

Nepal December 2020

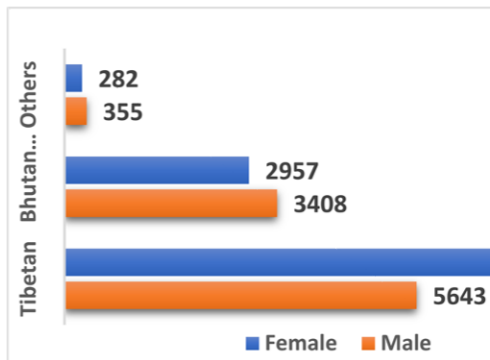
Nepal has a long tradition of providing asylum. Main larger arrivals took place in 1959 with the Tibetans and in 1990/91 with the Bhutanese.

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

19,542



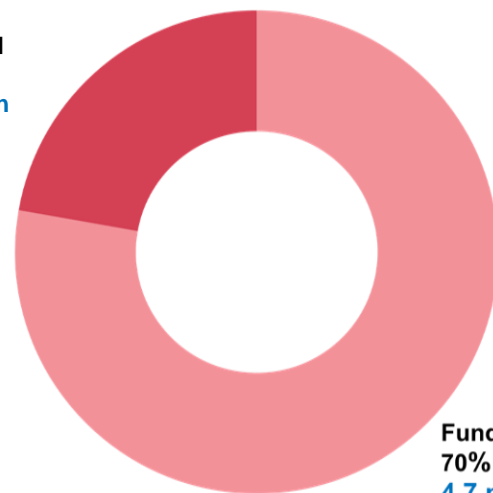
Others include refugees and asylum seekers of various nationalities (mostly from Myanmar and Pakistan). Those are registered and documented under UNHCR's mandate given that Nepal has not ratified the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees/ 1967 Protocol and has no national refugee legislation.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

FUNDING (AS OF 8 DECEMBER 2020)

USD 6.8million

requested for Nepal

Unfunded
30%
1.9 million



Funded
70%
4.7 million

UNHCR PRESENCE

UNHCR Staff:

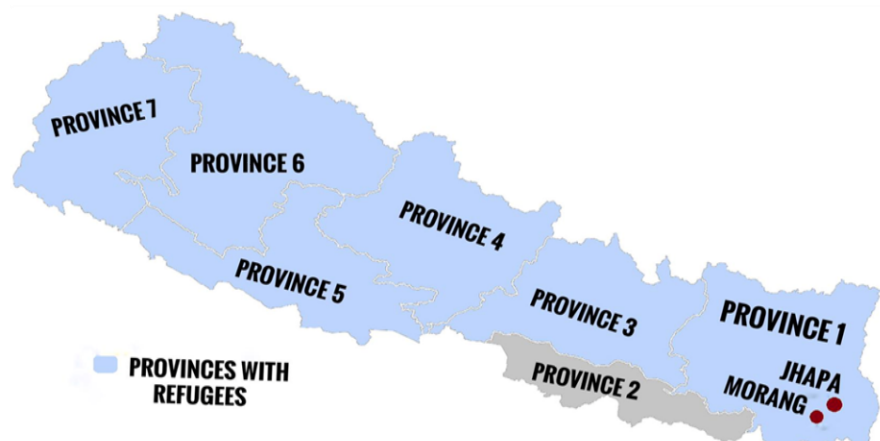
16 National Staff

03 International Staff

Offices:

UNHCR Representation
Kathmandu

Sub-Office Damak
(closed on 31.12.2020)



Working with partners

- In close partnership with the Government of Nepal National Unit for the Coordination of Refugee Affairs (NUCRA) within the Ministry of Home Affairs and other key line ministries, provincial and local authorities, development partners, donors, private sector, NGOs and civil society at large, UNHCR supports Nepal in protecting and assisting refugees. UNHCR works closely with the UNCT in reaching the SDG by 2030 and in the inclusion of refugees to “leave no one behind”. Key civil society partners are among others the Association of Medical Doctors of Asia (AMDA), CARITAS Nepal, Forum for Women, Law and Development (FWLD), Lutheran World Federation (LWF), Snow Lion Foundation (SLF), TPO Nepal, WOREC Nepal and the Nepal Bar Association etc.

Nepal COVID-19 Update

- As of 31 December 2020, the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in Nepal has reached **260,593 individuals of whom 1,856 have died** according to the Ministry of Health and Population, Government of Nepal (SitRep#326). The number of confirmed cases and deaths has been increasing exponentially since the beginning of 2020. Kathmandu Valley/ Province 3 is reported to be affected most severely followed by Province 1, where the Bhutanese refugees reside. The COVID-19 emergency has placed enormous additional challenges on health and other public services and on the economy in Nepal. The most vulnerable, including the daily wage earners in the informal labour market, suffer disproportionately harsh, with refugees and those without citizenship certificates among those vulnerable people.

Main Activities

Health and COVID-19 response in 2020

- Refugees have access to public health services, including COVID-19 testing and treatment equal to nationals.
- Bhutanese refugees have access to the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) which started to be rolled out so far only in Province 1.
- UNHCR has supported the COVID-19 response in multiple sectors, such as Cash Based Interventions (CBI), WASH (Water/Sanitation/Health), SGBV prevention & response, Education, Livelihoods, Counselling through UNHCR 24/7 Hotline services for refugees. Tele-counselling services replace the former face to face counselling for less urgent protection issues three times per week. Since the COVID-19 lockdown in March 2020, UNHCR and its Partners carried out over 6,000 protection interventions.
- In Kathmandu and Damak, UNHCR has funded ambulance services to support access to hospitals for COVID-19 and other medical emergencies of refugees and the host community. UNHCR provided medical equipment to Damak and Pathari-Sanischare Municipal Hospital in Province 1 and to the Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital in Kathmandu and coordinates with the Government and local authorities to ensure refugees have access to PCR testing and to public health care. UNHCR donated to municipal authorities in Province 1 and in Kathmandu hospital beds, mattresses, sanitizers, surgical masks, PPE, dignity kits, Rapid Diagnostic Test kits, thermal guns etc.

WASH, SGBV

- UNHCR invested in improvements to municipal drinking water systems, latrines, handwash facilities in refugee settlements and public schools and donated soaps for refugees and host communities.
- UNHCR supported the One Stop Crisis Management Centre (OCMC) in Kathmandu and funded the construction of one OCMC in Damak to comprehensively respond to the needs of survivors of Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV), funded mental health units in Damak and Pathari-Sanischare public hospitals for refugees and host communities, the construction of an immunization centre, handed over a Women Safe House to Damak municipality and strengthened the capacity of refugee community based organizations (CBOs) and local partners to prevent and respond to SGBV.

Education

- In Nepal, one third of the total refugee population are children. Refugee children have access to public schools in practice. UNHCR funded the construction and handed over two additional public-school buildings in Province 1 to strengthen access to public schooling for both, Bhutanese refugee children and local host community children. Due to COVID19, schools in Nepal have been closed since March 2020. To support remote learning opportunities which were developed by the Ministry of Education in the summer, UNHCR procured in 2020, 500 TVs and computer tablets for refugee children.

Livelihoods

- The Government of Nepal does not provide work permits to refugees. UNHCR funded vocational and entrepreneurial skills-training and small-scale businesses (for example pickle making, bee keeping, mushroom farming) and handicraft (for example tailoring, masks and bamboo stool making) and a farming project in Morang and Jhapa district, Province 1 for refugee and host communities to support self-reliance through livelihoods.
- Additionally, UNHCR provides CBI to refugees with specific needs and socio-economic vulnerabilities and facilitated the opening of bank accounts for adult women and male refugees.
- Refugees and those without citizenship certificates have been included in the 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.

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 UNasONE;
- **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 equal

access to public education, health, social protection and livelihoods, including for all descendants of long-staying Tibetans (estimated 75% are currently undocumented) and 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 resettlement and departure of over 113,500 Bhutanese refugees to third countries, UNHCR transformed Bhutanese refugee camps into two settlements, re-enforced shelters, provided solar energy, strengthened the capacity of community-based refugee organizations and referral mechanisms for refugees with specific needs, SGBV survivors and vulnerable children into public services. In 2020, UNHCR redoubled its investments into public health, education, social protection facilities and handed over registration data of Bhutanese refugees to the Government of Nepal. UNHCR will close its Sub-Office in Damak, Province 1 on 31 December 2020 and will carry on protection monitoring for all refugees in Nepal through its Representation in Kathmandu. At all levels, UNHCR will continue to advocate for the right of refugees to **Voluntary Repatriation** and continues offering to facilitate 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, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States of America**

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CONTACTS

Ms. Uma Basnet, Executive Support Associate

basnet@unhcr.org, Tel: +977 1 441 25 21, Cell +977 985 121 4371

Mr. Deepesh Das Shrestha, Senior External Relations Associate

shresthde@unhcr.org, Cell +977 985 108 1931

LINKS

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Operations page: <https://reporting.unhcr.org/node/29>

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Recent PI story: <https://www.unhcr.org/news/stories/2020/10/5f757f054/hardships-multiply-older-refugees-amid-covid-19-pandemic.html>

UNHCR Nepal Facebook page: www.facebook.com/unhcrnepal