



Nepal

ECHO FACTSHEET

Facts & Figures

Estimated number of
Bhutanese refugees living
in Nepal: **38 000**

Number of beneficiaries
in 2013: **600 421**

Total EU humanitarian aid
to Nepal in 2013: **€1
million**

Total EU Disaster Risk
Reduction funding for
2013 & 2014 : **€3.28
million**

Total EU humanitarian aid
to Nepal since 2001:
€72.2 million



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Key messages

- There must be continued support to vulnerable communities to prepare for and reduce the impacts of natural disasters in order to reinforce their resilience capacities.
- The health emergency response capacities in the capital city, Kathmandu, must be strengthened to cope with the risk of a major earthquake.
- Food assistance to the refugees from Bhutan living in Nepal should be continued.

Humanitarian situation and needs

Background and Situation in Country

Nepal faces numerous natural and human-made disasters every year which cause significant loss of lives and property. Every year, around 1 000 people are killed by landslides and floods during the monsoon season.

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There are also potential threats of earthquakes, glacial lake outbursts, avalanches as well as cold and heat waves. According to the 'Nepal Disaster Report 2009: The Hazards and Vulnerability', Nepal ranks 23rd in the world in terms of total natural hazard-related deaths, 7th for deaths related to floods, landslides and avalanches combined together, and 11th in terms of vulnerability to earthquakes. According to experts, if an earthquake of 8.4 magnitude similar to the 1934 earthquake strikes the Kathmandu valley, there could be more than 100 000 fatalities, 300 000 injured, 60% of the structures may collapse and more than one million people may become homeless. Rapid urbanisation and violation of building codes risk exacerbating the intensity of disasters in Nepal.

Major needs and related problems

There are growing concerns about the impact of climate change in Nepal. Rapidly melting glaciers cause erosion, flash floods and fill up glacial lakes, which could eventually burst and flood low-lying areas in southern Nepal. When hit by natural disasters, people not only risk losing their lives but also their means to earn a living. Moreover, recurring disasters in hazard-prone areas can stifle recovery and development efforts. But communities taking adequate precautions can reduce the damage caused by natural disasters.

Nepal also hosts refugees from Bhutan. In the early 1990's, more than 108 000 refugees from Bhutan¹ – approximately 20% of Bhutan's population – arrived in Nepal and started living in camps run by the United Nations' refugee agency (UNHCR). The refugees are not permitted to work outside the camps and rely almost entirely on World Food Programme's (WFP) food rations, supplemented with vegetables and basic household items supplied by the UNHCR.

Between 1996 and 2006, the civil war between the government and the Maoists left thousands of people dead, and many more displaced. The peace agreement signed by both parties in 2006 called for the drafting of a new constitution; but despite several extensions, the Nepalese Constituent Assembly elected in 2008 failed to finalise the constitution by the 28 May 2012 deadline. The prolonged political uncertainty led to strikes and blockades, negatively impacting the livelihoods of vulnerable populations as well as often delaying the transport of relief materials to disaster-hit areas. A caretaker government is presently in place, while elections for a new Constituent Assembly are planned for November 2013.

The European Union's Humanitarian Response

Funding

The European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department (ECHO) has been working in Nepal for many years, implementing community-based disaster preparedness projects, helping the survivors of the conflict in remote areas and assisting the refugees from Bhutan.

Since 2001, ECHO has contributed almost €15 million to disaster preparedness and risk reduction activities in Nepal, including €3.28 million allocated for 2013-2014. ECHO's sustained advocacy efforts led to the formulation of the "National Strategy for Disaster Management in Nepal".

During Nepal's internal conflict, and up until 2011, ECHO's humanitarian actions totalling €35 million supported thousands of conflict-affected people, especially in rural areas, by providing healthcare as well as water and sanitation facilities. The European Commission's humanitarian aid to Nepal has totalled over €72.2 million since 2001.

In 2013, ECHO has allocated €1 million to help WFP provide food rations to refugees in Nepal.

¹ The third-country resettlement process started in November 2007. According to the UNHCR, as of April 2013, some 100 000 refugees have been resettled, and the process is continuing. Most of refugees resettled in the USA (66,134), while the rest went to Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Norway, Denmark and the Netherlands. The remaining camp population therefore stands now at around 38,000.

Outreach and coordination with humanitarian partners

In Nepal, ECHO is a member of the Nepal Risk Reduction Consortium funding activities which strengthen populations' resilience to natural disasters including community-based disaster management, flood management & early warning systems, school-focused disaster management, livelihoods-focused disaster risk reduction, disability inclusiveness, and improving national emergency response capacity. As part of its earthquake preparedness programme, ECHO is working with UN agencies and NGOs to bolster the health emergency response capacities in the capital city, Kathmandu.

For the refugee situation, ECHO's funding for the World Food Programme – 20% of WFP's total annual requirement for the camps – enables nutritional support for the most vulnerable groups, such as children under five, pregnant and nursing women, as well as those who are chronically ill.

Furthermore, many of the 108 000 refugees from Bhutan who arrived in Nepal in the early 1990s have voluntarily re-settled in third countries including the USA, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Norway, Denmark, and the Netherlands. About 38 000 of them remain in two camps in eastern Nepal.

ECHO has been supporting the refugees from Bhutan for more than ten years and will continue to advocate for a political solution to this crisis.