through bio-engineering methods. The micro-finance

project for local women continued for the second year.

**Progress as measured against selected indicators**

INDICATORS	PROGRESS
Enhanced in-camp production of textile items. Provision of household items such as cooking equipment, jerry cans, soap, kerosene etc.	Increased in-camp production of jute mats, baby blankets, clothes for children under five, cotton cloth (for sanitary napkins). Kerosene regularly distributed. Procurement of other domestic items not yet possible due to 20 per cent freeze of total budget, which was only lifted in mid-June.
Uninterrupted supply of chlorinated drinking water; improvement in personal hygiene of the refugees; incidence of skin disease and combined incidence of watery and bloody diarrhoea not to exceed 65 persons per 1,000 per month and 35 persons per 1,000 per month respectively.	Water supply system based on deep tube-wells and overhead storage tanks was regularly repaired and maintained. Provision of 22 litres per person per day (average). Water-borne diseases were relatively reduced. Marked improvement in refugee personal hygiene.
Improved shelter and infrastructure	Out of the target of 10,372 huts (pre-monsoon phase) 9,736 huts had been repaired as of 30 June. Satisfactory living conditions ensured decreased risk of propagation of communicable diseases.
Special support given to refugee children, disabled refugees, single heads of household and adolescents.	Early child development activities conducted through the child play centres in camps. Informal education and literacy classes running in four camps. Community reading centres functioning in all camps. Income generation activities such as stationary shops, cotton-weaving, dhaka-weaving, chalk-making, cloth production, jute rope production and bakery were implemented.
Number of pupils having access to primary education.	A total of 37,000 refugee students were enrolled in the camp primary schools, out of which, 48.5 per cent were female students. Almost all teachers were from the refugee community.

***Tibetans***

For some 20,000 Tibetans, who arrived prior to 1 January 1990, the Government has started issuing new travel documents. The format of this document, which has the appearance of a passport, was proposed by UNHCR. Since 1 January 2001, the Government has also issued identity cards to some 3,000 Tibetans who had been applying for the cards since 1995.

Despite repeated attempts, UNHCR has still not been granted permission to resume monitoring visits to the northern border with Tibet. During the first six months of this

year, the Office was aware of a total of 634 new arrivals.

***Other Asylum Seekers***

UNHCR continued to conduct refugee status determination for individual cases. Since January 2001, the number of asylum applications has been increasing, testing the capacity of the Office. It is becomingly clear that Nepal is being used increasingly as a transit country to Europe and North America. As of 30 June 2001, UNHCR was handling active cases representing 34 individuals.

### Progress as measured against selected indicators

INDICATORS	PROGRESS
Easy access to Tibetan new arrivals.	A total of 91 Tibetan new arrivals were assisted and referred to the Department of Immigration in Kathmandu.
Assistance rendered to the Tibetans in transit in Nepal and to needy urban refugees.	A total of 634 Tibetans and 35 urban refugees were assisted.
Medical services provided to the Tibetans in transit and to urban refugees.	A total of 531 Tibetan cases were treated in the Tibetan reception centre clinic, and 10 cases were referred to hospitals in Kathmandu; 9 urban refugees received medical care.
Support given to urban refugees requiring language and vocational skills training that would enable them to be self-supportive in the country of asylum and beyond.	Eight persons received language and vocational skills training (mainly computer courses).

### REVISED OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITIES FOR JULY - DECEMBER

#### *Bhutanese Refugees*

The initial objectives for the Bhutanese refugees remain unchanged. One of the priorities will be to carefully review the 2001 budget in order to meet increased requirements in certain sectors through reallocation of funds. Anticipated additional needs of refugees include clothing, blankets and other domestic items.

UNHCR will continue its regular dialogue and consultations with the concerned authorities to explore possibilities of facilitating the voluntary repatriation process for Bhutanese refugees. Similarly, UNHCR will maintain contacts with the embassies of

major donors who are particularly interested in the Bhutanese refugee issue. The Office will pursue its efforts to increase awareness of all aspects of UNHCR's work by providing information to Government officials.

#### *Tibetans and Other Asylum Seekers*

Initial objectives remain unchanged. UNHCR will continue to ask the authorities for permission to undertake visits to the northern border in order to monitor the situation of new arrivals more closely. UNHCR will also ensure ongoing follow-up with the authorities on the issuance of identity cards and travel documents to Tibetans (settlers).

### FINANCIAL DATA (USD)

	Initial Budget	Revised Budget	Total Funds Available <sup>1</sup>	Total Funds Obligated
<b>APB</b>	5,434,790	5,885,616	3,709,010	3,709,010

<sup>1</sup>Includes income from unrestricted contributions, income from contributions restricted to the regional, sub-regional and/or country level, opening balance and adjustments.