



**Experiences of Nepali speaking Bhutanese**  
**American or any other people of Bhutanese**  
**origin during covid pandemic**

**Bhim P. Dhungana (M. Sc., Nepali Core CHI™, CHW.)**

**Interpreting Coordinator**

**International Institute of Akron**

**Email: [bhim.dhungana@iiakron.org](mailto:bhim.dhungana@iiakron.org)**

**Phone: 330-376-5106 Ext. 125**





# Greeting Namaste





# CONTENT

- Brief History of Nepali speaking Bhutanese American or any other Bhutanese individuals in America.
- Covid pandemic and Bhutanese Nepali community including community experiences and what can be the solution of it.
- Services offer by International Institute of Akron

# Immigrant vs. Refugee



All refugees are immigrants, but not all immigrants are refugees

- Refugees are Individuals who have crossed an international boundary due to a well-founded fear of persecution based on race, religion, nationality, or membership of a particular social group
- An immigrant is someone who has voluntarily left their home country for a variety of reasons, including economic reasons or to be closer to family.



# Durable Solution



Photo Source: NYT

- **Repatriation**
  - Return to the home country or land of citizenship.
- **Integration in the first country of asylum**
  - Integration means having access to education, employment eligibility, security, and a pathway to citizenship
  - Host countries often unstable due to their own conflicts
  - Political ties between the home country and host countries can hinder this option.
- **Third country resettlement**
  - This is where the United States comes in
  - 19 other countries are involved, but the US is the largest resettlement country

# US REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT PROGRAM

- US Congress recommend the number of refugees to allow into the country and President determine
- Refugees are screened at an Overseas Processing Entity (OPE)
- Interviews with Immigration Officials
- Medical Screening & Security Checks



# GEOGRAPHY

- Located in South Asia.
- Roughly half the size of Indiana (populations - 777,486)
- Situated in the Eastern Himalayas, between China in the north and India in the south.
- Ranks 133rd in terms of land area and 160th in population





# Shemjong School and Students in National Dress<sup>8</sup>





# HISTORY

- 19th Century, people in Nepali were invited to move to Southern Bhutan (known as Lhotsampa or "People of the South".)
- Mid-1980's - The government initiated a campaign known as "One country, one people," or "Bhutanization" to cement Bhutanese national identity.
  - The policies imposed the Druk dress code, religious practices, and language use on all Bhutanese regardless of prior practices.
- Human rights violations in the 80s and 90s, including detention, imprisonment without trial, and torture, were common.
- By the end of 1992, more than 100,000 Lhotsampas had fled or been forced out of the country, mostly into refugee camps in Nepal.

Many people spent decades in refugee camps before being resettled



# 1990's Refugee Camp in Nepali and Life of Scarcity<sup>10</sup>





# Peaceful March Back to Bhutan



- The Bhutanese refugees have been desperately trying<sup>11</sup> different strategies to go back to their country ever since the time they were evicted from Bhutan.
- Appeal Movement Co-ordinating Council (AMCC), a coalition of exiled Bhutanese non-governmental organizations and Bhutanese refugees, was established in 1995 to restore fundamental human rights and the early repatriation of the Bhutanese refugees.



## Bilateral Talks b/w Nepal and Bhutanese Government (Repatriation)



- After years of stalemate, the governments of Bhutan and Nepal in March 2001 agreed to conduct a pilot screening of the refugees in Khudunabari camp, which houses 12,000 refugees, to determine their identities and eligibility to return to Bhutan. The refugees were divided into four categories:
- **Category I** – bona fide Bhutanese citizens (just 2.5% of the refugees);
- **Category II** – refugees who supposedly "voluntarily" migrated from Bhutan (70% of the refugees);
- **Category III** – non-Bhutanese (24% of the refugees);
- **Category IV** – refugees who have committed "criminal" acts, including those who participated in so-called "anti-national" pro-democracy activities in Bhutan (3% of the refugees).



# Third Country Resettlement



- For sixteen years, Bhutanese refugees have languished in seven refugee camps in Nepal with no resolution to their plight.
- In October 2006, however, the United States announced its willingness to resettle up to 60,000 of refugees.
- Refugees are concerned and confused about the selection procedures for resettlement, education, and employment opportunities in the U.S., and about housing and health care.
- Above all, they are anxious to understand what the resettlement offer means; in terms of citizenship offer has given hope to many of the Nepali-speaking refugees



# Refugee Resettlement

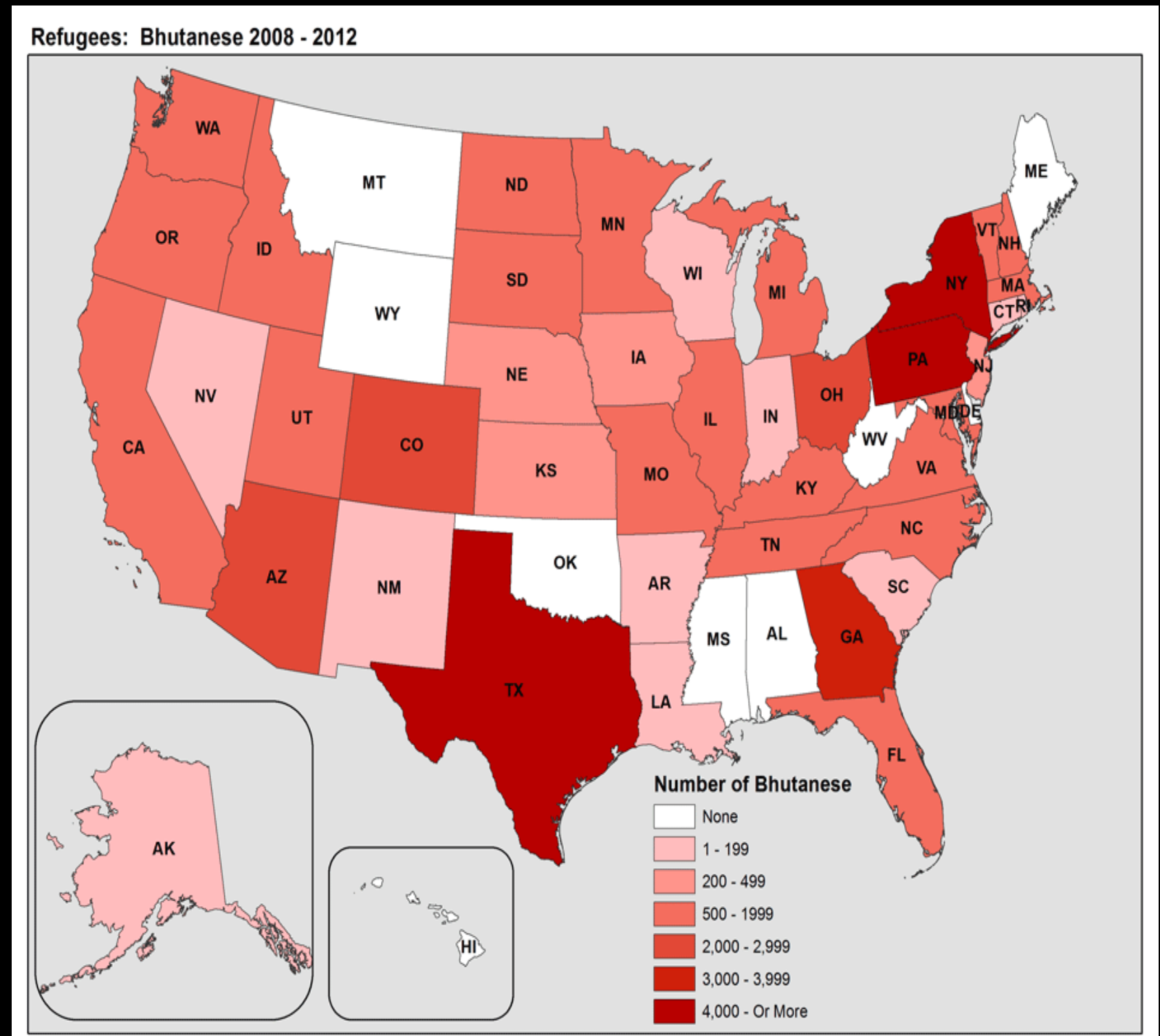


- More than 85 percent of 108,513 Bhutanese refugees, who were taken outside Nepal for third-country resettlement after the program was introduced in 2007/2008, 92,236 have made the US their new home.
- Canada hosted 6,773, Australia 6,204, New Zealand 1,075, Denmark 875, Norway 570, the United Kingdom 358, and the Netherlands 329, according to the UNHCR Nepal



# BHUTANESE NEPALI DIASPORA

- **More than 90,000 Bhutanese Nepalis have been resettled in the United States**
- **The largest single community is over 20,000 in Columbus, Ohio.**
- **Ohio and Pennsylvania have the largest communities.**
- **Resettlement officials estimated that the Nepali community in NE Ohio numbered between 4,000 and 5,000 people in 2020.**
  - Community members estimate about 10,000 live in NE Ohio now.
- **Many Bhutanese Nepali residents come to the area as secondary migrants.**





## EXPERIENCES OF BHUTANESE NEPALI COMMUNITY DURING COVID PANDEMIC

Covid pandemics affect Nepali speaking Bhutanese community just like any other local communities in the areas. Lot of people loss there job as well their love one and family member. Some people have covid multiple time and some become covid long haulers..



# EXPERIENCES OF BHUTANESE NEPALI COMMUNITY DURING COVID PANDEMIC

It can be discussed by keeping it on following categories.

- 1) Economic and social circumstances;
- 2) Access to testing and treatment; and
- 3) Underlying health conditions



## ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CIRCUMSTANCES:

Where people live, work, attend school, play and pray have a strong influence on health outcomes.

The following factors play a role during the COVID-19 pandemics for Bhutanese community :

- Lower median incomes: which lessens the chance of having a financial cushion to absorb income declines if they do not work .
- Employed in front-line service industries deemed essential, such as grocery store workers , , companies and delivery drivers .



# ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

- They are in jobs that can't be done remotely, and they are more likely to rely on public transportation, as well.
- Limited paid sick leave, leaving people more likely to continue to work even when they do get sick for any reason.
- Fear of losing job and continue to work even if they had covid as well



# ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

- Lack of direct communication to the supervisor due to language barrier and not able to express their problem.
- Living in densely populated areas or lot of people live in same house, making it more difficult to practice social distancing.
- Illiterate in own language and difficult to understand news or any announcement what is going on around and difficult to follow local guideline provided by local government written in English.



# ACCESS TO TESTING, TREATMENT AND VACCINES :

- Language and cultural barriers reduce the likelihood people will seek out healthcare providers and fully understand and adhere to treatment regimens.
- Not having health insurance, which lessens the chance of receiving adequate healthcare.
- People use home remedy before go to the health care system
- Limited access of Mask or any other sanitization material



# UNDERLYING HEALTH CONDITIONS

- Some of the community member has following health condition that put them in more risk.
  - Report fair to poor health, putting them at greater risk for the coronavirus.
  - Limited physical exercise and workout
  - Have higher rates of certain health conditions that put them at higher risk for experiencing serious illness if they contract COVID-19, including **asthma**, **diabetes**, **heart disease etc.**



# WHAT MAY BE THE SOLUTION?

- Create culturally competent communication messages tailored to specific populations through methods that increase usage as well as **use of interpretation services**.
- They must promote an environment where change and problem solving are met with **community collaboration**
- A multichannel digital communications strategy can perform a lot of the heavy lifting. A multichannel approach enables **to meet the audience where they are**.



# WHAT MAY BE THE SOLUTION?

- Use the communication platforms they find most familiar and comfortable.

That can be email, SMS/texting, Facebook live streaming , youtube recording

**in their own languages , partnerships with trusted community members,** or a combination of several tools



# WHAT MAY BE THE SOLUTION?

- **Need education to provider** in order to treat underserve population, which help them to guide patient-provider interactions, treatment decisions, treatment Guide and patient health outcomes.
- **Increase access to community-based services**, Expand community-based testing centers and providers,
- **Increase testing sites** in underserved communities and access to those at increased risk of exposure.



# IIA Services



- Immigration
- Refugee Resettlement
- Employment Counseling
- Education
- Interpreting and Translation
- Community Integration

# How to get Interpreting and Translation Services From IIA



## Scheduling:

- **Mr. Bhim Dhungana, Interpreting Coordinator**
  - 330-376-5106 ext. 125
  - [bhim.dhungana@iiakron.org](mailto:bhim.dhungana@iiakron.org)
- **Scheduling**
  - <https://www.gofluently.com/IIA/> or
  - Fax: 330-247-9441( Alternative Fax 1330-376-0133)
- **Ms. Hsathablay Moo, Translation coordinator**
  - 330-376-5106 ext. 126
  - [Irene.translation@iiakron.org](mailto:Irene.translation@iiakron.org)



# Languages Provided



- Arabic
- Armenian
- Bosnian
- Burmese, Karen, Mon, chin (from Burma)
- Chin( Hakka and Falam)
- Chinese( Mandarin and Cantonese)
- Dari Farsi Pashto, Persian
- French
- Georgian
- Gujarati, Hindi, Punjabi
- Nepali
- Russian
- Swahili,,Lingala,Kikonga,Kiganda,Kibembee,
- Serbian( Croatian)
- Spanish
- Ukrainian
- Vietnamese ( mostly translation)

(Note: The languages we do translate may be more/less than we interpret, so check with the Translation Service Manager in extension 126 for sure)



## 29

