The Long Trek from Bhutan to America
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in cooperation with the Bhutanese communities of Concord, Manchester, and Laconia, New Hampshire.

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March 2010
The Long Trek from Bhutan to America
A Journey from the Foothills of the Himalayas to Concord, New Hampshire

Richard Ford

in collaboration with the workshop team
Aparna Nepal
Sheela Pradhan
Mohan Sunuwar
Nimesh Dhungana
Douglas Hall

and a group of graduate students from Clark University

March 2010
Executive Summary

The Department of International Development, Community, and Environment at Clark University, upon invitation from the Bhutanese Refugee Community of Concord, New Hampshire, conducted a two day workshop (March 26-27, 2010) to assist the community to strengthen its internal capacity to solve some of its highest priority needs. The first evening featured a highly successful celebration of Bhutanese culture and attracted over 250 people, including about 75 children, to a boisterous and festive evening. It was a gala event. The following day, 125 to 135 participants worked from 9:30 am to 5:00 pm to identify their highest priority needs and what they can do to solve them. They used participatory planning tools developed by Clark over the last 25 years. The findings indicate the following needs, listed in order of highest to lowest priority for two refugee groups: Concord and Manchester.

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<tr>
<th>Ranked Order: Concord</th>
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The last hour of the workshop was invested in discussion of what steps they can take to ease their highest priority concerns. Details of the setting, the participatory tools, identification of problems, the ranking, and next steps are the subject of this report.

In the first month following the workshop, the leadership committees have met and achieved two major accomplishments. First, they have created three regional steering committees for the three urban sites where the refugees have been located: Concord, Manchester, and Laconia. They also have organized the leaders of these three sites into a state coordinating committee of Bhutanese Refugees. Second, the sad and untimely death of one of the Bhutanese residents created a need for them to implement their plan for a funeral and cremation ceremony in accordance with Bhutanese Hindu traditions. The committee was able to make arrangements with the hospital that the extended family could be present in her room during her final hours; the funeral home turned over their entire facility for rituals and performed the cremation in ways that met New Hampshire legal requirements but also satisfied the family that it was in keeping with Hindu traditions. Employers of the deceased’s immediate family allowed the workers 13 days leave so they could observe the proper mourning period. And certain ceremony’s outside the deceased’s apartment complex were allowed, with the family in appropriate dress to express their mourning. The ceremonies were conducted according to the plans that had been initiated at the planning workshop.
Acknowledgements

We are indebted to a large number of people and organizations for making this workshop possible. First and foremost come our thanks to the Bhutanese refugee community of Concord along with many of their colleagues from Manchester and Laconia. They turned out in large numbers for both the cultural evening and workshop. Their energy and enthusiasm made the entire event a resounding success. Their cultural presentations were a special treat. The commitment to follow through will have long and far reaching impacts on their own well-being as well as for their generations to come. They were the front and center throughout and we thank them.

From the Concord community we thank Mayor James Bouley for his words of welcome and for helping all of us to enjoy the cultural presentations. Also Liz Hager, Executive Director of the Merrimack County United Way; Father Peter Boucher, Pastor of the Immaculate Heart of Mary Catholic church in Concord for making available the splendid facilities of the church as well as the continuing cooperation and support that IHM provides for the Bhutanese community; the staff of Lutheran Social Services, especially Amy Marchildon, Director, New American Services, and Augustin Ntabaganyimana, Program Manager; and Doug Hall, long-time friend of Nepal and Nepalis, no matter where they may be or what they are doing. Finally, we thank the church-related and other community volunteers who have been helping with ESL instruction, sorting out health forms, registering people for social security benefits, and working on driver’s license applications. Such small but highly relevant assistance has made a big difference with the Bhutanese newcomers.

From Clark, we thank William Fisher, Director of Clark University’s Department of International Development, Community, and Environment, who happens also to be a Nepali speaker and expert on the cultures and people of Nepal. He made the workshop possible and provided funds for logistical support. We are also appreciative and respectful of the critical role that the facilitators played throughout the workshop. Sheela Pradhan, Mohan Sunuwar, Nimesh Dhungana, and Aparna Nepal made the workshop come to life. Their language skill was only part of it. They, along with several graduate students from Clark, also understood the context within which the newcomers were working and did a splendid job of making the exercises relevant to the community.

As a closing thought, special praise is in order for the work of Aparna Nepal. It was her vision that took the first step for the workshop and her persistence that made it happen. She has a small child at home and a big job in Concord. Normally such duties are more than enough to keep someone busy. Aparna took the extra step, contacted Clark, organized local committees, found a meeting facility, and met repeatedly with local groups to make things happen. Of all the people involved with the planning and implementation, she deserves the Olympic Gold Medal for achievement. Aparna, we thank you.

Richard Ford, Clark University
THE LONG TREKK FROM BHUTAN TO AMERICA

A Report and Recommendations from a Planning Workshop
26-27 March 2010

In the last two years the State of New Hampshire has received more than 1,000 Bhutanese refugees. At least that many additional travelers are expected in the next 18 months. They have settled in primarily three urban areas: Concord, Manchester, and Laconia. How does a predominantly rural New England state deal with the influx? How do the refugees themselves cope? What impact does their arrival have on social service agencies, housing, schools, and many more local institutions? And perhaps most important, what are the long term impacts for both the refugees and the present residents of the state?

This case study describes the experience of one refugee cluster and ways that planning tools that Clark has developed over several years in Asia, Eastern Europe, and Africa are being used to call upon skills and resources already present within the refugee community to ease their pathway to becoming American.

Who Are the Bhutanese Refugees?

The Bhutanese refugees are Nepali-speaking Bhutanese. Their status results from British colonial practices in the 19th century that sought to bring order to a previously highly fluid social, political, and economic society. Before the British, the thin strip of land between Hindu/Moslem India (today’s Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh) and the Tibetan plateau was inhabited by tribes whose culture, religion, economy, and political systems were fully local. There were at least two kingdoms (Nepal and Bhutan) and several smaller groups, some local and others migrants from Tibet or Burma. Two hundred years ago, the ancestors of the present refugee community settled in the south of Bhutan in an area generally shunned by the majority of the Bhutanese because of malaria infestation. In those early days the settlers were ethnic Nepalis—hence their language. But during their two centuries in Bhutan they became Bhutanese by political identify. The settlers cleared land and became productive subsistence farmers. The British determined that the region needed more orderly governance (so they
could extract timber and promote trade) and launched a series of military expeditions to bring the area under control. These campaigns led to drawing official boundary lines that became the nations of Bhutan and Nepal. The Nepali-speaking settlers largely ignored the geopolitics as they were peaceful farmers in the lowland valleys. Their numbers increased in the 20th century to the point that they comprised 25% to 30% of the Bhutanese population. They survived the partition of India (1947/48), the Chinese incursion into Tibet (1951/52), and the revolt of East Pakistan and creation of Bangladesh (1971). What they could not survive was a visit from an international agency in the 1980s that advised the King of Bhutan to conduct a census.

The census highlighted something that everyone knew but few talked about: nearly a third of the Bhutanese King’s subjects were ethnic Nepali speakers. A bit of xenophobia began when this information became official and led eventually to a nationalist fervor during which the Bhutan government expelled as many as 120,000 of the settlers. In the early 1990s, India refused them entry. But Nepal allowed them inside its borders in refugee camps managed by the UN as temporary residences. These camps continued for nearly 20 years when, in 2007, an agreement was concluded that the US and other western nations would accept 120,000 refugees – the US share was 60,000. Of these 60,000, 3,000 have come or will be coming to New Hampshire, especially in Concord, Manchester, and Laconia.

The Arrival

The US Department of State contracted with Lutheran Social Services (LSS) to manage the refugee arrival for Concord and Laconia and with the International Institute of New Hampshire (IINH) for the city of Manchester. Because most of the refugees arrive in family units, LSS and IINH find apartments, work with local agencies to locate furniture, clothing, cooking utensils, and deal with a myriad of details related to language instruction, Social Security registration, health coverage, and similar matters. They also put the arrivals in touch with a network of volunteer agencies that provide hospitality and orientation for the newcomers. However, six months is only the tip of the iceberg in terms of learning English, finding employment, and becoming financially capable of paying rent, buying food, and paying for many other costs of living in New Hampshire.

The refugees face other problems. Although they are all Nepali speakers, they are not a unified community. They do not know each other as they come from different refugee camps in Nepal and they lived in many different parts of Bhutan in the earlier years. They also belong to different castes, have attained different levels of education, and have different social class perspectives. The combination of the trauma of expulsion from Bhutan 20 years ago, then nearly 20 years in closed camps where their freedom of movement was limited, then expulsion again from Nepal, then arrival in a fully new and often alien cultural setting without certificates or credentials, and then only six months of support to get settled is a textbook formula for depression, anxiety, and feelings of total hopelessness. To make matters even more difficult, the highly capable staff of LSS are receiving about 30% more arrivals than their budget provides for so LSS staff are stretched thinner than thin.
The Role of Clark University

Clark University’s Department of International Development, Community, and Environment enjoys a long tradition of working with minority communities. Over the years, faculty research has developed planning tools that enable impoverished and afflicted communities to learn how they can take the lead to analyze their own needs, set priorities that the entire community supports, develop action plans to implement solutions, and find partner organizations that can assist in implementation. Instead of waiting for charity, the strategy enables the local community to organize what they already know, mobilize resources they already have, and join with their partner groups to solve their own problems. To lead communities through this process, Clark faculty have developed a number of training modules that help communities come to consensus about their highest priority needs and how to solve them. While the tools are most commonly used overseas, Clark has increasingly been working with domestic groups including Somalis, Sudanese, Burundians, Rwandans, and Congolese in the United States.

In 2003, Clark led a workshop with the Somali community of Lewiston, Maine and included several graduate students in the program. One of these students, Aparna Nepal, is a Nepali now working in Concord, NH in the State Department of Public Health. As a Nepali, she reached out to the Bhutanese as they began to arrive in 2008 and raised a question with Clark as to whether the University might be able to offer a planning workshop similar to the one conducted with the Somalis in Lewiston.

Clark agreed and provided a budget of $300 to cover local logistical costs. Faculty and graduate students in IDCE volunteered their time to conduct the workshop. Aparna performed heroically in making all of the local arrangements including lodging for the Clark students, pot luck lunches and suppers, a meeting facility, and conscripting the Bhutanese community to form local management committees.

The Workshop

Starting with Culture

Clark has conducted (or supervised) several hundred community planning workshops over the last 25 years. In most cases, the workshops are requested because there is a problem or concern fragmenting a community. For example, last year, a Clark alum organized 100 conflict-ridden neighborhoods in Baghdad, Iraq (upwards of 1,000,000 people) to use the planning tools and create neighborhood action plans to solve what they have identified as their highest priority needs. In the case of the Concord Bhutanese, the objectives were:

- **Solidarity and working together.** To assist the Bhutanese community to think of itself as a cohesive and committed group to work together to solve some of its
problems of entry into the US

• **Setting priorities.** To provide tools that enable the community to set priorities that the entire community supports

• **Reaching out to partner organizations in the region.** To demonstrate to the Bhutanese how creation of action plans that the entire community supports will assist them in forming partnership with like-minded groups in Concord and other parts of New Hampshire.

Several planning committee meetings (Clark and Bhutanese) were held during which schedules and activities were discussed and agreed upon. Given that one of the needs was to build solidarity and cooperation among the diffuse parts of the Bhutanese community, we opted to start the program with something they all shared in common: Bhutanese culture.

On Friday evening, 26 March, 250 Bhutanese refugees came to Concord to celebrate their cultural. And celebrate they did. They organized at least 20 separate presentations and performances in a variety show of singing and dancing. Young and old, men and women, children and young people, Concord and Manchester – they were all there in force. Some were solo performances; others were groups of as many as 12. The young people tended to perform Bollywood styles rather than the more traditional Bhutanese acts. It made all of us realize that those under the age of 20 had never lived in Bhutan – a sobering thought as one tries to maintain some cultural continuity! The program went on from 7:30 to 10:30. Everyone loved it with cheering, applause, laughter, and joy in abundance. The celebration demonstrated several things:

• the Bhutanese were desperate to make a statement about the dignity and significance of their culture

• they were fully capable of organizing and presenting a program that included several near-professional acts

• they could work closely together on a large program and bring it off with accomplishment.

These findings are critical to the success of the workshop in that they enabled the Bhutanese to demonstrate that they are a competent and achieving society and not a group of beggars asking for charity. This is a fundamental lesson to instill early in such a workshop. It is a first step to create self-confidence in both the leadership and the rank and file members of the community. Having started on such a high note, the program the following day could not possibly fail. And succeed it did.
Young and old enjoying the cultural night.
Exercises for Analysis and Planning

Our goal was to learn the community’s perception of their needs and ways to solve them. We divided the 125 workshop participants into four small groups - they eventually broke into additional even smaller groups – to complete two tasks: sketch maps of their community to iden-
Concord Workshop, March 2010

tify physical areas of need; and an analysis of institutions in Concord and Manchester.

Figure 2
Sketch Map
Manchester

EAST
MANCHESTER

WalMart (1 hour)
Lowes (1 hour)
Rite Aid (15 min)
CMO (15 min)
High School (5 min)
Library (5 min)
Seven/Eleven (5 min)
Hanafords (1 hour)
Hanaford 1 hour
Eliot Hospital 1 hour
Lowes
WalMart
Indian Palace
Walgreen
Indian Market
IINH 10 min
MCRC
(15 min)
MCRC
(15 min)
NEFWC
Salvation Army
(15 min)

WEST
MANCHESTER

Central High School
ESL Church
Library
Fire Dept.
Seven/Eleven (5 min)
Hanafords (1 hour)
Police (5 min)
Walgreen (5 min)
Hanaford (30 min)
Stop and Shop (45 min)
Macy-Lowes (50 min)
Pharmacy
Health Dept.
MCHC
(20 min)
SSO
(20 min)
NEHP
Easter Seal

Merrimack River

Tech College
(45 min)
(45 min)
(20 min)
(20 min)
(15 min)
(30 min)
(20 min)
(15 min)
(30 min)

The sketch map has several goals. The first thing it does is help the small groups to work together on tasks for which they know the answers. It is a way to start data gathering in ways that get people sharing information, exchanging ideas, and working together in a cooperative mode. This is an important goal as the purpose of the entire workshop is to listen to what all the people have to say. The maps are a good place to start. Second, we asked the participants to identify the most important parts of their community and to discuss why these places/organizations are important. Third, our facilitators listen as the conversations flow back and forth: prodding some of the women if they allow the men to take over, asking helpful questions if the conversation is lagging, and keeping tabs on the conversation as a means to develop a set of issues that concern the people.

The maps worked well. We ended up with several. The two that appear here (one Concord and one Manchester) are good examples of the data collected. For the Concord map (Figure 1), the first impression is that most of the Bhutanese housing is concentrated in apartments relatively close to one another. The complexes are also within easy walking distance to bus transport on Loudon Rd (one of the major avenues for Concord). The map also shows how two banks, Goodwill Industries, and the Catholic church are central to their location and all are important parts of their lives. Not far away are a supermarket (Shaws), pharmacy (OSCO), general merchandise store (WalMart), and the all-important Lutheran Social Services. For other parts of town the map locates mainly churches, health providers, government service providers (such as social security), Head Start, elementary and secondary schools, and the Brinda Center (temple).

The Manchester map (Figure 2) shows many of the same resources for their city though they are in a different situation from Concord when it comes to housing. It is less centralized — hence one of the issues for the Manchester group was transport and getting help in obtaining drivers licenses. The Manchester map also has a marvelous and creative component. They identify the offices and stores that are important in their lives — schools, shopping, government offices, medical services, a church where ESL is offered, and several NGOs that provide different types of support and assistance. In addition, they include several reference notes stating how long it takes to get from their homes to the sites important to them. For example, for those living in West Manchester, WalMart is an hour away. For the East Manchester folk, the Salvation Army is 30 minutes and health Department 20. This is a creative way to explain that one of their needs is transport.

Of further interest is detail of shop location. While it is not a GPS, it is a guide for where to go and the spatial relationship of their important places. Both maps stimulated a great deal of discussion and nearly everyone in the small groups participated in placing their priority sites on the map. It worked very well as an exercise to get the workshop started. The list of community issues was beginning to emerge — sometimes slowly, sometimes indirectly, but clearly noting how the map helped the small groups think about their needs on a community-wide basis rather than an individual one. It was a positive beginning.
Bhutanese View of Concord Institutions

Figure 3

- US Government
- Lutheran Social Services (LSS)
- Health and Human Services
- Social Security
- Hospitals
- State Employment Program
- Charitable Churches
- American Red Cross
- Concord Housing
- City Welfare
- Service Link
- 911 Services
- Schools/Colleges
- Community Action Program
- Concord Workshop, March 2010
Figure 4
Bhutanese View of Manchester Institutions

- Federal and State Government
- Child Care and Disability Center
- Health and Human Services
- State Employment Program
- New England Farm Worker’s Council
- Health Care
- Schools/Colleges
- Lutheran Social Services (LSS)
- INH (International Institute of New Hampshire)
- Public Safety (Police, Fire, etc.)
- Transit Authority
- Grocery Stores
- Manchester Community
- Manchester Work Force Unemployment Office
- Manchester Airport
- Health Care
The institutional analyses (Figures 3 and 4) were equally helpful. The larger the circle, the more important the institution in the lives of the Bhutanese. The degree of overlap of the circle indicates the extent the groups cooperate with one another. The circles in Figure 3 (Concord) tell it all. The five primary and inter-connected institutions are the US Government (source of the original travel and visa support), LSS, NH Health Services, Social Security, and local hospitals. They stand out as the primary providers. The chart acknowledges the Bhutanese obligation and dependence on the “big 5.” It also notes that local churches, schools, and the state employment program are extremely helpful but in a secondary mode. Further, they indicate that these three act independently of one another whereas for the “big 5,” there is modest cooperation and coordination. Other institutions are noted, especially a cluster of three that focus on housing. The “big 5,” the secondary social service group, and the smaller housing cluster of institutions are the life support system for the refugees. The Bhutanese acknowledge this situation and use it as the basis for fine tuning and sharpening their highest priority needs. It is clear from both the map and the institutional analysis that they have helped the Concord community to identify their current situation and therefore to help comment on and identify their future needs.

Manchester’s institutions showed many similarities to Concord. Government, educational, shopping, health and child care, employment services, and transportation — all are part of their representation of influential institutions. They include one that is not on the Concord map, the International Institute of New Hampshire. This group is based in Manchester and offers a number of international visitors (including refugees) assistance in finding housing, health services, ESL, school placements, continuing education and job related training, immigration legal services, employment services, and many support services related to these needs. Needless to say, these are hot topics with the refugees and therefore IIHH receives a large circle indicating the importance it plays in Bhutanese daily life.

There is another extremely important difference with the Manchester institutions as compared with Concord. Not one of the circles overlaps with another, thus suggesting that the spread-out nature of the Manchester housing is carried over into the Manchester perspective of disconnected institutions. The Manchester chart shows no relationship among the service providers, the public sector, or the private sector. They see that it is their responsibility to make the connections between these groups — and again, that is a logical reason why they are more concerned about transport than the folk in Concord.

Filling Gaps in Needs identification

The mapping and institutional sessions were revealing and opened a conversation about needs. At the conclusion of reports on the charts, a facilitator summarized the discussion and asked if there were any gaps in the needs identified. What followed was the hour we had all been waiting for. Instantly individuals began to stand up and describe their needs and why they had difficulty in meeting them.
One spoke of anxiety about health needs and their vulnerability if a member of the family were to become ill. He explained that if they could find some way to have health insurance it would make the entire community more comfortable and relaxed. Another spoke, not so much about money, but about family finance. The comment was that their rent payments were so high that they had little money for other needs. In particular, most apartments require a $1,000 security deposit when the lease is signed. Taking $1,000 just for a deposit was a huge hardship for a refugee family. Another described need for a community center that would provide a space for meeting together, recreation, and even to hold religious services. Another lamented that there was no place in New Hampshire where the deceased could be cremated in a manner consistent with their religious traditions. Gradually people began to applaud these speakers as they were raising issues near and dear to the hearts of the entire group. Yet they previously had no forum through which to express these ideas. Another spoke of assistance needed to learn to drive. Living in refugee camps for the last 20 years, there was no opportunity to own a car. Now, for those who had been able to find jobs, a car was within reach. Given the spatial layout of Concord and especially Manchester, a car was a critical means to get to work, to school, to the hospital, and to shopping. Additional topics came up and have found their way into the ranking exercises (below).

By now the meeting had become animated and electric. We knew that the community had suddenly discovered that the purpose of the exercises was to open the floor to the deeply felt and previously unarticulated needs, needs that fitted the Bhutanese cultural, family, spiritual, political, and economic priorities, as expressed in the group meeting. It was a chance both to speak and to listen with all castes and various groups represented. Attention was focused, people were keenly listening, and the body language was intense.

**Identifying and Ranking Needs**

The boisterous conclusion of the morning session assured a strong and productive discussion for the afternoon’s ranking of needs. The mapping had produced authentic and deeply felt needs, a list that no questionnaire or individual interview process could create. It was a list from the heart and, after all, when it comes to competition between the head and the heart, the heart wins every time. The ranking was vigorous, enthusiastic, spontaneous, and disciplined. The facilitators were splendid! The entire morning session that accomplished all of the above was less than three hours. A remarkable accomplishment when one considers all that the Bhutanese have endured over the last 20 years.

The Clark system of pairwise ranking asks that the entire group compare two choices at a time, as shown in Figures 5 and 6. The method further requires that the group discuss the higher priority of each pair and come to consensus about each priority, **without voting**. At first, the Bhutanese wanted to vote. After all, what can be more American than to vote? But with patience, explanation, and repetition, the facilitators were able to lead the groups beyond voting.
**Figure 5**  
Using Pairwise Ranking to Identify Severe Problems: Concord

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<th>CC</th>
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**Figure 6**  
Using Pairwise Ranking to Identify Severe Problems: Manchester

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<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>Craft Marketing</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Ranked Order:**  
Manchester
1. Health Insurance  5. Driving License
2. Cremation  6. Community Center
2. Language  5. Cremation Facility
2. Education  6. Driving Licenses
3. Family Finance  7. Craft Marketing
4. Education
to come to decisions by consensus. While voting may take less time, it involves only speaking. Decisions by consensus involve some speaking and a lot of listening. Besides, voting only makes decisions, but consensus builds ownership of the decision. Deciding between voting and consensus is an easy choice when building cohesiveness and stability is a primary goal. Pairwise ranking is an important strategy for a recently arrived refugee community.

There are a few technical points to explain about the ranking in order for the importance of these decisions to be understood. We divided the group into two: Concord and Manchester. But we kept the list of needs the same for each group because they created it jointly. One small change was that Concord added “language” as a need and Manchester did not.

The chart is simple. The initials (in Figures 5 and 6) in bold across the top line (CC, CR, HI for example) are abbreviations for the list of problems in the left column. The letters in the individual boxes (central portion of chart) indicate the choices of the group when comparing two needs. For example in Figure 5 (Concord), the upper left box contains “CC.” This means that the Concord group placed higher priority on need for a community center than need for a ritually approved crematorium. In the same box in Figure 6, Manchester gave priority to an approved cremation facility over the community center. So the letters “CR” fill that box for Figure 6. Moving one box to the right in Figures 5 and 6, the letters “HI” appear because both groups placed higher priority on health insurance than on the community center.

The next to last column on the right, marked “score,” provides the number of times the community chose the particular need as their priority. For example, the line for family finance in Figure 5 shows a 7 in the “score” column. That indicates that the group picked family finance 7 times during the course of the ranking. That was the highest score for any of the choices so for the “rank” column (the last column to the right) a “1” appears as Concord’s rank for family finance. In this way the facilitators were able (in less than an hour) to get input from the entire group about their ranking preferences and through the discussion that accompanied the ranking, able to get the entire group (more than 70 for Concord) to agree most of the time. Concord could not agree on three choices (see the boxes in the chart with a diagonal line and two responses entered). This means that for those three boxes, each choice received half a point. Manchester agreed on every choice they ranked.

The ranking began slowly and with some confusion. Normal responses to a new situation. The facilitators, all native Nepali speakers, were wonderful — patient, listening, rephrasing as needed. Their goal was to have the groups (70 to 80 in the Concord group and about 30 in the Manchester group) come to consensus. They achieved their goal as noted in Figures 5 and 6.

A more detailed discussion of the top two or three priorities will be helpful. Even though we are using numbers, this is not a scientific or statistically reliable decision-making tool. Rather it is a tool that enables every member of the group to come away from the meeting feeling like a winner. Decisions by voting create winners and losers and therefore upwards of half may go home from a meeting where voting takes place feeling like losers. Losers are less likely to support the decisions of the meeting. Losers are more likely to become contrary and refuse to cooperate with the winners. One of the goals of our workshop was to create cohesiveness
and good cooperation within the group. Using procedures that create losers is contrary to
good team building and creating high levels of cooperation.

It is also helpful to know that because the tool is not statistically oriented, we cannot say that
the choice with the highest number of points is THE first choice of the community. So look at
the top two or three selections and create two or three working groups and see what re-
responses and commitments of energy come forward. There is additional information on how
to do this follow up in the section on Recommendations.

A few words on some of the top choices, specifically family finance, health insurance, and the
cremation facility. First, note that family finance and health insurance were high on both lists.
Cremation was high only for Manchester. There is a story behind every decision.

Family finance or more broadly, family livelihood, is an obvious need. There are no simple so-
lutions and a small task force will not make a huge dent in the problem over the next 6
months. However, a task force made up of some of the more concerned Bhutanese can begin
thinking about both short term and longer term needs. At the moment, most employment
comes through word of mouth and social networking going on within the community. Linked
to family livelihood is skill training that can open up new careers, especially for the younger
people. A task force for livelihood can visit the state employment office, as a group, and hold
conversations with some of the middle to senior staff making the officials more aware of the
details of the Bhutanese situation and needs as well as seeking advice from them about longer
term career opportunities. The information can be organized (in Nepali) and made available
to any interested members of the community. Increasingly the refugees are getting access to
computers. Perhaps the family finance group could begin running classes on computer liter-
acy so that there could be better communication among the community members. Another
dimension of family finance is expenditures. For many, having bank accounts is a new experi-
ence. Having credit cards is an even newer (and more terrifying) experience. Banks would
(perhaps already have) be happy to run short courses on savings options, the nature of credit
cards, and the liability of purchasing on credit. While many of these courses have already
been offered, having the Bhutanese themselves organize and sponsor such courses imbues a
high degree of local ownership and creates a higher possibility that people will attend and take
the courses seriously. There may also be night classes already available that may not be well
publicized. The task force can work on that issue as well. Finally, most of the families are
renting in a limited number of large apartment complexes. The task force could easily organ-
ize meetings between the community and apartment owners/managers and discuss what
some of the problems are for the managers and, in turn explain some of their problems —
such as the high rent deposit. Maybe there are ways that a community fund can be estab-
lished to have a collective fund for the deposit, thereby assisting the cash flow of individuals.

Then there is health insurance. This too is an educational issue as most of the Bhutanese, like
the rest of America, are overwhelmed with the complexities of the present and rapidly chang-
ing system(s). A Bhutanese task force on health could be a huge help in much the same way
as a task force on livelihood could be. Aparna is in the state Department of Health and would
have several suggestions about people and agencies who could help explain and counsel peo-
ple in need of information. Perhaps the Bhutanese themselves could establish their own information office for health insurance education. Two or three already knowledgeable community members might win grants for special training and become familiar with procedures and programs that are already open. Funding for such training to serve community needs should be readily available.

The cremation facility is a horse of a very different color. While it potentially affects nearly every member of the community, for most it is not a pressing issue. How fascinating that the Manchester group performing the ranking was almost entirely young people under the age of 30. Why are they interested in a spiritually and culturally acceptable facility for cremation? Because they see many of the old people fully disrupted in their lives of the last 20 years beginning to wonder what will happen to their remains when they die. This issue has moved the youth to the point that a suitable cremation facility leaped into their #2 priority. A touching comment on the concern of the youth; a moving comment on ways that the workshop was helping people think about the entire Bhutanese community, not just their own particular interests and needs. It suggests that perhaps there should be a task force to review the current New Hampshire requirements for a legally approved cremation facility and then to look into whether there are steps that can be taken, in full cooperation with a licensed facility, to see what might have to be done. There may be ways to accommodate, on both sides, so that the State takes into account the needs of the Hindus and the Hindus take into account the health requirements of the state. What a wonderful exercise to explore and what a symbolic issue of acceptance to multiple cultural and religious needs of the elderly generations.

As a final comment on the ranking, what a touching note to close the ranking of needs with a topic so personal as the young people caring for their elders. It makes one appreciate the depth of feeling of the young people honoring the concerns of their elders. What a nice Bhutanese tradition.

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**Update on the Cremation Discussion**

This note is entered one month after the workshop. In mid-May, an older woman from the Bhutanese community passed away. This was the first death in the refugee community since their arrival in the US. Because the cremation issue was discussed at the workshop and some plans considered, the newly identified leadership went to the funeral home and were able to arrange a culturally-suitable cremation. The funeral home turned over all rooms in the building to the family so that different vigils and ceremonies could be performed. Employers of immediate members of the family were contacted and all immediate relatives received 13 day leaves so they could observe the traditional period of mourning. Finally, the managers of the apartment complex where the family lived agreed that it was acceptable for some of the mourning ceremonies to be held, in traditional dress, on the lawns adjacent to the apartment buildings. All of these negotiations were inspired by the self-confidence and leadership that emerged from the workshop.
Preparing a Plan of Action

With the ranking in place, it is time to think about implementation. We prepared several plans of action to implement particular priorities. Only one is illustrated here, as an example. The purpose of the plan is two-fold. First, it captures the energy and the momentum of the workshop and therefore enables a broad range of community members to have a say in what needs to be done. This process also leads to local ownership of the a solution for the need. Second, the action plan leaves a written record of what the workshop accomplished and what first steps can be taken to solve the problem.

Figure 7, the action plan of the workshop’s Manchester group, is instructive. While it is incomplete, the ingredients for health insurance and the shell of the other three needs suggest how the group can proceed. Beginning with health insurance, the need is clear — lack of information and lack of money. Both are soluble though the financial challenge is substantial. Their recommendation is to establish a leadership committee on the topic and have that committee gather information about existing opportunities and suggestions about other ways the need can be addressed. They established a health committee at the workshop (listed under “who”) and agreed to start with networking — find out how people deal with the need in other parts of the state and perhaps beyond. This is an area where Clark students could have a role. It is an area where some of the younger Bhutanese could also provide useful research and data gathering. There are also many volunteers in the Concord community who are well versed in health issues and could be recruited to provide information and perhaps even some recommendations. This process relies partly on resources within Concord and partly on support from external groups — such as grad students at Clark. The plan provides both the occasion and the opportunity to bring these many resources to focus on the identified need of the community.

The second issue is more timely, given the events of early May. The small indented anecdote that appears on page 21 describes how Manchester dealt with the death and funeral rituals of a member of the Bhutanese community. This item had been their second highest priority need identified at the March workshop. The action plan laid out the beginning of how the community could proceed, especially finding solutions, including identification of local leaders to take the first step and then educating the community (both Bhutanese and NH residents) about the need and some possible solutions. That is exactly what happened in early May when the death occurred. From all reports, the NH community responded with willing support, given the orderly and well planned arrangements that the Bhutanese brought to the hospital, the funeral home, the apartment complex, and the employers of the immediate family members who needed 13 days without working to observe the formal mourning period. It is a perfect example of how orderly adjustment and accommodation can take place in ways that the interests of all parties are respected. There are now precedents established that will make it easier for the performance of future cremations and funeral rituals among the Bhutanese community. The result of that knowledge makes the Bhutanese community somewhat more comfortable in their new cultural environment. Of course, that was the objective of the workshop and it seems to have caught hold very quickly in the case of the funeral ritual.
Figure 7
Action Plan for Manchester Bhutanese Community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problems</th>
<th>Suggested Solution</th>
<th>Materials Needed</th>
<th>Money Needed</th>
<th>Time to Benefit</th>
<th>Who</th>
<th>When</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health Insurance</td>
<td>• Knowledge of rules of NH on Health Insurance</td>
<td>• Build relationship with State Government</td>
<td>• Networking</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>3 months to find leader and networking</td>
<td>Manchester Bhutanese Community (N.P. Koirala, Om Basnet, Tikaram Acharya, Durga Subedi)</td>
<td>Identify leaders within the month of April</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Lack of information</td>
<td>• Jobs</td>
<td>• Leadership</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• People do not have money</td>
<td>• Need Leaders</td>
<td>• Transportation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Cremation</td>
<td>Don’t know rules and regulations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1 month</td>
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<td>Family Finance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unemployment</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Driving Lesson</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Money</td>
<td>• Need of agency for free training</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Language</td>
<td>• Free English language training</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Knowledge</td>
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Specific Recommendations

There are any number of ways to follow up a workshop of this type. There are the beginnings of action plans created at the workshop. The core of these recommendations is to pick up with one or two of the action plans for each group and, while the momentum of the workshop is still fresh, to get busy and start the follow-up. The following scenario is one possible option.

1. **Get Organized.** Create task forces for two or at most three different needs. One assumes that there would be parallel action groups going in both Manchester and Concord.

2. **Start Information Collection with Task Force.** The task forces would review the preliminary action plans and build on those to create a set of activities that all of the task force agree would be helpful.

   a. Among the first things that will be needed will be more detailed information about the topic — for example health insurance. The task force should undertake research to find out what program are possible. Another strategy is to see whether one of the New Hampshire volunteers might know of one or two people informed about the topic and would meet a few times with the task force, describing possible options. Also contact Clark to see whether one or more from the Clark team could lend assistance. You may wish to see if funds are available to have one or two members of the task force take a training course in the topic — for example, health insurance.

   b. You may also want to recruit local residents to act as advisors to each of the task forces. Doug Hall could help you find such people or Liz Hager would know how to find such people. In this way, your task force would not be acting alone. If these attempts fail, contact Aparna, Augustin or Amy at LSS, Bill Fisher, Dick Ford, or someone whom you met from the Clark graduate student group and see if they have some suggestions about getting good technical advice and recommendations on the topic.

   c. At the same time, have one or two other members of the task force do some research on the internet. Find out what programs are available or possible and what needs to be done to become involved with these programs.

   d. Contact other groups of Bhutanese refugees and see such as in Boston, Portland, or Worcester and see what they are doing on the topic.

3. **Local Meetings.** Once you have good information, hold small meetings with your fellow Bhutanese. You can begin making recommendations. If your recommendations will require money, think about local sources that might make contributions to help you get started.

   a. If health care becomes one of the topics selected, get two or three of your people to learn the details of the recent legislation that President Obama has just signed. There may be opportunities there that will be of assistance to meet your needs.
4. Get Started. Implement some portion of the project. Think about the recent events with the cremation and funeral rites. Someone had to talk with the funeral directors, the hospital staff, the supervisors where family members worked, and other key people in the community. So it will be when working on training that may be needed, getting started with a bank for help with financial planning, or any other type of program. If the organization seems to have no interest, go to others. You will not find every group interested in working with you. See people at LSS or United Way or the hospitals or schools, depending on your projects. Use your beginning efforts to show potential partners that you are not just begging for money but, instead, you want to be partners and work together to solve your needs and problems.

   a. Explore funding sources. The United Way may have a mechanism to provide funding for projects. Here is where you may have to organized some formal type of group that can receive money — find out how to do this.

   b. If you have not already done so, open a bank account.

   c. Keep records so you will be able to refer back to what you have agreed with different organizations.

   d. Keep other groups in the Bhutanese community informed about your progress.

Finally, do not be shy to contact Clark people or others who can help. Finally invite some of the Clark group to these meetings. Dick Ford, Sheela, Nimesh, Mohan, Aparna, and others may be able to come up and listen to what you are doing and give advice. Be prepared for some frustration and realize that some task force members will probably drop out. But if you can end up with a core group of 10 to 15 people per topic, you will find abundant interest and assistance available to you in Concord (and Manchester and Laconia). So far you have been working mostly on needs of individual and families and have not had time or the occasion to work together as a community. The workshop has opened the door for that opportunity and makes many more possibilities open to you.

Conclusions

Self-Sufficiency. Without question, the Bhutanese refugee communities in New Hampshire have sufficient brain power and managerial capacity to design and implement any number of programs to improve their situation.

Cohesiveness and Cooperation. The key to making this happen is working together in a cooperative mode. Divided they will surely fail. Working in collaborative modes, they have the possibility to succeed.

An Example of Cooperation Succeeding. The recent funeral and cremation experience (see page 21) is a case in point. The workshop enabled many voices to speak out on how the US
institution in Nepal responsible for organizing their departure said the US would easily accommodate Hindu cremation and funeral rites. The reality upon arrival was very different. The elderly felt betrayed by the dissonance between the message the Americans provided in Nepal and the reality they found in Concord. Priorities for suitable cremation/funeral rites surfaced in the workshop. Cool hearts and minds prevailed in the workshop and opened a conversation about how to proceed. The recent funeral created a time to test the workshop proposals — and they worked. The occasion of the funeral may become a turning point for the Bhutanese of New Hampshire. Nothing succeeds like success!

**Information Gap.** The greatest single need for most of their highest priorities is more and better information. Fortunately for the refugees, most if not all of that information is within reach. For example, for health insurance, medical care, ESL, technical training for available jobs (especially in the health sector) information is available. Some is on the internet and the younger Bhutanese are highly skilled in internet access. Several families have computers and therefore have internet access. Clarke students are also available and willing to join in the hunt. In the area of banking and family financial management, there are institutions in the three cities that could be approached. If a direct approach does not work, the banking people can be accessed through their churches or civic clubs such as Lions or Rotary. The workshop has shown that the Bhutanese are willing listeners. The New Hampshire residents have gone on record stating their willingness to help, including the office of the Mayor, the United Way, several of the churches, and virtually all of the schools and related educational institutions.

**Next Steps.** Someone has to take the first step. The three refugee communities — Concord, Manchester, and Laconia have now formed committees. There is no reason why they cannot launch task forces focused on each of their two or three highest priority needs. The first step is to collect information. A second step is to propose a solution(s). The third step is meeting with interested constituencies of the refugee community and then holding discussions with the relevant public, private sector, and non-profit organizations to test the idea. In some cases, these task forces may require small budgets to acquire equipment, training community members, or to attend relevant meetings. All of this is possible, though intermediary NGO institutions may need to be involved if there is grant money to manage.

**Eventual Money Management.** Managing community money, while necessary and important, can be the downfall of any well-intended community group. Get advice from people at the United Way. Find out the details at a bank for managing community budgets. Require two or even three signatures on the bank account. Have monthly public disclosures of funds received and spent. All of these things are possible, but require special skills and management.

**Revising Ranked Priorities.** Priorities change over time. Items of high priority in March 2010 may change or new priorities appear. It may be necessary to hold a new round of ranking a year or two later. Clark people are potentially available to help with second and even third round of selecting priorities and redoing action plans. Gradually local talent will figure out how to do this and the task can be managed internally.
In closing, five lessons have become abundantly clear for the Bhutanese communities:

1. The Bhutanese community already has sufficient information and resources to get started on these steps;

2. The community does not have sufficient resources to implement solutions to all of these needs. It will be necessary to work in partnership with local and even regional public, private, and non-profit organizations;

3. New Hampshire is well endowed with such institutions and many of these are prepared to help. But they are mostly interested in helping groups that have already taken initiatives and invested some of their own resources;

4. The action plans become the meeting ground between the Bhutanese community and the broad array of New Hampshire organizations;

5. The example of the funeral/cremation arrangement is a superb precedent and can guide both the Bhutanese and local organizations in the continuing quest for the recently arrived Bhutanese to become American.