

# NEPAL

## INITIAL OBJECTIVES

- Protect and assist Bhutanese refugees until a lasting solution is found.
- Support bilateral efforts by the Governments of Bhutan and Nepal to find such a durable solution.
- Emphasise self-help activities and encourage the active involvement of refugees in the management of their daily lives.
- Help and assist Tibetan arrivals in transit, and advise other asylum-seekers on legal matters linked to their right to international protection.

## MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS, PROGRESS ACHIEVED AND CONSTRAINTS

UNHCR continued to support the bilateral talks between the Bhutanese and Nepalese Governments to seek solutions for Bhutanese refugees who have been in Nepal for the last nine years. In this connection, the High Commissioner visited both countries in April-May 2000 and had a series of high-level discussions with the authorities of both Governments.

UNHCR's electronic database on the Bhutanese refugees was made available to the two Governments and UNHCR offered its technical expertise. The ninth round of bilateral discussions between Bhutan and Nepal took place in May 2000 and significant progress was reportedly made on a number of long-standing issues between the two Governments. A contention remains with regard to the definition of a 'family unit', which would be the basis for the verification process. UNHCR has suggested a formula for resolving this matter, which would be equitable for all concerned and urged that, the verification process start at the earliest possible opportunity.

With lack of tangible progress towards a solution for the Bhutanese refugees, UNHCR con-

tinued providing material assistance in all seven-refugee camps located in eastern Nepal. As of the end of June 2000, there were 98,269 refugees in the seven camps.

The Home Ministry, through its Refugee Coordination Unit in Jhapa, was responsible for the registration of refugees and overall administration of the camps. UNHCR has been promoting the more active participation of the refugees in camp management. The delivery of assistance has been rationalised through increased refugee participation. Teachers, health workers and food-distribution personnel as well as those who maintain the water-supply system and other services in the camps, are refugees themselves. This has increased self-reliance among the refugees and resulted in considerable savings to UNHCR's programme delivery costs.

A total of 1,743.72 ton of fresh vegetables and condiments were provided to the refugees in the camps, which complemented the basic food ration provided by WFP. Dried skimmed milk was provided to malnourished refugee children. Safe drinking and domestic water supply was provided in all seven camps. Basic hygiene was maintained through the repair and maintenance of latrines, garbage collection and vector control. Kerosene, as an alternative cooking fuel, was distributed regularly to all households to avoid deforestation of the areas surrounding the camps. Routine maintenance and repair of refugees' shelters were carried out to ensure safety of camp residents.

Basic preventive and curative health facilities operated satisfactorily in all the camps. Serious medical cases were referred to local hospitals. UNHCR provided the referral hospitals in Jhapa with funds to procure medicines and meet other related costs.

A nutritional assessment of refugees living in camps was carried out in May 2000 and a Joint WFP/UNHCR Food Assessment Mission took place in the same month. A substantial de-

crease in the incidence of Angular Stomatitis (Vitamin B2 deficiency) was noted this year as compared to last year. Increased knowledge of the cause of this condition, the continuous supply of vegetables in food rations and promotion of kitchen gardens contributed to this improvement. In order to minimise the micro-nutrient deficiency among refugee children, all adolescent girls received iron folate tablets and all children attending school received deworming tablets.

Refugee education initiatives were supported and UNHCR provided educational and recreational materials. A total of 37,647 refugee children, of whom 47 per cent are girls, received primary and lower-secondary education provided in the camps through a local NGO. Scholarships were provided for both secondary school education and vocational training. A non-formal education programme for men, women and previously unschooled children is functioning satisfactorily in the camps with the assistance of an international NGO and the active participation of Camp Development Committees. Training was provided to develop refugees' skills and promote their participation in camp management.

Self-management skills were provided to vulnerable refugee women. They were engaged in the production of jute mats, baby blankets, saris, blouses and petticoats under the Refugee Women's Forum operating in all seven camps. In addition, refugee women participated in

other supplementary income-generating activities such as cotton weaving, 'dhaka' (a typical Nepali cotton cloth) weaving and chalk-making.

The arrival of the 17<sup>th</sup> Tibetan Karmapa in Dharamsala, India in December 1999 has led to stricter border controls along the China-Nepal border and has adversely affected UNHCR's missions to the border area. UNHCR has taken up the issue with the authorities to regain UNHCR's uninterrupted access to the area. A total of 343 Tibetans arrived during the reporting period as compared to 253 persons during the same period in 1999.

### REVISED OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITY ACTIVITIES FOR JULY - DECEMBER

Initial objectives set for 2000 remain unchanged, pending a bilateral agreement between Bhutan and Nepal on solutions for the Bhutanese refugees. UNHCR will continue its regular consultations with the Nepalese and Bhutanese authorities to achieve such a solution. Efforts will continue to focus on increasing awareness among government officials, parliamentarians and legislators, on refugee issues.

UNHCR will also continue to monitor the number of new Tibetan arrivals, and facilitate their travel to third countries. UNHCR will also facilitate the issuance of refugee identification documents for more than 20,000 Tibetans who arrived in Nepal prior to 1989 and who are permitted to stay in the country.

### FINANCIAL DATA (USD)

	Initial Budget	Revised Budget	Total Funds Available*	Total Funds Obligated
AB and TF	5,429,264	5,414,206	2,848,276	2,628,700

\*Includes income from unrestricted contributions, income from contributions restricted to the region/country, opening balance and adjustments.