

Nepal

March 2023

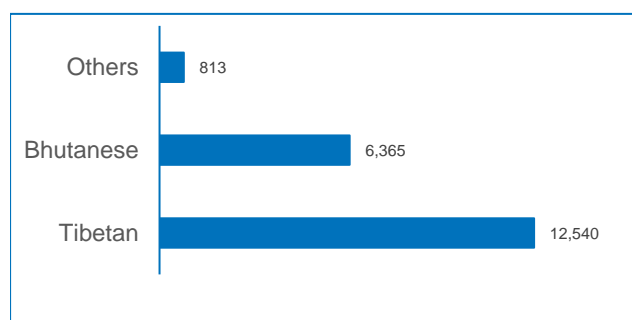
Nepal has a long tradition of providing asylum to the displaced. Key arrivals in the country were the Tibetans in **1959** and the Bhutanese in **1990/91**.

113,500 Bhutanese refugees were resettled to eight countries due to the lack of voluntary repatriation prospects. Group resettlement took place from 2007 to December 2016.

UNHCR supports Nepal in the **inclusion** of all remaining refugees residing in Nepal into public services and in strengthening their **self-reliance**.

POPULATION OF CONCERN

19,718

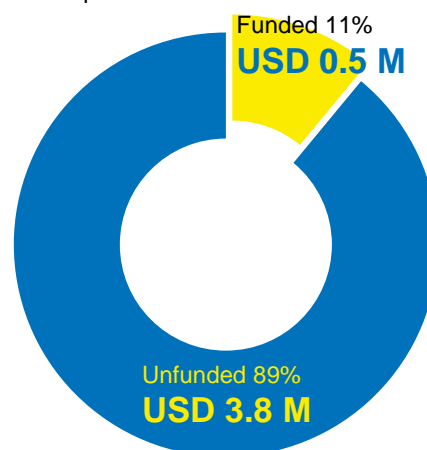


* Others include refugees and asylum seekers of various nationalities (mainly from Myanmar and Pakistan) registered and documented under UNHCR's mandate given that Nepal has not ratified the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees / 1967 Protocol and has no national refugee legislation. The Tibetan population is estimated per the Government of Nepal data.

FUNDING

USD 4.3 million

requested for Nepal



UNHCR PRESENCE

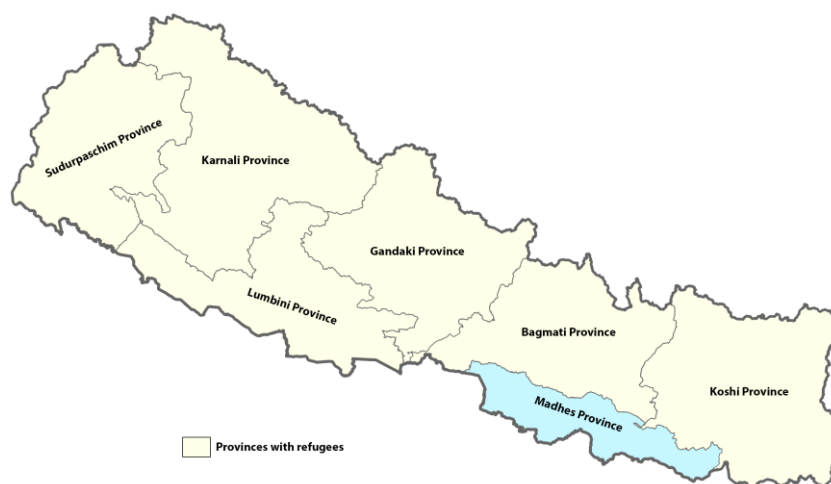
Staff:

16 National Staff

03 International Staff

Office:

UNHCR Representation
Kathmandu



Working with Partners

- In close partnership with the Government of Nepal's National Unit for the Coordination of Refugee Affairs (NUCRA) within the Ministry of Home Affairs and other key line ministries, provincial and local authorities, refugees, and their Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), development partners, donors, private sector, NGOs, and civil society at large, UNHCR supports Nepal in protecting and assisting refugees. UNHCR works closely with the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) in Nepal to reach Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) targets by 2030 and to ensure the inclusion of refugees under the "leave no one behind" principle. Key civil society partners are, among others, the Association of Medical Doctors of Asia, CARITAS Nepal, Forum for Women, Law and Development, Lutheran World Federation, Snow Lion Foundation, TPO Nepal, WOREC Nepal, the Nepal Bar Association, and Fightback Nepal.

Main Activities

Health

- Refugees in Nepal have access to public health services equal to nationals. Moreover, Bhutanese refugees based in two settlements in Jhapa and Morang districts in Koshi Province are included in the National Health Insurance Scheme and UNHCR Nepal has been paying the insurance premium for refugees with specific needs.
- Over the past three years, UNHCR Nepal has supported the strengthening of health posts and hospitals in Koshi Province and Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital in Kathmandu, by funding the building of constructions, medical equipment and ambulance procurement, and installation of an immunization center, mental health unit and Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU).
- As part of its Covid-19 response, UNHCR donated ambulances, hospital beds, mattresses, sanitizers, surgical masks, PPE, dignity kits, Rapid Diagnostic Test kits, thermal guns, and oxygen concentrators, among others, to the hospitals.
- Nepal became the first country in Asia and the Pacific to provide COVID-19 vaccinations to refugees, following the Government of Nepal's generous policy of inclusion of refugees in the national vaccination campaign in March 2021.

Water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) & Gender based violence (GBV)

- UNHCR has invested in improvements to municipal drinking water systems, latrines and handwashing facilities in refugee settlements and public schools.

- UNHCR handed over two tipper trucks to the mayors of Damak Municipality and Pathari-Sanischare Municipality in Jhapa and Morang districts in Koshi Province to ensure better access to waste management services for Bhutanese refugees and the host community.
- UNHCR supported the One Stop Crisis Management Centre (OCMC) in Kathmandu and funded the construction of another OCMC / Safe House building in Damak to comprehensively respond to the needs of survivors of Gender Based Violence (GBV), handed over another Safe House for Women to Damak municipality and strengthened the capacity of refugee Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and local partners to prevent and respond to GBV.

Education

- In Nepal, one-third of the refugee population are children. All refugee children have access to public schools and can avail themselves of government services such as free education and books. UNHCR provides a modest education allowance to all refugee children attending public schools to cover other costs such as uniforms and stationery.
- UNHCR has funded the construction of school buildings in Koshi Province to strengthen access to public schooling for both Bhutanese refugee children and host community children. UNHCR also provided school buses to the local government to serve schools that enroll refugee students. Due to the significant school closures following the restrictions imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020-2022, UNHCR procured and distributed TVs and computer tablets for refugee children to support remote learning opportunities developed by the Ministry of Education.
- UNHCR specifically supported public schools that admit refugee children and included them in World Refugee Day activities combining child protection, education, health/WASH, and SGBV prevention,

Livelihood

- The Government of Nepal does not provide work permits to refugees, and most find small jobs in the local informal sector. UNHCR has funded vocational and entrepreneurial skills training and small-scale businesses (for example pickle making, beekeeping, mushroom farming) and handicraft (for example tailoring, dhaaka weaving, masks and bamboo stool making) and organic vegetable and livestock farming projects for refugee and host community members to support self-reliance through livelihoods. UNHCR also provides top-up support for promising small businesses with the scope to expand. Additionally, UNHCR finances basic and advanced vocational skills training (for example carpentry, beauty culture, hairdressing, web-design, and masonry). UNHCR partners guide refugees on market opportunities and linkages to employers. UNHCR and ILO jointly completed in 2022 a Business Development Study based on the Approach to Integrated Market Systems (AIMS) which identified three key value chains for Koshi Province: Vegetable farming, piggyery, and poultry rearing. Each value chain

requires market facilitation and development of skills and capacities of the target group to realize the potential to create decent jobs and greater social inclusion of refugees.

- UNHCR provides additional assistance to refugees with specific needs and socio-economic vulnerabilities and facilitated the opening of bank accounts for adult refugees, both women and men.
- Refugees and the need to strengthen Civil Registration and Vital Statistics have been included in the 2020 UN COVID-19 Nepal Preparedness and Response Plan (CPRP) and the UN Socio-Economic Response Framework (SERF), which focuses on health, social protection, livelihoods and social cohesion and community resilience for vulnerable groups and in the 2023 United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) supporting a UN as One approach on development and legal identity.
- In line with the adoption of the Ministerial Declaration on civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) in Nov 2021 through the endorsement of the formal resolution by the UN ESCAP, Nepal commits to take measures to **remove all barriers to civil registration of vital events** among all hard-to-reach populations and people in vulnerable situations, such as women and children, persons with disabilities, migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, stateless persons, internally displaced persons, domestic workers, foundlings and persons without documentation” (Par. 26).

Protection and solutions advocacy

In close collaboration with the Government of Nepal, UNHCR aims at achieving protection, local solutions, and self-reliance of refugees through:

- **Inclusion of refugees in public services, policies, plans** (education, health, social protection) and self-reliance through livelihoods with enhanced refugee and host community mobilization while focusing on refugees with specific needs.
- **Inclusion of refugees in UN and Government of Nepal Emergency, Development and SDG planning** through multi-stakeholder approaches in the spirit of the Global Compact on Refugees and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the UN as ONE.
- **Registration and issuance of Legal Identity Documentation for all (SDG 16.9)**, including all refugees, which provide the right to work, own businesses, form cooperatives and have equal access to public education, health, social protection, and livelihoods, including for all descendants of long-staying Tibetans (of which an estimated 75% are currently undocumented) and the issuance of birth certificates for all refugee children.
- **Putting in place mechanisms to ensure respect for the principle of non-refoulement and non-penalization of refugees for irregular entry or stay.**

Following the group resettlement and departure of over 113,500 Bhutanese refugees to third countries, UNHCR transformed Bhutanese the initially seven refugee camps into two

settlements in Jhapa and Morang districts of Koshi Province, re-enforced shelters, roads, provided solar energy, electricity, strengthened the capacity of refugee Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and referral mechanisms enabling refugees with specific needs, GBV survivors and vulnerable children to access public services. During 2020, UNHCR redoubled its investments into public health, education, and social protection facilities. UNHCR handed over registration data of Bhutanese refugees to the Government of Nepal in December 2020 and closed UNHCR Sub-Office Damak on 31 December 2020. Close collaboration and coordination with all stakeholders and protection monitoring for all refugees in Nepal continue to be carried out through the UNHCR Country Office in Kathmandu. At all levels, UNHCR will continue to advocate for the right of refugees to return home voluntarily and continues offering to facilitate and support dialogue between the Government of Nepal and the Kingdom of Bhutan in this regard.

External / Donors Relations

UNHCR appreciates the partnership and financial contributions of both unearmarked and broadly earmarked funds from donors, as well as for those who have contributed regionally and directly to the Nepal operation: Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America. UNHCR also appreciates the support of major private donors from the following countries for their softly earmarked and un-earmarked contributions: Australia, Germany, Italy, Japan, Lebanon, the Republic of Korea, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America.

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LINKS

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