

Alert

Nepal

Fire in Bhutanese Refugee Camps in Eastern Nepal

Geneva, 25 March 2011

1. Brief description of the emergency

Fire in two Bhutanese refugee camps (Goldhap and Sanischare) in eastern Nepal on Tuesday 22 March 2011 destroyed 750 refugee shelters. About 6,000 people were displaced and 29 people were injured. Nepal police, the army and local fire brigades along with local residents battled more than three hours to control the fire. Both the refugee camps are situated in the eastern part of Nepal nearly 500 kilometers east of the capital city of Kathmandu.

2. Impact

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Nepal has been taking care of Bhutanese refugees since their arrival in Nepal. The influx of refugees began in the 1990s and all the Bhutanese refugees have been staying in seven designated camps (including Goldhap and Sanischare). Apart from distribution of food and non-food items LWF Nepal has been maintaining refugee shelters, family latrines, agency service centers, camp infrastructures and operating water systems in all seven camps.

According to the camp residents they only had time to save themselves and were unable to save any household items. As a result of this fire total of 750 refugee families have been displaced and taking temporary shelter in schools or with relatives.

3. National and international response

Immediately following the fire a task force was formed by the Inter-agency Coordination Team to co-ordinate rescue and relief work. The task force was headed by the Refugee Coordination Unit (RCU) supervisor. The main district office distributed NRs. 1,500 cash (about US\$20) to displaced families. CARITAS Nepal distributed ready to eat food, the Nepal Red Cross distributed non-food items, the local Community Forest User's Groups provided fire wood while health services were taken care of by the Association of Medical Doctors of Asia (AMDA).

4. ACT Alliance response

LWF Nepal is the only ACT Alliance member working in the refugee camps and it has distributed tarpaulin sheet, blankets and some ready to eat food to the affected families. Temporary communal latrines were set up and a temporary potable water distribution system established. LWF has also provided logistics to transport and distribute relief materials offered by other humanitarian agencies.

5. Planned activities

The LWF project team in Damak Jhapa is coordinating with the the RCU and UNHCR to reconstruct the refugee shelters and resume essential camp services. LWF is also co-ordinating with UNICEF for water, sanitation and hygiene supplies. Taking into consideration LWF's lead role in the refugee camp care and maintenance, LWF is planning to request ACT Rapid Response funding to reconstruct refugee shelters.

LWF is keeping the ACT Secretariat updated on the situation and a Rapid Response Fund (RRF) proposal is expected within the next few days.

Any funding indication or pledge should be communicated to Jean-Daniel Birmele, ACT Chief Finance Officer (Jean_Daniel.Birmele@actalliance.org).

Thank you for your attention.

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