

Labour & Immigration
Research Centre

Te Pokapū a Mahi me Te Manene Rangahau

A SERVICE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOUR

The Bhutanese Refugee Resettlement Journey

PART 3: SETTLEMENT

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



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of Labour
TE TARI MAHI



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The Bhutanese Refugee Resettlement Research follows 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 Mangere orientation programme, 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 up to 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-resettlement needs, expectations and experiences. The findings from these interviews can be found in *The Bhutanese Refugee Resettlement Journey – Part 1: Pre-departure* (Department of Labour, 2011a).

The second phase of the research is reported in *The Bhutanese Refugee Resettlement Journey – Part 2: On-arrival* (Department of Labour, 2011b). 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, and focus of this report, explores the post-settlement experiences of 20 former refugees and examines specific elements of settlement into New Zealand society.

Findings

The settlement experiences of the former Bhutanese refugees interviewed were explored and specifically focused on a range of key themes to emerge from interviews.

First impressions and settling in

First impressions of New Zealand were predominantly positive, but there was an inevitable period of adjustment to a new culture and country. The main challenges faced in the initial resettlement period were; communication difficulties, using money and modern technologies, lack of transportation, and feelings of loneliness and isolation. Of most help to overcome these challenges

were volunteers assigned to each family. Volunteers were found to be invaluable and were a source of practical support as well as a key social contact.

The Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre and the orientation programme

On arrival to the community the skills and knowledge gained during the orientation programme was found to be of great value. Of most use was; the familiarisation with electrical appliances, English language classes, information on how to form relationships with New Zealanders, the schooling received, and the availability of learner licensing. However, despite the overall satisfaction with the orientation programme, there were some areas that were identified for improvement. These were:

- The need for more appropriate cross-cultural workers at the Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre
- The format of the learner licensing test
- More information about identity cards and visas
- Practice with banking and shopping.

The acquisition of English language and the uptake of educational opportunities

Most of the interviewees had had access to English language tuition and educational opportunities. However, the format of these differed greatly depending on the interviewee's characteristics. The young adults interviewed had a greater level of English language proficiency on arrival than the older generation, and had generally engaged in full-time English language classes during their first year in New Zealand before enrolling in mainstream courses. The men interviewed were predominantly still enrolled in fulltime English language classes and/or attending some form of vocational training. The women interviewed had fewer opportunities to improve their English and enrol in courses predominantly due to issues with childcare, limited transportation and limited availability of Home Tutors.

Experiences of finding employment

As English language levels improved gaining employment was increasingly a high priority. Two interviewees had found part-time employment. For those who had not gained employment the type of help they thought they needed to find a job was: better information sharing across the Bhutanese community, for jobs to be brokered for them, up-skilling and vocational training and community support. Due to the lack of employment all were receiving financial assistance from the government in the form of a benefit or allowance. However interviewees were reluctant to remain on a benefit and desired to be independent and contribute to New Zealand society.

Needs for a safe home and family life

Most of those interviewed were happy with their current housing and their location. There were some problems experienced in terms of living in cold and damp conditions, particularly for those resettled in Christchurch, and with the size and cost of housing. All but one person reported feeling safe in New Zealand, and

all were enjoying a more 'peaceful' environment than Nepal. In general interviewees were in good health, and were able to access doctors and the medications needed. However, the cost of healthcare was an issue for some.

Social interactions and cultural maintenance

The Bhutanese communities within New Zealand have maintained a high degree of contact with one another and get together frequently to socialise and worship. They have also maintained links with those resettled around the world and those still in the camps in Nepal. Most had been able to freely practice their Hindu or Christian religion and celebrate their ethnic festivals, albeit in a modified way. There were concerns raised by those in Palmerston North who did not have a priest, which was impeding their ability to feel settled in New Zealand. Overall, maintaining the Nepali Bhutanese culture and identity in New Zealand is of high importance to interviewees and whilst it is inevitable that this will become harder with time, efforts have been made to educate children and continue traditions within New Zealand.

Resettlement experiences, aspirations and plans for the future

The experience of resettling in New Zealand had been positive overall, and all were grateful to the New Zealand Government for the opportunity to resettle and for what had been provided to them since arriving. Suggestions for ways in which New Zealand could improve the resettlement process were most commonly to increase the amount of resettlement grants and to make up-skilling and vocational training more of a priority. The lack of employment opportunities and progress was viewed as the major disadvantage to resettling in New Zealand especially when compared to those resettled in the United States. There was a positive outlook for the future of their children and it was hoped that they would be able to take full advantage of the opportunities available to them. For most interviewees the focus for the next few years was to find a job, continue to improve their English and ultimately make their own living and contribute to a country they see as giving them so much.

Conclusion

As a whole the Bhutanese interviewed had maintained the positive and optimistic outlook they held during the first two phases of the research. They had experienced several hurdles during their first two years in New Zealand, but had also taken up many opportunities and worked hard to improve their English. The group will continue to require support in the coming years, but given the motivation and determination of this group they will hope to be employed and independent as soon as they are able.

1 BACKGROUND TO THE BHUTANESE REFUGEE CRISIS

Introduction

The predicament of the Lhotshampa (southern Bhutanese of Nepali origin) refugees in camps in Nepal arose from internal conflict in Bhutan. 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. In 2008, 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.

Events leading to the Bhutanese refugee crisis

Bhutan is a small landlocked Buddhist country situated in the Himalayas between India and China/Tibet (see Map A1 in Appendix A). Bhutan can be divided into three main ethno-linguistic groups; the western Ngalongs¹, Sharchhops from the east, and the Lhotshampas (or Nepali Bhutanese) of the South. The Ngalongs who are descendents from Tibetan immigrants are the prominent ethnic group and dominate Bhutan's political landscape. The official national language of Bhutan is the Ngalong derived Dzongkha (Hutt, 1996).

In the early 19th century, the Government of Bhutan recruited the Lhotshampa 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, the growing population, and success of Lhotshampa began to be viewed 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 moves 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 (UNHCR, 2006).

¹ Also know as Ngalops or Bhutia

Conditions and opportunities in camps in Nepal

Since the mid 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 (CDA) was taken in running the Bhutanese camps. The CDA is a set of guidelines developed to strengthen the self-reliance of refugees during protracted refugee situations. The CDA takes the viewpoint that refugees should have ownership of their situation and the opportunity to enhance their skills and capacities in order to build self-reliance and reduce dependency. The day-to-day management of the Bhutanese refugee camps in Nepal are coordinated by democratically elected camp management committees made up of volunteer refugees. Committees are responsible for social services, project services, health services, counselling and administration. The distribution of international aid, including food rations are administered through sector and sub-sector heads of each camp. The CDA 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. Whilst giving the refugees an active voice in their day-to-day activities has empowered refugees it also led to heightened political activism, escalation of demands for improved services and wide spread disillusionment amongst the Bhutanese refugees (Muggah, 2005).

Within the refugee camps of Nepal 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 Nepali population (Muggah, 2005, p 152). The camps themselves whilst overseen by the UNHCR are 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' (Muggah, 2005, 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).² 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). 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, 2008a). 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, 2008b).

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 Nepali 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

² 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.

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, 2008a). 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).

Resettlement of Bhutanese refugees 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.

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.

2 REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT AND THE NEW ZEALAND CONTEXT

Introduction

New Zealand's refugee policy has evolved in response to changing global circumstances and needs. The history of refugee resettlement in New Zealand formally began with the intake of 800 Polish people, predominantly orphaned children, during the Second World War in 1944. Since this time New Zealand has continued to receive a range of people from diverse cultures including; Eastern Europe, South East Asia, Africa and the Middle East all of whom have added to the richness of New Zealand society (Beaglehole, 2009).

Background to refugee resettlement

Third-country resettlement has been in existence in one form or another since between the two World Wars. Millions of people over the past 50 years have had the opportunity to rebuild their lives through the resettlement process (UNHCR, 2004). According to the UNHCR resettlement involves 'the selection and transfer of refugees from a State in which they have sought protection to a third State which has agreed to admit them – as refugees - with permanent residence status. The status provided should ensure protection against *refoulement*³ and provide a resettled refugee and his/her family or dependants with access to civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights similar to those enjoyed by nationals. It should also carry with it the opportunity to eventually become a naturalized citizen of the resettlement country.' (UNHCR, 2004. p 1/2).

The UNHCR (2002. p 32) sets out nine goals of resettlement and integration for refugees. They are as follows:

- to restore security, control and social and economic independence by meeting basic needs, facilitating communication and fostering the understanding of the receiving society
- to promote the capacity to rebuild a positive future in the receiving society
- to promote family reunification and restore supportive relationships within families
- to promote connections with volunteers and professionals able to provide support
- to restore confidence in political systems and institutions and to reinforce the concept of human rights and the rule of law
- to promote cultural and religious integrity and to restore attachments to, and promote participation in; community, social, cultural and economic systems by valuing diversity

³ Refoulement is to expel or return a refugee to the frontiers of territories where his life or freedom would be threatened on account of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion (Gray, 2008).

- to counter racism, discrimination and xenophobia and build welcoming and hospitable communities
- to support the development of strong, cohesive refugee communities and credible refugee leadership
- to foster conditions that support the integration potential of all resettled refugees.

New Zealand's Refugee Policy and Refugee Quota Programme⁴

In 1987, the New Zealand Government established a formal annual quota for the resettlement of refugees.⁵ 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 places⁶. These places are made up of:

- a minimum of 75 places under the Women-at-Risk Subcategory⁷
- 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.

⁴ Most of the information in this section comes from UNHCR (2007).

⁵ New Zealand also assesses claims for asylum under the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees.

⁶ The total annual quota may vary by plus or minus 10 percent.

⁷ 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)

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.

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.

Orientation Programme and the Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre⁸

New Zealand is one of only three countries that does not provide pre-departure cultural orientation⁹. Instead, on arrival all refugees granted residence in New Zealand under the Refugee Quota Programme spend their first 6 weeks at the Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre in Auckland. Immigration New Zealand, from the Department of Labour, manages the centre.

The centre can accommodate approximately 125 refugees from multiple ethnic groups at any one time. Facilities include accommodation blocks, an early

⁸ The information in this section comes from UNHCR (2007).

⁹ Ireland and the Netherlands also do not provide pre-departure cultural orientation.

childhood learning centre, classrooms, medical and dental clinics, a mental health clinic, and general living and recreation areas.

Orientation programmes are conducted in the refugees' language and provide general information about life in New Zealand, including an English language component and adult education, early childhood learning and care, special education, and primary and secondary classes. The orientation programme also aims to build the basic social and coping skills required for refugees' new life in New Zealand. The Auckland University of Technology coordinates the English language and education components of the programme.

During the 6 weeks at Mangere, refugees also undergo comprehensive medical and dental check-ups and, when needed, trauma counselling. Therapeutic activities are also provided for adults and children.

All refugees are given needs assessments in terms of education, employment experience, housing and social needs. All adult refugees are set up with a bank account and an Inland Revenue number and are enrolled with Work and Income, which provides each family with a resettlement grant of up to \$1,200 and income support in the form of a benefit paid directly in to their bank account.

Support on arrival to the community¹⁰

After the 6 week orientation programme, newly arrived refugees are resettled across New Zealand in Auckland, Hamilton, Palmerston North, Wellington, Nelson and Christchurch. Refugee Services is one of the key non-government organisations supporting refugee resettlement on arrival to the community and helps to link refugees to government and non-government organisations who provide support to refugees. Refugees are supported for up to 12 months after resettlement in local communities.

On arrival to the community refugees are linked with specially trained volunteers who provide in home support to help them settle into their new home. In addition, refugees are supported with social workers and bicultural workers who monitor progress and help assess individual needs.

Housing New Zealand and Refugee Services Aotearoa work together to locate appropriate housing for refugees in the community either through Housing New Zealand stock or the private rental market¹¹. In most cases refugees have accommodation to move into on arrival to the community. Refugee Services provides furniture and other essentials.

Child, Youth and Family funds services who specifically support refugees through social support, counselling, interpreting services and activity programmes for refugee children and youth.

¹⁰ This section comes from Department of Labour (2009).

¹¹ The housing need of refugees at the Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre is assessed using Housing New Zealand Corporation's Social Allocation System. Those refugees who qualify for state housing are placed on the waiting list for appropriate housing in the area specified by Refugee Services Aotearoa.

On arrival to New Zealand, refugees are also entitled to social welfare, as well as additional allowances and grants in some cases.

Developments in the New Zealand refugee sector

Comprehensive Resettlement Plans

In order to better capture the support refugees require to resettle and the activities that will support each refugee and their family in this process, a new Comprehensive Resettlement Plan known as 'Pathways' is currently being trialled by Refugee Services Aotearoa over the 2011/12 year.

Refugee Services Aotearoa is a non-government organisation that operates throughout New Zealand and is contracted by the Department of Labour to link all refugees who arrive in New Zealand as part of the annual quota to essential services and facilities. Pathways planning comprises two key components; a family settlement plan and an individual pathway to employment plan (for those aged over 18 years). Pathways is designed to provide individuals and families with a framework through which they can achieve their goals for building a new life in New Zealand.

Pathways involves a multiple agency approach that currently begins at the Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre with initial assessments of refugee capabilities and service needs which are developed into a plan. Once resettled in local communities Refugee Services Aotearoa staff monitor and facilitate access to services required for achieving the plan.

This new approach is designed to establish a clear direction for the resettlement of individuals and families and enable comprehensive oversight of the achievement of milestones and goals. With a stronger focus on self-sufficiency as an outcome the Pathways approach will provide former refugees with a greater sense of direction and control over building their future in New Zealand (Refugee Services, 2010).

Refugee Resettlement Strategy

Refugee resettlement reflects New Zealand's international commitment to refugee protection. New Zealand's resettlement programme is well regarded internationally in terms of providing vulnerable refugees with protection, safety and the chance of a new life. In spite of this, refugee outcomes have been poor – employment rates are low and benefit take-up rates and state housing tenancies are high. Problems with New Zealand's current approach include; the lack of agreement on desired outcomes, service gaps and overlaps, and poor coordination across provider agencies. There are also issues around the future use of the Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre which has passed its useful life.

The New Zealand Refugee Resettlement Strategy responds to these issues. Its development through a cross-sectoral process has been led by Department of Labour. The Strategy provides an outcomes-based coordinated response to the needs of refugees who settle in New Zealand so they are self sufficient at the earliest opportunity and living independently of state support. Its framework of integration outcomes and goals focuses on the key areas of resettlement and what should be achieved at each stage. Self-sufficiency through employment and

active participation in New Zealand life are the principal outcomes sought. They will be underpinned by improved outcomes in health and wellbeing, education (including English language) and housing. Success indicators and proposed performance targets will measure progress towards integration and inform decisions on service delivery and resource allocation.

It is proposed that that the Strategy applies to Refugee Quota intakes from 1 July 2012. More detailed work is currently being undertaken on how the Strategy might be implemented.

3 THE BHUTANESE REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT RESEARCH PROJECT

Purpose

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 Project 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.

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 provide valuable information on the 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.

Previous research

There has been relatively little research on refugee resettlement in New Zealand. The notable exception is *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.¹² However, this study of Bhutanese refugees before and after resettlement is unique both nationally and internationally. No other studies that systematically examined the expectations of refugees before resettlement and their short-term reactions after resettlement could be 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

¹²The *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.

(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 (2007) 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. 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.

Research structure and phases

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 (see Department of Labour, 2011a). 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. These interviews were designed to provide immediate feedback and information to the Department of Labour. 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 (see Department of Labour, 2011b).

The third and final phase of research, and focus of this report, 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.

Participants

Sample

The original sample for the Bhutanese refugee resettlement research project consisted of 33 people, who were interviewed in Nepal during the first phase of this research. As part of the informed consent process in Nepal, interviewees were asked if they would agree to being contacted for further interviews. At this time, 21 people agreed to be contacted once in New Zealand.

At the time of the Mangere interviews, 18 of these people had arrived in New Zealand and all consented to being interviewed for the second phase of the research.

For the community interviews, and final phase of the research, all 21 people who were originally interviewed in Nepal, and who had agreed to be contacted again, had arrived in New Zealand and were therefore eligible to participate in the third phase of the research.

Community Interview Participants

A total of 20 former Bhutanese refugees participated in the community interviews. The sample consisted of 11 females and 9 males who ranged in age from 20 to 78 years, with a median age of 34 years. All participants came to New Zealand as part of a family group.

The length of time spent in the refugee camps in Nepal ranged from 15 years to 18 years with most having spent 17 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 16.5 years.

Participants had a range of education; four had had no formal education, four were educated to between Grades 6 and 8 (New Zealand Years 7 to 9), seven were educated to between Grades 9 and 12 (New Zealand Years 10 to 13) and five had studied at University level. There was also a range in skills and employment histories from no previous employment to highly skilled work.

Unless otherwise specified, quotes throughout this report have been broken into the two age classifications of 'Adult' male and female, which relates to ages 20 to 35 and 'Middle-aged' male and female which relates to those aged over 35 years. Broad age classifications have been used to protect the identity of interviewees.

Interview Procedures

Interviews were conducted 18 to 20 months post-resettlement, in Christchurch, Palmerston North and Nelson. Thirteen interviews took place in Christchurch across three days in July/August 2010. Six participants were interviewed in Palmerston North in October 2010, and one participant was interviewed in Nelson in December 2010.

Pre-Interview

Participants were firstly sent a letter to their last known address; this letter was in Nepali and re-introduced the study, its purpose, and what would be involved in the follow-up community interview if they agreed to participate. Approximately a week after letters were sent, all participants received a phone call by a native Nepali speaker, and were asked if they were willing to participate in a community interview, and if so, an interview time and date was set-up. All of those contacted were willing to participate in interviews; however, one person was out of town when interviews were to be conducted and therefore was unable to be interviewed.

Interviews

All interviews took place at participants' homes. Two researchers from IMSSED Research were present at all interviews (one interviewer, one note-taker) along with a Nepali-speaking interpreter. Interview questions were asked in English,

and where needed questions and answers were interpreted and translated into Nepali/English. Interviewees were not comfortable to have their interviews recorded, and therefore field notes were instead taken¹³.

At the beginning of interviews, all participants were given an information sheet outlining the research, its purpose and what was involved in Nepali. Participants were informed that participation in the community interviews was voluntary, and that any information they provided would be kept confidential. Participants were then asked to give their informed consent, and were given a \$25 supermarket voucher as a token of appreciation for their time.

Interviews were approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour long, and followed a semi-structured questionnaire format. Interviews focussed on settlement experiences, and what life has been like since arriving in New Zealand. Topics covered were English language, education, employment, health, safety, cultural and religious maintenance and hopes for the future. A full set of interview questions are provided in Appendix B.

At the completion of interviews participants were given the opportunity to ask any questions or raise any concerns they had. Researchers answered questions as they were able, and referred any other questions to relevant people.

Ethical considerations

The process undertaken throughout this research complies with the International Migration, Settlement and Employment Dynamics (IMSED) Research strategy, which outlines ethical considerations for all research and evaluation. 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.

¹³ Therefore quotes throughout the report are not verbatim

In addition, due to the nature of interviews, up to three counselling sessions were made available to participants for them to access independently in case interviews brought up anything that they wanted some support with.

Data Analysis

Field notes from interviews were transferred into the qualitative software package NVivo 8 and an iterative process of thematic analysis was undertaken.

4 FIRST IMPRESSIONS AND SETTLING IN

'All in all is ok ... [a] better place than Nepal, everything seems fine.'
(Adult female)

Introduction

The arrival to a new community in a new country and culture is a daunting task for most migrants. For refugees, this can be even more so and because of the circumstances that bring them to a new country and their past experiences it may take them longer than migrants generally to resettle (Gray, 2008). This section explores the first impressions and the initial settling in period for this group of Nepali Bhutanese refugees.

Pre-departure knowledge of New Zealand

At the time of interviews conducted in Nepal, interviewees had very limited knowledge of New Zealand. What little information interviewees did have tended to be basic and general such as that New Zealand is a 'peaceful country' or 'an island near Australia'. Compared to other resettlement countries such as the United States, New Zealand was a comparative unknown. At the end of the Mangere orientation programme whilst a little more familiar with New Zealand, interviewees still knew very little about the cities they were about to be resettled in or what to expect on arrival to the community.

Initial thoughts, feelings and impressions

The arrival to Christchurch, Palmerston North and Nelson was filled with anticipation and apprehension as everything was new. In the first few days many expressed feeling overwhelmed and 'lost'. As one mother explained of her son 'when we first came, he stood outside the house and cried, because everything is new and he didn't like it'.

The comparatively cold autumn weather on arrival also made adjusting difficult, particularly for those who arrived into Christchurch. Many of these interviewees when asked what their first impressions were stated that 'it was nice, but cold'. Some were able to see the humorous side of New Zealand's changeable conditions, calling it 'silly weather'.

For others first impressions were also one of familiarity with the hills and plains reminding them of home; 'when we saw the mountains surrounding it, it felt familiar'. Others also expressed happiness and relief at the sight of their new surroundings and their home:

never imagined we would find this sort of house. (Middle-aged female)

when we first saw the house we were going to live in we felt happy and excited. (Adult female)

we were expecting something worse, so when we found it we were happy. (Middle-aged female)

Most help on arrival

Following the 6 week orientation programme, refugees are resettled in the community with access to an income via various benefits, and the support of Refugee Services including the assignment of specially trained volunteers.

When asked what was the most help on arrival to the community interviewees overwhelmingly (18 out of 20 interviewees) stated that their volunteers were the single greatest source of help and support when they first arrived into the community. Volunteers were important for many reasons, not only did they provide support and a contact person within the community they also contributed greatly to familiarising interviewees with their new communities by providing practical help with shopping, banking, showing them around and linking them with services such as doctors:

The volunteers ... anything you need even at night you could ring them. They solved all the problems, helped us in every aspect. We used to receive letters from different departments. We would call them, they would come and read them out and do any follow up. (Middle-aged male)

We were completely dependent on the volunteer ... they were like our gods, they taught us everything. (Adult female)

The volunteers, they took us shopping, showed us the telephone, took us to WINZ. (Middle-aged female)

Beyond providing practical support, volunteers were also an important source of friendship and a link to the Kiwi community and often went above and beyond their role to become great friends and in some cases surrogate family members to the new arrivals. As one woman said:

The volunteer kept helping us till the baby was born. [She] is like my mother. She comes here and if I ask her for something she will bring it the next day. (Adult female)

At the time of interviews, all formal ties with volunteers through Refugee Services had come to a close¹⁴. However, almost all of those interviewed still had varying degrees of contact with their volunteer(s) and it was clear that true friendships had been forged as one woman explained:

[the volunteers] were with us for up to 6 months whenever we needed them. We are still friends with them. They told us to ask for help if I need it. (Adult female)

Whilst volunteers were the greatest source of help for most on arrival to the community, family and friends were also a source of support for those fortunate to have had family resettled in New Zealand's first intake of Bhutanese. Family

¹⁴ Volunteers provided through Refugee Services Aotearoa work with former refugees for up to 12 months post arrival in the community.

members who had cars were able to take the new arrivals shopping and 'out and about' as well as provide a friendly face and link to their country of origin.

Challenges

When asked what the initial challenges were, many understandably said that everything being new was difficult. That is, not knowing where to go shopping, or the public transport system or how to find their way around the neighbourhood was in the beginning a huge challenge. As one man said 'when we first arrived, we didn't know anything'. However, more specific difficulties and challenges on arrival to the community became apparent with further probing.

Communication difficulties

The main challenge experienced on arrival was overwhelmingly difficulties communicating in English. The inability to understand others, signs, labels on food, for example, were all difficult in an unfamiliar place with unfamiliar things. Many voiced that this was extremely hard both for them and also for their children. As one mother said 'it was a problem for the children as no one for them to play with and no one spoke Nepalese'. The frustration at the inability to communicate with volunteers and other agencies was clear:

They [volunteers] took us shopping but we couldn't say the words for what we wanted to buy – we just had to point at them. (Adult female)

Volunteer would want to help us, but we couldn't understand each other. We would ask them, and they would take us to the wrong shops. (Middle-aged female)

At the time I didn't speak the language – that was hard. I wanted to speak to new friends but I couldn't and I couldn't understand some things. (Middle-aged male)

Those that could speak some English also experienced problems, mostly with the speed with which people spoke and the 'Kiwi' accent as one man explained it 'volunteer helped but can't understand Kiwi accent, trying to change own accent to sound more like a Kiwi'.

Using money and modern technologies

One of the biggest difficulties experienced on arrival to the community was the challenge of using unfamiliar modern technology in the form of ATM and Eftpos machines.

Another challenge on arrival to the community was the use of kitchen appliances and in particular the stove which one interviewee described as being 'scary'. Whilst this group was shown how to use a stove at the Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre the reality of using this appliance in their own home was identified as being a challenge. It is likely that the fire safety briefings received during orientation coupled with a large fire that spread through one of the camps in Nepal added to the apprehension of this specific group.

Lack of transportation

In the early stages of settlement transportation was also an issue. With limited or no access to a car and little understanding of the public transport system getting around to visit friends and family and to do shopping was difficult:

We didn't have a car; it was a bit of a problem. But not too bad, we walked. It was a bit difficult with shopping. (Middle-aged male)

In Nepal if you want to catch a bus you stand by the side of the road and just raise your hand but not here. We had to learn that we had to go to the bus stop. (Adult male)

Loneliness and isolation

Feelings of isolation and loneliness seem to have been a common feeling particularly amongst the woman interviewed. As one woman said of her first few weeks 'before we left camp we all gathered together ... once we arrived here we felt a bit isolated with no acquaintances or relatives around'. Another woman echoed this saying 'I got so depressed. I wondered why we had come to this country'. Coming from a collectivist environment within a refugee camp with little space and privacy, it is unsurprising that many felt alone and isolated. In addition, the absence of family support from those resettled in other countries or still in the refugee camps was being sorely felt as one mother said 'we are missing our families, no one to help with the baby'.

Summary

The first impressions of New Zealand and resettlement cities appear to have been predominantly positive. However, there were some understandable feelings of being overwhelmed and lost, and there was a necessary period of adjustment to a new culture. Volunteers were an integral component in the new arrivals' ability to settle and get to know their new community and cities. There was a definite sense of reliance, at least initially, on volunteers which highlights the importance that these people play in the early stages of the resettlement process.

5 MANGERE REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT CENTRE AND THE ORIENTATION PROGRAMME

'The orientation directly helped. It taught us things like going shopping and the things you need to be aware of.' (Adult female)

Introduction

The community interviews provided an opportunity to follow up on interviews conducted during the second phase of this research at the end of the Mangere orientation programme. Whilst questions were asked during the second phase about what was most useful about the orientation programme, now that the group had been resettled they were able to provide some useful information about the components of the orientation that were actually of most use on arrival to their resettlement cities.

Usefulness of orientation on arrival to the community

This group often voiced that they couldn't imagine what life would have been like had they not received any orientation on arrival to New Zealand. Many of those interviewed commented that when they arrived they knew absolutely nothing, and Mangere gave them the tools to survive during their first weeks in New Zealand, the following was a common sentiment: 'it helped a lot; we didn't know anything when we came from Nepal so it all helped' (middle-aged female). There were however, some aspects that were the 'most' use.

Familiarisation with electrical appliances

In Nepal, facilities are basic and there is no electricity as one woman said of the camps 'It was such hardship – we had to get coal to cook our food. There was a shortage of water'. Therefore, the familiarisation to electricity and electrical appliances such as the stove and heaters during the orientation was particularly valuable as it gave people confidence to cook meals and use appliances and to do so safely.

In interviews conducted at the end of the orientation programme, a fire safety demonstration was found to be one of the most valuable components of the orientation received. On arrival to the community, this continued to be the case, and was found to be hugely important as it meant those interviewed knew what to do in the event of a fire, and how to get help¹⁵. For two families located on the same street, this knowledge was especially helpful on arrival to the community as across the road from them a house caught fire, one woman relayed the experience '[it] was important, knowing about 111. There was a fire across the road and the fire brigade came with two fire engines'.

¹⁵ The strong emphasis on fire safety at both interviews may be explained by a fire that ravaged one of the refugee camps in Nepal in 2008, destroying everything.

How to form relationships with New Zealanders

The sessions on how to communicate and form relationships with New Zealanders were also found to be important. These sessions gave people the confidence and skills on arrival to interact with others and helped them to form relationships with their volunteers and wider social networks such as schools and neighbours:

Communicating with neighbours and how to maintain relationships and social contacts. (Middle-aged female)

We learned about how to go to social occasions, how to act. (Adult male)

English language classes

Conversational English classes during orientation were found to be invaluable. These classes provided the opportunity to learn everyday phrases, greetings and basic words as well as how to write. They were particularly a lifeline for those who were illiterate or had little or no English. As one woman relayed it meant that at 'least when you arrive you can answer the questions and spell out your name ... they taught us conversational English - greetings and meetings ... I could say how I was when people asked me'. This was important for her ability to interact with others in those first few important weeks.

Schooling

The schooling received was especially valuable for children and youth. As one woman relayed, this gives a gentle introduction to schooling in New Zealand which is vastly different from the rote style of learning in camps. It also enables testing to be completed to determine general academic ability and levels of English so that on arrival to the community students are able to start straight away in the appropriate classes for them.

Learner Licensing

The opportunity to learn the theory and then sit the test for a learners licence is another area which many mentioned. Many of those who did not sit the test at Mangere reported that they wished they had, and acknowledged that it took much longer and was much harder to do this once in the community. This also meant that there was an understanding of the road rules, which made simple things such as crossing the road and catching buses much easier. Another advantage of gaining a learners licence at Mangere was the early access to a form of photo identification that made setting up bank accounts for example much easier:

I passed the theory part of the drivers licence test so I knew the rules. Made it easier for how to cross the road. (Adult male)

ID papers expires after one year. We have a drivers licence and this is helping a lot. (Middle-aged male)

Areas of improvement identified

Whilst interviewees were extremely grateful for the orientation they had received, and found everything to be useful, there were some areas where they felt even more information would have helped whilst at the centre or on arrival to the community.

Practice with banking and shopping

After the language barrier, shopping and using money were the biggest difficulties in terms of settlement. Those interviewed often said that if they were able to go out and buy food, use money to pay for it and then come back to Mangere and prepare this food it would have greatly helped them on arrival to the community. As one woman said 'they didn't actually take us shopping and that would have helped. Instead we told the teacher what we wanted to cook and she went and bought it'. It was suggested that some sort of apartment set-up where refugees were able to spend some of their later days at Mangere living independently but still access the help and support of staff, would lead to less reliance on volunteers and greater confidence and familiarity with shopping and using modern kitchens on arrival to the community.

Cross-cultural workers

Those interviewed also indicated that refugees at the Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre could be better supported if former refugees (one male and one female) from relevant ethnicities were employed. These former refugees would be able to provide culturally relevant insight and information to those about to be resettled from the perspective of someone who has undergone this process themselves:

It would be good if Mangere had a good Bhutanese community person, one or two people. They can help to understand what their life is like and about refugee camp. They can help them with what they need to know.
(Middle-aged male)

It is important to note that at present the Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre does have one or more cross-cultural workers on site at the centre to work with each nationality resident in each intake. They play an important role on advising centre management on cultural issues. However, given the number of ethnicities that may be at the centre during any one intake, it is acknowledged that cross-cultural workers are not necessarily of the same ethnicity of all of those at the centre at the time.

Format of learner licence test

The format of the learner licence test offered during orientation was another area which many commented on. Because the learner license was found to be so valuable on arrival to the community, it was felt that it would be better if the test could be modified to pen and paper to make it more suitable for computer illiterate refugees. The use of a computer to sit this test was a barrier for people, and many failed because they were unable to control the mouse well enough, or they clicked on wrong buttons that terminated the test rather than continuing on:

With driving – many people could not use the computer, so they answered the online test wrongly by mistake. They need to be able to do a paper version. They could not use the mouse properly. (Middle-aged male)

It was voiced by interviewees that if it was possible for refugees to sit the official learners licence test in a more appropriate format, many more would pass and be advantaged on arrival to the community.

Information about identification and documents

Access to identification cards was also a common topic raised by interviewees. It was felt there was a need for more practical support to get identification papers. For those who do not gain their learners licence at Mangere a lack of photo identification provides large barriers to setting up life in New Zealand, and this was identified as a cause of anxiety and stress. Linked to this was the expiry of a Certificate of Identity. It was identified that after a year these expired, meaning they had no form of valid identification:

concern about the identity card which expires after one year – can we get something that we can use as an identity card? Can we renew it?
(Middle-aged female)

Having an ID card would help. ID papers expires after one year. (Middle-aged female)

It is clear that understanding of these documents, and the way in which these can be renewed is not well understood amongst members of the Bhutanese community, and was therefore identified as an area where more information at Mangere could be useful.

Summary

In the context of knowing nothing before arriving to New Zealand, the orientation received at the Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre was universally found to be useful and helpful on arrival to the community. Of particular use were the English language classes, the familiarisation with electrical appliances, schooling received, learners licensing and information on how to form relationships with New Zealanders. There were some areas where more emphasis or additional sessions would have better equipped those interviewed on arrival to the community. Specifically the need for more cross-cultural workers was identified, along with a change to the format of the learner license test, more information on visas and practice with banking and shopping.

6 ENGLISH LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

'The hardest thing is the language.' (Adult female)

Introduction

Most of those interviewed in Nepal and at the end of the Mangere orientation programme had expectations that improving their English language ability would be a primary focus during the first stages of settlement. This chapter explores English language acquisition and improvement; what help have people had and what has their progress been since settling in the community?

English language acquisition

One of the most important factors associated with settlement is the acquisition of the host country's language. The ability to speak the language, in New Zealand's case English, is critical for almost all aspects of everyday life such as; inclusion into the labour market, social interactions, understanding rules and regulations, gaining access to services, and exercising civil rights (Hamberger, 2009). The acquisition of language is dependent on several factors including incentives for learning, access to English language tuition, access to language tuition pre-departure and exposure to the language generally. The time in which it takes to learn a language also varies, and is often dependent on age and education level (Hamberger, 2009). According to Chiswick and Miller (2004) the ability to acquire a new language may also be dependent on how linguistically close the new language is to the native tongue. It has been found that English is harder to learn for those with an Asian first language (and vice versa). Not only are Asian languages quite different from English, but many also have a different script.

English language entitlements for former refugees¹⁶

New Zealand does not have any standard English language entitlements for former refugees. Instead, the Tertiary Education Commission provides funding for a diverse range of English language courses and organisations, from tertiary education institutions to community-based providers. It is up to individuals themselves to access these. Often former refugees are referred through the Ministry of Social Development or other agencies to appropriate courses. In addition, formal English language qualifications can also be accessed through tertiary education providers, however, these are not provided free and refugees must take out a student loan to pay for fees.

The Ministry of Education provides funding for up to 5 years of English language support for students with a refugee background in schools.

¹⁶ Information provided by the Ministry of Education.

Pre-departure

English language proficiency

The predominant language of the Lhotshampa, is Nepali, which also has its own script. However, it is estimated that up to 35 percent of Bhutanese refugees are able to conduct their day-to-day lives in English (Banki, 2008). For those who were raised within the refugee camps in Nepal, English language rates are higher, as education within the camps was conducted in English (along with Dzongkha, Bhutan's national language). For those who did not grow up within the camp environment, English language is more common in males than females (International Organization for Migration, 2008).

Amongst those interviewed during this phase of the research, 9 spoke English well; 3 females and 6 males. In contrast 11 interviewees could not easily understand English. Of these, 8 were female and 3 were male.

Expectations

Before departing for New Zealand, interviewees had understood the importance of learning English. Many acknowledged that they would need to improve their English or learn English before they could enrol in education or find employment:

After arriving there we would have to learn English. I think I have to learn English. (Adult female)

Should be engaged in understanding the language. To find the job English is important. To communicate with people is important. (Adult female)

Whilst there was an understanding that English language would need to be learnt or improved, some had an optimistic view of how long this might take and how difficult it would be. One man said 'I can understand [a] little English, might take me 4 to 5 months to learn'. Others felt that their current levels of English would be sufficient, but they worried about other family members such as wives or parents/grandparents.

English language on arrival to New Zealand

On arrival to the community, 18 out of the 20 people interviewed stated that they had received some help to improve their English since arriving in their new city. However, the type of help received, its intensity and duration has differed extensively.

As might be expected, the English language help received depends greatly on the characteristics and circumstances of the individual. The interview sample can roughly be divided into three main groups: young adults who grew up in the camps and have a relatively high level of English language proficiency; middle-aged males, who differ in terms of their education levels, and English language abilities and; mothers who for the most part are at home looking after children. These women generally had a lower level of English language proficiency than the other two groups.

Post-arrival help with English Language

Young Adults

A total of five participants were categorised as young adults. These interviewees were all aged between 19 and 27 years of age and had no children.

The younger people interviewed for this study had the greatest level of English language proficiency on arrival to the community having learnt English whilst at the refugee camps in Nepal. However, the English language learnt was often a different style or older grammar and the New Zealand slang and accent were all new. As one young man said:

[I] had an old grammar book from Nepal. The teacher said it was very old. The grammar is very hard. Here people use slang, idioms – like 'Giddy' and 'watsup'.

Most of the young adults were enrolled, or had been enrolled, in full-time English language courses. Many started off in community colleges, moving to more formal courses at Polytechnics for example.

The main difficulties experienced by this group were with the New Zealand accent. Whilst many felt that they could understand English reasonably well before departing, on arrival they found that the Kiwi accent and slang used meant that they could not keep up with conversations as one young man said 'I can't always get the jokes that people make, the rest of the class will be laughing, but I don't understand'.

However, of all the groups, the younger people experienced the fewest difficulties in terms of gaining access to English language tuition and education. They demonstrated a positive attitude, determination and purpose. They had come to New Zealand prepared to improve their English, and with a desire to further their education, and had quickly found ways in which to do this.

Adult males

This group of six men ranged from those who were reasonably well-educated with a high level of English language proficiency, to those who had received little by way of education and were not literate in English. They ranged in age from 29 years to 44 years. Pre-departure interviews identified that this group were likely to face the biggest challenge in terms of needing to learn English quickly to navigate New Zealand society and ultimately become independent in order to support their families. On arrival to the community all of the men in this group had received help to improve their English.

Those who were not literate in English prior to arrival in New Zealand were attending full time English language courses at both private institutions and polytechnics. For the foreseeable future improving English language was to be the focus with the ultimate goal to improve employability. One woman said of her husband:

His English is not so good so he still needs an interpreter. He goes to training, and gets help with English; this may help him find a job ... You

have to be fluent in English to find a job, but even then it is hard to find one. (Adult female)

Other interviewees also made similar comments:

I have done an English language course – it is now finished. Funding has run out, but I am not satisfied. I want to learn more so I can get a job. (Middle-aged male)

The men who had some English language prior to arrival had completed full-time English language courses during their first year in New Zealand. Their next step was to gain employment or enrol in further education to improve their hopes of gaining employment.

There were several difficulties experienced for some of the men in this group when accessing English language training. Several of those interviewed mentioned that they had to go on a waiting list for several months before they were able to begin their English language courses. This delay caused some frustration. In addition, the length of free courses available was found to be inadequate, and the cost of enrolling in further English language courses restricting.

Mothers

It is widely acknowledged that on arrival to a new country, refugee women experience comparative difficulties in learning English. Women face particular difficulties such as, finding appropriate childcare and a lack of transport (Department of Labour, 2004). For the eight mothers in this study, particularly those with primary school-aged and younger children, access to English language does appear to have been difficult.

The mothers interviewed in this study had varying levels of English language ability on arrival to the community. Some of the younger mothers had a relatively high level of English, whereas, some other women had very little or no English language on arrival to New Zealand. The women within this group had all received some help to improve their English. However, compared to others, this tended to be less intense and on a part time or casual basis. Many were attending formal classes for 2 hours, 4 days a week. Four mothers, as well as, or instead of formal classes, also had a Home Tutor¹⁷ for 1 hour, 1 day a week. For the young mothers who have had babies since arriving in New Zealand, access to English language tuition had been yet more limited and intermittent. They had attended some English language courses prior to the birth of their baby but had not attended or received any English language tuition after this point.

There were several difficulties experienced by this group, particularly in relation to learning or accessing English language courses. One of the main issues was

¹⁷ English as a Second Language (ESOL) Home Tutors is a free in-home service run by English Language Partners New Zealand.

with childcare. For woman with young children and babies, the ability to attend English language classes was limited by the availability and cost of childcare:

Childcare isn't available or I would go. Previously child care was free, now you have to pay. The benefit hasn't increased enough to cover that. (Adult female)

I have a baby and I can't take him to my class. You have to go every day but there is only childcare on Friday. (Adult female)

In addition to childcare issues, the lack of transport to get to English language courses had also been a barrier:

Problem is driving, if someone drives me I can go maybe three times a week. I can't attend without transport. (Middle-aged female)

Many of the women in this group had received help to improve their English from a Home Tutor. However, many had experienced long waiting lists to gain access to this service, as one woman explained:

Had to wait for a Home Tutor for 5 to 6 months, then was taught for the next 6 months for 1 hour once a week. Once that finished I tried to find another but that took 2 months. (Middle-aged female)

In addition to long waits for a Home Tutor, many of these women also mentioned the fact that Home Tutors had stopped coming. As one woman said 'I had a Home Tutor for 4 months then she stopped – I don't know why'.

The interviewers witnessed this themselves first hand as during one interview a Home Tutor came around to say goodbye to a family she was working with as she was going overseas. It was unclear whether this was actually understood by the family or not.

Comments were also made about the frequency of the English language help received. That is, many of the women mentioned that because the help received was only once a week, that they had forgotten much of what was taught between sessions. As one woman relayed 'the words learnt one week are forgotten the next week, so having lessons more frequently would improve this'.

Whilst access was an issue for many of the woman interviewed, they were eager to learn English, and were looking forward to their children being at an age where they would attend school or kindergarten so they could more easily continue with their progress in learning English.

Improvement in English proficiency

Most help to improve English

All of those interviewed were asked what had helped them to improve their English the most. Several key factors emerged. Firstly, the teachers and Home Tutors themselves had made a large difference in motivating and helping interviewees to improve their English. As one man said; the most help was a 'very good teacher. The teacher was never angry. The teacher will try to get the feelings of the student and try to help any way they can'. Another factor for many in improving English was being able to practice with their children, who in many

cases were more proficient in English than themselves. For others, attending classes and interacting with non-Nepali speakers made a difference as they were forced to speak and practice their English:

At [name of institution] I was with friends in class from Bhutan and outside the class we spoke Nepali. At [name of new institution] there are mostly Kiwis so I have to speak English. (Adult male)

English language progress

The level of progress in learning English differed between groups and between individuals, depending on their level of proficiency on arrival. All interviewees were asked to assess how their spoken English was now at the time of the interview, compared to when they first arrived in New Zealand. With the exception of one, all of those interviewed were able to say, many with a smile, that they had improved their English in some way since they arrived. One young woman even showed she was picking up Kiwi idioms in her response, 'I think it's much better – I understand you guys'. Some common examples of what other interviewees said about their progress are outlined below:

I began by not understanding a single word of the teacher. Now although I can't understand whole sentence I can get the sense of it. If I can get a similar chance to learn English, in a few years I will be able to speak. (Middle-aged male)

In the beginning didn't even know the alphabet now [I] can write my name ... to communicate in English is my dream. (Middle-aged female)

More than 75 percent improved. In the beginning I didn't understand a word. I would rather 'not see' people than talk to them. Now I like to talk to people. (Adult male)

Summary

There was a definite sense of pride in the level of English language obtained to date; however, there was also frustration or dissatisfaction for some with current levels of English, and the ability to communicate. Before departing for New Zealand, there was a general impression that English would not be too difficult to learn particularly by the young adults and those with a higher education. However, on arrival to the community many have found that their English language ability was not as good as they thought. That is, their ability to understand the strong New Zealand accent and the style of English language used in New Zealand was not as easy as they had perhaps envisaged before they left Nepal. Communication has been one of the biggest barriers to resettlement in New Zealand. For many it will also take longer than anticipated to get to a sufficient level of English to enrol in tertiary education or to be employable in New Zealand.

As a general impression, this group is determined to continue to learn and improve their English with the primary goal to enrol in further education and/or gain employment. It will be important for many of those interviewed, but particularly for mothers, to have continued, frequent access to English language to encourage independence and ensure they do not become isolated.

7 EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

'I am doing a cooking course and a computer course. I've also learned to swim and I've done Nepali classical dance.' (Adult female)

Introduction

The Bhutanese are a comparatively well-educated refugee group. Education was of a relatively high standard for those who received schooling prior to fleeing Bhutan. It is estimated approximately 13 percent of the registered adult refugee population have an education past the 10th grade¹⁸ (Banki, 2008). The UNHCR administered refugee camps within Nepal, are recognised as being 'exemplary' and access to schooling is widely available within the camps in Nepal. So much so that the standard and availability of education within the camps is better than what is available to the local Nepali community outside the camps (Muggah, 2005).

Before the process of third-country resettlement began, there were nine main schools within the refugee camps each with an average of 4,000 pupils. It is estimated that over 40 percent of the refugee population attend education within the camps. Classes are conducted in Nepali and English and follow a modified version of the Bhutanese curriculum. Refugees themselves staff and manage the schools with limited resources, and schoolrooms are temporary structures made from bamboo and grass (Brown, 2001).

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 (International Organization for Migration, 2008).

Whilst education was readily available and highly valued within the refugee camps in Nepal, opportunities for further study or to utilise knowledge and gain employment were extremely limited. The lack of opportunities led to frustration and disillusionment particularly amongst young people within the camps. The provision of education to advanced levels had raised skills and expectations that could not be fulfilled in the context of confinement to camps (Brown, 2001).

Expectations of education in New Zealand prior to departure

The desire to continue education was a motivating factor in the decision to apply for third-country resettlement. The Bhutanese as a group value education and for them the opportunity to provide their children with a high quality, free education was important. In addition, young adults were excited by the opportunity resettlement in New Zealand might present to complete higher education.

¹⁸ 10th grade is approximately the equivalent to Year 11/5th form in New Zealand.

However, they did not know what they would be able to study, how this would happen, or what the costs involved would be.

Education received in New Zealand

On arrival to the community many of those with a higher level of English language proficiency had taken up opportunities to enrol in courses. Education was identified as a key way to increase the likelihood of gaining future employment, and as such the courses the group had chosen were predominantly with this goal in mind. As with English language, similar educational trajectories became apparent during interviews depending on an individual's characteristics.

School-aged Children

The primary school-aged children of interviewees were by and large reported to be doing well at school and kindergarten. Many of the children had experienced difficulties in their first few weeks at school, mostly in terms of making friends and communicating. However, this had improved with time. Most parents reported that their children were now very happy at school and both children and parents had experienced no problems. One mother said of her son 'he feels happy at school, when he first arrived he had no friends but now he has friends and likes school better than home!' Another young mum echoed this saying of her kindergarten-aged child 'my son really likes kindy. He even wants to go in the school holidays'.

For some of the parents of high school-aged children, there were more concerns over education. For example, some had changed schools due to problems with bullying and others due to the distance between their home and the school they were originally enrolled in.

For some of the parents of teenagers, there were also concerns about the freedom allowed at schools. They were worried that their children would leave school or not go on to further education, as one father said 'We worry about our children. It is very free here. We worry if they drop out or don't finish school'.

However, in general, children were doing well at school and children and parents were becoming increasingly familiar with the New Zealand education system.

Young Adults

The trajectories for this younger group of interviewees followed similar patterns to each other. In their first year in New Zealand they completed full-time English language courses. Once English language proficiency and confidence had improved they then enrolled in a variety of full time courses. The courses enrolled in were predominantly travel and tourism and computing.

The main difficulty identified by this group was the difference in teaching styles. That is, in Nepal a rote style of learning is used and text books are commonly followed. However, in New Zealand, learning is much more collaborative, and examinations and assignments follow different formats:

In Nepal I went to school ... It was based on rote learning. Here you watch TV then write something about it [listening tests]. (Adult male)

The assignments are different ... but I find the system really good although it can be difficult. (Adult male)

This group wanted their education to count, and to help them gain meaningful employment often asking the interviewers for their advice on what courses they should take. As one young female said 'I was looking for advice from you'. Many of these individuals had chosen courses solely because they had heard there would be a good chance of them getting a job at the end of it:

If this course gives me the skills needed for a job, that would be okay – but otherwise I might need more. (Adult male)

Middle-aged males

The middle-aged males amongst the group followed a slightly different pattern from their younger counterparts. These men were mostly all still enrolled in English language courses whilst also attending some form of vocational training. However, like the younger generation, these men were determined, and they wanted to increase their skills in order to quickly gain employment. For many, whilst there was an area of employment they would ideally like to be involved in, any job would do. One man explained 'I am ready to do any type of course'.

Mothers

Many of the mothers interviewed had been given the opportunity to attend courses other than English language; these were generally part time courses of a short duration. Courses attended included, cooking and computing for example. Many of the women in this group had also attended classes such as dance, swimming lessons and sewing. It was expressed that once children were older that they would like to do some more formal study with the hope of getting a job.

Summary

Education is of high importance to the Bhutanese interviewed. Before arriving to New Zealand, it was hoped that educational opportunities would be available, and on arrival to New Zealand, this group has certainly taken advantage of these. The children of interviewees after an initial period of adjustment had fitted in to school life in New Zealand, and were doing well. For the interviewees, educational opportunities had been taken up where available and this was with an emphasis on employment.

It was particularly noted that the younger generation were seeking advice from interviewers on the courses they should take. It would appear that some kind of reliable career advice would be of particular value to this group and ensure they enrolled in courses that were appropriate and would help them to achieve their goals. There is a risk that some of the courses enrolled in currently by this group may be misguided and that they will have to do further study in order to obtain a valuable qualification, and ultimately gain employment.

8 THE NEED FOR INDEPENDENCE: EXPERIENCES OF FINDING EMPLOYMENT

'I don't want to depend on others, I want to stand on my own two feet. It's very important to have a job as soon as you arrive.' (Adult female)

Introduction

Gaining employment is an important element in the resettlement process. However, there is widespread agreement and evidence to show that obtaining appropriate and meaningful work for refugees is difficult (Department of Labour, 2004). As opposed to migrants, refugees are not selected to enter New Zealand based on their ability to fulfil certain requirements (for example; English language, skills, age). In addition, refugees do not have the same luxury as migrants generally to research destination countries, and prepare accordingly (Connor, 2010). As a result, refugees face several barriers to gaining employment such as; a lack of New Zealand work experience, a lack of understanding from employers, a lack of New Zealand qualifications and limited English (Department of Labour, 2004).

The former Bhutanese refugees interviewed for the community phase of this research had had only limited opportunities for employment after arriving in the refugee camps of Nepal 18 years earlier. For those who fled Bhutan, many had been farmers, one a priest, one worked for government and one had been a mechanic. Most of those interviewed reported having no paid employment since arriving in the camps. Of those who had gained employment, this was most often within the schools in the camps, either as administrators or teachers. Most of the women, reported being 'housewives'.

Pre-departure expectations

Given the limited opportunities for employment within camps in Nepal, the potential to gain meaningful employment in New Zealand was a primary motivating factor in the decision to apply for third-country resettlement. For the young and educated in particular, the confinement to camps and the lack of legal employment opportunities was increasingly demoralising and frustrating.

The interviews conducted in Nepal showed that most of those interviewed expected to be working in paid employment in New Zealand and thought that employment opportunities lacking in camps in Nepal would be readily available in New Zealand. As one man relayed 'after arriving there I guess my life will be better than this life, because I will be working'. Another man was optimistic about his future prospects saying '[I] see myself in my dream job to make a good future through settlement process'.

Many expected that a job would be provided for them by the Government of New Zealand, 'which job will I be benefited?' asked one woman. However, the type of work the Bhutanese thought they would be provided with differed. Some indicated that they would have to accept whatever job was provided to them by the New Zealand Government. As one middle-aged male said 'I am totally dependent on government organisation so I will accept the work that is given to

me'. For others, there was an expectation that the government would find them suitable work related to their skills and expertise: 'I want to work according to qualifications and education'.

Whilst it was generally expected that work would be readily obtainable in New Zealand, there was little understanding of the type of work/jobs that might be available in a modern Western society. Many expected that they would be working in similar roles to the ones available to them in Bhutan. As one man said he did not want to work 'in the black market'. Some women interviewed thought that they would be able to get work 'tailoring and weaving'. For these people their skills, whilst valuable, are not necessarily easily transferable to the types of jobs that might be available in New Zealand. However, some understood that they might need to re-train or be up-skilled in order to obtain employment in New Zealand.

The search for employment in New Zealand

After their first year in New Zealand, those who had completed some English language courses, and had a reasonable level of English language proficiency began to search for employment. At the time of interviews, only 2 out of the 20 people interviewed had been successful in gaining regular employment in part-time jobs for 6 and 12 hours per week. One other interviewee had worked full time for 2 months doing seasonal work and had also found casual work fixing computers.

The low rate of employment was not for lack of trying. All of those interviewed, who were not mothers of small children, expressed their desire to find work. Many had tried to find jobs at supermarkets with no success. Others who were enrolled in vocational training were hoping that they would be able to find work through this channel. One mother had put her name down at local kindergartens for cleaning work, and registered her interest to work with her social worker to no avail:

I have given my name to all the local kindys to work as a cleaner if they need someone but no one has contacted me yet. I've also given my name to my social worker to say I am keen to work. (Adult female)

Having heard of labour shortages others had contacted local orchards about the prospect of seasonal work:

Now is the berry season – we have given our phone number in case there is work. Farmers say they currently have the staff they need – they haven't contacted us. (Middle-aged male)

Difficulties experienced

Arriving into New Zealand in 2009, at the height of the global economic recession has meant that gaining employment has been even more difficult for this group due to an overall lack of jobs in the community. Some of the interviewees mentioned that they cannot compete with locals who are applying for the same jobs. For others, gaining employment was more a matter of luck as one woman said 'you have to have luck to find a job. Not only Bhutanese but local people say the same thing'. Other barriers to gaining employment that were commonly

identified were a lack of English language, a lack of relevant work experience and transport problems.

As a highly motivated group who had been optimistic about their chances of finding employment prior to arrival, the lack of progress in gaining employment was starting to cause frustration amongst interviewees. The lack of employment was the biggest cause of worry and stress at the time of interviews. This is a group who many times mentioned that they do not want to remain 'idle' that they are used to working hard, and are ready and willing to contribute to New Zealand. They are aware of the difficulties facing refugees, and do not want to follow a similar pattern, as one man said 'when we ask about finding a job they say there are people who have been here 10 years who don't have a job'. As a group, the Bhutanese do not want to have to rely on a benefit. For them gaining employment is of utmost importance:

It [a job] is very important – you become more independent. (Adult male)

It's important to find work - if you work you can get \$400 to \$500 a week when the benefit is only \$200. (Adult male)

Very important [to find work] – you have to survive on the money you receive so it's hard. (Adult female)

The importance and motivation to gain employment was also evidenced in the education many had chosen, which predominantly was selected with the primary goal that the course would help them to gain meaningful employment. However, as discussed, where this group got this information from, and whether or not the courses selected will help to gain employment is yet to be determined. In addition, the Bhutanese had limited knowledge of the ways in which to find a job in New Zealand particularly outside of formal channels and relied on putting their name down with a potential employer or leaving them with a phone number.

Help needed to find a job

Before departing for New Zealand, many interviewees expressed an optimism or belief that the Government of New Zealand would help them to find a job, or would provide a job on arrival to the community. This is unsurprising given the reliance on others for the past 18 years within the refugee camps. Given the level of difficulty experienced gaining employment, interviewees were asked what help they thought they needed to find a job. By and large this group wanted help with the entire process.

Information sharing

Firstly they felt that they needed to have someone tell them about vacancies. As one young woman said there needed to be 'some kind of job search so everyone has central access to information'. She felt like someone would spot a job and take it and there was no chance for everyone else to apply for it. It became apparent that in some cases the availability of certain positions were being communicated to a select group of people, and that some who might be suited to a position were being excluded from the process.

Brokering of positions

This is a group that felt they needed a lot of support in finding work. Most often interviewees wanted to be told where jobs were available, when and how to apply for positions and help with a CV and references. There was little understanding of the actual process involved in applying for a job, and ways in which they could independently search for work. For those that had gained work, this was through vocational training agencies, who informed them of a position, helped them fill out the application form, and organised an interview. This is the kind of help/level of support that this group has identified they will need in order to find paid work.

Up-skilling and vocational training

Many of the men interviewed identified that they 'know how to work'; they just needed assistance up-skilling. A common theme to emerge amongst this group, particularly those based in Palmerston North and Nelson, was that there was an absence of vocational training courses that would help to provide the practical and technical skills needed to gain employment. In addition, some noted that they would be willing and able to do volunteer work in order to up-skill themselves and gain valuable New Zealand work experience and therefore increase their chances of gaining employment:

Make job funding more of a priority – things like technical and practical work – building, bus driving, and car mechanic. (Adult female)

They [the government] need to organise training courses to help people find a job. (Adult female)

I am worried about getting a job, if the government have volunteer job training this would help. (Middle-aged male)

Utilisation of skills

Many of the interviewees who fled Bhutan came from subsistence farming backgrounds. It was often mentioned by middle-aged males in particular that they were ready and willing to do hard work all they needed was the opportunity. Several men interviewed in different regions talked about the potential to work with local farmers and market gardeners. They identified that if they were given this opportunity that farmers would be guaranteed stable, reliable workers. As one man said:

Because Bhutanese are well experienced in farm related work – we are keen to do that. If the farming sector would tell us what they need we could do this work. It needs coordination between the Bhutanese community, Refugee Services and the farming community. (Middle-aged male)

Living on a benefit

Due to the lack of employment, the main source of income for all of those interviewed was some form of benefit or for those studying full-time a student allowance. Everyone was appreciative of the government for this support, and identified that compared to other resettlement countries, usually the United States, that those who came to New Zealand were well looked after. However,

being on a benefit long-term did not sit well for many. They did not want to have to rely on others, and were desperate after 18 years to be independent. As one man said 'Bhutanese people don't want to stay on a benefit'. Another echoed this: 'I don't feel happy just to be getting the benefit. I'm used to working. I would prefer to work'. In addition, they wanted to contribute in a positive way to a country that had given them a chance at a better life.

This is a group that did not want to complain about the amount of money they were receiving. One woman relayed a sentiment expressed by many; 'the allowance and the benefit we get from the government we're surviving on that. We're not poor, but we're surviving and we're happy with that'. However, for many, day-to-day living was a struggle and problems with benefits due to communication difficulties and misunderstandings had occurred.

Financial difficulties experienced

Arriving during a recession when price increases were experienced across many different areas, meant that an increased pressure on finances was felt. The comments below were relayed time and time again:

We have to go to school daily and the bus fare is going to increase from \$5 to \$6. I have a Metro Card but it is going up. All the prices are going up but the benefit is not going up. (Adult female)

All the prices are going up, telephone etc. But the benefit doesn't go up. Main worry is that the government will support me till I can get my own living. Once I can earn I'll pay tax and things will cost more again but it will be OK. (Adult male)

Now the house rent has gone up \$16 a week but the benefit hasn't increased. (Adult female)

We're surviving on a government benefit, but fees from kindy have increased – that's hard especially as grocery prices have gone up too. (Middle-aged male)

It's hard when the kids are small and hard to survive on the benefit. The demand for food/clothes is hard to meet. (Adult female)

Problems experienced

Whilst many said they had not experienced any problems with their benefit and had received regular payments, a few were not so lucky. The difficulty of communication and an unfamiliar system for some meant that problems experienced were not easily understood or fixed. As one middle-aged man said 'on several occasions the benefit has stopped and we don't know why and we can't communicate with them. They sent us a letter saying they were stopping the benefit but we didn't understand it ... But when you ring them up on the number all you get is the music'.

Pre-departure expectations versus on-arrival realities

Prior to departing Nepal there was the expectation that life in New Zealand would be better than in Nepal, and this was primarily because interviewees thought that

they would be working in meaningful employment. This impression may have been as a result of views expressed by others within the refugee camps. For example, in a study completed by the UNHCR on the resettlement of Bhutanese refugees in the United States it was found that refugees had been told whilst in the camps that they would be given a job, and shown video footage of the type of work that could be expected (Shrestha, 2011).

The Bhutanese in this study were minimally prepared for the realities of the New Zealand labour market. With limited knowledge of New Zealand prior to departure, on arrival they have not known what jobs are available in New Zealand, and more importantly are unaware of where to look for work, how to apply for a job and prepare a curriculum vitae and covering letter. The reality that some skills are not readily transferable to the New Zealand workforce and the necessity to have a high level of English language could not have been anticipated by the Bhutanese. With such high expectations prior to departing Nepal, the reality that jobs are not abundant in New Zealand, and that they are not provided by the government has been a disappointment for many of those interviewed. Frustration and disillusionment were commonly expressed during the community interviews as a result.

Summary

Employment is the number one priority and unemployment a cause of stress for the Bhutanese interviewed. As a group they are extremely motivated to obtain employment, and are actively looking for employment and/or engaged in activities to help them with this. For those without a high level of English language there is an understanding that this will need to be improved before employment can be obtained. Given the scarcity of employment opportunities it is going to be important that when jobs do come up through community channels that these are widely circulated, and equal opportunity is given to the Bhutanese to apply for the position.

Overall there is a risk that this group will become disillusioned and frustrated with their lack of employment and their reliance on the government for their day-to-day living. Whilst it is unknown what the future will hold for this group in terms of employment, interviews clearly showed that they are driven and determined to find jobs and contribute positively to New Zealand.

9 NEEDS FOR A SAFE HOME AND FAMILY LIFE

'We feel safe here compared with Nepal. I don't worry too much about anything.' (Middle-aged male)

Introduction

Access to appropriate housing, access to and utilisation of appropriate health care and feeling safe and secure are all important for helping former refugees to feel settled in their new country. The former Bhutanese refugees have had to endure harsh and difficult conditions for a prolonged period of time. Many of the older refugees have experienced discrimination, persecution and torture prior to fleeing Bhutan and all have lived in the difficult conditions within the camps in Nepal.

Pre-departure expectations

Interviews conducted in Nepal showed that the primary reason for applying for third-country resettlement for many was to 'increase the standard of living'. This was a term used broadly to describe a variety of factors. First, it was expected that third-country resettlement would result in being able to better meet basic needs such as access to housing, food and water: 'better than this camp or better than present situation ... in terms of facilities [what is] provided here is not sufficient' (adult female). Increased standard of living would also mean 'living being a human being ... to move from one place to another ... no more life as a refugee'. In addition, it was hoped that a sense of safety and security could be established:

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

After going I would like to move from our troubles and would like to know security. (Middle-aged female)

Perhaps most importantly for many, the expectation was to provide a better future for their children who could have access to opportunities unavailable in Nepal: 'my children grow up go to school and get education'. (Middle-aged female)

Housing in New Zealand

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. In summer conditions are hot and dusty whereas winter sees flooding and accompanying mud.

Before departing Nepal there was little thought about what housing interviewees might expect should they be accepted to New Zealand, generally it was just acknowledged that anything would be better than their current conditions. However, at the end of the orientation programme, anxiety about housing had started to emerge. With little knowledge still at this point about what awaited

them, there was a sense of nervous excitement about what their new home might be like.

In New Zealand the locating of appropriate housing generally begins prior to the arrival of an intake at the Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre, and is a joint effort between Refugee Services and Housing New Zealand. At the time of interviews, all but one family located in Palmerston North were living in Housing New Zealand houses.

On arrival to the community, all but three of those interviewed had houses ready and waiting for them. First impressions were generally positive ones and expressions like the following were common:

When we first saw the house we were going to live in we felt happy and excited. (Adult female)

Never imagined we would find this sort of house. (Middle-aged female)

For those who did not have houses waiting on arrival, one stayed with a cousin, another stayed longer at the Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre, and one was housed in emergency accommodation.

Most of those interviewed had not moved house since arriving in New Zealand. However, one had moved back in to his family home, and another had moved into housing closer to other family. Most were happy with their housing and felt that it was much more than they could ever have expected. Nearly all had also taken great joy in planting a garden and were growing a variety of flowers and vegetables successfully.

Housing difficulties experienced

Conducting interviews at the homes of those involved in the study provided the interviewers with an opportunity to view living conditions first hand. There were large variation in the types, size and quality of housing, particularly in Christchurch. As might be expected, issues raised about houses tended to be from those living in poorer quality homes. For those housed in better conditions, problems were not generally experienced, and satisfaction with their housing was high.

Cold and damp

The main problem and concern raised about housing was in relation to the cold. Many of the houses were visibly damp, with little or no insulation and had poor quality carpets. For example, one family slept together on the floor in the lounge at night during winter to keep warm. Another mother explained that it took her a week to dry her children's clothes, and even then they were still damp. Another family's carpet was in such a bad state that the volunteers helped to rip it up and put in some other (second hand) carpet. It was also noted by several of the

mothers, that their children had developed certain health problems since arriving in New Zealand.¹⁹

Cost and suitability

For some of those interviewed, the cost of housing or the lack of suitability of housing for their family were raised as issues. Several families mentioned the fact that they were living in rather cramped conditions for their family. For others the housing provided was found to be expensive or in some cases more than what was needed resulting in higher than necessary rents. One member of an extended family said:

One house with four bedrooms would be ok, but now have to pay for two houses with an extra room we don't need. If one of them was two bedrooms it would be ok. (Adult male)

However, for one family the suitability of housing was somewhat more problematic:

The house is well placed for transport but there's not enough space for the children to play – nowhere safe outside. The house is very damp and the children get cold. We looked for a private place to rent but it is too expensive. We wouldn't have the money to pay for childcare. If I start work they'll charge more. (Adult female)

Location

The vast majority of those interviewed, despite any other problems they may have been experiencing, liked the location of their house. For most they were able to easily access public transport, were close to kindergartens and schools as well as to local shops.

When asked if they had plans to move, many said that they did not. Those that said that they would consider moving said that this would be to another city and that they would do so to find employment or because certain courses were unavailable in their current city. Those that were dissatisfied with their current housing arrangements said they would move (within their current city) if something better was available. However, many did not know who to approach or how to go about finding a new house. As one young mother said 'we're thinking about moving to a warmer house for the baby – who should we approach about that?' Another woman explained 'It's not up to us to move, not our choice; it's up to Housing New Zealand. If the government says this is cold, damp and not good and they offer us another house, we are ready to move'.

¹⁹ Note: Housing New Zealand is currently upgrading its housing, for example by providing better insulation and heating through the Energy Retrofits Programme and the Healthy Housing Programme. The Healthy Housing Programme is a joint initiative between Housing New Zealand Corporation and District Health Boards.

Safety

For refugees, regaining a sense of security and safety is paramount, and integral to feeling 'at home' in a new country. As the refugee situation in Nepal continued, increased rates of suicide, domestic violence, alcoholism, and trafficking of women and children were experienced (Muggah, 2005). In addition, in more recent years, anti-resettlement factions within camps have actively promoted fear and misinformation to those considering resettlement by 'publishing statements to, issuing threats, to engaging in actual violence against pro-settlement refugees' (Banki, 2008, p 6).

On arrival to New Zealand, many hoped for a civil, peaceful society, but were not assured of this until after they had arrived:

At first we were afraid, we didn't know what sort of country that we were coming to. People said we were going to be sold. But it's completely different and we feel lucky we came. (Adult female)

There are rumours going around the camp in Nepal that New Zealand does not allow people to study here. We need to stop them. (Middle-aged female)

There were rumours around the camp that New Zealand was not safe and people would disturb you in your home but we took the risk and came out here and found it's not the case. (Adult female)

For the vast majority New Zealand felt safe, and many expressed how 'peaceful' New Zealand was and how different their sense of security was to back in Nepal:

We were living in fear where we were. I have never before experienced such a safe and secure place. (Middle-aged male)

In Nepal if there's an accident people will beat up the person who caused it. Here they take details and sort it out. (Middle-aged male)

Very much protected. Even if you keep the door open and go away, no one would steal anything. Not like in Nepal. (Adult female)

Health and wellbeing

Health plays an important role in the ability to actively engage and take up opportunities within a new society (Ager & Strang, 2008). Before arriving in New Zealand, interviewees had various ailments and limited access to healthcare. Interviews sought to find out if interviewees had been able to access the health care that they need in New Zealand, and how they have found the experience of interacting with New Zealand's health system.

Access to Doctors

All interviewees were registered with a GP in their city and most had visited their GP in the last 12 to 18 months. However, interviewees reported some dissatisfaction about their GP in relation to cost. On investigation, it appeared that there was a wide variety of fees being paid for trips to see a doctor. It is not known if this is due to a lack of knowledge with the system and what they are

eligible for, or not knowing which clinics to register with to get access to various subsidies:

We were told about the Community Services Card and that there would be subsidised medical visits. At first we were charged \$10, now we have to pay \$37. If you have a headache, there's a \$2 medicine that will make you feel better but the doctor costs \$37. We know of another family where one person has to go to the doctor twice a week at \$37 a time. It takes up half the benefit so the family has stopped going to the doctor.
(Adult female)

General health

In general most of those interviewed reported being in good health. Some had even found that ailments that had troubled them back in Nepal were no longer a problem. As one woman said of her husband 'in camp, my husband had a problem with the noise. The Doctor said he would need an ear operation. Since he's arrived that's all gone. He used to get fevers too and they have gone'. It was a similar story for another woman's children as she said 'my child used to have lots of illnesses, cold and things from the pollution but she doesn't have that now'.

The women that had given birth since arriving to New Zealand had found the experience to be positive, and had experienced no difficulties with the process. All of these women relayed that it was much easier than having a baby in Nepal.

For some, the arrival to New Zealand and the subsequent access to better healthcare meant that health problems unidentified in Nepal had been picked up either during health checks at the Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre or on arrival to the community. All of those interviewed who identified that they or family had health problems said that they were able to access the treatment and/or medications that they needed. However, for these people, their time in New Zealand had been more difficult due to their health, and it was recognised that the weather in New Zealand had likely exacerbated their problems.

Access to interpreters

Language difficulties often make it difficult for refugees to communicate with health professionals and therefore to get the help they may need (Ager & Strang, 2008). When asked if they had been able to get access to interpreters when accessing healthcare, most interviewees reported that this had not been a significant issue for them. Language difficulties had been overcome by the use of family and friends more proficient in English language attending appointments, or by doctors themselves being from South Asian countries (for example India and Bangladesh) and therefore they have been able to communicate in Hindi or better understand the doctor's English due to their more familiar accent.

Summary

A key change from pre to post departure was in the sense of safety and security perceived by interviewees. Prior to departure there was a longing for stability, security and freedom after living as refugees in limbo for so long. New Zealand has provided this. During interviews conducted in the community, interviewees

frequently commented on their increased sense of security and safety and there were the beginnings of a sense of 'belonging'. Some, after living in New Zealand for 20 months, stated that they wanted to become a part of the country. For example, when asked what her goals were for the next five years one mother responded that 'we will be citizens of this country'. She felt that her family was finally settled and her children were happy here. Another man relayed his hopes to be able to give back to New Zealand and share some of his country, culture, religion and traditions with New Zealanders. He explained that he would like to 'share with our Kiwi friends ... to pass on my knowledge [of rituals and philosophies] and wisdom to them. That's my goal'.

For the most part, the needs of those interviewed for a safe home and family life were generally met. Many were satisfied with their current level of housing, and felt safe in their neighbourhoods and generally within their city and New Zealand. Many enjoyed their immediate location and the amenities available within it. In addition, the health needs of most had been met, and access to the care and medication needed had not been an issue except for cost.

For those who had experienced problems with their housing, this was a cause for concern and stress and was impacting on general health and wellbeing. Of primary concern was the damp and cold nature of current housing. It was also noticeable that for some there was little knowledge of their freedom to find new housing and/or who to approach about this. It is important that former refugees are informed of the appropriate channels to move through to voice their concerns and get help with their individual situations.

10 SOCIAL INTERACTIONS AND CULTURAL MAINTENANCE

'It is necessary to teach our children who don't know our culture. It's your own identity. It's very important for us.' (Middle-aged male)

Introduction

Social support is another key factor involved in successful resettlement. It is important that there is support from refugees' family, friends and ethnic community as well as the receiving community (McDonald et al., 2008). The support from family and friends of the same or similar ethnic background is particularly important as it enables new arrivals to maintain their familiar cultural practices, patterns and relationships. This plays a large role in the ability to feel settled (Ager & Strang, 2008).

The former Bhutanese refugees interviewed in this study were only the second cohort to be resettled in New Zealand. Therefore, there are only small numbers within this ethnic community in New Zealand. In addition, due to the third-country resettlement programme currently underway, Bhutanese refugees are being dispersed around many different Western countries throughout the world. This presents particular challenges for this community in terms of maintaining their unique Nepali Bhutanese culture as well as maintaining contact with one another.

This chapter explores how the Bhutanese community have kept in contact with one another, and are managing to maintain their culture and religion in a Western society.

Pre-departure expectations

Interviewees relayed a strong sense of identity during interviews conducted in Nepal. It was hoped that contact could be maintained with friends and family still in camps in Nepal as well as those resettled in other countries. However, it was not known how this might work in practice: 'difficult to contact [family] as resettling in many different countries'. After experiences of cultural and religious persecution many interviewees also hoped to be able to freely express themselves in New Zealand and wear their national dress, follow their traditions and worship freely. One woman relayed her thoughts on the matter saying 'we don't want anybody to remove that we are Hindu ... We don't want anybody to criticise our festivals. We would like to flourish our Hindu culture and tradition'. In addition, coming from a collective society and after being in communal living conditions for a prolonged period of time neighbours were an important element of the life they envisaged for themselves in New Zealand. It was hoped that neighbours would be supportive and helpful on arrival and also that they would be Nepali: 'I like Nepali neighbours because there [New Zealand] local people will be different than me'. (Middle-aged male)

Social Interactions

Making friends

Many interviewees had made friends with New Zealanders or people from other ethnic communities since their arrival. Mostly friends had been made through English language or other courses or in some cases through sports teams. Some of the younger participants had experienced some difficulty in making friends at school, this was mainly due to the fact that 'cliques' already existed, and/or due to communication difficulties. Some parents also expressed that their children had initially had difficulty making friends, but once they had settled in to school, and their English improved this had changed.

Neighbours

In the first two phases of this research, neighbours emerged as being of high importance to this group. Camp life in Nepal was communal, reflecting traditional culture as well as the realities of having to live close to each other with little privacy in a refugee camp environment. Prior to arrival in New Zealand it was assumed by interviewees that this close contact would continue, and indeed during interviews most reported that they have had contact with their neighbours to varying degrees since arriving in the community. For some contact was a wave when they saw their neighbour, whereas for others more of a relationship had formed with children playing together, and meals being shared at each others' homes. Others exchanged vegetables, or helped each other out when needed:

One family gave us a big cake when we arrived, and we share veges when we grow them. (Adult female)

The neighbours are good - we share meals and visit each others' houses. (Middle-aged male)

The grass was long so when the neighbour saw me he helped me mow the lawn. (Middle-aged male)

We visit the neighbours and they visit us. Our son plays with their son who is around the same age. (Middle-aged female)

Contact with each other

There was a strong sense of community in all of the centres visited, whereby the Bhutanese community had formed groups and were in constant contact with one another. In Christchurch, they took turns to visit each others homes and had formed an ethnic society. Those in Palmerston North had gained use of a community hall which they used to gather together. In Nelson, close contact with one another was also maintained, and they too had made steps to form an ethnic society. There was a definite sense of connectedness to each other within each city, but also within New Zealand, and it was clear that the community had been able to maintain contact with each other, and that this was important.

Contact with friends and families outside of New Zealand

Every person interviewed had been in regular contact with friends and family still in camps in Nepal, and/or with those resettled in other countries, mostly the

United States, Canada and Australia. The main method of communication was telephone, with the use of phone cards, but some also used the internet to email or Skype friends and family. However, some problems, particularly early on, were experienced. For example, on arrival to New Zealand the lack of understanding about the cost of toll calls, and the ease with which such calls could be made meant that several families racked up huge phone bills that they were unable to pay:

The first three weeks the phone line was connected but there was no restriction on international dialling so we ran up a big phone bill. The phone line now only has local calls. (Adult female)

For some, the contact with friends and family is particularly important, as they have no family in New Zealand, or as was often the case, the husband's family was in New Zealand, but the wife's family was resettled in another country:

All my husband's family is here but all mine are in the USA so I am caught. I would like to go and visit them ... My daughter says she will be a pilot and take me to the USA. (Adult female)

For those without family members in New Zealand it has been more difficult to feel settled and homesickness and sadness were common. Many would like the opportunity to visit their family in other countries, but with the cost of this it is difficult to envisage how this, at least in the immediate future, will be possible.

In addition, many worried about their family still in camps in Nepal and those in Bhutan. For those with family still in Bhutan this was particularly concerning and contact with these family members was more dangerous and therefore intermittent as one man relayed 'I have parents in Bhutan, sometimes I contact Bhutan but if authorities find out that a phone call is for my father then he will be arrested so my father sometimes calls from Bhutan instead'.

Others who had no family in New Zealand desperately wanted their loved ones to be resettled in New Zealand, but more often than not were told that this was not going to be possible:

Most difficult thing is not having our own relatives here - no one from our own family ... My husband's parents would like to come to New Zealand but UNHCR said no. (Adult female)

My sister and her husband would like to come to New Zealand but the UNHCR said no and they're processing their application to the USA. My sister realised that I was all alone and she wanted to come to be with me but they said no. (Adult female)

Like other refugee groups in New Zealand, it is apparent that as the former Bhutanese refugees become more settled in New Zealand, family reunification will be of increasing importance. It will be important that this process is well managed and clearly communicated.

Religion

Given a history of religious and cultural persecution, the ability to freely practice their culture and religion was important to the Bhutanese interviewed. Before

arrival to New Zealand it was hoped for, but unknown whether this would be possible.

Most of those interviewed had been able to freely express themselves by celebrating their ethnic festivals, wearing traditional dress, and cooking the food that they are familiar with in New Zealand. However, whilst this group has had the freedom to freely express their cultural and religious practices, living in a Western society means that there are some restrictions and barriers in their ability to do this. This has meant that there has had to be some flexibility and creativity involved in the way in which rituals are performed, worship is conducted and festivals celebrated. For example, when a new baby is born a naming ceremony is performed and as part of this a fire needs to be lit. For one family, instead of doing this the 'traditional' way they 'did it in the garage'. Festivals were still celebrated, but were generally on a smaller scale, and not all of them were celebrated in the same way they would have been in the past, as one man said 'we wouldn't have leave to celebrate them all'.

Ability to practice religion

The majority of the interviewees are Hindu, and their religion and faith is of extreme importance to them and their wellbeing. However, the ability for the former Bhutanese refugees to practice their religion and worship differed depending on location.

In Christchurch, many of the former Bhutanese refugees had located and attended worship at a Hare Krishna Temple. In addition, every Sunday they got together and worshipped at each others homes. For those in Christchurch, performing necessary rituals was much easier as a priest was resettled as part of the group.

For those based in Palmerston North, the ability to worship was somewhat more restricted. Whilst most interviewees stated that they were able to worship at home and got together as a group, there was no temple for them to go to. In addition, a main cause of extreme stress for many in Palmerston North was the lack of a priest. The following sentiment came up time and again during interviews: 'there is no temple, no place for worship and no Hindu priest in Palmerston North. It is very important to have a priest'. The absence of a priest meant there was no one to perform important rituals. It was possible to get the priest from Christchurch to come up to Palmerston North, however, this cost money and during festival times for example he was also needed in Christchurch.

For the interviewees who are Christian, finding a place of worship had been easy, and in fact, was much easier than in Nepal where they were very much in a minority. These families had been well supported by their church communities and had experienced no difficulties as far as religion was concerned.

There were some concerns raised about the ability to perform certain rituals and adhere to certain protocols, of particular concern was around death. At the time of interviews there had been no deaths within the community. However, it was identified that when this did happen the Bhutanese would not know what to do or whether they would be able to perform the necessary rituals before cremation. In addition, following a death a bereaved person does not leave home for 14 days.

Concerns about whether this would be possible in New Zealand given work and study commitments were voiced. Ensuring that there is a good understanding between the Bhutanese community and schools, learning institutions and other agencies will be necessary to manage the differing cultural practices.

Cultural Maintenance

Given how globally dispersed this population has become, the issue of cultural maintenance comes to the fore. As a group the Nepali Bhutanese have a strong sense of identity. This is something that came through during all three interview phases. Interviewees were asked how they might maintain this identity in Western societies, given that they are so dispersed throughout the world.

Many acknowledged the difficulties of maintaining their language in New Zealand. They realised that their children were quickly learning English, and that they would be exposed to English as a main language; only speaking Nepali at home. For those who spoke certain dialects, there was also the realisation that this would die out. For example, one man identified that he was one of only two people in New Zealand that could speak his tribal language. He wanted to be able to pass this language on to his children, but knew that in reality it was unlikely that this would happen. The importance of maintaining their culture and passing this on to their children was expressed by many. For example:

It is necessary to teach our children who don't know our culture ... It's your own identity. It's very important for us. (Middle-aged male)

It is very important to teach [our children] the culture. They will learn English at school. (Adult female)

It's very important to pass on to our children. We know our rituals and culture but if we don't teach our children they won't know. We are trying to get funding to teach our children Sanskrit. (Middle-aged male)

Very important 100 percent ... It's our duty to protect the culture. (Adult female)

In Palmerston North two initiatives have been started to help the Bhutanese there to connect with each other and share their culture. Every Sunday families gather at a local hall and teach their children the Nepali language, and Sanskrit. In addition, a weekly one hour programme has been started on a local radio station for the local Bhutanese community to tune in to.

Summary

Prior to arriving in New Zealand it was unknown by interviewees how much contact they would be able to maintain with one another or what level of autonomy they would be provided to dress in their national dress and follow the Hindu faith in New Zealand.

Whilst there have definitely been challenges associated with practicing the Hindu faith appropriately in New Zealand, for the most part these have been able to be worked around with creative thinking and flexibility. There are concerns for the wellbeing of the older generation, particularly in Palmerston North, who do not currently have a priest within their community. This is a cause of stress, and

weighs heavily on the older generation. Likewise, the lack of understanding about Nepali Bhutanese and Hindu culture/faith in New Zealand is cause for concern for some interviewed as they are unsure if they will be able to carryout important rituals and protocols following certain events.

Despite the challenges associated with being a dispersed ethnic community living in Western societies, it is clear that as a group the former Bhutanese refugees are highly motivated and proactive. Whilst being realistic about what can be achieved, they are making steps to connect with each other at the local level, arranging informal gatherings to get together and worship. In addition, they have quickly organised themselves to create formal Bhutanese ethnic societies. It is these kinds of measures, along with the importance placed on their sense of identity that will ensure this group, at least in the near future, is able to maintain their culture and religion as much as is possible. Making places available for this community to gather together to worship and socialise will be important in the longer term for maintaining the Nepali Bhutanese cultural identity.

11 RESETTLEMENT EXPERIENCES AND HOPES, PLANS AND ASPIRATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

'We decided to come here thinking of the bright future for the children. Based on our experience so far we hope for that.' (Middle-aged male)

Introduction

Having lived in New Zealand for the past 18 to 20 months, this group has come through the initial 'settling in' period. As a cohort who has experienced New Zealand's resettlement programme first hand, this chapter explores what insights this group has, and given where they are at now, asks what their hopes are for their future.

Thoughts on New Zealand's resettlement program

As this group had just gone through the resettlement process in New Zealand, they were able to provide some unique insights into the way in which New Zealand resettles quota refugees. In addition, due to the nature of third-country resettlement for Bhutanese refugees and the level of connectedness of this group, insights were also able to be gleaned as to the pros and cons of New Zealand's approach compared to other countries.

New Zealand's resettlement approach

All interviewees were extremely appreciative of the New Zealand Government and the opportunity they had provided them to start a new life. The following sentiments were common:

We never dreamed of living in New Zealand. We have never dreamed of having these facilities in Nepal. We have seen a car, but never dreamed of owning one now we have one and a house ... We have got so much, [the New Zealand Government] have provided everything. (Middle-aged female)

Happy with New Zealand Government – My first duty is to serve them as they helped us move here. (Adult female)

Until now everyone is supporting me and everyone is helping me. (Middle-aged male)

This group would not like to be seen as 'complaining' and in general had an optimistic outlook as one woman said 'everything is provided for us, so we feel bad to ask for more'. However, there were inevitably some issues and improvements that they thought could be made to make resettlement easier and outcomes better.

Refugee Re-establishment Grants

Firstly, many brought up the Re-establishment Grant that refugees are entitled to on arrival through Work and Income New Zealand. This is up to \$1,200 per family and is to help with the costs associated with setting up a home or life in New Zealand, for example; furniture, bedding, clothes, attending English language

classes, transport costs (Work and Income, 2011). Interviewees frequently expressed that this amount did not cover the costs that it was designed for, and that it also benefited families with adult children as each adult family member was entitled to the grant:

The settlement grant is \$1200 – have to buy a fridge etc and it's not enough for clothes as well. We heard of a single mother who had no facilities in the house, no furniture or anything and she couldn't manage. It was very hard for her. (Adult female)

We are provided with \$1200 for a family, but if the family has older children, they get \$1200 each, so they have a lot more to spend. (Adult male)

Employment and vocational training

The other major area where it was felt more emphasis needed to be placed was with employment and vocational training. Many felt that New Zealand had brought them to New Zealand, and so had some sort of responsibility to ensure they did not remain 'idle' and had the opportunity to contribute to society. As a group they did not want to rely on 'hand outs' from the government, and had applied for third-country resettlement in order to kick start their lives again. The below are an example of interviewees' thoughts and suggestions:

If the government can fund city councils to up-skill us, this would make it much easier for us to integrate. (Middle-aged male)

If the course was designed to suit the qualifications that people have when they come – an up-skilling programme. It should be more focused on a job. (Adult male)

The biggest thing is a job. The government have to do something to help this problem, we are given driving training and computer help but need more than this. (Adult male)

The Immigration Department brings us here; we need a chance to upgrade skills. Everyone wants New Zealand experience and how can we offer that? We need to get a chance to show that. (Adult male)

Vocational training can be a very successful strategy to include refugees in the labour market. It can be a first step to enter an organisation, learn the culture, engage in normal civic life and gain valuable experience (Hamberger, 2009).

The former Bhutanese refugees are extremely committed to New Zealand. They have made New Zealand their new home, and intend to stay here. In order to feel that they are contributing to a country that has given them so much, they need to have the opportunity to find meaningful employment. This will be this group's priority in the coming years.

Comparison to other countries

Being such a well connected group, interviewees had heard how Bhutanese resettled in other countries were also faring and the assistance that they had received. Most commented on differences between New Zealand and the United

States. The main comparison to be made was that many of those who had been resettled in the United States had found jobs, and had done so quickly. In general it was felt that because of this, those resettled in the United States were better off:

Family in the USA have a job. They have started working already and have bought a house. They have a community group who help them find work. Those who are not well educated find it easier to get a job because they don't have to get any qualifications accredited/checked. (Adult male)

Our family in the USA have found a job so they are better off. If we could get a job it would be better. (Adult female)

All brothers and sisters are in the USA and started work straight away. (Adult female)

However, whilst there was acknowledgement that work opportunities were better in the United States, it was also recognised that because former refugees are not entitled to the same benefits as in New Zealand, that they have not had the opportunities that those resettled in New Zealand have had to improve their English language and continue with their studies:

After 6 months you have to earn your own living. Children have to leave school. Just work, eat and sleep and it's hard to learn English. (Adult male)

There is more opportunity to find work over there, but more opportunity to study here. (Adult female)

Whilst some thought that perhaps they would have liked to have been resettled in the United States, most were grateful for the assistance that is provided in New Zealand and the opportunities that this creates.

Achievements

At the end of the interviews every interviewee was asked what their biggest achievement had been since arriving in New Zealand. Responses to this varied but generally followed similar themes. For half of those interviewed, their biggest achievement was improving their English. For others, completing a course or learning to use a computer was recognised as their biggest achievement to date. For some new mothers having a baby was understandably their biggest achievement, whereas for some fathers, learning to drive and owning a car was theirs. Some were more philosophical in their responses recognising that for them the biggest achievement was starting a new life in New Zealand and finding happiness for them and for their children and future grandchildren.

Hopes for the future

There were several hopes interviewees held for their future, and certain goals they hoped to achieve. For many it was hoped that they would be able to find a job that would utilise their skills and make their own way here in New Zealand. As one woman said of her future 'I would like to be independent and earn something for my own living'. For others they hoped that they would be able to improve

their English: 'to communicate in English is my dream' said one mother. Completing a course was a primary goal for some whereas for others the goal was to learn to drive. Others hoped to be able to visit their loved ones resettled in other countries at some stage in the future.

Hopes for their children

For many refugees, a primary motivator in the decision to apply for third-country resettlement was to provide a better future for their children. At the end of interviews parents were asked what hopes they now held for their children and their futures. Parents most often hoped that their children would have a good education which would lead to a rewarding career, one woman joked that she was thinking her daughter would be a nurse, and her son a policeman, but acknowledged that they would decide. Like most parents, those interviewed also wanted their children to grow up to be 'good' and 'happy' people who were able to positively contribute to society. But overall, parents overwhelmingly wanted to provide a future for their children that was better than what they could have expected if they stayed in the camps in Nepal:

We decided to come here thinking of the bright future for the children. Based on our experience so far we hope for that. (Middle-aged male)

I know this is a better place so no doubt they will have a better future. (Adult female)

Summary

For most, New Zealand's resettlement programme and the opportunities that it allows were unimaginable before arrival to New Zealand. There were inevitably some areas where improvements were identified, and these commonly revolved around more government assistance. Coming from 18 years spent within refugee camps where day-to-day living was dependent on others, and there were little opportunities for independence it is unsurprising that this group expect a certain level of assistance with regards to their future. Of particular importance to this group is gaining employment and opportunities to do so in other countries led some to feel disadvantaged by being resettled in New Zealand.

There was a sense of hope and anticipation for the future, particularly towards the younger generation and the opportunities they will have and the options that will be available to them. However, for interviewees themselves, the future seemed less certain with many unsure whether they would gain meaningful employment.

12 CONCLUSION AND ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

'We suffered so much back there, now we have happiness and a relaxed life.' (Adult female)

After spending up to 18 years living in limbo in refugee camps, the Nepali Bhutanese have had the opportunity to move forward with their lives with the offer of third-country resettlement. The Bhutanese refugee needs, experiences and expectations research provides a unique insight into the resettlement journey of a cohort of refugees, and explores the challenges associated with resettlement from pre-departure to arrival to settlement in the community.

The community interviews provided the opportunity to explore how the Nepali Bhutanese were finding life in their new home up to 20 months post resettlement. Most have settled well in New Zealand, but there have been challenges that they have faced and continue to come up against.

Pre-settlement

New Zealand does not provide any pre-departure orientation, focusing on-arrival orientation instead. However, before departure, refugees to New Zealand are given a pre-departure settlement booklet in their own language that provides basic information about New Zealand.

One of the primary findings from this research is that the Bhutanese had some unrealistic expectations about what third-country resettlement would mean for them and their future. This is largely a result of having very little knowledge about New Zealand prior to departing Nepal. This has resulted in some disappointment with some things on arrival to New Zealand.

Prior to departure there is a need to ensure refugee groups are given factual information about some of the realities of settling in New Zealand, for example, information on New Zealand's education, health and welfare system and what is provided on arrival. Given the large number of countries resettling the Bhutanese, there is also a lot of confusion and misinformation within the camps in terms of what each country is providing. Managing expectations prior to departure will help to shape more realistic expectations on arrival to New Zealand and therefore make some aspects of the resettling process easier.

Orientation programme

All refugees granted residence in New Zealand under the Refugee Quota Programme spend their first 6 weeks at the Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre in Auckland. At the centre they are provided with orientation programmes in their own language which provide general information about life in New Zealand as well as English language lessons and basic social and coping skills.

Interviews found the orientation programme provided a good foundation of knowledge. Of particular help were the English language lessons, obtaining a learners drivers licence and the familiarisation with electrical appliances and New Zealand culture. There were some areas where more help would have been beneficial on arrival to the community or whilst at the Mangere Refugee

Resettlement Centre, namely; more practice with banking and shopping, access to identification and documents and a more appropriate format of the learners license test. However, as a result of the orientation programme received, most interviewees reported being adequately prepared on arrival to their home in the community.

Arrival to the community

Despite being well prepared, volunteers were integral to the group's ability to adjust to their new environment and most were heavily reliant on them at least initially on arrival to the community. Volunteers are a critical component to the success of the resettlement of refugees. They provide not only practical support to set up a new life in New Zealand but are also a key social contact for many.

The acquisition of English

Communication difficulties and the acquisition of English language has been one of the key challenges and barriers to settling in New Zealand. For some learning English has been harder than anticipated, and progress therefore slower than what they would have liked. For others, there have been barriers to accessing English language training, due to a lack of availability of free courses or Home Tutors, a high cost of training, transport difficulties and a lack of childcare to attend classes. Mothers of young children have experienced the greatest difficulty accessing English language and had made the least amount of progress in learning the language. For the younger generation, the strong foundation of English language they brought with them to New Zealand has meant progress has been rapid and difficulties less pronounced. The acquisition of English language for many will continue to be a priority and women in particular will need continued, consistent support to progress their English further.

Education

All three phases of this research have highlighted the value interviewees place on education. Despite limitations of a camp environment, the education system within camps in Nepal was of a high standard and the younger generation in particular have had access to schooling. On arrival to New Zealand, many of the young adults interviewed had taken advantage of the opportunities available to them and had enrolled in a number of different courses. The primary goal of most was to gain meaningful employment on completion. However, with a lack of knowledge about New Zealand and its labour market, there is a risk that his group may complete courses based on misguided information. In order to maximise this group's potential there is a need for quality educational and career advice to be available. It is hoped the development of comprehensive resettlement plans may provide this advice and assistance for future refugee groups resettling in New Zealand.

Safety, security and general wellbeing

A key change from pre to post departure for the Bhutanese interviewed was a perceived increase in safety and security experienced in New Zealand. There was no longer the sense of fear experienced by some within the refugee camps and the label of refugee had been removed with their approval as New Zealand

permanent residents. In general a sense of 'belonging' and commitment to New Zealand was beginning to emerge and some relayed their hopes to become New Zealand citizens in the future.

Cultural maintenance

Maintaining the Nepali Bhutanese identity was of high importance for interviewees. There are challenges with this given the amount this group is internationally and nationally dispersed. However, despite this the Nepali Bhutanese in New Zealand have maintained links with each other. At a community level in all three resettlement cities they have quickly established registered ethnic societies and get together on a weekly basis to socialise and worship. Nationally this group is also in contact with one another, some visiting friends and family resettled in other communities. Internationally the Nepali Bhutanese have also managed to maintain contact and are in frequent phone and email/Skype contact.

The ability to openly and freely practice the Hindu religion in New Zealand has been a 'great joy' for interviewees. Festivals are still celebrated, just in a different way or on a smaller scale, and traditional dress is worn and food cooked. However, the ability to worship for those based in Palmerston North has been limited, and this has had an impact on the wellbeing of some of those interviewed. For these people, gaining an appropriate place to worship and more importantly a priest is of utmost importance and will be integral in the ability for them to successfully settle in New Zealand. In addition, it is also important that agencies directly involved with former refugees including schools and health professionals are made aware of the cultural and religious practices of the Nepali Bhutanese. This will help to ensure mutual understanding in times of religious and/or cultural significance.

The scale of the third-country resettlement programme of Nepali Bhutanese means that many countries are contributing to the resettlement process and New Zealand can only accommodate a certain number each year. As this community finds its feet in New Zealand and becomes more settled it is likely that family reunification will increasingly become a significant issue. The process will need to be well communicated with this group in order to manage expectations.

Employment

Employment was the primary concern for many interviewees. Work had been hard to come by and was found to be the one disadvantage of being resettled in New Zealand. For many, there was a need to improve English language before employment could be obtained, but for others there was a readiness and desire to move into the workforce. As a group, they were not happy to remain reliant on a government benefit for their day-to-day living and most expressed a willingness to work hard and give back to New Zealand should this opportunity be provided to them.

There are ways in which the Bhutanese identified they could enter the labour market, for example, by working in market gardens. However, they identified the need for this to be brokered by a third party. In addition, it must be noted that many have not had the opportunity to work during their time in the camps in

Nepal, and therefore have not worked since leaving Bhutan up to 18 years ago. Providing opportunities for vocational training and up-skilling alongside English language tuition will give them the best chance of gaining employment in New Zealand. Furthermore, informing this group of ways in which to do volunteer work in order to gain valuable New Zealand work experience and learn more about New Zealand work culture would also be of benefit. It is clear that there is limited knowledge amongst the Bhutanese about ways in which to independently look for work. More information on job seeking strategies in the New Zealand context may be a useful resource for this specific group.

Summary

The Bhutanese are an empowered group of people, who as part of the Community Development Approach were actively involved in the day-to-day administration and running of camps in Nepal and are used to having some control and voice in their affairs. In contrast, they have also been reliant on international aid for their day-to-day living and other countries for their futures in terms of third-country resettlement.

Whilst overall quality of life has increased, not all expectations of third-country resettlement have been able to met as yet and there have been unanticipated barriers particularly in relation to communication and gaining employment. However, the Bhutanese interviewed conveyed determination, resilience and strength. Whilst still learning about Western ways and New Zealand culture, they have quickly mobilised as a group and empowered themselves by taking advantage of opportunities available, enrolling in education, and forming Bhutanese ethnic societies. Interviewees had made some significant achievements such as learning English, gaining a drivers licence, and completing courses. They have many hopes for the future, which for most include gaining employment, speaking fluent English and most importantly for many, providing a better future for their children.

Overall, the future for the former Bhutanese refugees interviewed looks positive. They have faced many hardships and challenges in their resettlement journey but remain optimistic and enviably philosophical in their outlook of the future. As one man said 'we come with nothing, we go with nothing'.

APPENDIX A: MAPS

Map A1: Location of Bhutan and Nepal



Source: UNHCR

Map A2: Location of refugee camps in Nepal



Source: UNHCR

APPENDIX B: COMMUNITY INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

Bhutanese resettlement needs, expectations and experiences study

Phase 3 – community questionnaire

Interview No.: _____ Date: _____

Time Start: _____ Time Finish: _____

Notes:

Question 1 – First Impressions/Settling in

I'd like to begin by going back to your first few weeks living in Nelson

- 1A:** Can you tell us what happened when you first arrived in Nelson?
- 1B:** What did you think about Nelson?
- 1C:** What helped you and your family most in those first few weeks?
- 1D:** What were the hardest things for you and your family when you first arrived?
- 1E:** Did any of the things you did or learned at Mangere help you in those first few weeks?
- 1F:** What helped you the most?
- 1G:** What would have made those first few weeks in Nelson easier for you and your family?

(Prompt, is there anything else that could have been covered at Mangere?)

Question 2 – Housing and living arrangements

"Can we talk about what it's like for you now, since you've been here for over a year?"

2A: Let's start with your living situation. Have you moved house since you first arrived?

IF YES

2B: Why did you move?

2C: Have you had any problems with this house?

IF YES – prompt for type of problems

(eg; location, proximity to family members, who you are housed with, the actual house itself or the neighbourhood, accessing transport and shopping, rent money etc)

2D: Have you had any problems signing up with power/telephone companies?

2E: Do you have plans to move houses or cities in the next year – if so, why?

Question 3 – English Language

"The next questions are about learning English"

3A: Since you arrived in New Zealand have you had any help to improve your English?

3B: What has helped you the most?

3C: Have you had any problems getting help with your English?

IF YES – prompt for type of problems

3D: How is your spoken English now, compared to when you first arrived in New Zealand?

Question 4 - Education

"These next questions are about education"

4A: Since you came to New Zealand have you done any courses or study other than learning English?

IF YES

4B: What did you do?

IF NO

4C: Is there any training/ or study you would like to do in the future? Have you made any plans for that?

4D: Have you or any of your family members had any problems enrolling at school or University/Polytech?

4E: *(If have school-aged children)* How do your children like school in New Zealand? What do they like the most?

4F: Have they had any problems at school?

IF YES - prompt for kind of problems they have had?

Question 5 – Employment and Income

“Now I would like to ask you about your work and income since you arrived”

5A: Have you had a paid job since you came to New Zealand?

IF NO – 5I

IF YES

5B: How important do you think it is to find paid work soon after arrival?

5C: Are you working at the moment? (if answer is no go to 5I)

5D: Can you tell me a bit about your job?

5E: How many hours do you usually work a week in this job?

5F: How did you find the job? (eg, yourself, directed through WINZ etc)

5G: Is this job the main source of income for your family?

IF NO

5H: What is the main source of income for your family?

NO – Employment Questions

5I: Have you looked for work since arriving in New Zealand?

IF YES

5J: What kind of work have you looked for?

5K: What has been the main difficulty finding work?

5L: Has finding a job in New Zealand been harder than you expected?

5M: Do you need any help to find a job? What would be most help for you?

5N: How important do you think it is to find paid work soon after arrival?

5O: What is your family's main source of income?

Question 6 - Health

6A: How has your health been since you arrived in New Zealand? What about other people in your family?

6B: Are you and your family registered with a doctor's clinic? If so, have you and your visited the clinic since you arrived in Nelson?

Question 7 – Safety

7A: How safe do you feel in New Zealand? Is there anything that worries you?

(If unsafe prompt for why they feel this way)

Question 8 - Culture and religion

8A: Have you found a place of worship (eg, a temple) to practice your religion?

8B: Have you been able to celebrate some of your ethnic festivals since arriving in Nelson?

(IF have had any problems – prompt for what these problems have been)

8C: How important is it for you to keep your Bhutanese culture alive in New Zealand?

(Prompt – to speak Nepali, pass on traditions to children etc).

Question 9 – Social contact

“Can we talk now about your contact with other people since you arrived in New Zealand”

9A: Since you arrived have you had any contact with friends and family in camps in Nepal?

(Prompt for frequency and type of contact)

9B: How about friends and family resettled in other countries and around New Zealand?

(Prompt for frequency and type of contact)

9C: Would you like to have been in touch with people more? What has made it hard for you to keep in touch? (*if wanted to keep in contact*)

9D: How have you made friends outside your own community since you came to Nelson?

9E: Have you had any contact with your neighbours?

9E: Have you joined or formed any kind of ethnic community organisations since arriving in Nelson?

Question 10 – Overall settlement

10A: Overall, what has been hardest about resettling in New Zealand for you and your family?

10B: What has helped you and your family the most to feel settled here?

10C: What have been your biggest achievements since you arrived?

10D: Is there anything that the New Zealand government could do to make the experience of resettling in New Zealand easier?

Question 11 – Hopes for the future

11A: Do you have any goals for the next five years?

11B: *(If applicable)* What hopes do you have for your children?

Question 12

Finally, is there anything else that you would like to say about settling in New Zealand?

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