

## **Statelessness in South Asia, Case of the Bhutanese refugee population in Nepal**

### **Background**

In South Asian region, the modern state building process of the post-colonial states has been marked by the trails divided communities and mutilated neighbourhoods and the walls of rejected peoples. The history of these post-partition states of South Asia has been one of consolidating majoritarian elites producing persecuted minorities, of citizenship giving rise to statelessness, of borders resulting in illegal but not un natural cross border movements and of development policies uprooting millions, this condition reinforced by the protracted refusal of the involved states to take them back creates a circumstances which may eventually lead to the loss of their nationality and citizenship. It has made South Asia a region crowded with refugees and the displaced. Some polices makes refugees and create stateless people. (Bose and Manchanda) States, Citizens and Outsiders)

The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) in 2012 recorded that there are around 800,000 stateless people residing in Nepal. Individuals from Tibet and Bhutan are also stateless. The case will cover Lhotsampas of Bhutan, a minority groups of Nepali origins who have been expelled and compelled to lead a life of refugees in Nepal. They were 121,000 refugees living in seven different camps of Nepal. After 15 rounds of bilateral talks failed between Bhutan and Nepal they have now been offered for a third country resettlement as a durable solution. However, not all the refugees in Nepal have chosen to resettle abroad. The Government of Nepal and development partners who have been closely assisting refugees are still not clear of the status of those staying back in Nepal. There are limited information about those who have gone for resettlement in the third countries whether it has been a choice, happy moment or a forced choice and a loss of identify.

**Objective:** To understand and find out the plight and journey of Lhotsampas changing status and identity from minority citizens, to statelessness and a new citizenship.

### **Research questions**

- What were the challenges of living as a minority group in Bhutan?
- How groups of Nepali speaking Bhutanese population were rendered stateless?
- What are the factors that compelled them to leave their homeland and travel all the way back to Nepal?
- What were the challenges of staying without a nationality in Nepal though they were culturally and religiously similar?  
How do the refugees take the resettlement options; a new identity or a loss of identity?
- How do the refugees staying in Nepal review their situation?
- What will be the host government, Nepal's policy for those stateless staying in Nepal?

### **Methodology**

This paper will be based on the secondary information, literatures review of books, journals, articles on the internet and testimonies published in the internet. If time permits some quick survey will be conducted via email and telephones with the refugees living in the country of resettlement and those who have been staying back.

