

# The Bhutanese Refugee Resettlement Journey

## PART 1: PRE-DEPARTURE

*'An environment that encourages you to work hard,  
erasing the present tag of refugee.'*



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Introduction

The Bhutanese Refugee Resettlement Research is following a group of Bhutanese refugees from camps in Nepal through to settlement in New Zealand.

The research involves three phases of data collection. The first phase involved initial interviews with a group in refugee camps in Nepal. The second phase involved follow-up interviews at the end of the resettled refugees' orientation process at the Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre, and the third phase involved interviews in the community 18 to 20 months after the refugees' arrival in New Zealand.

Since the 1990s, over 100,000 Lhotshampa (Bhutanese of Nepali origin) have been confined to seven refugee camps in south-eastern Nepal after the Government of Bhutan revoked their citizenship and forced them to flee the country. These Nepali Bhutanese spent 18 years in refugee camps, being denied integration into the local Nepal community or their return to Bhutan before the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees offered third-country resettlement as a solution.

In 2007, New Zealand announced its inclusion of Bhutanese refugees into its annual refugee quota, and in 2008 the first selection mission to the camps in Nepal took place.

As part of the second selection mission in October 2008, 33 Bhutanese refugees gave their permission to be interviewed about their pre-settlement needs, expectations and experiences. This report presents the findings from these interviews.

The second phase of the research is reported in *The Bhutanese Refugee Resettlement Journey – Part 2: On-arrival* (Department of Labour, 2011a). This report focuses on specific aspects of the orientation programme and how it worked, how before and after departure expectations were met, and the refugees' hopes for their life in New Zealand.

The third and final phase of the research explores the post-settlement experiences of this group of former refugees and examines specific elements of settlement into New Zealand society. The findings from these interviews can be found in *The Bhutanese Refugee Resettlement Journey – Part 3: Settlement* (Department of Labour, 2011b).

## Findings

The study explored the preparedness of 33 Bhutanese refugees to resettle in New Zealand after living 18 years in a refugee camp.

### ***Pre-departure knowledge and understanding of resettlement***

The pre-departure knowledge at the time of selection interviews was found to be limited. At the time of the selection mission interviews, gaining assurance of resettlement rather than information about a country was of most importance for

most. Official information received about resettlement in New Zealand was only minimally absorbed. Most information came from family members resettled in New Zealand and knowledge of the country often revolved around New Zealand's clean, green environment. The timing of information given and the way in which this is introduced could be modified to be of greater use for those to be resettled in New Zealand.

The use of family and friends already settled in New Zealand as a conduit of information to those in camps could be a valuable resource as the population of Bhutanese in New Zealand grows. Overall, despite the lack of certainty and knowledge of resettlement, there was a general sense of optimism that outweighed concerns.

### ***Short- and long-term expectations***

The study participants had an overwhelming sense of optimism for their first 12 months in New Zealand and a sense that any change would be better than their current facilities and opportunities.

Although optimistic, the refugees were also realistic. Many of those interviewed acknowledged that they expected to experience a period of transition and adaptation and that their first year would be difficult but manageable.

The refugees' longer-term expectations were somewhat higher than their short-term expectations with an emphasis on self-reliance and personal advancement.

### ***Need for a safe home and family life in New Zealand***

After living in cramped conditions in bamboo huts, most of the study participants did not know what to expect in terms of housing in New Zealand, but stated they would be happy with whatever was provided:

In general, the refugees had high expectations for neighbours who would be 'like' them and with whom they would interact frequently and be able to rely on.

Likewise, refugees generally hoped that they would be able to practise their culture and religion freely. However, many voiced uncertainty about whether this would be possible.

The reality of how to maintain links with others whilst dispersed throughout the world was becoming apparent to this group, and many expected that it would be difficult to maintain contact.

Most intended to keep in touch with friends and families through the internet and telephone, but had not thought about how they might make new friends in New Zealand.

### ***Perspectives on education and English language acquisition***

Overall, the study participants were well educated and had a high level of English language literacy compared to other cohorts of refugees.

Those interviewed held high hopes for further education in New Zealand. Many clearly stated that they wanted to take up the opportunities available to them in New Zealand to further their studies.

Almost all of the refugees acknowledged that their first step in New Zealand would be to enrol in English language classes and that learning English was vital to their ability to resettle.

### ***Employment and the future***

Nearly half of the study participants had not had any paid work since living in the refugee camps and expected to have opportunities to work in New Zealand.

Most of the refugees, although expressing their will to undertake paid work, did not know what kind of work they would like to have, and those who did know had unrealistic expectations.

Overall, most refugees felt they would be fit for work within a short period of their arrival in New Zealand and that a job would be brokered for them through a government agency.

### ***Bhutanese refugees are optimistic***

Overall, the Bhutanese refugees interviewed were optimistic about resettling in a new country and were aware of the challenges they would face. They saw learning English as a priority on their arrival to New Zealand and expressed a desire to complete further education.



# 1 PREDICAMENT OF BHUTANESE REFUGEES IN NEPAL

We are not able to say that we are from this country [Bhutan] ... We have no identity. (Middle-aged male)

## International context

### *Introduction*

The predicament of the Lhotshampa (Bhutanese of Nepali origin) refugees in camps in Nepal arose from internal conflict in Bhutan (see Map A1 in Appendix A). Those affected have remained in limbo as a result of the refusal of Nepal or Bhutan to accept their citizenship or for both countries to agree a solution (Loescher and Milner, 2005). This situation has put pressure on international aid agencies to find a durable solution. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) offered third-country resettlement. After 18 years, the Bhutanese now faced resettlement in Western countries, for which their time in camps and as outsiders in local society minimally prepared them.

### *Background to the Bhutanese refugee crisis*

In the early 19th century, the Government of Bhutan recruited the Lhotshampa of ethnic Nepali origin to southern Bhutan to cultivate land. The predominantly Hindu Lhotshampa became the country's main supplier of food. They remained largely unintegrated with Bhutan's Buddhist majority until 1958, when a new nationality law allowed the Lhotshampa to hold government jobs and obtain Bhutanese citizenship (UNHCR, 2006).

In the late 1980s, Buddhist Bhutanese began to view the growing population of Hindu Lhotshampa as a threat to traditional Buddhist culture. In 1985, the government passed a new citizenship Act that denied many Lhotshampa their citizenship rights. Discriminatory policies followed whereby Nepali dress, language and the right to sell cash crops became illegal. In addition, the Nepali language was removed from the school curriculum (UNHCR, 2006).

Unrest in the Lhotshampa-populated south in response to these reforms began to surface. In 1990, public demonstrations against the new policies took place. In response, the Bhutanese government branded all those who took part in such protests as anti-nationals, and imprisoned and tortured several thousand Lhotshampa. Very few Lhotshampa were formally charged or stood trial. Repressive measures continued against the Lhotshampa Bhutanese, and increasing numbers had their citizenship rights revoked, had their houses demolished and were forced to flee to neighbouring India.

By the end of 1992, an estimated 80,000 Lhotshampa were living in UNHCR-administered camps in Nepal.

### *Conditions and opportunities in Bhutanese camps in Nepal:*

Since the early 1990s, more than 100,000 Lhotshampa have been confined to seven refugee camps in south-eastern Nepal (see Map A2 in Appendix A). These camps have been supported by approximately US\$20 million from donor

governments each year (UNHCR, 2006). A community-development approach was taken in running the Bhutanese camps. This meant in practice a rights-based approach and democratic structures of self-management, the promotion of the interests of women and children, and equitable access to basic services. Comparatively high levels of primary, secondary and tertiary education were achieved, and several preventive health programmes were instituted along with regular nutrition and other services. In effect, the refugee population enjoyed 'disproportionately higher indicators of well-being' than the local Nepalese population (Muggah, 2005, p 152). The camps themselves are entirely refugee run – with the refugees providing policing, social, project, and health services, counselling, aid distribution, and camp administration. The result has been described as a 'best practice' example of refugee camp 'care and maintenance' (p 156).

Despite such a 'relatively high standard' of education and services, the UNHCR has acknowledged 'considerable frustration' among refugees (UNHCR, 2006, p 116). This frustration is 'particularly pronounced' among young people (p 116). The provision of education to advanced levels has raised skills and expectations that cannot be fulfilled in the context of confinement to camps (Brown, 2001). Suicide rates, domestic violence, alcoholism, and trafficking of women and children were increasing (UNHCR, 2006) along with child marriage, polygamy, and prostitution (Muggah, 2005). Refugee families were dispersed across different camps, and young people often lacked identity papers since they had been born in camps after families fled Bhutan.

Although the local host population did derive some benefit from the camps since the cheap labour increased the supply of goods and locals used the camp healthcare systems, local Nepali communities complained that refugees drove down wages, depressed prices and contributed to crime and prostitution (UNHCR, 2006). The failure to address issues of differences between refugees in camps and local populations has meant solutions 'cannot and will not' be found (Goetz, 2003, p 16).

### ***Protracted refugee situations and policies***

Global refugee populations are at the lowest they have been for many years. However, the international population of refugees left in protracted political stand-offs and their duration as refugees has increased (Loescher et al, 2008). Recognition of this has resulted in the UNHCR designating such situations as 'protracted refugee situations', defined as populations of over 25,000 who have been in exile for 5 years or more in developing countries (UNHCR, 2008b, p 1).<sup>1</sup> By the end of 2003, there were an estimated 6.2 million refugees worldwide (excluding Palestinian refugees who are dealt with under a separate mandate).

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<sup>1</sup> This definition effectively discounts the situation of a great many groups of fewer than 25,000 (Loescher and Milner, 2005). The UNHCR (2006, p 106) acknowledges that the definition is a 'crude' underestimate of what are often 'chronic and stagnating' protracted refugee situations. The humanitarian and academic communities have done some soul searching on the best ways to ameliorate these problems. High-level international conferences have dealt with issues such as relationships between policy components, issues of security, and the relative roles of humanitarian agencies, development agencies and civil society.

By 2008, estimates were as high as 9.9 million refugees worldwide, half in protracted refugee situations (UNHCR, 2008a, p 1). Not only has the number of protracted refugee situations increased since the early 1990s, but the average duration of protracted refugee situations has almost doubled over that period (Loescher et al, 2008).

In the 1990s, the gap between the number of refugees needing repatriation and the number accepted for resettlement by third countries continued to grow (UNHCR, 2008b). In 2002, the UNHCR adopted a new strategy termed the 'Agenda for Protection' to develop 'customised' programmes (Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme, 2008). This new strategy aimed to share burdens between and build the capacity of states to receive and protect refugees. By 2004, this strategy had become the UNHCR's search for 'durable solutions' (Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme, 2008).

The UNHCR's three strategies for 'durable solutions' are voluntary repatriation, local integration in the country of first asylum and resettlement in a third country. The UNHCR's search for durable solutions has had limited success, and in 2006 the UNHCR acknowledged that many protracted refugee situations remained because of 'neglect by regional and international actors' (UNHCR, 2006, p 106).

### ***Resettlement of Bhutanese refugees***

The UNHCR has tried to find a durable solution for the Bhutanese in Nepal. However, its attempts to get agreement for their repatriation to Bhutan failed, and the Nepalese Government opposed local integration. Most refugee leaders also opposed local integration. International observers criticised integration on the grounds that Bhutan's behaviour constituted ethnic cleansing and local integration was a dangerous precedent (UNHCR, 2006). In 2006, the UNHCR acknowledged that the 'many refugees from Bhutan who were deprived of citizenship [and] languish in camps in Nepal foresee little chance of returning home or reacquiring their citizenship' (UNHCR, 2006, p 26). They faced a prospect of remaining 'part of the UNHCR casebook for the coming years' (p 27).

In mid 2008, the UNHCR acknowledged the failure of repatriation efforts (Feller, 2008), saying the United Nations had 'found it impossible' to broker solutions, so the strategy was to 'phase out assistance' and support targeted third-country resettlement as a 'solution to this problem' (Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme, 2008). The Bhutanese in Nepal were seen as a 'priority' for resettlement.

New Zealand has supported the effort to resettle the Lhotshampa. Other countries to offer resettlement include the United States, Canada, Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway and Australia. There is no limit to the number of Nepali Bhutanese who may be resettled, and it is estimated that the process will take up to seven years as nearly one-third of the Nepali Bhutanese refugee population has registered their interest in third-country resettlement (Banki, 2008).

## **New Zealand context**

### ***Refugee Policy and Refugee Quota Programme***

In 1987, the New Zealand Government established a formal annual quota for the resettlement of refugees.<sup>2</sup> In recent years, the focus has been on refugees most in need of resettlement as identified by the UNHCR. Before resettlement decisions are made, refugees referred by the UNHCR are interviewed by Refugee Quota Branch officers from the Department of Labour in the country of asylum or, where this is not feasible, by officers of international organisations in the field. Each case undergoes a comprehensive selection screening and assessment process that focuses on credibility, risk and potential settlement to ensure:

- the case is in line with New Zealand's priorities
- New Zealand is the right settlement option for that person
- the case is not a security risk or character of concern to New Zealand.

If the Department of Labour is not satisfied with the information presented in relation to any of the above considerations, the case is declined.

The New Zealand Government aims to ensure the resettlement quota remains targeted to refugees and that New Zealand has the capacity to provide good settlement outcomes to those accepted under the Refugee Quota Programme. The programme allows 750 places<sup>3</sup>. These places are made up of:

- a minimum of 75 places under the Women-at-Risk Subcategory<sup>4</sup>
- up to 75 places under the Medical/Disabled Subcategory
- 600 places under the UNHCR Priority Protection Subcategory (including up to 300 places for family reunification and up to 35 places for emergency referrals).

All subcategories within the refugee resettlement quota generally include the immediate family members (that is, spouse and dependent children) of the principal applicant.

In addition to standard family residence categories, two specific family reunification policies are available for refugees.

- Within the quota, a declared spouse and dependent children may be included.
- Under the Refugee Family Support Category, 300 residence places are available for refugees to sponsor family members. This has been limited to Tier 1 priority sponsors (those being refugees who are considered 'alone' in New Zealand). Tier 2 will be opened to sponsors early in 2012; this will allow a wider range of sponsors to register.

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<sup>2</sup> New Zealand also assesses claims for asylum under the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees.

<sup>3</sup> The total annual quota may vary by plus or minus 10 percent.

<sup>4</sup> For the purposes of resettlement, the UNHCR considers women at risk as 'those women or girls who have protection problems particular to their gender, whether they are single heads-of-families, unaccompanied girls or together with their male (or female) family members' (UNHCR, 2004)

The size and composition of the refugee resettlement quota has traditionally been set annually. However, from 2010-2011 the Minister of Immigration and Minister of Foreign Affairs agreed to a three year planning cycle. The quota is reviewed annually in line with the three year cycle proposal after consulting widely with relevant government departments, the UNHCR, non-governmental organisations, existing refugee communities and other stakeholders.

New Zealand's annual refugee quota is above average on a per capita basis compared with a number of other resettlement states (eighth out of the 19 resettlement countries). Other countries with significant resettlement quotas include the United States, Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom. Australia has the highest quota programme on a per capita basis.

The Refugee Division of the Department of Labour works closely with the UNHCR, the International Organization for Migration and other governments to promote international responsibility sharing, coordinated responses to refugee issues, capacity building, and the ongoing development of norms, policies and best practice in refugee protection.

Refugees accepted for resettlement to New Zealand under the refugee quota programme are granted a permanent residence visa on arrival. As New Zealand permanent residents, they are entitled to live in New Zealand permanently, and enjoy almost all of the same rights as New Zealand citizens.

### ***Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre***

Refugees who arrive in New Zealand under the Refugee Quota Programme spend their first 6 weeks on an orientation programme at the Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre in Auckland. Annually, the centre handles six intakes of about 125 people each.

The centre includes accommodation blocks, an early childhood learning centre, classrooms, medical and dental clinics, a mental health clinic and general living and recreation areas.

The orientation programme is conducted in the refugees' language and provides general information about life in New Zealand, including the institutions and services integral to their successful settlement into New Zealand society. The programme also aims to build the basic social and coping skills required for a new life in New Zealand.

The Auckland University of Technology coordinates English language and socio-cultural components of the orientation programme.

## **2 BHUTANESE REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT RESEARCH PROJECT**

[I am] very happy and proud to move to New Zealand ... I want to do something and let my children do something. (Middle-aged male)

### **Resettlement of Bhutanese in New Zealand**

In 2007, New Zealand became the first country to accept Bhutanese refugees for resettlement. In 2007/2008, 75 Bhutanese were accepted as part of the annual refugee quota. Most of those accepted were resettled in Palmerston North and Christchurch. In 2008/2009, a second intake of 195 Bhutanese refugees was included in New Zealand's annual refugee quota. This intake was predominantly resettled in Palmerston North, Christchurch and Nelson.

These cities were chosen for resettlement because, in addition to having the availability and capability to resettle a new community, they were deemed to be a good fit in terms of their environment for the Bhutanese community and could offer a good resettlement foundation.

In 2009/2010, 176 Bhutanese were resettled in New Zealand and as of April 2011, a further 105 Bhutanese refugees have arrived. It is likely that Bhutanese refugees from camps in Nepal will continue to be accepted for resettlement in the future given that they remain in a protracted situation, and therefore a UNHCR focus for resettlement.

The Bhutanese are a new ethnic community to be resettled in New Zealand. Given their small numbers, they will continue to require large levels of support from a variety of service providers.

### **Background to the research project**

The 2008 selection mission to Nepal was used as a unique opportunity to undertake research on this group of refugees. The aim of the Bhutanese Refugee Resettlement Research is to provide information about the pre-settlement hopes, expectations and experiences of the Bhutanese refugees, as well as their short-term settlement outcomes. This information will enable better support for the resettlement not only of this community, but of refugees generally.

There has been relatively little research on refugee resettlement in New Zealand. The notable exceptions are *Refugee Voices: A journey towards resettlement* (Department of Labour, 2004), which contains the findings from interviews with nearly 400 recent and established refugees, and the recently published *New Land, New Life: Long-Term Settlement of Refugees in New Zealand* (Department of Labour, 2011c) which is a preliminary report from the Quota Refugees Ten Years On programme of research.<sup>5</sup> However, this study of refugees before and after resettlement is unique both nationally and internationally. No other studies

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<sup>5</sup> The *Quota Refugees Ten Years On: Perspectives of Integration, Community and Identity* programme of work builds on *Refugee Voices: A Journey Towards Resettlement*, to understand what life is like for former refugees who have lived in New Zealand for more than ten years.

that systematically examined the expectations of refugees before resettlement and their short-term reactions after resettlement were found.

There are some studies of refugees *after* resettlement. These studies tend to focus on specific issues such as impacts on the health of refugee youth (Gifford et al, 2007), ongoing effects of violent refugee experiences after resettlement (Amone-P'Olak, 2007), changes in family structure (Currie, 2007), the challenges of integrating refugees into the workforce (Posiadlowski, 2007) or other specific aspects of third-country social or economic structure (Valtonen, 1998, 2004; Pottie et al, 2006; Spitzer, 2006; Beirens et al, 2007; VanderPlaat, 2007; Pressé and Thomson, 2008).

No substantial studies appear to explore these issues from the perspective of the refugees, before, during and after resettlement (Mitchell and Kisner, 2004). However, this is an important issue, as other researchers have pointed out. Gifford and colleagues demonstrate from their prospective study of a cohort of refugee youth resettled in Melbourne that important differences exist between studies that examine the importance of 'meaning' as made by individuals and studies that focus on the 'measurement' of indicators as decided by researchers (Gifford et al, 2007). There is limited understanding of how refugees' own priorities and values may change between pre-arrival and settlement. This study takes account of these issues in its design. The substantive issues important in New Zealand policy and the provision of services for resettling refugees are addressed through a selection of topics and questions in a semi-structured interview.

## **Purpose of this research project**

The findings of the Bhutanese Refugee Resettlement Research Project as a whole will help to:

- inform future pre-arrival and on-arrival settlement information and orientation
- identify areas of priority when resettling new ethnic communities, for example, language and employment support
- identify gaps and overlaps in current settlement support.

Monitoring before- and after-settlement needs and outcomes for this cohort will inform the selection process and resettlement of refugees through the Refugee Quota Programme. Little such monitoring has been undertaken in the last two decades. The complexities of world events and resettlement needs require the Department of Labour to monitor its practices to ensure they are up to date and in the best interest of the communities who are to be resettled through the Refugee Quota Programme.

## **Structure of the research**

The research involves three phases of data collection. The first phase involved 33 interviews that took place as part of New Zealand's refugee mission to Nepal in October 2008. Interviewees were asked about their background, expectations of resettlement, existing knowledge of New Zealand, their goals for life in

New Zealand and expected settlement support needs both before departure and after arrival.

The second phase of the research involved a series of shorter follow-up interviews at the end of the orientation process at the Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre (see Department of Labour, 2011a). These interviews were designed to provide immediate feedback and information to the Department. These interviews focused on specific aspects of the orientation programme with a particular focus on how it worked, how before and after departure expectations were met, and the refugees' hopes for their life in New Zealand.

The third phase of research took place in the community, 18 to 20 months after the refugees' arrival in New Zealand. These interviews focused on specific elements of settlement into New Zealand society (see Department of Labour, 2011b).

## **Participants in the research project**

### ***Selection of participants***

A mix of participants was sought, so selection criteria were necessary. The UNHCR assigns one case number to individuals and their families. The selection criteria process was as follows.

- When a case consisted of a single applicant, this person was always interviewed.
- When a case consisted of a married couple with or without dependent children, a random mix of interviews was undertaken that alternated between the husband and wife.
- When a case consisted of a married couple with adult children, sometimes an adult child was interviewed separately in addition to a husband or wife.
- When a case consisted of an extended family with a grandparent, the grandparent was sometimes interviewed.

Only those cases identified as low risk by the Refugee Quota Branch pre-mission risk assessment and by the Refugee Quota Branch interviewing officer post-interview were included in the research case studies.

### ***Sample characteristics***

Thirty three people participated in the study. The sample consisted of 13 females and 20 males who ranged in age from 18 to 77 years, with a median age of 31 years.

The length of time spent in the refugee camps of Nepal ranged from 14 years to 17 years with most having spent 16 years in the camps.

Age on arrival to the refugee camps differed greatly with the youngest entering the camps at the age of 2 years and the eldest at the age of 61 years. The average age on arrival to the camps was 18 years.

Participants had a variety of current occupational backgrounds; from teachers, students, and office workers to those who were housewives or had no

employment history. Educational attainment ranged from no formal education to a university-level education.

Unless otherwise specified, quotes throughout this report have been broken into the four age classifications of: 'young adult', which relates to ages 18 to 25; 'adult' which refers to those aged 26 to 40 years; 'middle-aged' for those aged 41 to 59 and; 'older' which refers to participants aged 60 years and over. Broad age classifications have been used to protect the identity of participants.

## **Interview procedures**

Interviews were conducted in October of 2008 over 10 days as part of the selection mission to Nepal.

At the beginning of each day, a debriefing meeting was held with all those attending selection interviews. During this meeting the contents of the booklet prepared by the Refugee Quota Branch about life in New Zealand was outlined and the selection interviews were discussed.

During these meetings, the Bhutanese Refugee Resettlement Research Project was also discussed, giving information about the study, including the purpose of the research and what participating would involve. The voluntary nature of the research was discussed, and it was explained that the study was not only confidential, but would also not influence or affect applications to be resettled in New Zealand. Information sheets in Nepali were also provided.

Following meetings, a Nepali-speaking interpreter from the International Organization for Migration asked all family members associated with a single case whether they would like to participate in the research. Those who wished to participate were again given information about the research. Decisions using the selection criteria were then made as to who within the family group would be interviewed. The participant was asked for their signed informed consent to the interview, and then the interview took place separately from other family members.<sup>6</sup>

Interview questions followed a semi-structured questionnaire format, and focused on background information such as education and employment histories; expectations of resettlement; existing knowledge of New Zealand; goals for life in New Zealand; and expected settlement support needs both before departure and after arrival (see Interview Questionnaire in Appendix B).

Interviews were approximately 1 hour long. Questions were asked in English but an interpreter who spoke Nepali was present to translate questions and answers. Interviews were recorded where permission to do so was given, otherwise detailed field notes were taken.

At the completion of the formal interview, participants had an opportunity to raise concerns or ask questions, in particular, questions about New Zealand and settling in New Zealand. The researcher engaged in an open discussion about this with participants.

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<sup>6</sup> Consent forms were translated into Nepali.

## **Ethical considerations**

The process undertaken throughout this research complies with the Association of Social Science Researchers' code of ethics (ASSR, 1996) and Social Policy Evaluation and Research Committee's *Good Practice Guidelines* (SPEaR, 2008) have also been followed. Further, recommendations from an in-house training manual developed for the research study Quota Refugees Ten years On: Perspectives on integration, community and identity were also considered in this research.

The researchers reviewed Mackenzie and colleagues' paper 'Beyond "do no harm": The challenge of constructing ethical relationships in refugee research' (Mackenzie et al, 2007). The paper raised the need for researchers to move beyond harm minimisation as a standard for ethical research and recognise an obligation to design and conduct research projects that aim to bring about reciprocal benefits for refugee participants and/or communities.

In relation to these concerns, it is important to note that in addition to identifying the needs of the Bhutanese refugees accepted for resettlement in New Zealand, this research has been designed to monitor and evaluate the operational processes of the Department of Labour. The information gained by tracking the impacts and outcomes for this cohort will help the Department in its efforts to successfully resettle quota refugees from pre-arrival to post-arrival.

### **3 KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF RESETTLEMENT**

We don't know anything so you have to tell us what is important for us to know. (Middle-aged male)

#### **Introduction**

Most of the Bhutanese who took part in our study had spent the larger part of their adult lives in refugee camps; many became refugees in childhood. Such people have not had the opportunity to know adult life as full participants in civil society since they have been kept as outsiders to local host communities. Although two of the refugees we talked to did have regular daily paid work outside camp, for most people the camps were a kind of restricted civil and political microcosm where the exercise of political and other rights was limited and individual effort in education, enterprise and other domains of life had only limited outlets.

This section explores the state of preparedness of one cohort facing the shocks and challenges of resettlement: what did they know of New Zealand and what did they want to know?

#### **Context of uncertainty**

When the refugees were interviewed for this study, decisions about resettlement had not been made and some had not yet had interviews with officials.

At interviews for resettlement, refugees were given the standard booklet about New Zealand that is explained by Refugee Quota Branch staff. While branch staff discuss the contents of the booklet with refugees during the offshore selection mission, the level of detail in which this happens depends on the circumstances of the mission and is subject to constraints of time and environment. Moreover, this briefing could take place up to a year before an individual is approved and allocated to an intake for New Zealand.

Once allocated to an intake, refugees also have a briefing with a representative of the International Organization for Migration. However, this briefing focuses on travel matters such as baggage allowances and the logistics and practicalities of the journey and does not cover information about New Zealand.

#### **Knowledge priorities**

With no assurance of resettlement and a history of protracted uncertainty, people in this study understandably wanted resolutions. For some, gaining assurance about being resettled rather than information about the country of resettlement was the dominant concern. As one man declared, he just wanted 'to go there, we want to resettle' (young adult male). He was echoed by a woman who declared:

It's been a long time since we processed our case, so how long will it take now? If possible, I wish to move as soon as possible. (Adult female)

Most people interviewed were prepared to take the future as an act of faith, admitting that they knew little and hoping for reassurance of being reunited with family through resettlement. This was particularly the case for older people. A middle-aged man looked no further than being reunited with his daughter and family:

I'm happy to go there because my relatives are there. My daughter is calling me to come here. (Middle-aged male)

Others had family scattered through other camps or in India or Bhutan. They longed for resettlement to bring them all together even while they feared it might make it more difficult to retain family connections:

We have a little part of our family moving from Bhutan ... some family [are] in Assam [in India]. We happened to meet here ... Communication is very important. I don't know the address of [family in] Assam. So if I am selected and they are there also, to get the family together would be the happiest time. My brother and myself, together. So it would be better to go together. (Adult male)

If we are settling in New Zealand, after some years if we make a plan to come back to visit our relatives in Nepal or India, can we come back or are we not allowed? (Adult male)

For some people, the practicality of transit to a new country was of most concern. Most people we spoke to had little travel experience other than that of expulsion from Bhutan and trucking across India to the south of Nepal. They contemplated the practicalities of resettlement anxiously:

Me and my husband only understand a little English. I have small children so problem as only four people. How much luggage can we carry and where do we get our luggage, in Kathmandu or New Zealand? (Adult female)

How to reach New Zealand? Which way we have to follow? What should we carry in transit centre? I have small kids they might fight with each other. (Middle-aged male)

Most individuals were acutely aware of how little they knew of the larger issues of resettlement. The task of imagining the unimaginable – a question about life in New Zealand – was too great and they simply shrugged and said, 'what to say, sister?' Others gave no answer when asked what information would be useful, or responded as one young woman did, 'No, I don't know' (adult female). Another declared, '[t]here are things I don't know but I don't know what to ask' (adult female).

People recognised they knew very little about New Zealand and needed to know more, but they felt they were reliant on authorities for deciding and supplying what they needed. As one man said:

[W]e don't know anything so you have to tell us what is important for us to know. (Middle-aged male)

This man relied on the authorities from the country of resettlement for ensuring he received good information and the preparation needed for resettlement; others knew they were radically unprepared:

What are the living conditions of that country? What is the culture and tradition? It is a new place for us we need to know about environment. After arriving there is medical and education free? After arriving, what kind of job do I get? And what kind of job do my parents get? ... what kind of rules [do] we have to follow? Or can we follow our own? (Young adult male)

What are the house conditions? Is it like Nepal? What kind of country is it? The government? ... environment. The law. How to live there? What is the life standard? What kind of house do we get?' (Young adult male)

In contrast, the few highly educated refugees were able to articulate what they wanted and needed to know. Invariably, they wanted information about careers, responsibilities they would need to exercise, and new services and legislative regimes with which they would have to engage. They wanted *specifics* about how to position themselves and their family for best outcomes:

I want to know about industrial sector, entrepreneurship, day-to-day life, transport, health, convenience in terms of living with another society. (Adult male)

I want to work in an organisation in New Zealand for the community and for society. If I have private studies what will be the benefits or packages I get and income? [what] ... about education and health ... culture and traditional New Zealand? What type of facilities and jobs can we get? Qualifications and education will not match so what will New Zealand government think about us? (Adult male)

Young people were interested in opportunities to advance themselves:

Information about studying and jobs. (Young adult male)

Employment. What kind of job can I get and what will be suitable for me in New Zealand? (young adult female)

Older people who had little education struggled for a frame of reference in which to envision the future and form a realistic view of what they needed to know. They tended to fall back on understandings of how their traditional world had worked. As one older man exclaimed,

How should I go to market? How should I go to make friends in the village? (older male)

Few individuals displayed foreboding or fear about difficulties in the future, although one young man pondered:

it will be difficult for us to be there. I hope they will help us. Whether we can continue our study. I would like to study further. (Adult male)

However, for the most part, people were prepared to make a general, optimistic leap of faith. As one mother declared:

We will move to that country if we know something is better for us. There is free education for our children. Health medicine is free. Living standard is good. (Adult female)

Another woman echoed this when she declared:

[I] would like to know about resettlement. About women who don't have guardians [but I am] happy that my children will go to school there. (Adult female)

### **Summary of knowledge and understanding of resettlement**

Refugees were anxious and wanted to be assured of resettlement and were aware they lacked knowledge about the resettlement process. Some participants wanted to know more, while others were happy to leave things to fate and see how things turned out rather than identify specific challenges or difficulties that they might face. Refugees had a general sense of optimism about a better life that outweighed any concerns. Many felt that their lives to date had been so difficult that any change would be an improvement.

## 4 PRE-DEPARTURE KNOWLEDGE AND MISINFORMATION

Everything is good and everything is taken care of by the Government.  
(Young male)

### Introduction

In this study, 33 refugees being considered for resettlement in New Zealand were asked about how they had arrived at their knowledge of New Zealand. Since they had all been confined to refugee camps for nearly two decades, their networks for accessing new information were constrained. New Zealand had been in view as a third-country destination only recently; when study participants were interviewed just one previous cohort of Bhutanese had been resettled in New Zealand, so there had been little reason for others to gather information systematically on New Zealand. Although New Zealand had been the first country to accept members of this community, other countries were accepting far larger numbers.<sup>7</sup> Given this, it was understandable that many refugees knew little of New Zealand.

Most admitted ignorance despite having been given official information and despite having close personal networks to New Zealand. As one young woman declared, '[I] don't know anything' even though 'necessary information [had been] provided' by the UNHCR and a 'brother in New Zealand. New Zealand will be good for us' (adult female). This young woman was not alone in professing complete ignorance *and* having been briefed with the 'necessary information' by the UNHCR *and* having gained information from a resettled brother *and* having a general expectation that all would be well. This section explores what might lie behind such a response.

### Knowledge sources: formal briefings and education

Ten individuals stated that that they knew nothing about New Zealand, either before or after interviews with officials or from their own education. Typically, they said simply, 'I know nothing' (young adult female) and 'I don't know' (young adult female). Most people had a patchwork of knowledge from a medley of sources. As one young woman declared:

I got [information] from someone who is resettled in New Zealand ...  
[and] I get to know by the interview. (Young adult female)

Official information seemed to have been of limited impact. Of those who mentioned interviews with officials, few specifics could be gleaned. When asked, 'were there any new things you found out about New Zealand today?' only 7 out of 31 people said they had learned something specific. The others gave either no answer (16 people) or an equivocal answer (1 person). The seven people who said they had gained some knowledge referred to having received a booklet, having watched television or having read newspapers. One man with a university

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<sup>7</sup> The United States has committed to considering the resettlement of 60,000 Bhutanese refugees and as of December 2010 has accepted 34,129 people.

education who was listed as having a teaching job, listed items he had learned, but nevertheless indicated he was disappointed, 'I was expecting more information'.

Of the 23 participants who said they had known something about New Zealand before their interview with New Zealand officials, a few mentioned briefings from the UNHCR. The UNHCR officials had evidently put the case of the 'durable solution' of resettlement, which had been adopted to cope with protracted refugee situations such as the situation of these people in Nepal:

[The] UNHCR/[International Organization for Migration] referred us and we can't repatriate in Bhutan because we are chased by Bhutan. So for our good future and for our regiment [sic] the resettlement is very much important for us. (Middle-aged male)

There were talks about New Zealand and the government and I was interested that is why I came to the UNHCR. They talked about third-country resettlement. So ... that is why we came to the UNHCR and we want to resettle in New Zealand. (Adult female)

Learning that they might be resettled in New Zealand had not necessarily induced a single information-seeking response: some people were galvanised into active searching for specific information about New Zealand after UNHCR dealings and others let matters rest. 'When selected for the New Zealand ... we tried to find out information' (adult female). Another woman did the opposite. The 'UNHCR [was the] main source', but she decided to wait until 'after settling [when] we will try to find out information about New Zealand, climate and land etc' (adult female).

Others had acquired disparate factual information in the course of more general study or by browsing official or media data sources. Participants mentioned sources such as 'booklet[s]' and internet searches (adult male) or having 'browsed not gathered information' (middle-aged male). A few were specific, 'read the New Zealand Immigration Service bulletin' (adult male). Others had gained factual knowledge from their formal education:

While studying geography [I] came to know it is an island near Australia. Two main islands. Climate is 0 to 18 degrees. People diverse community. Māori indigenous people. Democratic country. Dairy products are popular. Occupation is more industrial agriculture. Life standard is similar to Australia – a developed country. 100% literacy. Dairy farming is as good as in Australia. (Adult male)

It is an island country. It is a country of Kiwis. Most of the people speak English. Some speak another language. It is a country full of beautiful scenery and greenery. Neighbouring country is Australia. (Young adult male)

## **Knowledge sources: personal family networks**

The most usual knowledge of New Zealand came from family members resettled in New Zealand. Family evidently played a key role for refugees still awaiting resettlement. As one young man explained:

Don't know anything because no relatives are there. That's why I don't know. (Young adult male)

Most participants did have resettled family, and all of these people explained that their resettled family members were regularly in touch and acted as sources of information, although the information as it pertained to New Zealand was minimal and usually vague and piecemeal. Probably New Zealand society and conditions were discussed only as context for news of family activities and progress. Typical responses were:

I don't know much about New Zealand ... my brother resettled in New Zealand. (Adult male)

My sister is there ... I hear it is a small and beautiful country. (Young adult female)

I don't know much, but I have a sister and a brother-in-law there. (Young adult male)

The means of communicating with family were sophisticated. Some used the telephone like the man who talked regularly with 'my sister and brother-in-law over the phone' (Young adult male). However, most appear to have used the internet:

My sister is there. I keep in touch through the internet. (Young adult female)

My brother has sent some photographs through the internet. (Adult male)

Individuals appear to have gained reassurance and hopeful expectations from family rather than useful, practical, detailed information for life and progress in New Zealand. The expectations formed on this basis were hopeful:

New Zealand is a peaceful country and a peaceful environment. Our relatives are there and they tell us things are good there. (Young adult female)

They say they have a hospital and health facilities provided by the Government and are free for us. (Middle-aged male)

Peaceful country. One brother already there. I learned from him that [it is a] very good environment, it will be good for us to settle there. (Adult male)

Sometimes hopeful expectations appear to have bordered on the over-optimistic. Some people appeared to have the impression of a cocoon of complete care from the Government:

My life and children's life will be better. Government and organisations will take care of us. (Middle-aged male)

Everything is good and everything is taken care of by the Government. (Young adult male)

I think we can solve our life there very comfortably that's the expectation. (Young adult female)

## **Limitations and potential of offshore preparation**

Overall, even after official briefings and long and regular contact with resettled family members, the prospective refugees who spoke with us had little practical or useful knowledge about the country in which they were to be resettled.

This lack of knowledge may be the result of three factors. First, the effect of being a refugee for many years may render incomprehensible information and briefings about alien matters such as New Zealand's bureaucratic and administrative systems, welfare and employment regimes, and social customs of diet, clothing, housing, health and schooling. Secondly, after a lifetime as a camp refugee continuously disappointed with neither repatriation nor local integration occurring, people may have become resigned to having their fate decided for them. Such people might have become indifferent or unmotivated to search out information about yet another change that might not eventuate. Thirdly, for some individuals, traditional customs and issues of literacy and education precluded personal information searching. As one woman explained:

My husband and children ... are educated, so everything is done by husband and children so I know nothing about it. I would like to know their language [in New Zealand]. I want to understand. (Adult female)

This woman had not surrendered her will to understand – indeed she said, 'I want to understand' – but she knew the limitations to what she could do to inform herself independently.

It is notable however, that those who had family connections in New Zealand resettled as part of the 2007/2008 intake had limited knowledge of New Zealand. Although some information had flowed back to families in camps, it was generally not practical facts and advice.

Research from refugee situations elsewhere has demonstrated that feedback from resettled family can be a powerful influence on family members remaining as camp refugees. It can influence not only expectations of the third country, but influence the social manners, clothing, dance and diet of those in the camps who model themselves on resettled family (Porter et al, 2008). However, such influences in these cases had built up over a fairly long period of gradual resettlement whereas this study cohort was only the second intake.

## **Implications**

The recognition that resettled family members are a primary source of information for refugees could be used to advantage in policy development. Currently, the main external source of information is from officials and a booklet on New Zealand. These sources seem to have been of limited use in preparing people for life in New Zealand. When asked soon after the settlement interviews, few study participants stated that they had learnt anything useful in interviews; no one related anything that would help them adjust to New Zealand. Instead, some gave a few items of fact such as the name of the capital city and main languages spoken. In some ways, this is hardly unexpected given that

momentous changes were in prospect and much that was happening was novel and perhaps overwhelming or disorienting.

The need for some authoritative source for pre-departure information is all the more important since camps are often grounds for campaigns against resettlement, which may give rise to misinformation. Gale (2008, p 541) argues the 'microclimates' of camps had a 'profound effect on refugees' livelihood opportunities, social networks, and future outlook' and had an 'immediate influence on refugee decision-making'.

In the Bhutanese refugee camps, conflicting opinions on resettlement have emerged with Bhutanese political leaders fearing resettlement will minimise efforts to promote political reform in Bhutan and ultimately end any hope of repatriation to Bhutan. A lack of information about third-country resettlement has provided fuel for those who are anti-resettlement. Such groups have actively discouraged resettlement by 'publishing statements to issuing threats to engaging in actual violence against pro-settlement refugees' (Banki, 2008, p 6). Rumours propagated by those who are anti-resettlement range from misinformation (for example, 'I heard that in 20 years New Zealand will be no more', 'they give you vaccinations before you go to make you sterile') to information resulting from an adverse event in a resettlement country being taken out of context (for example, 'marry your daughters before you send them for resettlement as unmarried girls will be raped').

### **Summary of pre-departure knowledge and misinformation**

The run-up to resettlement is important for orienting refugee communities. Their lack of general knowledge about New Zealand indicates that information currently given is insufficient or is given when their focus is on obtaining certainty of resettlement rather than information gathering.

New Zealand could take better advantage of the 'natural' connections of family networks. It is clear that resettled family are a main conduit of information to refugees, but little of the information flowing back appears sufficiently specific and practical to help people prepare for life after resettlement or to combat campaigns of misinformation. Resettled family could be actively encouraged to realistically advise and reassure. They could help to equip oncoming cohorts of refugees to make the best of a change for which they are without precedent.

## 5 EXPECTATIONS IN THE SHORT AND MEDIUM TERM

I do not [know] now, I will know when I get there. Once there I think that we will get a good education and a good job. (Adult male)

### Introduction

Most refugees have hopes and expectations that they will achieve a return to some sort of 'normal' life. However, little systematic research has been done to understand any expectations they may harbour (Hein, 1994). One of the few studies in this area showed that expectations can have profound effects in the communities of those awaiting resettlement. For instance, among Sudanese refugees in Egypt, the guidelines of the UNHCR and resettlement countries have undermined traditional marriage arrangements, so individuals have instead sought partners and adopted forms of marriage that will enhance resettlement prospects and acceptance in resettlement countries (Currie, 2007).

However, Currie's (2007) research was conducted among refugees living intermingled with host communities rather than contained in camps. Therefore, this present study is unique. For nearly two decades, the Bhutanese have been largely separated from civil society and their existence has been largely determined by UNHCR and non-governmental organisations' attitudes and policies. Some refugees have known no life outside this environment. Given that the option of resettlement to New Zealand is recent,<sup>8</sup> ideas about modifying traditional or local practices is likely to be limited. Camp life, its constraints and provisions are likely to be more important determinants of expectations of life after resettlement.

Personal characteristics of resilience and a sense of autonomy are no doubt of importance in how people look forward to an unknown future, but despite being able to exercise a degree of camp self-management, the refugees knew they were in the last instance dependent on the UNHCR, donor states and the willingness of third countries to accept them. They knew that after nearly two decades in refugee camps, resettlement in Nepal was not an option. The UNHCR had for years tried unsuccessfully to broker a return to Bhutan or local integration in Nepal but by 2006 the agency saw a bleak outlook for the Bhutanese in Nepal who had 'little chance' of returning home and likely to remain encamped 'for the coming years' (UNHCR, 2006, p 26). Only a year or two before this study was conducted, the UNHCR changed direction and resettlement was a preferred 'solution to this problem' (Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme, 2004). Once again, the camp communities had little ability to make independent decisions about this.

This section discusses the short- and medium-term expectations of the people caught in this protracted situation and the UNHCR's attempt to find a way forward. It is hardly surprising that several participants felt they were powerless and dependent on the will of others. As one women said, '[I] don't know what to say. I think we will be doing what the people say and doing what the people give us' (female, 35 years old, married, no formal education, mother). Another

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<sup>8</sup> This research was conducted with the second cohort of quota refugees from these camps.

woman declared, 'we don't know anything. I think that my children will go to school. I hope that they will take care of us' (middle-aged female). But if the recent life of powerlessness and confinement had helped shape such attitudes of some, perhaps more remarkable is the optimism of so many.

In such a small study, it is not possible to analyse systematically any substantive differences between men and women or older and younger people, although some research has shown different outcomes for different groups after resettlement (Currie, 2007; Dauvergne, 2006; Kirk, 2006; Newman, 2005; Pottie et al, 2006; Sherrell and Hyndman, 2006; Spitzer, 2006; Taylor, 2006). But on the brink of departure for resettlement, the commonality in expectations among this current group was more salient than differences.

## **Expectations for the first 12 months**

Optimism towards resettlement was in part determined by push factors: any change would be better than camp life and facilities and opportunities in New Zealand must be better than those available in camp. This sentiment was expressed by men and women, older and younger people, the uneducated and reasonably well educated:

I think it is better than this life at home and being a refugee I think that resettling in New Zealand it is better than this life here. (Middle-aged male)

Living standards will be higher than here. Climate and environment will be better than this. For my children everything will be better than this here. (Middle-aged male)

Better than this camp or better than present situation, in terms of facilities [what is] provided here is not sufficient. (Young adult female)

The few individuals with university education more often expressed faith in specific pull factors and expressed well-developed ideas of what was needed to advance in Western societies. They were resiliently optimistic. Indeed, as one man said, 'obviously' New Zealand 'is helping us so we will [have] better life and happy life'. Research has identified different discrete elements that need to be in place for successful resettlement (Ager and Strang, 2004), but the individuals in this study had a broad, general set of expectations rather than a sense of precise needs or services.

Some spoke of the removal of legal impediments such as refugee status as the key to better things:

Here we are living without recognition and after arriving in New Zealand I would hope that life will be better than this and [we will] have recognition ... before we came here we were from Bhutan but we have no identity from Bhutan. (Adult male)

We hope we would [have removed] the status of refugee and after that our living standard would be higher. (Adult female)

Individuals with more formal education, older people who had had the opportunity to study in their younger days, and younger people who had had a

good education within the well-developed camp education system were likely to be aware of the need for considerable personal adaptation after resettlement. There would, as one said, be a need for 'transition ... to adjust to new community'. The first year would be a 'totally learning period how to talk'. An adult male, undertaking university education in camp echoed this:

Within a year nothing will be develop effectively. It will pass learning about language and culture. After learning these new things we will pass our life better in a developed country. It will take one year to learn these things. (Adult male)

Younger people could see that their less-educated elders might struggle. As one young man declared:

I don't think it will be difficult for me. For my parents and grandparents [it will be] new big environment and new culture. I [was] studying in Calcutta so used to those types of big cities. (Young adult male)

Another young man echoed the concern:

For our parents it will be difficult for them to adjust as they are not used to new things. It will be easier for us and nice for the younger generation. They can be introduced to so many things. (Young adult male)

Older people who had had less opportunity for education did tend to be more anxious about maintaining the world they knew. For instance, they wanted to maintain extended living arrangements or at least live close to extended kin. As one man said, 'if my family are settled together in the same place it will be good for us' (middle-aged male); it is doubtful he could envisage the geographical dispersal likely in the relatively small-scale geographical distribution of suburban areas in New Zealand where he was likely to be resettled.

However, most adults, even those with limited education, were confident that they could cope with the challenges of change. They took heart from the precedents of those who had gone before: if others could do it, so could they. A woman with only primary schooling took comfort from her sister's example. Although 'it will be new', she would adapt as her sister had adapted. When this woman's sister had left she could not speak English but now she can maybe 'some things will change in our lives too' (adult female). Similarly, a man spoke of taking heart in a realistic way from his brother, 'life is a challenge but not miserable according to my brother' (adult male).

Despite being heavily influenced and constrained by the policies of international agencies such as the UNHCR, life in the Nepal camps enabled the continuation of some forms of civil society. Industrious habits of normal social life, trading and the practice of traditional crafts were able to be maintained (Fordyce, 2008) and administration was to a large degree in the hands of community members for day-to-day functions (Muggah, 2005). The maintenance of these practices of civil society stood these communities in good stead. Researchers have drawn attention to the 'cultural competence' of refugees or how social behaviours and values before resettlement determine behaviours after resettlement (Overland and Yenn, 2007; Snyder et al, 2005). Therefore, despite the many hazards and

grounds for demoralisation in camp confinement (UNHCR, 2006), the Bhutanese refugees in this study were perhaps reasonably well equipped psychologically in some respects. By and large, they confronted resettlement with expectations of being self-reliant and of being able to gain meaningful work and advance through personal effort:

I don't know what it will be like but I hope that life will be good there. If people have skills and if they can get a job according to their skills that will be good. (Young adult male)

We think everything will be fine. Have to work and not stay there and do nothing. (Young adult female)

I think that life will be good there just like in other countries. There we can study. (Adult male)

### **Expectations for the longer term**

Participants' short-term and longer-term expectations were largely aligned. Those who made a leap of faith about life in the first 12 months had the same faith about life outcomes in the longer term. The man who had confidence that 'New Zealand is helping us' in the first year had similar confidence of the longer term:

The people of New Zealand ... I have faith they will look after us. (Adult male)

Others showed a similar alignment in their short and longer term expectations:

I don't know what it will be like but I hope that life will be good there [and later] I hope ...that everything will be fine there. (Young adult male)

We think anything will be fine there [and later] I think life will be better. (Young adult female)

New Zealand is an advanced country [and later] we will have a good life and live in an advanced way. (Adult female)

Participants envisaged consolidating rather than changing direction and on building on short-term achievements over the longer term. One man keen to use his first 12 months as 'a learning period' hoped in the longer term to have made progress beyond his initial aspirations:

I would definitely get the chance to study further that is my desire. The next is that I will be happy to see that my child is going to school as early as possible, I would get a part-time job, I might get the higher education at the same time so that I can manage my family too, like financial affairs. I would like to study science but I don't know exactly, I would have to know the scope. It would be better if I get some orientation in learning the scope. (Adult male)

Even those who had expected little of the first few months had raised expectations for the longer term. One of those with the least sense of achievable outcomes in the first few months expected to be forward looking and

autonomous in the longer term. This woman explained that in the first few months 'I think we will be doing what the people say and doing what the people give us', but felt that 'after I have been there [some time] we will have learned lots of things' and she would be able to make her own way (adult female).

Those who had not emphasised self-reliance and advance through employment and career during the initial period nevertheless placed those matters centre stage of their vision for the medium term. Getting employment was the key to the future:

Before entering into that country we don't know anything but after entering after a few years we would be able to do jobs and improve our life standard. (Adult female)

Some changes will be there new places and new things. In Bhutan have no job. So in future I hope I will get a job. (Middle-aged male)

Life will be better. After learning some technology I will be able to get the job. I will be able to self-sustain. (Adult male)

### **Summary of short and medium term expectations**

Despite the hazards they had experienced, the many political adversities and a long period of being powerless to control their own fate, the Bhutanese who took part in this study had well-developed expectations of life after resettlement. They wanted opportunities for self-advancement, although in the immediate term, resettlement was a longed for release from life as a camp refugee. In the first year, resettlement was expected to be difficult but manageable, although older and less-educated people probably had less realistic ideas of what the challenges would be and how difficult it would be to meet them. But in the longer term, all wanted self-reliance and advancement through education and work.

## **6 NEED FOR A SAFE HOME AND FAMILY LIFE IN NEW ZEALAND**

There will be peace and happiness and that does not happen here.  
(Middle-aged male)

### **Introduction**

The people who took part in our study had been living in difficult and often risky conditions for nearly 20 years. This might be expected to affect their views about what they needed for a safe home and family life in any country of resettlement.

Most study participants had never been able to make an adult life for themselves as free citizens in a normal city context. Of the 33 participants, 16, nearly half the sample, had been aged under 18, including 10 aged under 12, when they became camp residents. Of the 6 who had been aged 30 years or over in Bhutan before becoming refugees, 5 had received no education and had only limited elementary schooling. Understandably, such people might struggle to envisage life as an unrestricted citizen with the resources, goods and services of city life – let alone life in a developed Western city.

Life as an inhabitant of a refugee camp had schooled individuals generally to manage within whatever resources were afforded them. It was an environment that demanded personal ingenuity but where personal effort to make one's way in life was constrained by reliance on political impotence and the consequential need to rely on international aid.

Nevertheless, these participants were optimistic and resilient in their views about life after resettlement. They were not unrealistic in outlook about what they would need for a safe home and family life.

### **Housing**

The housing circumstances in camps in Nepal are relatively cramped and basic, involving self-built bamboo huts close to one another. Small huts usually house many members of one extended family. Cooking and water facilities are basic with no electricity.

Study participants knew camp housing conditions were unacceptably low by normal standards. One young woman who had been in camp since she was 2 years old declared, 'here we are in a hut', which was echoed by others. 'Here', said an older man, 'we live under plastic roof [and] sometimes it blows away and we sleep under a tree'. Some people had very little concept of what housing would be like or what would be needed for life in New Zealand. One individual said they would 'see when there' (older male), and another said, 'Don't know about housing' (adult female). 'We haven't thought about that one [that is, a house]', said another, 'we will get to know only when we reach New Zealand' (young adult female).

Only one man had sophisticated ideas of what his family would need in a home, including 'furniture ... communication facility ... a library inside the house ... home tutoring [and] somewhere to play music' (adult male). However, this man was

an exception; by and large, study participants expected to manage with whatever they were given:

We are satisfied with whatever Government organisation gives us. It is very difficult for us to choose. (Adult male)

I do not know the system so whatever is provided I will be happy with. (Adult male)

What to say? Here we are in a hut which is made by ourselves so what to say? We would be happy with whatever you provide us with. (Adult female)

People who were responsible for maintaining a home in a refugee camp often specified basic criteria in a house to aid daily life: 'things which are needed to cook food. Kitchen, bathroom and toilet' (adult female), to achieve 'cleanliness and hygiene' (adult male) or 'a simple house, don't need a big house. House with kitchen and bathroom' (adult male). Some younger participants had visions of a Western lifestyle and, as one young woman declared, wanted 'facilities like telephone and TV and CDs I can listen to'. A young man wanted an 'internet connection and phone. Standard household facilities. TV'. However, most young people shared more traditional expectations.

For others, having the family together was the most important thing. As one man declared, he wanted 'my whole family members will live in same place'. 'I wish everyone will be together', said another man. Their sentiments were echoed by younger people. A young man wanted to be 'with my family members', and his sentiments were echoed by a young man who wanted a 'good house ... me and my family and grandparents should be together'.

For many, expectations of housing reflected a past dependence on subsistence provision, and the obsession with cleanliness might reflect an inability to control this within the camps.

## **Neighbours**

Almost all study participants projected a sense of connectedness to extended family and friends into expectations of connectedness with neighbours. Camp life in Nepal is communal, reflecting traditional cultural lifestyles as well as the realities of having to live close to each other with little privacy. The one exception was a man who declared, 'I can adjust with any community there, it is not necessary that the neighbours are from here'. Most expected friends and neighbours to be essential assets, 'for a few months at the beginning we will want all our friends who are living there ... if our friends are living near us we will be in peace' otherwise consequences would be dire, '[we] will become homeless', said one man.

Although not everyone specified having neighbours from their own Bhutanese community, several did so, and it may be that others expected it would be so. Individuals of all ages and backgrounds wanted neighbours who would be 'Nepali ... who understand our language (adult female), 'all Nepali' (middle-aged male) 'local people' (that is, Bhutanese) since native-born New Zealanders would be 'different than me' (middle-aged male).

Most study participants expected that neighbours would be at least as important in New Zealand as formerly since 'neighbours are important to us. We are in need of neighbours' (young adult male). A few were uneasy that they did not know enough about the society, including its people and social practices, that they were moving into to be confident of neighbours. As one young man said, 'what kind of neighbours will there be? Will they like us or not?' Study participants wanted people who would be welcoming and whose helpfulness could be practical and reciprocal:

Neighbours who are helpful and interesting. (Adult male)

Neighbours should be kind and helpful and help us in pain or sorrow. We get a chance to share with them and they can help us. (Adult female)

Helpful and hospitable [allowing] interacting with them. (Young adult female)

The Bhutanese hoped they would be treated in the way they had themselves treated newcomers in their own communities, 'expecting help from the neighbours. We will first be like a guest. We don't have anything' (adult male).

## **Religion and culture**

Many of the study participants conveyed the hope that they would have the opportunity to freely express their religious and cultural practices. This is understandable given the persecution and suppression that they had experienced before fleeing Bhutan. In the late 1980s, the Government of Bhutan began to suppress the culture, religion and language of the predominantly Hindu Lhotshampa, making it illegal for them to wear anything other than northern traditional dress and removing the Nepali language from the school curriculum.

Study participants wanted neighbours specifically and society generally to permit the practice of their culture and religion. Although for most participants religion meant the Hindu faith, some identified as Christian so for them the move to a Christian country was expected to be beneficial since 'being Christian we want to go to church regularly with whole family [there will be] more materials like Christianity we need, not available in Nepal' (adult male). Religion and culture were inseparable. Being Hindu meant faith and cultural practices such as 'festivals, ceremonies, marriages and deaths [for which] we are [in] need of neighbours [since] we usually celebrate together' (young adult female). Individuals typically explained the importance of 'Hindu festivals'. As one said, 'we don't want anyone to criticise our festivals or criticise our culture ... we would like to flourish our Hindu culture and tradition' (adult female). 'We want to keep existence of our religion ... not eliminate our religion and our culture' (young adult female). They wanted to be able to 'continuously' and openly be seen to worship:

We would like to see that whenever we celebrate our festivals we can get an opportunity to celebrate and hope that nobody interrupts our religion. We want the freedom to celebrate our religion. (Adult male)

I am in the Hindu society and there are some important rituals, births, deaths and marriages. I hope I can practice that along with other people of other religions living there. (Adult male)

Being Hindu meant not only maintaining public religious observances, but also personal practices, notably around alcohol, food and clothes. Study participants wanted to live among 'people who do not use drugs or alcohol, and are good mannered' (adult female). Others wanted traditions of dress to continue:

For the continuous religion ... married girl needs to wear bangles, tika and sari ... if we give continuity to those things we can continue our culture and religion. (Adult female)

Past repression may have made this a sensitive point. As one man said recalling the prejudice:

We would like to follow our culture and wear our traditional clothes [and] caps. In Bhutan we were forced to wear national dress. In New Zealand we hope we will not be forced to wear national dress. (Adult male)

Ideas about food preparation were similarly precise:

For us to maintain our culture we do not eat food made by others. We don't like to eat food made by other people. (Middle-aged male)

Memories of religious repression gave rise to anxiety. A man explained:

Will I be able to practice as I am practicing here? Can I keep a statue of God and worship? (Adult male)

An adult male pondered the issue, saying, 'we are Hindu [but] what do they practice in New Zealand? How are they practising there?' An older man echoed this:

What kind of religion [do] that country's people follow? Do we have to follow that religion ... have to [practice] according to their rules and regulations? [It would be better] if we can follow our own that's good for us. (Older male)

The Bhutanese community have known a considerable amount of religious persecution; and the sentiments of most conveyed a high level of religious tolerance. Even very religious people were willing to accept that the traditions might be modified for the generation who would grow up in New Zealand. As a woman who expressed an ardent hope to follow her religion in private faith and public dress, accepted that 'my children might grow up in that different environment [that is, New Zealand] that's okay they have a right to live their own way'.

It may be that younger people were less committed to their religion than their elders. An adult woman said, 'I think my parents will follow the same as what they are following now – Hindu', but his parents left the issue open for him personally. Similarly, a young adult male said it was 'quite important to be in our religion', but not for his own sake:

I don't bother about religion but it may be a severe matter for grandfather and grandmother. I believe that there is only one God. My grandparents [don't] view [it that way] so might be issue for them.  
(Young adult male)

## **Social networks and supports**

In the run-up to resettlement to New Zealand, study participants had come to recognise that their community was on the verge of being dispersed throughout the Western world, raising challenges for maintaining networks and linkages and preserving their distinct ethnic identity. As one young married woman said, '[I] can't say' how to stay in touch with friends, 'Maybe it will be hard'. Another woman declared, 'I don't think we will be able to meet'. A few people hoped that the Government in New Zealand would afford them the means of staying in contact, 'I expect [the] government will provide some facilities to keep in touch' (adult male).

Although not everyone answered the question about how they would stay in touch with friends, only one person said this was a matter of little importance; this appeared to be because he had many relatives, 'relatives. Have 30. Not important to keep in contact with [friends]'. Apart from one woman who hoped she could save money to meet up with camp friends face to face in the future, study participants expected to retain contact using the phone or internet:

Through phone and mobile phone it is not possible to meet them though. (Adult male)

I have some friends in Bhutan some are resettled. I hope we can keep connected by email to share experiences. (Young adult male)

Most friends have already gone. Keep in touch by phone, mostly friends are in [the United States]. (Young adult male)

Young and old, well-educated and uneducated people expected to rely on modern technologies of phone and internet. One man envisaged a systematic approach to communication:

Yes we have friends here in Bhutan we are out of communication some went [to] different countries, I hope we can develop a network system to keep in touch with them and find out everyday life and share things. It would be better if we could make a network system of information.  
(Adult male)

At the other extreme a woman knew of the technology but relied on her family to utilise it, 'my children are educated so I think they will call [friends]'

Participants had given little thought to making New Zealand friends after resettlement. 'I haven't thought about that', said one, and 'before going I can't say anything', said another. 'I cannot imagine how new friends might be made', 'I will know when I get there', declared others. Individuals were unsure whether

making friends would be easy or difficult,<sup>9</sup> but all acknowledged the importance of making friends even if they had not thought about how they would do so.

## **Safety and security**

To feel safe in the new communities of resettlement, participants expected they would have to have friends or at least be friendly with new people. As one person said it would be necessary 'not to fight with the people, we have to be friendly with the neighbours'. Another declared, 'to be safe we need security, like security in friends and neighbours'.

Although individuals hoped that the new society would be welcoming, issues of 'security', were envisaged as matters of the rule of law. At this level, individuals expected New Zealand to be a safe place compared with the refugee camps, 'it is a good country ... security will be there' (young adult male); people would feel safe 'under the care of government and organisations' (middle-aged male). As one man declared:

I will feel more secure than here because that country is educated country and rules and regulations are better than this country and things that happen here will not happen there. There will be peace and happiness and that does not happen here. (Middle-aged male)

## **Summary of needs for a safe home and family life**

For the people in this study, having basic facilities; the freedom to maintain domestic, social and religious habits; friends and neighbours; religious tolerance; and the rule of law made for optimism despite a fraught history of repression. It is likely that a sense of safety is also wrapped up in the ability to see a future for themselves. These people wanted to play an active role in supporting what they hoped to enjoy; 'we should not be bad for that country, we should follow their rules and regulations' (young adult female).

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<sup>9</sup> Of those who answered, 7 thought making new friends would be easy and 9 thought it would be difficult; some complicated their answers by saying initial difficulties could be overcome by familiarity, politeness and so on.

## **7 PERSPECTIVES ON EDUCATION AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE ACQUISITION**

Education's important, if education is there, everything is there. (Adult male)

### **Introduction**

Although the Bhutanese refugee camps in Nepal have been cited as models of their type in various ways, they have nevertheless provided highly constrained environments. Camps did not support a normal infrastructure for civil society: there was no unrestricted field for private enterprise in goods and services and limited local government or professional sectors in which refugees could gain employment or training. The major exception was education. In contrast to other areas of professional endeavour, education gave scope for the employment of refugees with appropriate training and offered an avenue of training and at least a potential route for career development for camp refugees.

The importance of education can be seen in participants' hopes and visions of a future life after resettlement.

### **Education within the camps**

Access to schooling is widely available within the camps in Nepal. The nine main schools have on average 4,000 pupils. It is estimated that over 40 percent of the refugee population attends education within the camps. Classes are conducted in Nepali and English and follow a modified version of the Bhutanese curriculum. Refugees staff and manage the schools, and schoolrooms are temporary structures made from bamboo and grass. The UNHCR funds primary education, which caters from pre-primary to grade 8, and CARITAS funds secondary education grades 9 and 10. Upper secondary education (grades 11 and 12) and university students must go outside camps to nearby government or private campuses to study. Limited resources are available to fund these students.

The younger members of the study participants displayed a commitment to high educational achievement, at least inasmuch as it was available through the camp education system. Of the 17 people aged 18 to 31 years in the sample, 7 defined themselves as students when they were interviewed. Education was highly regarded by study participants, young and old, the highly educated and illiterate. This may be a traditional view as one respondent said, 'education is part of culture' (adult female). Certainly, education had come to play an important role in camp culture and there was a broad consensus on the issue:

Education is very important for development. (Young adult female)

Education's important. If education is there, every thing is there. (Adult male)

Family members who had missed out on education regarded it as essential for their children's development:

My kids have education is important, if they are provided education I would be hopeful. (Middle-aged male)

My children are young, not educated. Education for my children and if possible my husband also to go to school. (Adult female)

The education system of these camps has been held up as exemplary and as having effective teacher training and support and an exam system that has produced high levels of participation, motivation, cooperation and orderliness among students (Brown, 2001). Study participants looked to their education as the key to a better life after resettlement.

## **Role of education after resettlement**

Camp residents appear to have understood at least some of the shortcomings of the education system operating in the refugee camps. Those who had had education, and those who had not, joined in consensus that they wanted better education after resettlement: 'we hope that it is different than this' said a young woman; 'here our teacher comes in a week and [teachers] change frequently'; 'I hope their education is better than here' (middle-aged male). New Zealand schooling was also expected to be better:

I think all schools are very good in New Zealand ... It is a highly developed country. (Adult male)

A few had concerns about securing an education in New Zealand. One parent feared the cost of education would be prohibitive, even if it were available:

I think a good school is an English-medium school, it may be expensive, [might need] temporary support. (Adult male)

However, most expressed no such fear.

Older study participants wanted education not for academic or career purposes but to equip them for daily life after resettlement, for practical day-to-day management of their own lives in a new society. An illiterate woman declared, 'I wish if possible that my husband goes to school. My husband would like to study English' so the family could get by in the new country. Another man declared that he and his wife wanted 'to get a chance to talk openly and to go to medical hospitals and the market ... For me and my wife we need education from the beginning for language' (middle-aged male).

Younger people tended to think of education and employment. There was a sense of frustration at the lack of opportunities for higher education or employment after study while restricted to camps in Nepal. Resettlement in New Zealand was seen as an opportunity to further education in order to secure employment: 'without education we will not get a job' (adult male) and 'after completing education we might get jobs' (young adult female).

Some participants had ambitious plans. A few wanted professional employment in occupations with which they could have had very little personal or practical experience in refugee camps. 'I would like to learn accounting' said a young woman, and others wanted advanced tertiary education:

To go ahead I may need vocational training ... to start with to get income but I also want academic. (Adult male)

## English language acquisition

The Lhotshampa speak Nepali. However, up to 35 percent of Bhutanese refugees have some functional knowledge of English (Cultural Orientation Resource Centre, 2007). Everyone recognised the importance of English; language acquisition would be a prerequisite to a bright future.

Not only was English seen as an essential asset in managing to take advantage of life in New Zealand, it was seen as promising access to the world:

English is worldwide. We will fit in if we know this. (Young adult female)

The sample population fell into four 'natural' groups in regard to English language acquisition.

First, there were the very young, preschool or school-aged children of participants who had had some access to English language tuition within the camps. These children are likely to learn well within a school system and are likely to require very little by way of additional English language support after an initial period in New Zealand. Certainly, participants in our sample took for granted the ability to learn English as a critical part of the education of their children. Parents in the sample who had had little education themselves tended to assume that camp teaching had already equipped their children with English:

My children understand English it is important for my children [to learn English]. (Middle-aged male)

Secondly, there were young adults who had had a camp education, but had acquired only limited English competence. For instance, one young man, who had been in camp since he was aged 7, said, 'if it's necessary to learn the language then I have to learn'. Most people of his age appeared to have been taught at least some English, although they might have had reservations about understanding English spoken with a New Zealand accent.

Thirdly, there were older parents and grandparents who did not speak English but who had younger family members who spoke English and were expected to support their elders. These older people expressed some willingness to learn English, although they might be over-optimistic about their ability. For instance, one older man explained that he wanted 'to speak the language. I want to know the language. Whatever help I need you should all help us with'. Some of the older generation had already applied themselves to the challenge. 'Language class in camp is being attended by my mother', one young woman explained. Generally, younger people tended to have had more understanding of the challenges their elders would face in learning a new language and they expressed concern for their parents and grandparents who would find English harder to learn than they expected:

Parents are illiterate so need education from the beginning. (Young adult female)

For older parents, better to teach little as they may be too old for classes. (Adult male)

For our parents we will also be there to teach. We will need to teach [our illiterate elders] with visual material. (Young adult male)

Fourthly, there were middle-aged adults who were not literate in English but who need to become economically self-sufficient in New Zealand to support their families in the longer term. This group is likely to have the biggest challenges in terms of needing to learn English rapidly to navigate in New Zealand society and, ultimately, to be able to be independent and support their families. Most recognised that they would need to acquire English. As one man declared:

We should learn the language ... to learn in official work ... If someone comes from an office we need to be able to give answers to them. (Middle-aged male)

This view was echoed by others:

To find a job English is important, to communicate with offices and to communicate with people. (Young adult male)

To learn language is important. I don't understand a lot today. Language classes and school are important to learn[ing]. (Middle-aged male)

The challenge of learning English might be greater for women than for men in this group, although this is not to discount the willingness of women to learn. For instance, one woman explained that she knew 'after arriving there we would have to learn English. I think I have to learn English'. But there were indications that women tended to be less literate than men in camp communities. As one man said, his main concern about resettlement was to 'give wife a chance to study to improve understanding'. Several children were concerned about the illiteracy of their mothers. 'My father can speak English but my mother cannot' said one young man. He went on, 'I hear the Government has a language class so that may help my mother learn'. He was echoed by others, 'To help my mother learn English we would have to teach her at home' (adult female).

## **Summary of perspectives of education and English language acquisition**

Continuing education and gaining English language competence were highly important to those interviewed and seen as critical for their future in New Zealand. The opportunity to have access to education and in turn to enter professional employment was highly valued and viewed as a way to give back to New Zealand society. The awareness and desire to learn or improve English literacy was apparent and the motivation and ambition to do so strong. This, particularly among the younger generation, will need to be carefully managed to avoid potential disappointment and frustration during the initial resettlement period.

## **8 EMPLOYMENT AND THE FUTURE**

Work as per my capacity. (Adult male)

### **Introduction**

As a group, study participants had had very few outlets for securing paid work. This was because refugee camps offered limited economic, service and bureaucratic sectors for the employment of its refugee communities. As one young adult male declared, 'here in camp there are no opportunities'. This was despite an admirable level of self-government and the continuation of traditional crafts. Nevertheless, securing a job was a central expectation of life after resettlement.

### **Employment before and since becoming a refugee**

Most of the sample was too young to have had a work history before they were made refugees, and of those who had worked, the biggest group had been farmers. Of the 10 people who had worked in Bhutan before they were forced in to the camps, 6 said they had been farmers.

Nearly half the sample (15 out of 33) said they had not had paid work since entering the camps, but the same number said they had worked, including at least some instances of unpaid tasks such as housework. Three further individuals reported doing voluntary work in camp. However, overall, of the 33 study participants, 17 were officially recorded as having no occupation or not identified as having an occupation.

### **Future employment after resettlement**

It is evident that study participants generally did not comprise a skilled workforce, but this was more a reflection of the limited possibilities for paid work in camps rather than any lack of interest in skilled work and acquiring skills. Indeed, employment loomed large in study participants' expectations of life in New Zealand. In the study cohort, 26 of the 33 participants saw themselves as having a job in New Zealand in the future, 2 further people said they wanted work but that language difficulties might preclude employment, and others did not provide an answer.

This emphasis on employment was really more of an aspiration than a well-developed plan. Everyone who spoke to us knew they had insufficient information to have a well-developed or well-grounded idea of the kind of work they could do in New Zealand and how they would set about securing it. As one middle-aged man declared, 'I can't say, know when I get there'. Others echoed this view.

Given the recent history of the community as dependent on international agencies, individuals had had to accept that others determined their employment opportunities – or lack of them.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, several study participants thought they would be in the hands of the New Zealand Government, which would secure future employment for them in New Zealand. This was not an unreasonable conclusion. Not only had

this community been obliged for almost two decades to live at the behest of the UNHCR and international agencies, but it also knew that relocation was due to the good offices of a state government. Therefore, the community expected the Government to have policies and plans for the placement and activity of refugee communities after resettlement. The Bhutanese also knew that, at least at the time of their resettlement interview, they were ignorant of what those plans might be. Such people declared they would 'accept what is given' or simply stated they wanted work 'as per my capacity', and even expected, as one adult female said explicitly 'you decide what is fit for us to do'.

Of those who did articulate some personal criteria for future work, most had relatively realistic expectations. Several people said they expected to get just a 'simple kind of job', 'simple job ... in hotel', 'job related to science even a simple job'. One man emphasised he did not want a physical labouring job and hoped for office work of some kind. Another man with a good education was happy to expect 'something technical in the beginning' and to build up from this. A student studying at university-level knew he would have to do further study before being able to work. And another student knew he could not expect to work on the basis of the education he had received in camps; he expected to study further before getting work.

Women hoped for work in the service sector in some way. One woman wanted to train after her children left school. Another woman hoped to do 'social work', although this was not further defined, and another woman hoped for 'household work'.

When study participants were asked specifically what kind of job they would *most* like to have in New Zealand, a large number were unable to say. As one responded, his community did not know what kind of work would be available in such a different country. However, of those who gave some sort of answer, albeit with the proviso that they were speaking from a position of comparative ignorance, the most common aspirations were office work (1 woman and 2 men), teaching (2 men), non-manual work (2 women and 1 man) or the work they had done in the past (2 women and 3 men). It is evident that both men and women expected to work. Very few had any idea of what *specific* supports they might need to work once in New Zealand. One man suggested 'friendly flexible open-minded friends' and another wanted to be given 'orientation ... help to do the work properly because it may be technically very advanced' (Adult male).

Women and men both looked forward to work after resettlement. As one man declared, to have a job 'it is a dream for me'. Women may have found it difficult to imagine the specific kind of paid work that would be viable after resettlement. In camps, and perhaps before, women had been able to work in traditional crafts (for example, tailoring and weaving) as a form of cottage industry – although it is not clear whether such work had brought them much remuneration in camps, it seems these women may have expected a country with such cottage industries. As one woman explained:

When my children go to school I would like to take some kind of training after training I would like to work. Tailoring. Painting on handkerchiefs. Designing. Weaving handkerchiefs. (Adult female)

In practice, there may be little demand for these skills of cottage industry crafts. Nevertheless, as a community these people evidently had a strong work ethic. One man declared, 'I like to be very busy doing 2 or 3 jobs to keep engaged'. 'I will have a job in the future', said one, and 'I don't like to sit there idly', said another.

Most respondents felt they would be fit for work within a relatively short time, ranging from 2 to 3 months to 3 to 4 months to 2 years. Men were more likely than women to give a time-frame for finding a job: of the 19 who gave a timeframe, 14 were men. Overwhelmingly, the individuals we spoke to, both men and women, wanted a job to be brokered for them: 15 of the 24 who answered this question said they needed government or agency help 'to select a job for me'. 'I hope they will guide us. We will ask them about application submission' (young adult female). It would be, explained one individual, 'totally new for us. Our new birth. To find a job impossible. If you find for us it is good for us' (adult female). The others did not know what help they might need other than a 'helpful person' or being 'told about vacancies'.

### **Summary of employment and the future**

It is clear that employment was a central element in the life participants envisioned after resettlement. There was a strong expectation of being able to work and become self-sufficient after varying degrees of time. Some had a general expectation that suitable employment would be found for them; others thought skills obtained in Bhutan and Nepal camps would be readily transferable to New Zealand. Such an ambitious and motivated group are at risk of disillusionment, if their ambitions are not realised, and frustration, if difficulties are encountered that delay employment. Regardless, this is a group that is highly motivated and ready to take control of its future and achieve independence.

## 9 CONCLUSION

My life, and my children's life will be better ... No more life as a refugee.  
(Middle-aged male)

Many aspects of the resettlement of this Bhutanese population make this a unique study into the resettlement journey. This study captures what is in effect the third substantial diaspora of this population. The third-country resettlement programme of the Bhutanese from camps in Nepal sees this population being dispersed by resettlement around many Western countries.

This presents challenges for New Zealand and the refugees being resettled here. New Zealand and host communities must quickly learn about this culture and their resettlement needs, and the Bhutanese refugees face the challenge of having little Nepali community to support and aid resettlement. This makes this study all the more important. This study will contribute to our ability to document the settlement journey and learn about the challenges facing refugee communities being resettled in New Zealand who have no 'like' others in their resettlement community.

The information received from this group has provided a valuable insight into the journey of third-country resettlement. It is clear, at least at the time of the interviews, that knowledge of New Zealand and an understanding of resettlement were lacking, and that what is of most concern is confirmation of resettlement. It was difficult for participants to understand a country and culture so different from their own, and information given at the point of UNHCR interviews appears to have been minimally digested. These interviews give a clear indication that modifying the timing of information and increasing the level of detail particularly around areas of concern such as education, health and housing would be beneficial.

In addition, as more Bhutanese are resettled in New Zealand, utilising networks of friends and family already in New Zealand to relay factual and practical information from their perspective to those still in camps in Nepal would be invaluable.

Despite participants' lack of knowledge of the resettlement process and New Zealand, they were generally positive towards New Zealand and enthusiastic about the potential that resettlement might bring. This enthusiasm, in part, is due to the hope of finally being able to move ahead with their lives and leave behind the restrictive and prolonged life of camps in Nepal. There was optimism about being resettled in a modern Western society, and the opportunities this presents to substantively progress their lives, living conditions and possibilities.

Access to education in New Zealand was seen as a valuable and important step in the resettlement process. The limited potential for post-education opportunities in camps in Nepal meant many identified education as a primary route to betterment. Almost all of those interviewed had a strong will for themselves or their children to further or succeed in education and to take advantage of the opportunities that were not available to those living in camps in Nepal.

The importance of education for this group cannot be underestimated. It can be assumed the children of those interviewed will get access to education in New Zealand and the potential benefits this entails. However, the challenge for settlement will be for the young and middle-aged adults who have a strong desire and expectation to further their education. It will be important for this group to have the opportunity to access such education and subsequent employment to ensure they feel they have maximised their opportunities and are contributing positively to New Zealand society. Ultimately, the success of this will determine how well this group can settle and feel a sense of belonging in New Zealand.

Alongside employment and educational advancement, competence in the English language was seen as vital. The importance of being able to understand and speak the native language was understood, and almost all of those interviewed identified English language as an initial barrier to be overcome. Learning English was the first port of call, after this, education and employment would be possible.

Given the level of English language proficiency already evident in this population, English is less likely to be a barrier to integration and settlement than for other refugee groups. Further, the English literacy amongst the young adults and children within this population will also mean that in addition to formal English language tuition, informal family and community-based learning has the potential to be a further avenue for language development. However, there are challenges particularly for older people and mothers who are more likely to be at home and are at risk of isolation if their English language literacy needs cannot be catered for or met.

The lack of community support for this unique group is of concern. Throughout the interviews, participants expressed the desire to be resettled near Nepali-speaking and culturally similar neighbours. Given the small numbers of former Bhutanese refugees and Nepali speakers in New Zealand, this group may feel isolated and alone. In addition, the wide dispersal of this ethnic community throughout the world raises challenges for this community to maintain contact with family and friends being resettled in other countries or remaining in camps in Nepal. Innovative ways are needed to keep community members in contact with one another and to ensure this highly dispersed group does not lose its culture and identity. International organisations and countries of resettlement may need to play an active role in aiding communication and the cultural maintenance of the Lhotshampa.

However, it is important to note the resilience of the Lhotshampa. Despite living in refugee camps in Nepal for 18 years and being scattered across the Western world, this group has a strong cultural identity. It has preserved and maintained its culture in extremely adverse circumstances, passing on traditions and a love of Bhutan to children born and raised in the camps in Nepal. This group will bring its culture to New Zealand and other resettlement countries and will endeavour to continue its traditions and cultural practices despite the challenges associated with doing so in a Western country.

After 18 years spent in limbo, the Nepali Bhutanese are a community that is ready to make its own way in New Zealand. Those interviewed did not have a

sense of entitlement; they were grateful to New Zealand for offering them an opportunity to resettle and better their lives, but they wanted to make their own way and become fully functioning and contributing members of New Zealand society. This group has faced nearly two decades of adversity and oppression, but has remained resilient, strong-willed and determined. While many still have hopes of some day returning to Bhutan, they are ready to be resettled in New Zealand and to make a new start in a new culture and new country.

## APPENDIX A: MAPS

**Map A1:** Location of Bhutan and Nepal



Source: UNHCR

**Map A2:** Location of refugee camps in Nepal



Source: UNHCR

## APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

**Interview:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Case No:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Age:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Gender:** \_\_\_\_\_ **PA or SA:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Education:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Occupation:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Time in Camp:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Single/Family:** \_\_\_\_\_

- Q1 What did you know about New Zealand before you came here today?
- Q2 Can you tell me where you obtained this information about NZ?
- Q3 Were there any new things you found out about New Zealand today?
- Q4 What information do you think would be the most useful for you (and your family) to know before moving to New Zealand?
- Q5 What do you think life will be like for you (and your family) in your first year in NZ?
- Q6 What do you think life would be like for you (and your family) after living in NZ for a few years?
- Q7 What hopes do you have for life in NZ for you and your family?
- Q8 What kind of challenges or difficulties do you think you and your family might face?
- Q9 Do you know anybody in NZ?

Yes / No

If Yes:

- Q9a Can you tell me a bit about the people you know in NZ and what sort of contact you have with them?
- Q10 Now I want to talk to you about what you or your family might need when you come to NZ

Q10a Housing

I want to begin discussing housing needs. If you are resettled in NZ, you (and your family) will be given help to find somewhere to live. What would be the most important things about where you live?

Q10b Localities and Neighbourhoods

What would be important for you (and your family) about where you live and the neighbours you have?

Q10c Education

What do you think would be the most important things for you (and your family) in terms of schooling and education?

Q10d English Language Tuition

What are the most important things for you and your family in terms of learning English?

Q10e Health and medical needs

What would be your (and your family's) most important health and medical needs in New Zealand?

Q10f Religion

In terms of religion, what would be most important for you (and your family) to meet your religious needs in NZ?

Q10g Culture

What will you and your family need in order to maintain your cultural practices in NZ?

Q10h Friends

Thinking about your social networks and supports, what would you need to keep in contact with the people you already know?

Q10i What about making new friends?

Q10j Safeness

Thinking about living in NZ, what would be important for you and your family to feel safe in your daily life and in your home?

Q11 Work prior to NZ

Q11a I see in your notes that you were working as ..... in Bhutan, is that right?

Yes / No

If No:

Q11b Can you tell me about what work you did in Bhutan?

Q11c Since you arrived in the camp have you been doing any work to support yourself (and your family)?

Yes / No

If Yes:

Q11d Can you tell me a little bit about the work you have been doing?

Q11e Have you been doing any voluntary/unpaid work since you have been in the camp?

Yes / No

If Yes:

Q11f Can you tell me a bit about the voluntary/unpaid work you have done?

Q12 Working in NZ

Q12a First of all, do you see yourself having a job in New Zealand in the future?

Yes / No

If Yes:

Q12b What kind of job do you think you would be able to get in NZ?

Q12c How soon do you think you would be able to work after you arrive in NZ?

Q12d What help do you think you would need to find a job?

Q12e What kind of job would you most like to have in NZ?

Q12f What kind of support do you think you will need to do this kind of job?

Q12g What do you think you will be doing if you are resettled in NZ?

Q13 Do you have any concerns or worries about moving to New Zealand?

Yes / No

If Yes:

Q13a What are your three main concerns about moving to NZ?

Q14 What would be the three best things about moving to NZ?

Q15 Are there other things about New Zealand that you don't already know that you would like to know about?

Yes / No

If Yes:

Q15a What kinds of things would you like to know about?

Q16 Prior to arriving at the camp, were you a victim of torture?

Yes / No

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