



The 2nd Annual Refugee Communities Advocacy Network conference

Devi Ghimire

**President of Bhutanese Community in Australia
(BCA), Melbourne**

LIFE IN REFUGEE CAMPS



- More than 120,000 Southern Bhutanese were evicted since 1990s from Bhutan
- High mortality rates in camps due to hunger, diseases, and extreme hardship
- Lack of Resources, opportunities, insecure and living in despair
- Spending more than 2 decades in this dark world



Life in Australia

- Totally different but more secure and safe
- Challenging but more opportunities
- Cultural shock but comfortable to adopt our own culture
- Thank you Australia and Australians

THANK YOU



To all 8 countries that resettled Bhutanese Refugees of more than 102,000 According to UNHCR on **30 April 2016**

- Australia (5,790)
- United State of America (86,826)
- Canada (6,675)
- New Zealand (1,009)
- Norway (566)
- Demark (875)
- Netherland (329)
- United Kingdom (358)



Our contributions to Australia

- Donated AUS\$ 2493.00 to the bushfire victims of Victoria in 2009 (individual contributions)
- Donated AU\$2006 to Queensland flood victims in 2011 (Individual contributions)
- Hosted Multicultural Festival in 2012 alongside Karen-Burmese, Assyrian and Chaldean, Burundian and others from Africa, Italian, Greeks, Kurdish, Indian, Nepalese



Contribution outside Australia

- Financially supported earthquake victims of Nepal. [Individual Contribution (\$4,136.75) and Fund raised from Shopping Centre (\$850) total of \$4,986.75]
- Fire victims of Bhutanese Refugee Camps (twice)

Bhutanese Community in Australia Inc.

ABN: 95971 101 136





Introduction to BCA

- Bhutanese Community in Australia Inc. (Melbourne)
- Established in 2009
- A not for-profit organization



Key activities of BCA

- Partnership with Spectrum MRC to run driving classes for new arrivals (Both L and P) – Currently 15 members of the community are learning to drive.
- Nepali ethnic classes for children run by volunteer teacher
- Dance classes for everyone run by volunteer
- Citizenship classes for adults run by volunteer
- Drama and skit running by youth



Key activities (Continued)

- Partnership with BSL under RAP program for hall hire and equipment
- Organize Bhutanese cultural events/festival
- Strengthen & promote Bhutanese culture and tradition to the broader community

Citizenship Class 11am -1pm



NEPALI CLASS 11am -12pm



DANCE CLASS 12pm-1pm





Career Counselling

- BCA encourages our younger generation to have bigger dreams, therefore we need support from the broader community to help them transform into their new reality.
- Drop out rates of TAFE courses and university degrees are quite frequent amongst children and adults
- Most of our parents are uneducated and thus cannot provide guidance to their children
- Support worker from service providers could provide information and assistance for higher education
- We need volunteers, mentors, career counsellors and industry experts:
 - Assist making the correct choice of the subject they are interested in
 - Help to develop resume, apply for jobs and provide interview tips
- We need volunteers who can help connect fresh graduates access and gain industry experience

EMPLOYMENT



A major Issue especially for the age group of 30- 60 are caused by:

- **Language barriers** --- as a result of missed schooling- Never been to school
- **Lack of skills** -- only farming experience back in country
- **Lack of opportunity**– difficulty with the selection procedure/interview
- **Lack of job searching skills** -- no computer knowledge
- **Job Active**--- Lack of targeted support and persistence of unsolved barriers



EMPLOYMENT (Continued)

Our recommendations

- Securing contracts in areas such as cleaning, farming and running small business
- Win-win solution– Through enhancing employment opportunities
 - However, we need ideas and opportunities to know the process of how to secure employment contracts
 - There is a need for guidance, mentoring and support



EMPLOYMENT (Continued)

- 65% of total population of adults and youths are working:
 - Part time, full time or as casual
- People are mostly working in:
 - Service sector
 - Nursing home and aged care,
 - Employment agencies and centrelink,
 - Council,
 - Hospitality,
 - Cleaning
 - Administration

Lack of funding for Refugee Community Associations



- Not enough funding for small communities like us
- Need to depend on limited resources
- Only large organizations get funding
- Limited funding makes it very difficult to organise activities to meet the need of the community
- All our work is around voluntary service
- Unable to access the Council venues to hold any fund raising events due to the cost
 - Too expensive therefore unaffordable
- Unable to access sports venue for youth due to:
 - Lack of access to youth clubs- due to costs
 - Increasing need for the disengaged and desperate youth

FAMILY REUNION



- Most of us have family in Bhutan
- Some resettled families are still waiting for their family members and relatives to be released from Bhutan jail
- Unable to visit them as Bhutan Government does not allow Australian passport holders
- We kindly request Australian Government to lobby with Bhutan Government to allow us to visit and meet the families legally



HOUSING

- Challenging but most of them are on top of it
- 60% of total population settled in their own home (Purchased)
- Many are in a process of buying their own houses



ANY QUESTIONS?