



UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

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The process for Third Country Resettlement of the refugees from Bhutan in Nepal begins

KATHMANDU, 06 November (UNHCR) – The much-awaited process for large scale third country resettlement of refugees from Bhutan in camps in eastern Nepal begins with the mass information campaign in all the camps to assist refugees to make an informed decision by providing them with accurate information.

This follows the decision of the Government of Nepal to allow those refugees who wish to opt for third country resettlement as an alternative solution to do so on the basis of an informed choice and acceptance by the resettlement country.

“UNHCR prefers to help refugees go back to their home countries when they can do so in safety and dignity, however, in this case, the only option currently available is that for resettlement in a third country for those refugees who wish to make this choice,” said Abraham ABRAHAM, UNHCR Representative in Nepal. He emphasized, “Resettlement to a third country does not in any way preclude the right of refugees to return to Bhutan.”

“We urge refugees and refugee leaders to respect the right of every individual to make informed choices and take decisions regarding his or her own future,” added Abraham.

Resettlement is the relocation of a refugee and their family from Nepal to a third country. This is done with the support and agreement of the resettlement countries as part of a burden sharing mechanism towards achieving a humanitarian solution so that refugees do not have to continue suffering in the camps. On arrival in the resettlement country they will have legal permanent residence including the possibility for being citizens of that country in due course, if they so desire.

The UN refugee agency together with the international community will continue its efforts to ensure that as many doors as possible are opened in terms of achieving lasting solutions to the plight of the refugees, including voluntary repatriation as and when return conditions permit.

While the United States of America has announced that it would resettle 60,000 refugees and even more if required, other members of the Core Group consisting of Australia, Canada, Denmark, the Netherlands, New Zealand and Norway have

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also expressed their desire to take their share in the resettlement of refugees. Canada has also announced its plan to resettle 5,000 refugees.

"We are profoundly grateful to the Government of USA and to all the other resettlement recipient countries as well as to the Government of Nepal for supporting third country resettlement as a humanitarian solution," added Abraham.

Resettlement to the USA is organized by the US government, through its Overseas Processing Entity (OPE), the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The IOM will process resettlement of refugees on the basis of referrals made by UNHCR, and only where expressions of interest for resettlement have been made known to UNHCR.

Refugees will be leaving in batches to their new homes in third countries, and the first batch is expected to leave by January 2008. Prior to their departure the refugees will undergo a cultural orientation that will be organised by the IOM/resettlement countries, in order to prepare them to start a new life in the resettlement country.

Referral by UNHCR for resettlement does not mean automatic acceptance in a third country. The final decision on whether an individual is authorised to resettle in a particular country would be made by the concerned resettlement country, normally following an individual interview to confirm the identity and interest of the individual for resettlement.

Refugees cannot choose the resettlement country. UNHCR merely facilitates the resettlement process and has no role in making final decisions for resettlement, but will take into account the best interest of the refugees.