The 2nd Annual Refugee Communities Advocacy Network conference

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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 Zeeland (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
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
  - Adminstration
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
Feedback about Bhutanese refugees

Service providers feedback
Bhutanese community are Active, Progressive and Willing to work to earn living

UNHCR feedback
Most successful settlement of Bhutanese refugees

Australian Government feedback
Take lessons from the successful resettlement of refugee families (including senior family members) from Bhutan
ANY QUESTIONS?