



A case study of Bhutanese refugees in Nepal

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Abstract

This research mainly focused on the recognition of Socio-Economic and livelihood situation of Bhutanese Refugees in Eastern Nepal. The study was conducted to understand, whether their situation will be one of a root cause of a possible conflict between Bhutan and the Nepal Governments in near future. Empirical data for the study was collected from the three Beldangi Bhutanese refugee camps. Basically, field data was collected from a sample of refugees by using a questionnaire. In additionally interviews and focus group discussions were also conducted. Secondary data were gathered through review of literature. The qualitative and quantitative data analyzed in dual approach. This study didn't cover all the Socio- Economic aspect of Bhutanese refugees. Instead emphasis was on the unemployment situation among the study group. The data explained that lack of economic condition has been changing their livelihood situation. Initially, unemployment has become a main cause to create their unstable economic condition. And also, as the stateless people, they haven't been able to fix with out side and to make relationship with them. That context has created a barrier to find out the government and private jobs from out side. The study mainly found that, this kind of situations has made a vulnerable situation for the young refugees to join the Moist Army against the Nepali Government. As the reason of stateless people they are getting less salary, even the labor context of the out side. Though the authorities made on attempt to address their needs, those have not sufficient to fulfill their actual needs. As the reasons of authorities are reduced the supplements year by year, the refugees have become frustration. Basically, in the unemployment context, they are facing as discriminators. In that sense, the study ensure that, this crucial situation will be one of a root cause to create violated Refugees and it will lead to arise a conflict between Nepal and Bhutan governments in near future.

Keywords: Conflicts, Economy, Unemployment, Livelihood situation

Introduction

This paper attempts to recognize the Socio-Economic difficulties which are faced by the Refugees in Eastern Nepal. The main critical challenge that is considered here is unemployment situation that they are facing in the current context. An emphasis was paid in the study to find out the causes for unemployment of Refugees and how it will be affected a conflict in the future. Further the legal framework associated with the Refugees' rights of employment was analyzed in order to understand issue.

The history of the Nepali speaking community in Bhutan goes back to 7th century AD. In the mid of 19th century those who have adaptability and experience to work under difficult condition was encouraged to work. This encouragement forced Nepalese to go to Bhutan and have a better life. As the result of formulation and implementation of a number of racist policies and discriminatory practices against the Lhotshampa citizens of southern Bhutan in 1985, they

were forced to leave from the country by making a large refugee population in eastern part of Nepal (Shrestha 2004).

Nepal as a multi lingual, multi cultural, multi racial, multi ethnic, multi religious society, also have been facing several socio-cultural and political problems. Though rich in Bio-diversity and agro-forestry, it is one of the poorest countries in the world.

The 1951 United Nations convention identified the "refugees" as, "Any person who as a result of events occurring before 1 January 1951 and owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, region, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is out side the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail him self of the protection of that country, or who , not having nationality and being out side the country of his former habitual residence as a result to such fear, is unwilling to return to it"

(Chimini 2000). According to this identification, can understand that most of the European and third world countries are suffering from refugees crises (Chimini 2004).

According to the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees). reports of 29th may-09th June 2006, there are more than 100,000 Lhotsampas, ethnic Nepalese refugees in Nepal. Of these about 90,000 who are officially recognized as refugees, live in seven camps located in Jhapa (such as Beldangi-I, Beldangi-II, Beldangi-II Extension, Sanischare, Goldhap, Timai and Khudunabari)

Methodology

This research mainly focused on the refugees in the Beldangi-I, Beldangi-II, and Beldangi-II Extension in Jhapa. An emphasis was given in the study to collect qualitative data. But some quantitative data also gathered from appropriate locations and authorities such as UNHCR, IMO (International Migration Organization), WFP (World Food Project). To collect the first hand empirical data, a questionnaire was administered where the questions were basically structured. The questionnaires were distributed among 150 refugees who were selected randomly. The questionnaire included 18 questions, were prepared by according to the basic structure, and based on Inventive type questions. Most of the young people's (80%) ideas were collected through those questionnaires. Though I distributed questionnaires both English and Nepali languages for collecting data, most of the younger people answered by English language. While conducting interviews, an emphasis was given to collect data from internally and externally in the camps. The interviews were conducted at three levels such as houses hold Interviews, Individual Interviews and focus groups discussions. In the house hold interviews, main emphasis was to find out their current economic back grounds' difficulties and their own suggestions to solve their difficulties. In the Individual Interviews, a sample of 35 male and female individuals were selected (between 25-35 ages), who are doing labor work, to earn a livelihood. The focus groups discussions were conducted with special groups comprised of educated and old people. The key issues discussed with them were the difficulties they are facing in the camps over the past 17 years and their suggestions for sustainable livelihood options. Further it was discussed the policy back ground that they have bounded to and the opinions about the outside people. While conducting interviews, on site observations

were also made to collect necessary information. The necessary and specific secondary data were gathered through review of literature.

Conceptual and Theoretical frame work

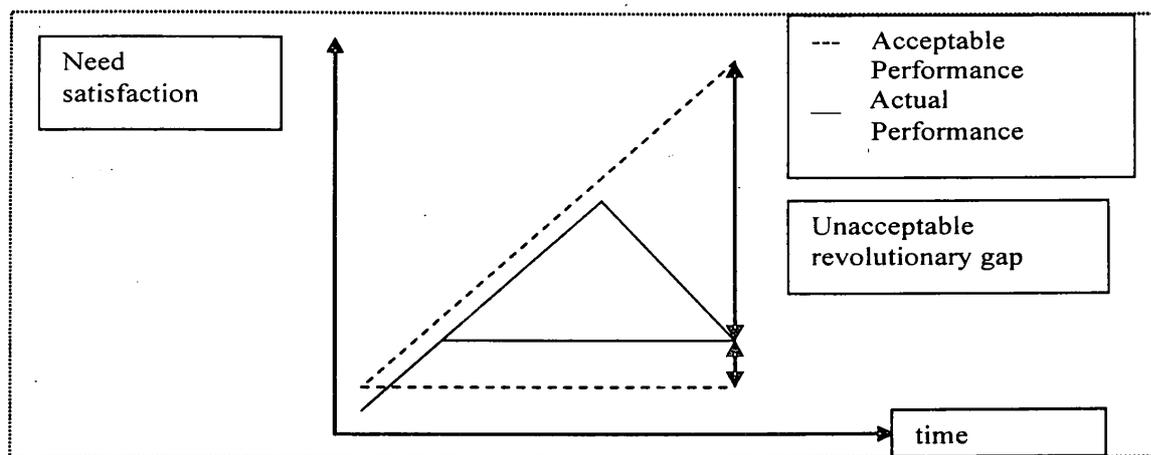
Considering various ways, Scholars have described the causes of conflict which are related to arisen a conflict. According to them vivid type of issues are arisen in the society associating with the causes of conflict.

The scholar, Paul Collier and his team assessed a range of variables to determine which were most salient to the risk of violent conflict. They have found that factors commonly identified as conflict causes such as economic mismanage, ethnic heterogeneity, the level of political rights, and regime type. (Cited from Ballentine and Sherman 2005). Among those, they have found that economic factors were more salient to the risk of conflicts. Like Unemployment, Land ownership, limited natural resources, etc. The high degree of Unemployment is a main root cause for arisen internal Conflict in every Country. The mismanagement of economic factors basically clears the path to increase the Unemployment rather than political and social factors. These have also been referred to the "Greed and Grievance" theories. (Cited from Ballentine and Sherman 2005). This theory has described that the economic factors are more salient to the risk of conflict. The motivation for Conflict in the grievance theory is the opportunity to right past wrongs. The unequal distribution, scarcity of resources, competition to access opportunities etc. grieve the people, and they always try to compare the difference between right and wrong. In this situation people become to the worst and withstand their discrimination. While in the greed theory the motivation is for seizing the resources through violent means. It is also necessary to distinguish different types of natural economic resources, the more likely that it could become a source of Conflict. Collier and his team is mentioned that natural resources and a mass of ill educated youth are created the rebel movement to gain the wealth and the opportunities. (Cited from Ballentine and Sherman, 2005). And they have found that large number of unemployed men, faced with few other income-earning opportunities may be more willing to join a rebellion and therefore increase the risk of armed conflicts in the society. Finally he summarise that people are motivated to the armed conflict as the reason of their greed rather than grievances.

The work of Lewis A. Coser, "*The Functions of Social Conflict*" describes what "realistic Conflicts" is about.

As Cosers definition of Conflicts, "Conflicts which arise from frustration of specific demands... and... are directed at the presumed frustrating object". (Cited from Wallensteen 2002: 39). Further more Wallensteen points out that thus they are Instrumental actions, not just a form of tension release or "anger". According to him every persons have demand for basic needs such as political and economic participation, physical security, nutrition, etc. If those demands don't full fill in his life time he becomes frustration. The final result of this is that these people take place instrumental actions to

gain their specific demands. The basic needs theory has described that when basic needs are not met in a particular society; instead they are out of reach for a group, which thus become frustrated. And the Conflicts originate in or feed on this frustration. James C. Davies has also described that how a gap emerges and when the difference between expectation and frustration becomes obvious. (Wallensteen 2002). He has described this specific idea using a figure on revolution.



Satisfaction of needs and revolution (wallensteen 2002 p: 41)

According to the above figure, the expectations are always higher than what is accomplished. Certain differences are therefore manageable. The achievements are seen as the lower line in the figure. When the gap becomes too large, however, it is like to be unacceptable. And this may happen, for instance, if the economy causes to grow after period of sustained growth. The actual achievement becomes considerably lower than was expected and thus discontent rises and this leads to a revolution of rising expectations. (Wallensteen 2002). The nature of human beings is tried to satisfy, receiving their preferable basic needs. They are always tolerated in limited psychological boundary till receiving those expectations. If it is met impossible that limited boundary become destroy and it turn to a psychological Revolution. The result of that, the unsatisfied people are going to the Instrumental revolutions. Even any person in the society does not satisfy from receiving their expectations. So every where in the world any types of struggles, rebels, revolutions, Conflicts, etc. may be arisen in any moment.

The Structural Conflict Theory also emphasizes the competing interests of groups as prime motivations of conflict. Thus primary sources of conflict are the social, economic and political organization of society

and in the nature and strength of ties within and between communities. (Galtung 1996). Considering above theories, we can understand that, the economic factor has become a main root cause for arising conflicts rather than other factors such as political, social etc. This has happened, as the reason of economic condition is mostly related to the human life and its changes are always impacted to the peoples' livelihood.

Discussion / Presentation Data

When considering the latest data, relating to the population in the camps, Beldangi I, Beldangi II, and Beldangi extension are the largest camps than others. 50% of the population has been living in those camps. The whole refugee population is nearly evenly divided between males and females, children fewer than 18 make up 39.96% of the population. Nearly 9.73% are between ages of 1-4. The adults between ages 18-59 covered 54.40% and adults age 60 and older make up 5.64% of the whole population. Almost 97% of the refugees are ethnic Nepalese. The non- Nepalese include the shachop, Drukpa, Urow and Khenpge ethnic groups. Nearly all refugees speak Nepali as their

first or second language. According to the latest data of UNHCR 2006, more than 35% of the population has basic knowledge of English. The Education process is also continuing in the camps. Both Nepali and English languages are the main languages which are taught there. Up to grade 10, the students follow the modified version of the Bhutanese curriculum and beyond grade 10; students attend local Nepali schools outside the camps. Some students have attended secondary schools and Universities in India.

Though the UNHCR, WFP or other INGOs, NGOs are giving their assistance continually, the refugees are not satisfied in the unstable economic situation. They are suffering in various daily needs and unfulfilled services. When consider their economic background, all the refugees have become unemployed. Though UNHCR and other Implementation Agencies help them in various ways to fulfill their daily expenditures, those are just sufficient for survival. Below list shows how the foods are distributed among the refugees by UNHCR.

Table 1- Distribution of food

Commodities	Quantities(g/pld)
Parboiled Rice	400
Whole	20
Lentils	40
Vegetable oil	25
Sugar	20
WSB	35
Salt	7.5
Fresh Vegetables	260g/plw

(Nepal Red Cross Beneficiary card, 2002)

The refugee's main idea is that the food which is distributed are bear on sufficient for only for meeting the survival needs. Under this situation the refugees are trying to earn money for extra daily needs. Though legal background has become a barrier to do works outside, most of the male refugees go outside for search some kinds of work. According to the result of interviews which did with the UNHCR staff, about one- third of all refugees are worked in outside the camps on regular basis. The refugee people who are identified as farmers, including young women leave the camps to harvest tea leaves and plants rice for local farmers. The majority who are willing to earn a daily wage embraces the work in the construction industry in the nearby town of Damak which is experiencing a construction boom. Their daily wage mostly limited to between 100-150 NPR. The teachers are working outside teaching English, Mathematics, and Science etc.

They have been able to earn between 3000- 6000 NPR per month. Apart from them, women are usually selling vegetables and clothing in small market inside the camps, all of the males and females embrace the various types of income process to run their livelihood. Mostly girls spin thread from cotton yarn which is collected and sold outside the camps by Nepalese middlemen, and women weave mats from palm leaves, which are also sold outside the camps. Some people don't go outside work or nothing doing for extra income in the camps. They are totally depending on the relief assistance. They spend money for their daily needs, children's education fees, health facilities etc in a month. Though the WFP provides the free health facilities for the refugees, those are not sufficient for them. So they have to go outside to take the medicines and have to bear too much cost for that. In the critical situations, though UNHCR is financially assisted to procure medicines and meet other related costs, for serious medical causes which are referred to local hospital, that has not sufficient for them. The severe economic burden has forced some teen age girls to become sex workers inside and outside of the camps. They get from 500 to 1000 NPR from a person. That money depends on the time and the place. Most of the refugee teenage girls are going for deal to Damak, Daran, Phokara, Ithari etc. And family expenditures are mostly met from that money.

The Role of UNHCR /WFP/INGOs/NGOs

Most of the refugees have not had opportunities to acquire job skills in the camps. So under the UNHCR and other International Agencies, the various skills programs are organized within the refugee camps. Their main objective is to help the refugees for self help activities and encourage the active involvement of refugees in the management of their daily needs. The training includes driving, computer literacy, teachers training, knitting, and weaving, Tailoring, electrical writing, mechanics, hairstyling, necklace making Carpentry and bamboo handicrafts. By targeting the youth who have stopped their school education, the UNHCR provides skills development programs. The government also provides some funds for vocational training and scholarship for young refugee training as nurse aids and lab technicians.

To complete their assistance further more, they have given the opportunities to embrace the works in refugees' incentive staff which is conducting by NGOs. By this time 2100 refugees are working in the camps earning between 40-50 NPR per day. Basically labors, teachers, health care workers, are hired by the

NGOs and the workers are paid according to a four-tiered pay scale, dependent on position, ranging from 840 to 1514 NPR per month. When consider whole amount of refugees, in Eastern Nepal, those NGOs are unable to provide job opportunities for refugees. To build up house based small business and cottage industries, NGOs provide the training with trainers hired from the Nepali business community and seed money is provided in the camps. Basically they have focused on the bamboo crafts, mushroom production, banana fiber crafts and jute carpet making. Establishing village savings and loan associations, their assistance has ensured further more. It can be appreciated that a network has created among the government, business community and refugees to promote the refugees products, out side the camps. Mushroom production has become the most successful home production and the producers are earning 500-800 NPR per month. In 2008 a new type of vocational training programs was introduced by WFP for refugees. The Indian bakers have supported a group of refugees to run a bakery to teach the refugees how to make doughnuts and cookies. Through this project the refugees have got opportunities for generating income to strengthen their family business further. Providing loans for interested refugees, WFP is successfully continuing this project without facing any difficulties at present.

A Critical Challenge

Though UNHCR and other agencies do at their best to assist the refugees every moment they are facing critical challenges which are enduring in nature. As a result of growing population writhing refugee camps, new opportunities are needed to take the emerging challenges. Among the challenges of third country resettlement, crime prevention, protecting human rights, solving citizenship problem and refugees' unemployment is the most prevalent among others. According to the refugees, the main reason for unemployment among them is lack of citizenship. These people being a group of stateless people, they don't get equal access to jobs opportunities available in the country. According to data, 95% refugees are lacking Unemployment. Though the refugees have sufficient qualifications, without citizenship they can't access to the job opportunities in Government and private sectors. As a result of Nepali government's policies, the refugees have faced crucial barrier for accessing jobs in the Government sector. Even though when they find a job in the private sector, they are paid less than what is paid for Nepali citizens. They are

faced with discrimination in every place out side the camp. Not only in the formal sector, in agricultural sector, building construction field or any other labor work, are they paid less money than the Nepali citizens. This situation is taken as an opportunity by employers to exploit the labor of refugees. As most of the young refugees are willing to resettle another countries; their main hope is to get a better training in the field of house keeping, hotel and restaurant management, nursing, computer training and vehicle repair and extensive driving training. They expect trainings which could be marketable easily for earning a better income.

International Legal framework for Refugees to access the Employment Opportunities

To ensure the rights of refugees, various International Declarations, Protocols, Conventions, and Laws have been promulgated but these people have not yet been benefited from them. If one may mention a few important instrumental instruments such as Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), The International Convention on Economic Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), International Convention for Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), The Child Right Convention (CRC) and the Convention Against Torture (CAT) all these Instruments have ensured the legal provision for the protection of Refugee's Rights but the reality is different

In the Universal Declaration of Human Right (UDHR) of 10th December 1948, opportunities to access the employment are mentioned in article 23. namely,

01. Every one has the right to work, to free choice of employments, to just and favorable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.
02. Every one, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for work.
03. Every one who works has the right to just and favorable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection.
04. Every one has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests. (Sinha 2000 p: 110).

Comparing relationship between Refugee Employment Rights and above mentioned rules different treatment can be seen between both

components. According to the data relating to the refugees in Eastern Nepal, they haven't equal access to job opportunities as a result of their position as stateless people. The Nepal Government has completely prohibited the government jobs opportunities for refugees. Though the refugees have acceptable level of qualifications for available jobs, they haven't a right to join the jobs. Not only the government sector, but also private sector are treated them in differently. As a result of being stateless people, they are facing unequal treatment over the past 17 years. Under such a context one can raise the question whether the stated rules and laws which are formulated for protecting the rights of refugees are any more worth in the Nepal context?.

Conclusion

In the present Nepal context of refugees, we can understand that economic factors are critical in changing the livelihood of refugee group among others; Unemployment is the major factor to be addressed on terms of refugees. Lack of unemployment leads a person to be frustrated and it make a base for creating conflict. Though implementation Authorities give their assistance, the refugees are not satisfied due to the resulted frustration. If these conditions continue, refugees may engage with a conflict to satisfy their expectations.

Satisfying the refugees' expectations is the best way to prevent potential conflict. Unemployment, unequal resources distribution, Maladministration and Corruptions, Nepal government policies have become the barriers for refugees. Addressing economic difficulties is the ways to find a suitable solution for this matter. The Implementation Authorities should find out the proper programs to make their lives more comfortable. As their future depends on this process, it is better to prepare them regarding the necessity of another country. Another area which has to be concentrated is restructuring the Nepal government's policies relating to refugees. Based on the study findings it can be said that the refugees are the people who should need more attention than others.

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