

# Soldiers, Migrants and Citizens

## – THE NEPALESE IN BRITAIN



A RUNNYMEDE COMMUNITY STUDY  
BY JESSICA MAI SIMS



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In reflecting on the changing nature of ethnic diversity in Britain, it becomes increasingly clear that we have to move beyond binary notions of white and non-white to explain the ways in which racisms operate, identities are formed and people live out their lives. The societies in which we live are becoming more diverse and will continue to diversify as migration patterns change, and the impacts of globalization are reflected in labour markets as well as in transnational movement of capital.

This series of community studies aims to promote understanding of the diversity within and between different ethnic groups. Our intention is to build up a collection of studies which focus on communities; their demography, links to civil society, and key political and social issues. We hope that over time this will provide a rich resource for understanding how diversity is lived and experienced away from the necessarily crude ethnic monitoring form, in a vital and dynamic multi-ethnic society.

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# Soldiers, Migrants and Citizens – The Nepalese in Britain

JESSICA MAI SIMS

## Nepalese in the UK at a Glance

### Demography

- In the 2001 Census, there were a reported 5938 people born in Nepal living in the UK, with less than a third living in London.
- Community organizations estimate that the current population may be as high as 50,000.
- There seems to be a concentration of Nepalese people in areas around garrisons, such as Shorncliffe and Folkestone in Kent and Farnborough and Aldershot in Hampshire.
- For the first time since 1991, Nepalese nationals in the top ten countries of nationality granted settlement in 2006 (coming in at fourth place).
- Between the years of 2001 and 2006 there were over 7500 applications for student visas from people in Nepal, of which approximately 60% were denied.
- From 1993 to 2001 applications received for asylum in the UK (excluding dependants) by people from Nepal was 0.5% of the total applications of asylum for all nationalities. There was the highest number of applications during 2000 to 2001, and out of initial decisions 87% were refused.

### Health, Social Care & Housing

- Emerging issues for Nepalese migrants in general have been access to appropriate care for older people
- One participant from the research stated diabetes may affect older Nepalese people disproportionately.
- There is a need for translated materials and interpretation for GP visits, for wives of Gurkhas in particular, due to many having limited knowledge of the English language.

### Education

- Among international students the UK was favoured because of historical links and the utility of the English language.

- Currently the UK has lost favour among international students because of the perception that it is difficult to obtain a student visa and high tuition fees with few opportunities to receive scholarships.
- Based on the World Nepalese Students Organisation (WNSO) UK membership, the President speculated that the most popular areas of study for Nepalese students were business, accountancy, IT, nursing, and economics.
- For school-aged Nepalese pupils of Gurkha backgrounds the main issues have been language, pupil mobility and isolation in predominately white schools.
- There has been a concern that the wives of Gurkhas want and need access to English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses, but find attending difficult due to work schedules, child care and cost of tuition.

### Employment

- There are between 3000–3500 Gurkha soldiers enlisted in the Armed Forces, all of whom are men.
- Upon retirement from the Armed Forces, men tend to opt for careers in security, factory work, or as bus and taxi drivers.
- Between 2002 and 2007, over 1700 new National Insurance numbers were allocated to people from Nepal living in Kent.
- People from Nepal have featured in the top ten countries for new NI numbers every year from 2002 in Kent.
- The Himalayan Yeti Nepalese Association states that their membership is drawn from professional and business backgrounds, such as healthcare, education, academia, investment and engineering.
- London Census data shows that the top industries for people born in Nepal living in London were hotels and restaurants (34.8%), real estate and renting (15.7%), wholesale and retail (15.3%) and health and social work (9.6%).

## Relevant Organizations and Websites

### **British-Gurkha Army Ex-servicemen's Organisation**

www.gaeso.org.uk  
3A Arthur Street  
Aldershot  
Hampshire  
GU11 1HJ

### **Non-resident Nepali National Coordination Committee**

www.nrnuk.org  
69 High Street  
Camberley  
Surrey  
GU15 3RB

### **Burnt Oak Nepalese Community**

www.nepalesecommunity.org.uk

### **British Gurkha Welfare Society**

www.bgws.org  
Gurkha Bhawan  
119 Wren Way  
Farnborough  
Hants  
GU14 8TA

### **Nepal Samachar**

www.nepalsamachar.com  
Nepal UK  
Nepaluk.com

Nepali Samaj UK  
www.nepalisamajuk

### **The Sagarmatha Gurkha Community Ashford Kent**

www.gurkhacommunityashford.co.uk  
Swanton House Centre  
Elwick Road  
Ashford  
Kent  
TN23 1NN

### **Centre for Nepal Studies United Kingdom**

224 Broadlands Road  
Southampton  
SO17 3AS  
www.cnsuk.org.uk

### **Himalayan Yeti Nepalese Association, UK**

www.nepal977.com  
12 Reeves Road  
Chorlton  
Manchester  
M21 8BT

### **Siddhartha Nepali Samaj Hastings**

21 The Green  
St. Leonard-on Sea  
TN38 0SU

### **Nepalese Doctors Association, UK**

www.ndauk.org.uk  
16 Leyburn Drive  
High Heaton  
Newcastle-Upon-Tyne  
NE 7 AP

### **Lumbini Nepalese Buddha Dharma Society UK**

www.lumbini.org.uk

### **Worldwide Nepalese Student's Organisation UK**

http://Uk.wnso.org

### **The Gurkha Museum**

Peninsula Barracks  
Romsey Road  
Winchester  
Hants  
SO23 8TS  
www.thegurkhamuseum.co.uk

### **The Britain-Nepal Society**

www.britain-nepal-society.org.uk  
2 West Road  
Guildford  
Surrey  
GU1 2AU

### **Pasa Puchah Guthi UK**

www.ppguk.org  
3 Lefroy Road  
London  
W12 9LF

### **Embassy of Nepal**

www.nepembassy.org.uk  
12A Kensington Palace Gardens  
London  
W8 4QU

### **Welfare Support Office**

New Normandy Barracks  
Evelyn Woods Road  
Aldershot  
Hants  
GU11 2LZ

### **Lamjung Samaj UK**

www.lumjungsamaj.co.uk

### **UK Magar Association**

www.ukmagar.com

### **Tamudhee Association UK**

www.tamudhee.org.uk  
36 Churchill Crescent  
Farnborough  
Hants

# Introduction

Little over half the size of the United Kingdom, Nepal is a country with extraordinary biological, geographical, ethnic, and linguistic diversity. The geography of Nepal is made up of the flat river (Terai) plain in the south, the central hill region and the Himalayas in the north which is home to eight out of ten of the world's highest mountain peaks.<sup>1</sup> Nepal has the largest altitude variation on earth; it is also widely known for being the birthplace of the Buddha. Nepal has 103 caste/ethnic groups, with 80% of its citizens identifying as Hindu. It was the only official Hindu state in the world until it became a secular republic in 2008. After Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam are the most widely practised religions.<sup>2</sup> The social composition of Nepal is highly complex, with combinations of religion, ethnicity, caste, and language informing identities. The largest caste/ethnic groups according to the 2001 Census were the Chhettri (15.8%), Brahman-Hill (12.74%), Magar (7.14%), Tharu (6.75%), Tamang (5.64%), Newar (5.48%), Muslim (4.27%), Kami (3.94%), and Yadav (3.94%).<sup>3</sup> However, the most widely known groups outside of Nepal are those that have traditionally formed the Gurkha regiments in the British Army (Gurung, Magar, Limbu, Rai) and the Sherpa, an ethnic group which refers to the mountaineering guides in the Himalayas.<sup>4</sup>

The first contact between the British and the people of modern day Nepal was when the British East India Company sought to increase their presence on the Asian sub-continent. In 1815 they declared war with Nepal following a series of boundary disputes with, and raids into, the Gorkha city-state. Despite winning, the British were so impressed with the tenacity of their opponents that they encouraged them to volunteer for service in the East India Company's Army in India in 1816.<sup>5</sup> This imperial legacy of military service remained after the partition of India, with Nepalese nationals comprising the largest group of foreign nationals in the British Army, and receiving 13 Victoria Crosses between them.

This link has made the UK a popular destination for Nepalese emigrants seeking employment opportunities internationally because of the weak economy of Nepal – the world's 12th poorest country. Political instability and violence has also been a contributing factor; in 1990 Nepal's government made the transformation from absolute to parliamentary monarchy headed by King Birendra in a move towards democratization. However, since then, Nepalese governments have not lasted longer than two years because of internal collapse, parliamentary dissolution by the King, and the effects of the insurgency by the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoists). Recently, the political climate in Nepal has been more optimistic, with an appetite for change, with the Maoists entering the political mainstream and the country declaring itself to be a republic.

At the time of the last Census, people from Nepal numbered just under 6000 in the UK, which is surprisingly low considering the historical links between the two countries and the political situation in Nepal. However, since the Census the Nepalese population has grown dramatically because in 2004 retired Gurkhas won the right to settle in Britain.<sup>6</sup> Home Office data has shown that nationals of Nepal have been increasingly settling and taking up citizenship in the UK. It appears that the change in the terms and conditions of Gurkha soldiers has been the cause of the growth of the UK Nepalese population. Aside from the migration caused by Gurkhas and their families, it is also important to note that Nepalese individuals have been migrating to the UK as professionals, overseas students, refugees and asylum seekers. Migration has been part of the realities of life of many Nepalese people. It is estimated that there are approximately 925,00 working in India's private and public sectors, and a further 700,000 working 'overseas', meaning beyond India.<sup>7</sup>

This report has been organized in two parts in order to explore the experiences of the UK Nepalese population. First, the population and settlement groups are outlined in order to develop a sense of the experience of migration and the organization of grassroots based initiatives. The

1 Foreign & Commonwealth Office (2007)

2 For more information on population by religion see: Central Bureau of Statistics (2001a).

3 Central Bureau of Statistics (2001b)

4 Gurung (1996) and Gurung (2004: 31)

5 British Army (2005)

6 Hamilton (2004)

7 Seddon (2005)

second part of the report outlines issues that have had resonance with the research participants themselves. Brief accounts of the various groups settling in the UK are given in the section on population; the experience of Gurkhas and their families are discussed in greater depth throughout

the report. Many of the policy areas of concern to Gurkhas are relevant to other migrants from Nepal. Through exploring settlement, employment and training, and children, schools and families, this study aims to present a rounded picture of all Nepalese people living in the UK today.

## Methodology

Nepal has not been a significant sending country of migrants to the UK, so there is very little information on the UK Nepalese population. Even census data is of little use in assessing the current situation of this group because there is no clear category for those of Nepalese heritage (subsumed under 'Born in Nepal' and 'Asian Other'), and the recent change of settlement rights has prompted many to migrate to the UK since 2004. However, this lack of information is beginning to be addressed as research has begun to include samples of Nepalese people and the increase in migrants to the UK has led to their inclusion in Home Office statistical bulletins. In order to isolate a set of policy concerns of the group, this report has included literature and statistics when available, along with qualitative accounts by Nepalese people and those working with Nepalese people. In October 2007 a meeting organized in the London Borough of Hounslow by the Gurkha Army Ex-servicemen's Organisation UK (GAESO) served as an initial scoping exercise for this report. The concerns raised in the meeting were used as a point of departure in the following interviews and focus groups. The qualitative research for this report has been conducted using three methods: telephone interviews, focus groups and community association meetings. Table 1 gives information about the participants, their location, and the

research method used.

A large concern for the group of Gurkha families in Hounslow was the well-being of their children, both in terms of educational achievement and opportunities and how they got along with youth from other ethnic and national backgrounds. To explore the experience of Nepalese youth further, education professionals were consulted on their perception of the issues that concern Nepalese pupils, and in turn a sample of Nepalese pupils was consulted to gather their opinions on their school and local area. The geographical areas studied were chosen through the identification of local education authorities advertising specialist services to the Nepalese community. Additionally, the three community organizations – Siddhartha Nepali Samaj, Himalayan Yeti (Nepalese Association), and the Worldwide Nepalese Students Organisation (WNSO) – were available to participate in the research which provided additional experiences and perspectives to those provided by the Gurkhas and their families. The sample size of this study, as well as the scope of the official figures of the Nepalese population, has meant limited conclusions could be drawn regarding the experience and concerns of the group. However, this study does provide a starting point for those seeking to understand some of the issues for Nepalese people, as well as other BME groups in predominately white areas.

**Table 1 Research participants by method**

Method	Participants	Location/Area Covered
Telephone interview	President of a Nepalese community organization (1)	National; Manchester
Telephone interview	Chair of a Nepalese community organization (1)	East Sussex
Telephone interviews	Education professionals (2)	Kent; Dorset
Focus group	Nepalese overseas students (4)	National; London
Focus group	Nepalese school and college aged students (12)	Bracknell Forest
Focus group	Education and community development professionals (7)	Bracknell Forest
Community Association meeting	Members of Nepalese community and GAESO members (approximately 300)	Hounslow

## Population

According to the last Census, there were a reported 5938 people born in Nepal living in the UK. Of this figure, there were approximately twice as many men than women (4008:1930) and less than a quarter of the total was living in London (1436). Compared with what we know about Gurkha soldiers, this profile is unsurprising – current Ministry of Defence (MoD) policy only allows men to join the Brigade of the Gurkhas, which means that there are between 3000 and 3500 male Gurkha soldiers employed by the MoD in the UK, Brunei, Nepal or deployed in combat.<sup>8</sup> As shown in Figure 1, since 2004 – the year retired Gurkhas were allowed to settle in the UK – there has been an increase in the number of people from Nepal given grants of settlement.<sup>9</sup> In 2006 Nepal featured fourth in the top ten nationalities granted settlement – this was the first time since 1991 that Nepal appeared in the top ten sending countries.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, there has been an increase of those taking up British citizenship since 2004, also shown in Figure 1 below.<sup>11</sup>

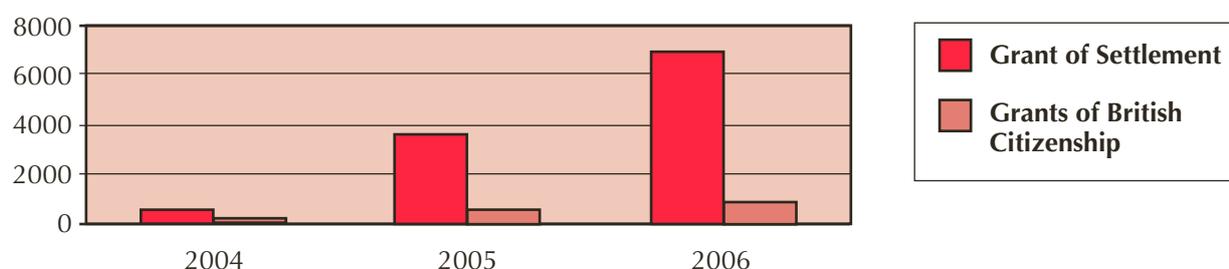
which would mask the numbers of subsequent generations of Nepalese people in Britain.

The following section will outline different migrant subgroups from Nepal which have been differentiated for the purposes of this report. They have been divided as such in an attempt to find patterns in different migration status. Whether migrants are Nepalese or from another national background, those who enter the UK as professionals will be likely to have different experiences than those who enter as asylum seekers, because of the resources available at the time of settlement. Nevertheless, the policy section of this report which follows the outline of groups will attempt to discuss shared characteristics and where their common concerns may coalesce.

### Overseas Students

According to the President of Himalayan Yeti, people from Nepal have been coming to the UK mainly for education and work since the early 1990s. The Worldwide Nepalese Students Organisation (WNSO) provides support for Nepalese students in and outside of Nepal

**Figure 1 Grants of settlement and British citizenship to nationals of Nepal**



Considering recent Home Office data, it is not unreasonable to assume that the 2001 Census figures grossly underestimate the current Nepalese population in the UK. The President of the Himalayan Yeti Nepalese Association estimates that the current population may be as high as 50,000. The next Census may represent a more accurate picture; however, the data will be limited because Nepalese people will most likely continue to be included in the categories of 'Born in Nepal' or 'Asian Other'

by providing information and scholarships to students, and maintains a UK representation for the particular concerns of those in the UK. In a focus group of members from the UK representation, one participant related that he has observed an increase in Nepalese overseas university students since he first arrived for studies in 1994. The organization estimates that they have about 2000 members across the UK – both current and former students – most of whom are in London. Even though there was a concentration in London, the participants agreed that it was still rare to meet other Nepalese people at university. Based on

<sup>8</sup> BBC (2006)

<sup>9</sup> Home Office (2005, 2006, 2007)

<sup>10</sup> Home Office (2007)

<sup>11</sup> Woollacott (2005), Mensah (2006) and Mensah (2007)

the WNSO UK membership, the President of WNSO speculated that the most popular areas of study for Nepalese students were business, accountancy, IT, nursing, and economics.

The members of the WNSO are spread internationally and share information about the positives and negatives of studying in their adopted countries through the organization's online forums. In the focus group, the participants discussed how the UK was traditionally favoured by Nepalese students because of historical links and the use of the English language; however, this position has declined in recent years because of the perception that it is difficult to obtain a student visa. According to UK Visas, the Government's agency for visa advice and information, between the years of 2001 and 2006 approximately 60% of applications for student visas by people from Nepal were denied.<sup>12</sup> A second reason that the UK is becoming less desirable to Nepalese students is that fees are high for international students and there are very few opportunities for students from Nepal to receive scholarships. The WNSO members speculated that many students would work part-time to fund their studies because of the high cost of living in the UK. Correspondingly in London, 55% of people born in Nepal who were students were economically active.<sup>13</sup> The students felt that anxiety over finances would prompt students to work, though working would negatively impact their capacity to study. Increasingly more students opt to go to the USA and Australia for international study where the cost of living is much lower; in the USA there are more scholarship opportunities, and in Australia it is easier to gain permanent residency which allows greater employment opportunities upon degree completion.

The participants also stated that another concern for the students was that 'bogus' colleges and universities were tainting the reputation of studying in the UK. As one participant commented, "They say British education is the best in the world, but then it's only some of them – if you go to a good university". The focus group participants

said that people have been tricked by well developed websites or have been misled by private education counsellors in Nepal. They stated that colleges will sometimes have no classes, or have poor quality for the fees they demand. They felt that both the government and the British Council should take more responsibility in controlling the quality of higher education institutions, otherwise overseas students may think twice before recommending the UK for studies. In 2007, the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) outlined new rules for private colleges that teach overseas students in order to prevent poor quality colleges from getting established. Although the new rules will not take effect until January 2009, they state that colleges recruiting students from overseas will have to be registered on the DIUS Register of Education and Training Providers. To be on the register, colleges must be accredited by an approved body such as Accreditation UK, the British Accreditation Council, and the Accreditation Service for International Colleges.<sup>14</sup> This Register does not assure the quality of the services offered by the providers, but determines whether the provider is legitimate before giving them accreditation. As of January 2008, out of the 254 colleges inspected by the government, 124 had been removed from the DIUS register.<sup>15</sup> The new system will clarify which colleges are recognized, and also prevent 'bogus' colleges from having the ability to sponsor overseas students.

Importantly, members of the WNSO believe that Nepalese students will continue to study in the UK because education in the UK is very good and a degree from a UK higher education institution is very valuable in the international job market. Not only is the education in English, an international language, but degrees from the UK are recognized and trusted throughout the world. While their primary motivation to study overseas was to be competitive in their careers, they did not necessarily see their futures in the UK. Rather, the focus group participants thought of themselves as very mobile, ready to relocate to other countries depending on the

12 UK Visas (2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006); UK Visas (2007)

13 Finella (2005: 181)

14 Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (2007)

15 BBC (2008a)

best employment opportunities because of the lack of opportunity in Nepal for professionals. As one member commented:

Things are changing now, the political problems are settling down now and hopefully we'll go back. The reason why I stay here for so long was because of that, there were no jobs and there was no business there, there was no future. As things settle down many people will go back.

These students were hopeful that experience gained in other countries would contribute to the further development of Nepal.

### Professionals

Similar to the motivations of overseas students, people with professional qualifications have come to the UK in search of good employment opportunities. For example, the President of the Himalayan Yeti Nepalese Association – a national organization that mainly comprises people from professional and business backgrounds – first came to the UK to study and then settled in Manchester after finding work there. Since the mid-1990s the organization has grown in membership to approximately 400 families. In contrast to many of the other Nepalese community organizations, very few of the members of Himalayan Yeti are from Gurkha backgrounds. This was also true of the Siddhartha Nepali Samaj in Hastings, which has been formed by overseas trained nurses from Nepal.

In Manchester, Himalayan Yeti run a Nepali language class for young people, participate in the Summer Mela ('gathering' in Sanskrit) with other South Asian community groups, and every four years have a Nepalese festival that has stalls from local businesses and features academic lectures on Nepal, Nepalese cuisine, dance, music and art exhibitions. They have been able to fund their activities through corporate sponsorship and from Manchester City Council.

The Chairwoman of the Siddhartha Nepali Samaj noted that even with support from Hastings Borough Council, it was difficult to

plan activities and meet regularly because all the members work as nurses and have conflicting schedules. In the year and a half they have been in operation, they have managed to celebrate some Nepalese festivals as a group and also teach their children Nepalese dances to perform at charity events and for the council-wide celebration of International Women's Week. The Chairwoman hoped that the association's activities would help the families feel settled in the UK and that their children would have opportunities to learn about Nepalese culture.

In February 2008, the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) began consultation on guidance for funders to promote community cohesion. The draft guidance had been received with a mixed reaction because of its focus on providing funding for organisations that promote activities between groups. During the consultation period, there was evidence that councils informed organizations that only cater to single groups that they would no longer receive funding. The Community Development Foundation has argued that organizations that cater to single groups contribute to community cohesion, In that these organizations "provide a supportive environment for their members to develop their skills and confidence and therefore create a more diverse community leadership".<sup>16</sup> This supportive environment would then extend and may inspire others to become active members of the community. In the context of this study, the organizations described are examples of single nationality organizations that have been building the capacity of their members to participate with their local communities. The President of Himalayan Yeti argued that since his group represents a small community, they should receive more support from the council to run their activities; he felt that larger communities were more likely to be able to generate support from other funding sources. Council funding was an enabling factor for the Siddhartha Nepali Samaj to organize more activities for its members, including

16 Community Development Foundation (2008). For more information on Runnymede's response to the draft guidance, see: Runnymede Trust (2008a).

participation with other groups in council sponsored activities. This has also been in the case of Himalayan Yeti which has been able to organize activities within their group, promote Nepalese culture to the wider community, and engage with other South Asian organizations to celebrate the Summer Mela.

### Refugees and Asylum Seekers

The third group of Nepalese migrants who have settled in the UK are refugees and asylum seekers. Since the 1990s the political situation in Nepal has been marked by instability and civil war, with human rights abuses by both the state and the Maoist insurgency movement leading to the displacement of thousands of people from their homes. According to United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the abuses reported include extrajudicial executions, unlawful detention, individual and mass abductions, disappearances, torture, extortion, forced recruitment and use of child soldiers.<sup>17</sup> The years of conflict resulted in 13,000 deaths, 100,000-200,000 internally displaced people, and thousands more fleeing the country. These experiences were similar to those reported by young Nepalese asylum seekers in a University of Central Lancashire report commissioned by the Greater London Authority; the reasons for fleeing given by a small sample included not only the volatile political situation, extortion and threats, but also being sent by parents to escape the political and economic instability and find better employment, education and life opportunities.<sup>18</sup>

From UNHCR data, it can be seen that 13,600 asylum applications were submitted by people from Nepal during the years of 1987 to 2004, and out of this number very few applications were made to come to the UK.<sup>19</sup> According to Home Office statistics, the

numbers of asylum applications from Nepal were not significant in comparison to other nationalities; from 1993 to 2001 applications received for asylum in the UK by people from Nepal (excluding dependants) was 2010 (0.5%) of the total applications of asylum by all nationalities. In that period, 2000 and 2001 had the highest number of applications, and 87% of initial decisions were refusal.<sup>20</sup> The period between 2000 and 2002 coincided with a heightened period of violence and instability in Nepal, with King Birendra, Queen Aishwarya and other close relatives of the Royal family being killed by Crown Prince Dipendra.<sup>21</sup> Prince Gyanendra, who had been crowned King, became directly involved in politics in order to quell the rebels. Following curtailment of democracy by the King through the dissolution of parliament and the declaration of a state of emergency, there was an increase of violence by the Maoists. The government and the Maoists were able to negotiate peace accords, which eventually brought the Maoists into the political mainstream. Since 2005 the establishment of an effective government in Nepal had been fraught with complications. However, this year the political situation has become more stable through elections and the declaration of Nepal as a secular republic. Even though the political situation in Nepal over the past decade would suggest an increase in people seeking asylum, the data shows that very few asylum seekers from Nepal have been granted refugee status or exceptional leave in the UK. With these recent political developments, Nepal's growing stability may encourage more people to stay in the country and may encourage more emigrants to return.

### Gurkhas and their Families

Considering the low acceptance of applications for asylum and student visas, it would appear that the largest group of Nepalese people in the UK are Gurkhas and their families, who have mainly arrived since 1997 when the British Gurkhas headquarters were relocated from Hong Kong. Although the Gurkhas do not comprise any one ethnic group, in the meeting

17 UN High Commissioner for Refugees (2007: 3)

18 Centre for Ethnicity and Health, University of Central Lancashire (2004: 56)

19 The 39 receiving countries included: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Latvia, Liechtenstein, and Lithuania. The UNHCR data was generated at: 'Analyzing Asylum Applications' by the Migration Policy Institute. For more information, see: <http://www.migrationinformation.org/datahub/asylum.cfm>

20 Heath and Hill (2002)

21 BBC (2008c)

in Hounslow the participants felt themselves to be a distinct community as a result of their nationality and their shared experiences of migration to serve for the British Army. Areas such as Hampshire, North Yorkshire and Kent have concentrations of Nepalese people because of the presence of nearby garrisons. In Hampshire, it has been estimated that there are approximately 6000 Nepalese people living in the areas of Farnborough and Aldershot, near to the Aldershot Garrison.<sup>22</sup> Shorncliffe Barracks in Folkestone, Kent, is home to the Royal Gurkha Rifles. It is estimated that there are 200 Nepalese families in the surrounding areas of Folkestone,<sup>23</sup> with other significant numbers in Maidstone and Ashford. Between 2002 and 2007, over 1700 new National Insurance numbers were allocated to people from Nepal in the Kent County Council area which may indicate a steady flow of retired Gurkhas and their families taking up civilian careers in the area.<sup>24</sup> In fact, with the exception of 2004/05, people from Nepal have featured in the top ten countries for new NI numbers every year in Kent between 2002 and 2007. In the 2006/2007 year they were the second largest migrant worker group behind Polish nationals (8.5% and 30.4% of the total respectively).<sup>25</sup> The significance of the election of Dhan Gurung, first ex-Gurkha Councillor to take office in Britain, to Folkestone Town Council in 2007 is that the Nepalese population there does not only consist of migrant workers, but residents and citizens who are participating in political institutions.<sup>26</sup> Within London, the biggest populations of Nepalese seems to be in Greenwich (500-1000 people),<sup>27</sup> and Hounslow where the Gurkha Army Ex-Servicemen's Organisation UK (GAESO) estimates there are 350 families.<sup>28</sup>

Even after serving a full military career, Gurkhas are still within working age and so

will often have secondary careers outside the armed forces. GAESO's lawyer stated in the Hounslow meeting that retired Gurkhas often do seek work after their military careers because the pensions they receive are insufficient to support their families. In Dorset a small number of retired Gurkhas (approximately 10 families), who were once based at the Blandford garrison, have started to settle and set up businesses. Similarly, in Kent retired Gurkhas have settled around Ashford where they have found work at a local factory. As families settle outside of the garrison communities, they are likely to attract other Nepalese migrants because of family reunification or because of the networks and amenities they have created in certain areas.

## Policy Areas

This report has separated the UK Nepalese population into four groups (overseas students; professionals; refugees and asylum seekers; Gurkhas and their families) in an attempt to understand how migration status affects settlement and access to services. It is important to bear in mind that the groups discussed are not neatly separated, and the categories made here may not be useful or relevant for individuals themselves. Overseas students may become settled professionals; others may join community associations that are not related to employment but rather offer cultural affinity. In fact, the categories included in this report do not form an exhaustive list of groups. Alternative group categories could be wives of Gurkhas, second generation British Nepalese, business owners, or undocumented migrants.

The following policy section of this report mainly focuses on the concerns of Gurkhas and their families who were consulted for the report. This is not to suggest that Nepalese issues are synonymous to Gurkha issues, but because of the recent policy change, they are the largest migrant group from Nepal and in the case of access to services are in a distinct situation. Because of the particular migration and employment experience of Gurkhas, their concerns may be more relevant

22 Bayman (2005). In Rushmoor 72% of the immigrants are Nepalese and in Hart 23% of the immigrants are Nepalese. For more information see: Crime Prevention Committee (2007).

23 Inside Out (2005)

24 Analysis and Information Team KCC (2007)

25 Ibid.

26 Shepway Liberal Democrats (2007)

27 Social Inclusion and Justice Division (2007)

28 With each family having an estimated 4-6 people, estimated population in Hounslow is between 1400-2100.

to other Commonwealth soldiers in the armed forces. As stated above, the meeting organized in the London Borough of Hounslow by GAESO in October 2007 served as an initial scoping exercise to isolate some of the most relevant policy issues for both Gurkhas and Nepalese people in the UK. The concerns raised in the meeting were then further explored in the subsequent interviews, focus groups and meetings in order to gauge their relevance in other areas with military related communities. The following sections will outline briefly some of the concerns that were articulated, namely, the process of settlement in the UK and access to resources, access to employment and training, care for older people, and their children's transition to the British education system.

### Settlement

Once the Brigade of the Gurkhas relocated to the UK from Hong Kong, equality with other British Army personnel became more feasible. A persistent grievance of Gurkhas has been the inequality in wages and pension scheme in comparison with other armed forces personnel. According to MoD policy, the rationale behind the differential pension schemes was that the Gurkhas were expected to return to Nepal upon retirement, where the cost of living is less than in the UK. After beginning to put pressure on the MoD for equal pensions, Gurkha organizations also launched a campaign for Gurkhas and their families to have the right to permanently settle in the UK upon retirement. They felt that with the right to settle there would not be any argument for receiving a lower pension. In 2004, Gurkhas with more than four years service were able to settle permanently in the UK, and more recently (in 2007) they have won the right of equal terms and conditions of service in the Army.<sup>29</sup> This means that in addition to receiving the same pay and tax benefits as the other soldiers, they can now transfer from their Gurkha Pension Scheme to the main Armed Forces Pension Scheme.<sup>30</sup>

29 Hamilton (2004); BBC (2004a) and Ministry of Defence (2007)

30 Despite this change, Gurkhas who retired after 2007 do not necessarily receive equal pensions to other armed forces personnel. Services before 1997 are still only valued between 24% and 36% of British rates. A solicitor involved with the appeal stated that, "For example, a Gurkha, medically retired last year with 17 years' of service, will get just over £4,650 a year. A British soldier in the same position would get about £6,400." (quoted in: 2008 'Gurkhas lose pension legal battle', Independent, (2 July)).

While these two changes in MoD policy constituted greater equality in the armed forces for Gurkhas, these changes were only available to those who retired after the headquarters' relocation in 1997 because, as the MoD policy states, "Gurkhas discharged after this date will therefore have had the opportunity to develop close physical ties with the UK", which Gurkhas who were not based in the UK have not.<sup>31</sup> Those who had retired before 1997 could still apply for permission for settlement; however, those decisions would be determined on a case-by-case basis depending on the length of time they have lived in the UK, whether they have family or their children are being educated there, and whether they have a chronic medical condition which would be significantly improved by living in the UK. Many have considered this cut-off date as unacceptable and so with the support of the Liberal Democrats, retired Gurkhas have continued their campaign for citizenship and pension rights for those who retired before 1997. In March 2008, 50 soldiers handed their medals to Liberal Democrat leader Nick Clegg in protest at the unfair treatment, and have argued that the policy represents a breach in their human rights as outlined in the European Convention on Human Rights, on the grounds of unlawful discrimination.<sup>32</sup>

For those who qualified for settlement, their next challenge was adjusting to civilian life. During the GAESO meeting, the process of Gurkha families re-establishing themselves was an opening point of discussion. Even with having a 'good orientation' about British society through language, living in the UK, and serving alongside British nationals in the armed forces, once returning to the UK as civilians they end up in a situation such as any other migrant – registering for a National Insurance number, finding school places for their children, finding affordable housing, etc. Even though they have often been moving near bases, and where other Gurkhas have settled, they also have to adjust to moving from a close-knit military community to a situation where there may not be developed networks of, or resources available to, other Nepalese people. Adjusting to living as a settled

31 Borders and Immigration Agency (2008)

32 BBC (2008b) and Gibb (2008)

family may pose challenges for these families; before the change to their terms and conditions of service, while British soldiers' families were permitted to be posted with them abroad, Gurkhas were only allowed three years of family leave during their 15 years of service.<sup>33</sup>

Research participants from Hounslow, Bracknell Forest, Dorset and Kent expressed the concern that communication barriers with wives was a pressing problem because this barrier could cause feelings of isolation, keep them in low or unskilled work, and render them unable to access services independently of their children and husbands. The Extended Services Coordinator in Bracknell Forest stated that the change in government funding for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) meant that many of the women no longer took English classes because of the difficulties in qualifying for subsidies. As she explained, "the women had to pay £130 a session, which may as well be a million pounds if you don't have a job. That's a problem really, how do the ladies learn how to speak English?"<sup>34</sup> In Kent, the Specialist Teacher recounted that when English classes were organized at the request of the women, they proved not to be viable because of the women's conflicting work schedules. In Hampshire, they have courses open to all during normal term dates which they try to recommend to incoming families through their Access to Learning programme. After identifying a specific need for both the adults in and outside the garrison, ESOL classes were offered at a college in Farnborough and on the Aldershot base. It has been well received by Nepalese parents, although some users were unhappy that they were required to pay fees for the classes. As argued in Runnymede's Thai Community Study,<sup>35</sup> there is a need for low cost and flexibly scheduled English classes to ensure that migrants are equipped with the resources to understand life in the UK and have the ability to independently participate in society either socially, economically or politically. The fees imposed on non-European Union nationals often pose financial barriers to accessing these courses.

33 BBC (2002)

34 For more information on foreign spouses and ESOL provision, see Runnymede Trust (2008b).

35 Sims (2007)

The care of older parents is becoming a concern for families. There seem to be more older Nepalese in the country; in Bracknell Forest, for example, the Extended Services Coordinator remarked that she had noticed a growing number of older people with children in the playground. She suspected that issues concerning older people may be isolation, as they are suspected to have limited knowledge of English, and poor health, often brought about by a lack of knowledge about diet and care in their home country. The President of Himalayan Yeti also remarked that a growing issue for his group's members is the care for older people. The community development worker from Bracknell Forest suggested that the new Nepalese residents should be informed about the services on offer, especially related to care, and encouraged to feel able to they ask for assistance. However, studies on the care needs of BME older people have stated that care must be appropriate, accessible and adequate, in terms of diet, religious practices, staff that can communicate appropriately, and freedom of racial abuse.<sup>36</sup> Care for BME older people has tended to fall on relatives or BME day care centres rather than mainstream services because of these needs. Local mainstream services need to be developed if they are to provide an appropriate resource for BME older people.

In summary, there are many concerns for migrants from Gurkha backgrounds in terms of settlement. One of the persistent grievances of this group has been the sentiment that the MoD and British Government have acted unfairly towards the Gurkhas. The new settlement and change in terms and conditions of service have only benefited those who have retired after 1997, leaving many older pensioners without the financial ability to support themselves or give them access to good healthcare.<sup>37</sup> This treatment of veterans has not only been a concern for Gurkhas; the maltreatment and neglect of veterans has attracted considerable media attention and political activism. Apart from settlement and pension rights for those retired before 1997, other settlement concerns

36 Patel (1999)

37 For more information on the most publicised cases demonstrating this see: Townsend, Mark (2007).

have been the difficulties that Gurkhas face in establishing identity, and securing housing and employment and qualifying for NHS treatment.<sup>38</sup> The participants in the study identified language barriers as the largest concern for the wives of Gurkhas as it impacted their access to services, social network, and choice in employment. These issues may best be tackled through MoD resettlement provisions – now men can directly discharge in the UK and their separate reorientation programme is anticipated to be mainstreamed into the Career Transition Partnership.<sup>39</sup> In addition, owing to the clear need for the wives of Gurkhas to understand English while living in the UK, there is a case for ensuring that Gurkhas and their spouses qualify for accessible and affordable education, whether that be through the MoD or LEAs.

### Employment and Training

Considering that there are up to 3500 Gurkhas serving with the British Army in any year, it is likely that the Army is the single biggest employer of Nepalese people in UK. Because active Gurkhas were not consulted during the research, their employment concerns are beyond the scope of this report. However, as discussed previously, there are employment and training issues beyond military careers because retirees often move on to second careers after retirement from the military. In Bracknell Forest, participants in the meeting of professionals stated that they suspected that the majority of the retired Gurkhas in their area were working as taxi or bus drivers, or as security guards, and that their wives – if working at all – were working as cleaners or in customer service in shops such as Tesco. The students from Bracknell Forest confirmed this, stating that their fathers worked as security officers and as guards on the garrison, with their mothers working in shops, restaurants, or serving food on the base.

The career paths for those in Bracknell Forest were similar to the examples given in the meeting in Hounslow, and from other sources in other areas. In the press, there have been reports of retired Gurkhas being recruited as bus drivers in Wales and as security guards in Nottingham.<sup>40</sup> In Maidstone and Folkestone in Kent, the Nepalese communities have grown because of the garrison there; however, retired Gurkhas have also dispersed to neighbouring Ashford to take up work in a factory.

Moving into careers such as driving and security is apparently not uncommon for ex-servicemen in general; in one study<sup>41</sup> it was found that men in junior ranks of the military tended to work in ‘masculinized’ institutions that had transferable skill capital and continuity to the armed forces, such as the police service, prisons, or the defence and security industries. However, an Employment Consultant from the Regular Forces Employment Association stated that retired Gurkhas have also gone into work in areas such as engineering, project management, logistics, employment recruitment, and found careers as meter readers, tree surgeons, butlers, valets, and yacht hands - in addition to the occupations named above.<sup>42</sup> The consultant also stated that employers have been known to offer training for specific positions and to offer or pay for English classes for the men or their wives.

Aside from the Gurkha families, there is not much information about the employment choices of other Nepalese people. From speaking with the chairs of the Siddhartha Nepali Samaj and Himalayan Yeti, people seem to be working in professional occupations across the country depending on where they are able to find work in sectors such as healthcare, education, academia, investment and engineering. In London, at the time of the last Census, people working in ‘professional occupations’ were fourth (9.3%) in the list of occupations.<sup>43</sup> The top occupation was ‘elementary occupations’ (31.4%),<sup>44</sup> which a WNSO member referred to as the work students

38 In June of 2008, one hospital denied NHS treatment to Tul Bahadur Pun VC NHS treatment, arguing that ‘indefinite leave to enter’ (ILE) does not qualify for NHS treatment in England. (no author) (2008) ‘Gurkha, 87, who won the VC returns war medals to Downing Street after being refused free hospital care’ Daily Mail, (June 25.) <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1029303/Gurkha-87-won-VC-returns-war-medals-Downing-Street-refused-free-hospital-care.html>

39 National Audit Office (2007). CTP is the agreement between the MoD and Right Management that carryout free career transition services for service leavers as part of their resettlement process from two year before leaving to two years after. For more information see: <http://www.ctp.org.uk/>

40 BBC (2004b) and Thomas (2006)

41 Higate (2001)

42 The Regular Forces Employment Association (Rfea) is a charity that specializes in assisting ex-servicemen and women to find employment throughout their working life. For more information see: <http://www.rfea.org.uk>

43 Finella (2005)

44 Finella (2005)

tend to do, ‘the three D’s – dirty, dangerous and difficult.’ The London data also shows that the top industries for people born in Nepal living in London were hotels and restaurants (34.8%), real estate and renting (15.7%), wholesale and retail (15.3%) and health and social work (9.6%).<sup>45</sup> Although the women associated with the Siddhartha Nepali Samaj were working as nurses, a study by the Nepal Institute for Development Studies found that women migrant workers from Nepal (12% of whom had migrated to the UK) were mainly working as domestics or in other areas of the service sector.<sup>46</sup> Regardless of the employment industry or sector, Nepalese migrant workers have been an important economic resource for Nepal. Remittances accounted for 11.7% of the country’s GDP in 2006, and were larger than public and private capital inflows.<sup>47</sup> Indeed, during the course of the research, fundraising for charity work in Nepal was a commonplace practice.

As more families begin to settle into concentrated locations, the education professionals expressed a desire to have more Nepalese people involved in education and service delivery. Local education authorities have sought to hire bilingual teachers, teaching assistants, and interpreters to help children settle into new schools and to communicate with parents – especially mothers – who have limited English. Often local education authorities will only have the resources for a few positions within schools or the LEA, but will have recognized the need for more engagement with the local community. Across the areas consulted for this report, there were Nepalese people working as teachers and teaching assistants, interpreters and as school governors, but there was the feeling that individuals may be put under strain to meet the demand of their services. In the meeting of professionals in Bracknell Forest, a community development worker remarked that the council should be wary of relying too heavily on a few people to liaise with Nepalese families:

Well, that’s what we’ve found. When you first make contact with a community, you get a name and you ask them for something. And then someone else asks you for that name and in the end that person has to deal with ten different people and then you lose them. And then they say, well I can’t do this anymore. And it’s like you say, you’ve got [x], [y], [z] and a couple of others. It’s almost as if you need a pool so you make sure that you’re not pulling on one person because then they’re stretched, and they really can’t... And then that breaks down and then you lose everything.

The Extended Services Coordinator in Bracknell Forest was in the process of raising funds for a new position of link officer who would be in charge of liaison between the council, police, schools and community to alleviate the pressures of dealing with all problems that currently rest with the teaching staff and school governors. The hope was that these multiple roles would encourage more widespread engagement amongst the Nepalese community, rather than relying on a few ‘gatekeepers’ to be the points of communication to the Nepalese community there.

According to the education professionals in the different areas studied, they have come across women who have been teachers in Nepal who have not continued to work in education in the UK. If there are people with the relevant experience to work either as teaching staff or as support workers and they have not been able to continue working in these fields in the UK, it is important to find out why and see if any obstacles can be removed. In the case of education, getting these adults in paid or voluntary positions in schools would perhaps make the parents of Nepalese children more comfortable in interacting with schools, but also would benefit the entire community through improving the quality of public institutions. One of the focus group participants in Bracknell Forest felt that they have had success in making parents feel comfortable in schools through the employment of a Nepalese teaching assistant

45 Finella (2005)

46 Seddon (2005) and (Gurung, 2004: 29)

47 World Bank (2006: 88–90)

in combination with encouraging Nepalese parents to participate in school activities. As part of the resettlement process, the MoD does offer access to adult education, but one participant during the research seemed to think it was not appealing to the Gurkhas for one reason or another. This information was surprising, considering that those in the meeting in Hounslow said they were interested in learning more skills regarding IT and new media. Among the participants, there seemed to be confusion around the entitlement to education and training of retired Gurkhas and their families. Guidance from the Learning and Skills Council states that non-British nationals serving in the armed forces and their spouses and dependants should be considered eligible for funding throughout their period of service.<sup>48</sup> One area for future research is to investigate the extent to which people from different ethnic and national backgrounds participate in service leavers' resettlement services and adult education, to gauge the effectiveness of these services. Hampshire LEA's Access to Learning provides a good example of a service aimed at getting newly arrived adults into education (though it is only directed towards adults with children).

It would appear that there is a need for better communication between the MoD, local authorities and education institutions, and the organizations responsible for resettlement, on how Gurkhas and retired Gurkhas' immigration status affects their and their families' access to public services. This is also true regarding the children of Gurkhas' access to higher education, as will be discussed in the next section.

### **Children, Schools and Families**

Children from Gurkha families have dominated much of the data regarding Nepalese pupils in schools. The reason for this has been linked to the particular migrant pattern of these families: that they are settling in a few specific locations. The main issues concerning these young people, as identified from these sources, have been language, which is an issue relevant to all Nepali speaking migrants in general, and pupil

mobility.<sup>49</sup> The Service Children in State Schools Working Group has argued that regardless of whether parents are currently or were previously serving in the armed forces, children may still be affected by the issues that have been associated with being a service child.<sup>50</sup> So, while it is likely that most of the Gurkhas who have school-aged children in schools in the UK are retired, it is important to understand the legacy of being a service child, such as how mobility can continue to impact on a child's education even after demobilization, and the relationship between being a service child and a foreign national. The specific issues associated with Nepalese pupils of Gurkha backgrounds and mobility have included the impact of different schools on learning and development, the provision and use of English as an additional language (EAL), how pupils are integrated in new school and community environments, and their transition to higher education.

### *Impact of Mobility on Learning and Development*

In a Defence Committee report looking into the needs of service children, the authors cited how moving schools can be stressful and that the frequent moves (termed mobility or turbulence) service children may experience can have detrimental impacts on their willingness to form friendships with their peers and the consistency of learning.<sup>51</sup> One key message of the report was that schools and local authorities need more efficient and reliable procedures for the transfer of student records, both between UK schools and between UK and overseas schools.<sup>52</sup> The Head of Service from Dorset County Council's Ethnic Minority Achievement Service (EMAS) remarked on the usefulness of records in assessing the pupils' prior school experiences, though it was the case that they were not always accessible. In Blandford, Dorset, the majority of their Nepalese students are from active army personnel families and often have changed schools frequently in and

49 It is also worth noting that the issues that affect Gurkha pupils in schools are also experienced by Fijian pupils whose families have come to the UK to serve in the British Army.

50 House of Commons Defence Committee (2006: 24)

51 House of Commons Defence Committee (2006: 8)

52 House of Commons Defence Committee (2006: 30)

48 LSC (2008: 17)

outside the UK. Student records were seen as extremely important for integrating them quickly into their new school in order to minimize as much disruption as possible to the children's education. Along with the transfer of student records, the transfer of special educational needs (SEN) statements was also included as a particular area of concern. The Head of Service for EMAS recounted a case about one Nepalese student who had not been assessed with learning difficulties until the family reached Dorset. When the father was due for a new posting he requested to stay to ensure that his child would continue to receive additional support. One area contributing to the Defence Committee report stated that they had a higher proportion of service children with special needs compared to the general population, though there is no reliable data to confirm the extent of this.<sup>53</sup> However, regarding the children of Gurkhas, it is important to keep in mind that perceived language barriers may mask SEN. Even in schools with considerable experience with Nepali EAL students, problems can still occur; the Extended Services Manager in Bracknell Forest admitted the challenges they had faced in the past with this issue before they had a Nepalese teacher on staff:

If we have English children coming in with learning difficulties it's easy to spot, but with a Nepalese student coming to us, it may be that their English skills aren't as honed, or a learning difficulty. We've had 2-3 students where we didn't do as good as a job as we should have. And that's because we just didn't realise that it had to do with learning difficulties.

One study from the University of Luton has found evidence that children with EAL are underrepresented among children with SEN statements, which may be an indication of the greater likelihood that there will be errors in identification than with other children.<sup>54</sup> Even in areas where most pupils are native English

speakers, it is important for LEAs to ensure that their teaching staff are effectively trained into spotting when special attention and resources are needed because of SEN or because of language barriers. Distinguishing between language barriers and learning difficulties will continue to be important, as even areas which had not experienced migration before have most likely been affected by the accession of A8 country nationals to the European Union. Furthermore, even if there are situations where SEN and student records are not transferred, schools should forge links with newly arrived parents to ensure that the needs of the pupils are known and are being consistently met at both home and school.

According to the Confederation of Children's Services Managers, one key issue concerning pupils from Gurkha backgrounds was additional English language support.<sup>55</sup> Even though the majority of these pupils are taught English in private schools in Nepal, there are varying degrees of language needs that correspond with the standard of English at the schools they have previously attended. Aside from attending to individual needs, it has been difficult for some LEAs to adequately plan ahead for large population changes because Ethnic Minority Achievement Service funding is based on the overall profile of minority ethnic pupils. For example, Hampshire LEA knew to expect Gurkha children, but did not know when they would arrive or where they would settle.<sup>56</sup> For some areas it may be a matter of a dozen pupils; however, in the 2005–2006 school year in Hampshire, 600 out of the 930 new arrivals referred to the EMAS were Nepali speaking children of both serving and retired Gurkhas.<sup>57</sup> Even small numbers of pupils can be significant for areas that lack infrastructure for EAL services; Wiltshire County Council similarly describes the stress of the influx of settling Gurkhas into their schools:

Over the past few months, we have been working with the Children's Education Advisory Service and with the Army

53 Wiltshire County Council stated that approximately 5% of their service children have statements of SEN, compared with an overall level of approximately 2.1%. For more information see: House of Commons Defence Committee (2006: Ev 96, Ev 97).

54 Cline and Shamsi (2000: 59)

55 House of Commons Defence Committee (2006: Ev 93)

56 House of Commons Defence Committee (2006: Ev 93-94)

57 Email correspondence with the Team Leader of Hampshire EMAS. This compares to 138 new Nepali speaking referrals in the 2004–2005 year. Hampshire EMA Service (2005).

Welfare Service to support the needs of the children of Gurkha families who have been arriving in increasing numbers as a result of changes to policy concerning accompanying families' dependants. This means that relatively small village schools have had to adapt in a short space of time to a significant influx of children who do not speak English.<sup>58</sup>

The Head Teachers of English schools in the same report stated that they would appreciate better communication with the MoD regarding notice of significant postings of service personnel to local garrisons so they will have some time to accommodate the new pupils.<sup>59</sup> This information sharing would not necessarily be available to families arriving after retirement, though perhaps the MoD could extend resettlement services to include providing channels for families to communicate with prospective schools. The MoD's HIVE information Service already provides this information for the service community (though more research is needed to determine the extent to which this service is accessed by Gurkhas, retired Gurkhas or ex-service personnel).<sup>60</sup> One method of liaison between LEAs and the MoD that has been used is Army Support/Welfare Officers. The LEAs that have support workers have increased communication with the MoD, have found the role beneficial in planning services, and value the intermediary link to the community.

The previously-mentioned Defence Committee report found that provisions for accessing education have not been adequate for service children, and this could lead to a situation where these children can 'slip through the cracks'. In order to manage mobility, the Committee has recommended that schools forge relationships with parents, gain information on an individual student's attainment and

plan tailored support as soon as pupils arrive in a new school.<sup>61</sup> As discussed above, it is important for staff to be trained to be able to distinguish when pupils need additional language support, or when they have SEN. The education professionals in Kent and Dorset mentioned that many migrant and BME pupils have similar issues, and so it is necessary for school staff to be trained in diversity issues in general. From this information, there is a case for the MoD to take a greater role in facilitating the resettlement of families from Gurkha and Commonwealth backgrounds, which extends past employment assistance to areas such as schooling for children. It would be useful for the MoD to adapt existing services and resources to help these families settle, through the facilitation of information across LEAs and between families, LEAs and the MoD.

### *Diversity in Schools*

Our research shows that Gurkha families have been settling in large numbers near garrisons. As many garrisons are in predominately white areas, Nepalese people may become very visible minorities. For example, the LEAs outside of London that have a separate ethnicity code for Nepalese students have a predominately white pupil intake: Dorset (96%), Essex (92%), Kent (92%), Lincolnshire (96.5%), Plymouth (91%), Wiltshire (95%) and Windsor and Maidenhead (80%).<sup>62</sup> Even in areas where there may only be 30-40 pupils between schools, this visibility can be significant for these areas – as in the case of Dorset which only experiences small levels of ethnic diversity. Challenges for these areas include the prevention of feelings of isolation for these students and how to promote integration between the students of different backgrounds.

In Bracknell Forest, the youth club adjacent to the secondary school organizes a twice weekly Nepalese after school club. The club was a way of getting together some of the Nepalese pupils at the school in a casual atmosphere, offering a range of facilities in the youth club, such as billiards, video games and computers, a space

58 Wiltshire County Council, Department for Children and Education, as quoted from House of Commons Defence Committee (2006: Ev 96).

59 House of Commons Defence Committee (2006: 29)

60 The HIVE Information Service is a tri-Service information network, providing information on a range of welfare issues to all Service personnel.

61 OfSTED (2002)

62 For more information see Office for National Statistics (2006a) and (2006b).

used to practise dance routines, and a study space. When asked about the club, the pupils in the focus group stated that they enjoyed coming with one girl explaining the value of being all-Nepalese,

[The other students] have other days they can come in [the youth club]. This is time for us Nepalese. It's fun to chill out – it's more comfortable. We speak Nepali and [the other students] would feel left out. They might think that we're speaking about them.

The professionals in Bracknell Forest remarked that they would like to see more mixing between the students, though the young people felt that they already had good opportunities to mix with people from other backgrounds during class and lunch. Some of the pupils also attended the other after school clubs that were not specifically designed for Nepalese pupils. Aside from school-related activities, all the students reported that their friendship groups were mixed. The Extended Services Manager mentioned that he has tried to make the other students understand some of the reasons that the Nepalese pupils stick together, and that it has started to work:

At lunchtime there are groups of Nepali girls in the dining room and very few boys. All the boys are playing basketball or football. At lunch time it's their opportunity to be Nepalese. And I've had students in the past saying that it's not fair, that they talk Nepali to each other, and you have to rationalise that with them. If I dumped you in Nepal with your friends would you speak English or Nepali?

The professionals in Bracknell Forest were concerned with ensuring that the students had opportunities to be comfortable being Nepalese at school, but that they also had opportunities to make friends with other non-Nepalese students. The case of Bracknell Forest illustrates one of the challenges to schools, which is how to manage the diversity at school

and create an environment where the new students are integrated with the majority and where the majority welcome the new students. One of the methods they have adopted in Bracknell Forest has been introducing pupils and staff to Nepalese culture through special days showcasing Nepalese art, food and dance. In a primary school in Bracknell Forest, they had Nepalese parents come into the school to cook and do art with all the children to make parents feel more comfortable in schools. The EAL Coordinator in the school thought this was a great way to get parents involved in the school because in Nepal the school is seen as the domain of teachers, "...in Nepal, they have a great respect for education... So for them it's a foreign experience for them to be asked to come in and work in school".

While the children and staff enjoyed the day, the EAL coordinator also said that some parents complained because they felt the school should do more to promote English culture. In the secondary school there was an assembly put on by the Nepalese students showcasing Nepalese dance, culture and music. Although the professionals felt it was a success and there were no complaints by parents, the students had mixed views about it. Most felt that the non-Nepalese students enjoyed it, though a couple thought that other students were still uninterested about Nepalese people or culture; as one girl explained, "Teachers care because they're adults, but other students don't care. They don't understand because they haven't been in our place". Students complained that sometimes pupils were not sensitive to other cultures in general, such as saying rude comments about other religions and cultures, about people in developing countries, and through racist name-calling and bullying. They felt that students' attitudes were not going to be changed, no matter the intervention of teaching staff, especially outside of the classroom when teachers were not present to witness the bullying. Instead they said the way to deal with these situations was to avoid the people that were known to be bullies. One girl felt that because they were a minority group there was little they could do to stop the bullying.

This lack of confidence in the power of

school staff to deal with racist bullying may lead to many incidents going unreported. In a study of BME pupils in predominately white schools, it was found that “over a third of the children who were interviewed, reported experiences of hurtful name calling and verbal abuse either at school or during the school journey, and for around half of these the harassment was continuing or had continued over an extended period of time”.<sup>63</sup> This harassment occurred mainly when close supervision from school staff was difficult or impossible, such as during breaks, lunchtime and journeys between home and school. In that study, the schools that effectively dealt with bullying were those with strong anti-bullying policies and sanctions against perpetrators, and with good practice such as a permanent school record of incidents as a resource for staff to maintain a common approach to incidents. However, Gaine has argued that ongoing in-service or initial teacher education is needed to effectively address the issues of racism and bullying. Further, the service would need frequent and collaborative interaction between teachers, anti-racism work, and informed and practical outside support to be successful.<sup>64</sup> This is especially true in terms of predominately white schools. This support is to ensure that teachers and schools are not only prepared to deal with racist incidents but also know how to promote anti-racism. The experience of the students in Bracknell Forest may demonstrate that while activities designed to promote cultural diversity are beneficial in terms of giving pupils opportunities to share and feel confident about their heritage at school, these activities may not necessarily lead to students espousing anti-racist attitudes.

While the professionals wanted to ensure that pupils had meaningful interaction with each other, one area where they did not want to see the Nepalese students integrating was into an academically apathetic school culture. When asked how well the students were achieving as a group, the Extended Services Manager explained how achievement was mixed, with those doing well seen as

benefiting from their home culture, and those who were underachieving seen as possibly taking advantage of a less strict English school environment. In the focus group, the pupils complained about white students’ behaviour – both boys’ and girls’ – in class towards their teachers and their school work – and felt that other students’ disruptive behaviour was a waste of class time. Although they enjoyed the more relaxed environment of English schools towards uniforms and the amount of coursework, they did feel that it was a benefit for all the students to have more of an emphasis on schoolwork. A few mentioned how some of their teachers were very good at giving them extra help when they needed it, but they felt that they were also unfairly told to behave themselves when they felt they were often already better behaved than many of the other students. One girl said that teachers often speak too fast for her to understand, and she was sometimes afraid to ask them to speak slowly because she feared bullying from other students. Her experience was echoed by comments from the Specialist Teacher in Kent, who suspected that even those that seem to have a good grasp of English may need additional support but might not ask for help. Another student in the focus group thought it was important that the teachers recognize each pupil’s needs and offer support accordingly:

... I had a teacher once who spoke to me as if I was a little kid. And I said I can understand what you’re saying, you don’t have to speak slowly. If someone does that and you know how to speak it’s insulting. Some of the Nepalese don’t speak well but they get extra help. We have a teacher and she’s quite good. She tries to help us, and you can call her anytime. If there are problems she calls the teachers because they might not understand.

As discussed above, it is necessary for teachers – even in areas that have not yet had significant newly arrived EAL pupils – to understand the barriers that these pupils may

63 Cline et al. (2002)

64 Gaine (2000: 78)

face whether socially or academically. In predominately white areas minority ethnic or EAL students may appreciate having spaces that bring them together that are culturally relevant, where they feel comfortable, and where English is optional. As the students in the focus group stated, they all had varying needs of EAL support, which required individual solutions. As the pupils were cautious of being singled out for fear of bullying, teachers should appreciate the need to sensitively work with pupils in a way that will build their skills and confidence.

The pupils were concerned with achieving in school because they wanted to continue their studies in university. While they spoke of how their parents were saving money to send them to university, none spoke of the controversy that the children of retired Gurkhas do not always qualify for home tuition fees. The parents in the Hounslow meeting expressed their distress that their children were not qualifying for tuition fees, which meant that they were not able to send them to university. Chhatra Rai, general secretary of the British Gurkha Welfare Society, was quoted as explaining the situation:

Most of the children have been educated at schools in the UK and most of the soldiers want to settle in the UK when they retire. To apply for leave to remain or citizenship they must first be discharged from the army... . It's a catch-22 situation because they have to sacrifice their service to send their children to university, otherwise it's not economically viable.<sup>65</sup>

Many families, though wanting their children to attend university, felt that international tuition fees were too expensive for the families to afford. This issue is not only relevant to retired Gurkhas either; Gurkhas serving in Afghanistan spoke of their concern about their children's barriers to higher education.<sup>66</sup> The DIUS have asked universities to consider

dependants of Gurkhas and Commonwealth service personnel for 'home fees', but ultimately this would be at the discretion of the universities. Parents have been extremely disappointed about this policy as it represents another area of inequality for the families of former Gurkhas soldiers. These restrictions are similar to those discussed in the previous section regarding adult education. Again, there is a need for better communication between families, the MoD, local authorities and education institutions on how the immigration status of Gurkhas and their families affects their access to public services.

This section has focused on children, schools and families in an attempt to discuss the relationship between schools and families in the development of children and young people. Again, regarding the children of Gurkhas, the most salient issues may be the impact of mobility on education, SEN and EAL. The priority for these students, as with any students transferring into new schools, is getting them integrated into the school as quickly as possible. In order to achieve this, it has been recommended that staff quickly forge strong communication with parents. Especially for those students who have English as a second language, special educational needs that are not caused by language difficulties may be able to be assessed more effectively. Getting to know the students' abilities will enable teachers to recognize when appropriate help is needed without making students feel less capable or vulnerable. For this, ongoing in-service or initial teacher education should be made available for staff to ensure that they are confident working with students who have diverse needs, and that they will be adequately prepared to incorporate anti-racism in work in schools – and will likewise see the importance of such an ethos and work. Especially in schools that are predominately white, a school environment that supports diversity and anti-racism can help alleviate feelings of isolation in pupils from BME backgrounds as well as promote a safe and supportive environment.

<sup>65</sup> Gilbert (2008)

<sup>66</sup> Gilbert (2008)

## Conclusion

While this report has endeavoured to present a brief account of the UK Nepalese population, its focus has mainly centred around Gurkhas and their families because of the availability of information and the likelihood that this category is the largest migrant group from Nepal. The Gurkhas do not have the same rights as Commonwealth citizens employed in the armed services, and this has impacted upon their standard of living and where they settle, their employment and their entitlements to particular services such as education. Many of the research participants felt that Nepal's unique relationship with the UK should translate into resources and relaxed restrictions for migrants. The overseas students were disappointed that Commonwealth students were eligible for scholarships but that there were none for students from Nepal, while Gurkhas felt that they should be given extra help settling in the UK and that they and their children should be allowed to participate in higher education as home tuition fee payers. Gurkha's grievances against the Government have also included the right of settlement and equal pension to be extended to Gurkhas who retired before 1997. Other issues of settlement that will affect other Nepalese migrants will be finding and accessing appropriate care for older relatives.

The MoD currently offers a range of resettlement services for service personnel before and after retirement from the military. These services have ranged from help in securing employment to access to adult education. The mainstream Career Transition Partnership provision has also been anticipated to replace the specific resettlement provision for Gurkhas because of policy change of the Gurkha Terms and Conditions of Service. With this incorporation, it will be necessary to monitor access to these services in order to assess their suitability for Gurkha service leavers. During the research, many participants stated that retired Gurkhas civilian employment opportunities were tied to their level of English. As previously discussed, one area for future research may be the relationship between service leavers' access to resettlement services

and adult education and their ethnic and national background and fluency in the English language.

In terms of service delivery, research shows that it is LEAs that have borne the brunt of the change in settlement policy, as hundreds of school-aged pupils have gone to a few select locations near garrison towns. In a short space of time these areas have had to adapt their services in order to accommodate these new residents. In areas that have large communities associated with the armed forces, LEAs have felt that the MoD should take more responsibility in mitigating the effects of adapting service provision through supplying resources, link officers, or at the very least effective communication so that LEAs can plan ahead. In this study, different departments within LEAs were in charge of working with the issues of Nepalese students – Community Language Services, EMAS, and Extended Services. Perhaps the MoD, as part of their support to service families, could enable a network where education professionals could network and share best practice. Greater communication to exchange ideas, best practice and resources would especially benefit professionals in areas with less experience in working with Nepalese pupils or service children in general.

As many of these areas have not experienced migration previously, nor do they have long established or large ethnic minority communities, there has been a challenge in ensuring that staff are sufficiently confident to work with mobile pupils, and EAL learners. This may mean being able to recognize SEN from language difficulties, approaching EAL needs more sensitively, promoting a positive stance on diversity and taking up a strong anti-racism school ethos. Isolation has been an issue for students, not only in terms of numbers of other non-white pupils, but also that other students are interested and respectful of other cultures. The pupils in Bracknell Forest were unconvinced that learning about Nepalese culture would prevent anti-racist attitudes amongst the students, and they thought that teachers were unable to stop most of the bullying that took place. Ongoing in-service or initial teacher education should be made available to staff to ensure that they

are confident working with students who have diverse needs, and that staff will understand the importance of anti-racism work and will be prepared to incorporate such work in the ethos of the school. Supporting the value of diversity and promoting anti-racism are ways for schools in predominately white areas to tackle possible isolation of BME pupils and build confidence in pupils and their families that school staff are sensitive to their needs and concerns. The education professionals and pupils did not raise the issue of race-based violence; however, in the Hounslow meeting parents were concerned with the safety for their children and racially based community tensions have been reported in Hampshire.<sup>67</sup> Community safety, along with community cohesion, may therefore be an emerging issue in other areas with little ethnic and faith diversity.

While this study has represented a unique migrant group case, there are many similar issues between this and previous reports from Runnymede's Community Studies series.

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<sup>67</sup> Bayman (2005)

Primarily, like other groups, Nepalese people in the UK tend not to speak in terms of a unified community but rather in terms of locality, different associations and migration routes. Discussed briefly in the section on population, the government's current moves towards awarding funding based on activities that target more than one identity group have been in an effort to build greater cohesion in society. However, it is important to bear in mind that for some smaller minority ethnic groups, building the capacity to work as a single group has been necessary to participate in the wider community - as was the case of Hastings Nepali Samaj. Because of the particular employment situation of many of its members, holding community activities is difficult, let alone engaging with other groups in council sponsored activities. Furthermore, as the case of the pupils from Bracknell Forest suggests, strong and meaningful interactions between groups can only be achieved when programmes or policies have a respect for diversity in addition to an expressed commitment for equality.

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The Runnymede Trust is an independent policy research organization focusing on equality and justice through the promotion of a successful multi-ethnic society. Founded as a Charitable Educational Trust, Runnymede has a long track record in policy research, working in close collaboration with eminent thinkers and policymakers in the public, private and voluntary sectors. We believe that the way ahead lies in building effective partnerships, and we are continually developing these with the voluntary sector, the government, local authorities and companies in the UK and Europe. We stimulate debate and suggest forward-looking strategies in areas of public policy such as education, the criminal justice system, employment and citizenship.

Since 1968, the date of Runnymede's foundation, we have worked to establish and maintain a positive image of what it means to live affirmatively within a society that is both multi-ethnic and culturally diverse. Runnymede continues to speak with a thoughtful and independent public voice on these issues today.



RUNNYMEDE

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