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EXILES FROM THE LAND OF SNOWS
SURVEY OF A TIBETAN REFUGEE COMMUNITY

By Carol Rose



Housing in the Jawalakhel refugee settlement.

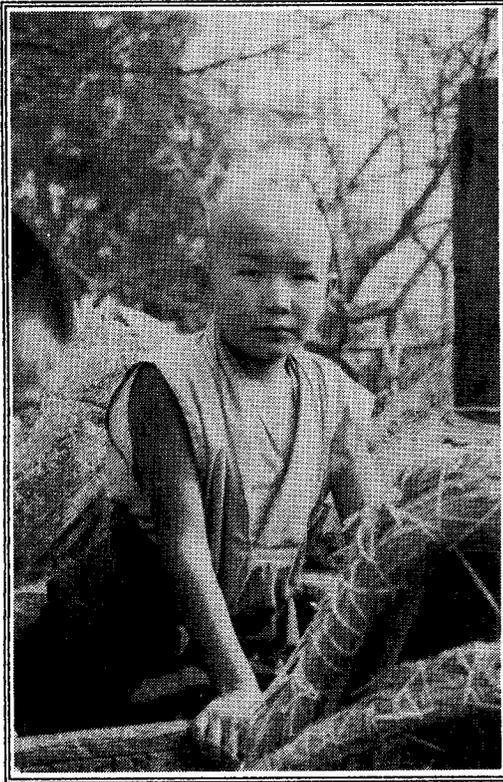
INTRODUCTION

This report summarizes the findings of a survey conducted in the Jawalakhel refugee community on the outskirts of Kathmandu, Nepal. Some of the Tibetans surveyed live within the Jawalakhel refugee settlement. Others have left the settlement and now live in the surrounding community of Lalitpur.

By distinguishing between refugee camp residents and those who have left the camp, this survey provides a unique look at how refugees make the transition out of refugee settlements. The results indicate both positive and negative impacts of formal camp settings on refugee populations. Specifically, the results suggest some of the factors that determine why some refugees become economically self-sufficient and how this independence can be encouraged. Finally, the report attempts to give voice to the needs of the Jawalakhel community as expressed by the Tibetan people themselves.

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Religion plays a key role in Tibetan life. Families traditionally send one son to the monastery to become a monk.

TIBETAN REFUGEES IN NEPAL

Forty years ago, the People's Republic of China invaded Tibet, declaring it to be a historical part of China. Following a popular uprising against Chinese rule in 1959, an estimated 100,000 Tibetans fled their homeland for the neighboring countries of Nepal, India, Sikkim and Bhutan.

The majority of the refugees settled in India, where Tibet's spiritual and political leader, The Dalai Lama, established a government administration in exile. More than 20,000 Tibetan refugees fled instead to Nepal.

Like most forced migrants, the Tibetans arrived in Nepal largely destitute. They had been nomads, farmers or traders in a country famous for its isolation and cultural xenophobia. Few of the arrivals spoke Nepali, or had experience in any work other than yak-herding or subsistence farming.

Those who brought valuables with them often were driven to exchange them merely to obtain food. Many of the early arrivals in the border area between Tibet and Nepal were compelled to beg, while others worked as servants or manual laborers for subsistence wages. Unaccustomed to the warmer climate and lower altitude of Nepal, many died from cholera, dysentery, typhoid and malaria.

Despite widespread media coverage of the 1959 Tibetan uprising against China and subsequent flight of the Dalai Lama to India, it took more than a year for the international community to provide assistance to the refugees flooding out of Tibet. Spurring efforts to assist the refugees in Nepal were Father Marshall Moran, a Jesuit priest, and the Swiss geologist, Toni Hagen. Hagen in late 1960 secured extensive monies through the International Committee for Red Cross (ICRC) and was appointed chief of ICRC's relief program in Nepal. Soon thereafter, he procured from the government of Nepal land at little or no cost upon which he established four "temporary" settlements for the Tibetans. The first camp was organized in 1961 at Jawalakhel, a dry patch of land on the southern edge of Kathmandu.

The creation of camps set apart from the Nepali community made it easier for foreign assistance organizations to provide aid to the refugees. But the isolation of the Tibetans from the host community also was endorsed by the Dalai Lama, who saw the camps as the best way to preserve Tibetan language and culture during what was expected to be a short stay before their return home.¹

The initial focus within the camps was on housing, health and sanitation. Most settlements provided housing, a primary school, limited medical care and work. But early on, the scope of international assistance programs expanded to one of "making the Tibetans economically self-sufficient and integrating them into Nepal."²

Assisted by the Swiss Association for Technical Assistance, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Nepali Red Cross, the Tibetan community in Nepal built housing, primary schools and health clinics. They established cooperatives where refugees could buy commodities at lower prices, and in rural areas they attempted to develop subsistence agriculture.

By far the most successful program, however, was the promotion of carpet-weaving factories. Once a skill reserved for a small artisan class in Tibet, mass-production carpet centers at each settlement became a vital source of income and stability for the refugees. By 1966, the Carpet Trading Company in Kathmandu was established to provide export channels for carpets to western markets.

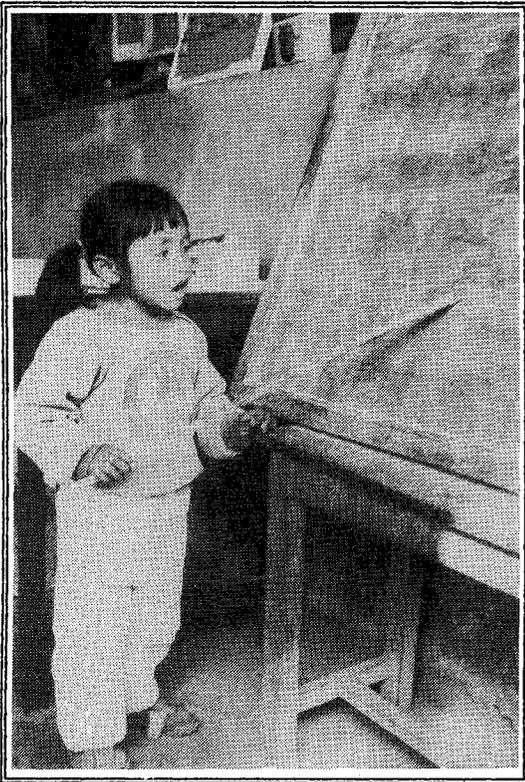
Twenty five years later, the 14,000 Tibetans in Nepal have emerged as an



Carpet production has become the key source of income for most Tibetans. Here, a Jawalakhel resident spins wool at the camp Handicraft Center.

¹ Ann Armbrecht Forbes, Settlements of Hope, Cultural Survival, Inc., Combridge, MA., 1989, p. 38.

² Quoted from a 1964 agreement between the Swiss and Nepalese governments officially documenting the role of Swiss aid. Forbes, op. cit.



Free primary education is provided to employees of the Handicraft Center. Here a Tibetan youngster leads her kindergarten class through a recitation of the Nepali alphabet.

schools, various scholarship programs, assistance to the elderly, health and sanitation. Seed money for the foundation came from the Dalai Lama's administration, the Carpet Trading Center, the Swiss Development Corporation and other international agencies.

Despite these programs, economic independence has not come to all Tibetan refugees. Nearly one-third of the Tibetans in Nepal continue to live in 12 refugee settlements spread around the country.⁴ Many of the settlement residents live in substandard housing, where space constraints create serious sanitation and health problems.

³ Michael G. Keller, Tibetan Woman and Children in Nepal: A Preliminary Report on the Conditions Affecting the Health and Welfare Status of the Tibetan Community in Nepal., Unpublished report prepared for UNICEF/Nepal. October-November 1990.

⁴ Office of H.H. the Dalai Lama's Representative in Nepal, see Keller, op. cit. Appendix A.

extraordinarily successful and cohesive community. They comprise a powerful economic block through their creation of and dominance over the carpet weaving industry, which now ranks as the second largest source of foreign currency in Nepal, -- surpassed only by tourism.

Hundreds of private carpet factories have sprung up around the country, often managed by Tibetans who hire Nepalese to do the laborious work of weaving. In addition, Tibetan shops, restaurants and hotels have spread throughout the tourist areas of Nepal.

In 1972, a Tibetan-managed charity called the Snow Lion Foundation (SLF) was established to provide on-going support for the Tibetans' social, health and educational needs. International aid agencies based in Nepal are not allowed to assist the Tibetans. But the Foundation is eligible to receive foreign assistance directly from overseas, which is used to administer 13

In addition, while primary education is now available to all children in Nepal, school fees remain an obstacle to post-primary education for many Tibetan (as well as Nepali) children.

THE JAWALAKHEL SETTLEMENT

Jawalakhel, once accessible by a single dirt road, now sits on a main thoroughfare in one of Kathmandu's most populous areas called Lalitpur. Around 275 Tibetan households live in or around the Lalitpur area, which includes the Jawalakhel settlement. Of these, approximately 200 families live in the settlement, while the remaining 75 households either rent or own housing in neighborhoods that surround the camp.⁵

Since 1968, administration and management of the Jawalakhel settlement has been handled solely by Tibetans. The settlement is dominated by its "Handicraft Center," which consists of a carpet-weaving factory with facilities for cleaning, washing, dying, and balling the wool/yarn.

There also are rooms equipped with weaving looms and areas for trimming, packing and storing finished carpets. There are three retail shops on factory premises, as well as offices that handle carpet exports.

In recent years, employment at the center has become a requirement for many entitlements, including rent-free housing in the settlement, subsidized medical care, free primary education for one's children, and old-age pensions.

Camp housing is free if at least one member of a family works in the carpet



"Dirt Makes Sickness" signs posted around the Jawalakhel refugee settlement. Despite such admonitions, space constraints create serious sanitation problems in the camp.

⁵ These figures approximated from an informal tax-roll and a list of workers at the Jawalakhel settlement handicraft center. Heslop, *op. cit.* came up with almost identical numbers in her April 1989 survey, which counted 209 families living in the settlement and approximately 70 in the surrounding Lalitpur area. See Pauline Heslop, Assessment of the Tibetan Primary Health Care/T.B. Control Projects in the Kathmandu valley, Nepal. Unpublished report. April - May 1989.

center. Some carpet factory workers have moved out of the settlement into the outlying community, retaining their settlement house and charging rent to other refugees in the camp.

Housing within Jawalakhel settlement consists^{of} brick masonry, with uninsulated tin or tile roofing and earthen floors. Most families have one or two rooms, each measuring 10' by 12' to accommodate 4-6 people.⁶ Electricity is generally available, but there is no indoor plumbing. Public water taps and latrines each serve large numbers of people in the camp.

A new health center recently has been constructed near the carpet factory. Jawalakhel settlement members, if they are Handicraft Center employees, receive full reimbursement for their medical expenses. Outsiders pay "cost" for all medicines, as well as visit and laboratory fees.

Jawalakhel settlement residents over age 61 who have worked in the carpet factory at least 10 years receive a pension of 100 rupees a month. Factory workers over age 66 receive a pension of 300 rupees a month.⁷ At present, approximately 60 of the 950 residents of the settlement receive pensions.

A new primary school (grades KG - 5) recently has been built at Jawalakhel. In March 1991, there were 358 students and nine teachers in the primary school. In addition, the first and only Tibetan high school (grades six through 10) recently was established in Kathmandu, with a capacity for 500 students.⁸



School fees increased in February 1991. The

Good reasons to smile: This Tibetan couple left Jawalakhel camp to open their own carpet factory and sales shop.

⁶ Keller, op. cit., p. 10.

⁷ Interview with Lobsang Nyima, general manager of the Jawalakhel Handicraft Center.

⁸ Report to the XVIII General Assembly of the Snow Lion Foundation. 1990.

cost of tuition for grades kindergarten through five is 1,200 rupees (US \$38) a year, or 7,800 rupees (US \$244) a year if board is included. Fees for the high school are 1,440 rupees (US \$44) yearly tuition, and 8,400 rupees (US \$263) including board. Parents also have to buy textbooks, uniforms, and pay admission and other school fees. Families that cannot afford school fees may receive partial assistance from the Council for Tibetan Education, sponsored by the Dalai Lama's government. Primary school is free only for children of Jawalakhel whose parents work in the carpet factory.

It must be stressed that each of the 12 refugee settlements in Nepal is self-governing, and not all provide the same services as those found in the Jawalakhel camp. Residents of other refugee settlements in Nepal must obtain letters of recommendation from the Dalai Lama's government representative in Nepal and a letter of "no objection" from their present camp in order to move to Jawalakhel. There is no formal procedure for accepting new residents into the settlement. Those with relatives in the settlement usually approach camp leaders (elected every three years), while those who arrive with no relatives are assigned to a settlement by the Dalai Lama's government representative in Nepal.⁹

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The Tibetan community in Kathmandu assisted a great deal in this survey. Vital background information was provided by the director of the Tibetan Welfare Office in Nepal, Mr. Paljor Tsering, and the general secretary of the Snow Lion Foundation, Mr. Karma Tashi. Local Tibetan officials in Jawalakhel, including Mr. Tsering Tobgyal Rusur and Mr. Lobsang Nyima, supported the survey effort by giving the authors full access to the carpet factory and settlement, and by providing crucial information on the organization and operation of the Handicraft Center and its relationship to the settlement.

Two lists obtained through the Jawalakhel Handicraft Center and local Tibetan officials provided the basis for systematically surveying the Tibetan population in Jawalakhel. One list included the 193 Handicraft Center employees - the majority of whom live in the Jawalakhel settlement. Another listed the 78 non-settlement Tibetan heads of households in Jawalakhel, based on the exiled government's voluntary tax roll. Starting with a random name on each list, every nth name was selected a predetermined number of respondents was selected from each list.

⁹ Lobsang Nyima, op. cit.

In order to ensure adequate representation in the survey between refugees living in the settlement and those who had moved out of the camp, the survey design was to sample these two groups separately. Since the lists did not correspond exactly with settlement resident and settlement-departer populations, twenty respondents were surveyed on each list with the goal of finding ten respondents that fit into the two desired categories. As a result, from a total of 39 useable surveys, twelve respondents were settlement residents working in the Handicraft Center, and eleven respondents were former settlement residents now in private business. Another ten respondents had never lived in the settlement. Characteristics of the respondents are given in Figure 1.

Two Tibetan translators, one a camp resident, were of invaluable assistance for identifying, locating and communicating with survey respondents, many of whom spoke only the Tibetan language. These assistants were instructed to let respondents answer all questions freely, and to avoid "putting words" into their mouths.

Survey questionnaires were pre-tested and modified. Individual surveys lasted from 20 minutes up to one hour. Heads of households or their spouses were surveyed. Only a few Tibetans refused to participate in the survey for health or other personal reasons. Of the forty Tibetans surveyed, however, all were enthusiastic and willing respondents, answering all questions. Only one survey was discarded because of the respondent's inability to provide information concerning rent and income, etc.

The survey focused on three general areas: (1) background and flight from Tibet; (2) educational background, employment, and residence history since leaving Tibet; (3) and expectations and desires for their children growing up in Nepal. About half of the survey consisted of questions with qualitative or descriptive rather than quantitative answers, such as why did you settle in Nepal, do you prefer living in the settlement, what are

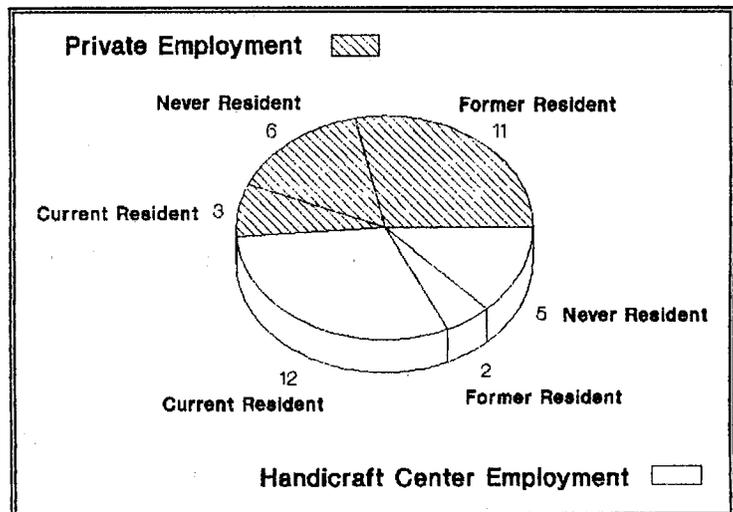


Figure 1. Number of survey respondents by employment and residence in settlement

the most important subjects for your children to study in school? Although open-ended, answers to these questions were grouped into categories listed on the survey form. In this way common responses could be counted.

COMPARISON OF SETTLEMENT RESIDENTS AND SETTLEMENT DEPARTERS

In the three decades that Tibetan refugees have spent away from Tibet and their varying degrees of integration into the host country provide a unique setting for looking at how refugees make the transition from refugee settlement to self-settlement in a particular location. As noted above, 12 of the 39 respondents were settlement residents currently employed in the Handicraft Center, and 11 were settlement departers employed in private business. Comparing these two groups provides the basis for considering the process of and motivation for departure from the settlement.

Demographics and standard of living

The survey results show no statistically significant difference in the ages of the respondents (who in most cases were heads of their respective households), despite the expectation that settlement departers might be a younger group on average. This result is consistent with the findings of Heslop who analyzed a census of Jawalakhel in 1989 which found that settlement and non-settlement residents had similar demographic profiles.¹⁰ The average age of heads of households among settlement residents and settlement departers found in the current survey are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Average Ages of Respondents

Group	Average	High	Low
Settlement Resident	47	74	23
Settlement Departer	41	50	31

In addition, the survey results show no difference between the two groups with regard to when they departed Tibet. Nearly all respondents in these two groups who fled Tibet left between 1957 and 1962. Thus the survey results indicate that settlement residents and settlement departers are approximately from the same one or two generations of people who fled Tibet as children or young adults.

¹⁰ Heslop, op. cit.

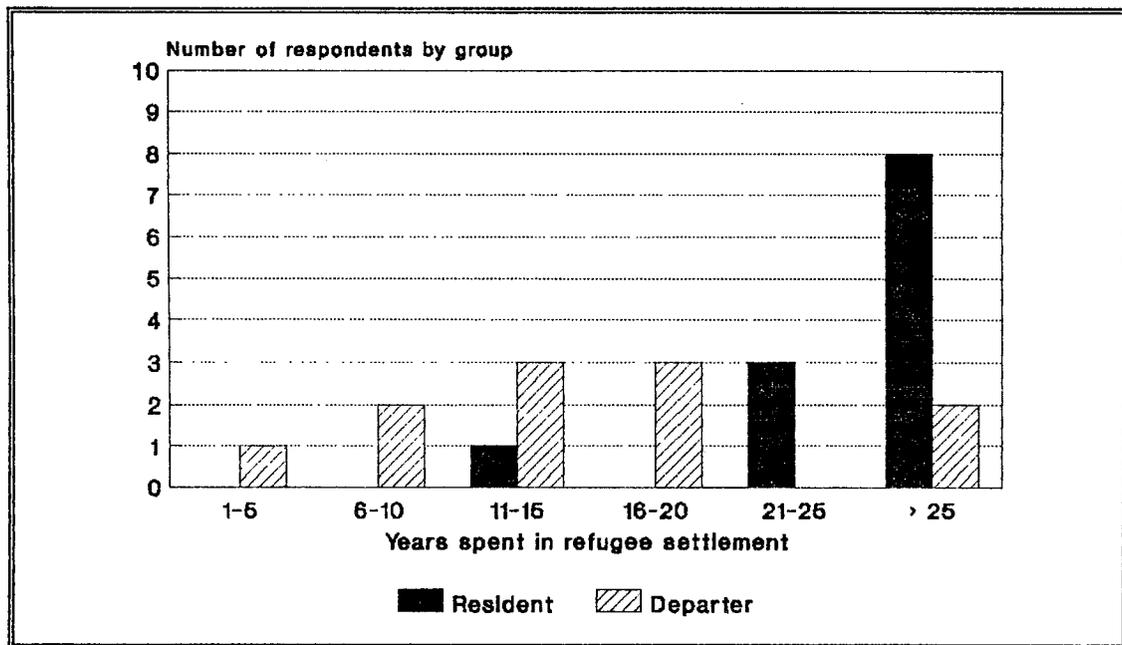


Figure 2. Duration of residence in refugee settlement

There is no consistent pattern in the number of years spent in refugee settlements among those who eventually departed from the settlement. Two stayed in the settlement for over 25 years before leaving, while three spent ten years or less. The majority, six, spent between 11 and 20 years in refugee settlements before departing. The majority of respondents currently residing in the settlement have been there for greater than 25 years. In other words, given the thirty years that have elapsed since they left Tibet, settlement resident heads of households have lived virtually their whole lives outside of Tibet in the refugee settlement. The distribution of number of years lived in the refugee settlement is given in Figure 2.

Average household size is significantly larger for settlement departers as shown in Table 2. Yet, the degree of crowding, in terms of number of persons per room per household, is three times higher in the settlement.

Table 2. Average Household size and Average Number of Persons per Room

Group	Household Size	Persons/Room
Settlement Resident	4	3.6
Settlement Departers	7	1.2

Survey results concerning household size are perhaps indicative of diverging patterns of behavior between the settlement residents and settlement departers. Departers' households include extended family members, while settlement residents' households are nuclear in composition. Specifically, 73 percent of settlement departers' households contained one or more extended family member (i.e., grandparents, siblings, nieces or nephews, grandchildren, etc.), while 83 percent of settlement residents' households had no extended family members.

Moreover, by studying census data, Heslop recorded a crude birth rate between May 1988 and April 1989 of 14.3 per 1,000 for Jawalakhel Settlement residents, approximately half that of the crude birth rate of 27.8 per 1,000 for Tibetan residents living in the Lalitpur area. (The census excluded Tibetans who had Nepali citizenship.)¹¹ Although further study is required, taken together these findings are a tentative indication that space and economic constraints experienced in the settlement have had an impact on household composition and family size.

While all respondents have electricity, plumbing in the settlement consists of outdoor and communal water faucets and latrines. In contrast, 10 settlement departers (91 percent) have private indoor plumbing facilities.

Employment and income

Economically, settlement and non-settlement refugees in Jawalakhel are dependent almost exclusively on the carpet industry. However, settlement residents and settlement departers have significantly different roles in the carpet industry. The majority, or eight of the eleven settlement departers, own or co-own either a carpet factory or carpet sales shop. Of these eight owners, four said that they export carpets as well as sell in the local market. Of the remaining three, one is a carpet store manager, another works for the Tibetan government, and a third is retired and receives income from rental property.

In contrast, it is required that at least one member of each settlement family work in the Handicraft Center. Of the 12 Handicraft Center employees living in the settlement, 9 are involved in the production of carpets - knotting carpets, spinning wool, dyeing wool, balling wool, etc. They are paid on a piece-work basis. The other three are involved in the bookkeeping and sales aspects of the Handicraft Center, and receive a salary. Figure 3. illustrates the differences in job

¹¹ Ibid. Heslop lists the average family size within the Jawalakhel settlement as 4.7 people, compared with 5.7 people in the average Tibetan family living in the surrounding area.

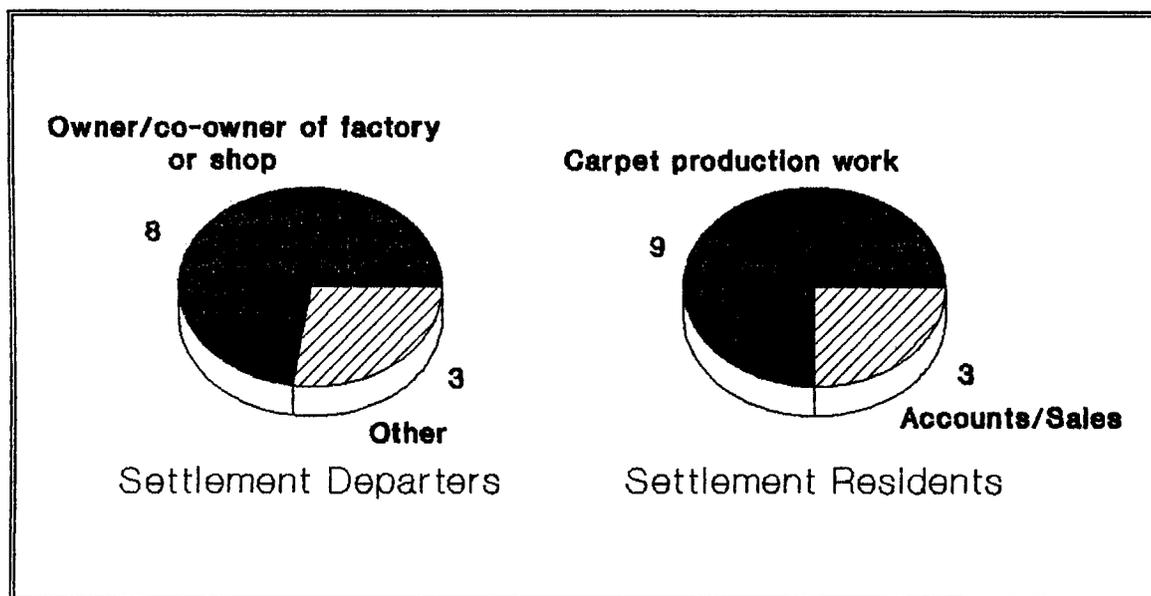


Figure 3. Differences in types of employment among refugee groups

types and level of responsibility between those in private employment ("settlement departers") and those working at the handicraft center ("settlement residents.")

With regard to income, the survey shows that settlement departers enjoy much higher household incomes on average than settlement residents. This is in keeping both with their roles in the carpet industry as managers and owners of carpet factories and shops, and with the higher average number of workers per settlement departer household (three workers as opposed to two per settlement resident household). Figure 4 compares the distribution of total household monthly income between settlement residents and those who have left.

Taking into account the slightly larger average household size as noted above, settlement departers household incomes per person are still significantly higher, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Average Monthly Household Income per Person

Group	Average	High	Low
		<i>(Nepali Rupees)</i>	
Settlement Resident	311	1,500	38
Settlement Departer	2,604	7,500	250

(32 NRs. = 1 US Dollar)

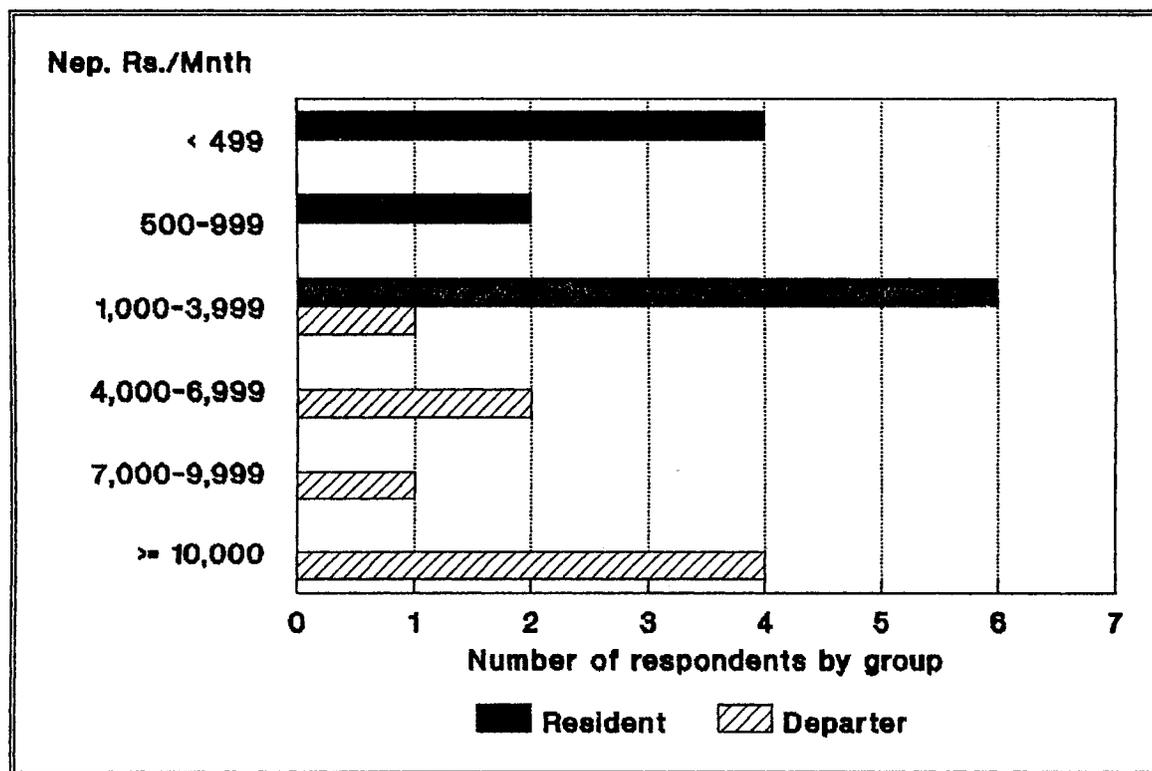


Figure 4. Distribution of monthly household income in Nepali Rupees (32 NRs. = 1 US Dollar)

Nepali citizenship either of head of household or spouse was high among settlement departers. Nepali citizenship probably came after departure from the camp because of the difficulty and high cost although the timing and means of obtaining citizenship was not ascertained by the survey.¹² The utility of Nepali citizenship for Tibetans is business-related. Citizenship is required for property ownership, private business, foreign travel and export-capability .

As a result, there is no utility for Nepali citizenship for settlement residents. Not surprising therefore is the result that no settlement residents were Nepali citizens. Settlement residents expressed a desire not to become Nepali citizens, preferring to remain in their words, "pure Tibetan," waiting for their chance to return to a "free Tibet." The absence of citizenship among settlement residents versus the high proportion

¹² Nepali citizenship legally can be obtained by proving that one's father was a Nepali citizen, or by renouncing your own citizenship and by passing a series of tests after residing in Nepal for 15 years. Many Tibetans appear to have been able to obtain citizenship by paying money to Nepali government officials, but the cost is rumored to be 20,000 Rupees (US \$625) or higher.

of citizens among settlement departers is shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Incidence of Nepali Citizenship among Settlement Residents and Settlement Departers

Group	Number	Percent
Settlement Resident	0	0
Settlement Departers	8	73

Although it was hypothesized that valuables brought from Nepal may have played a role in providing capital for making a transition out of the settlement (i.e., starting a business, providing for special training, etc.), the survey results indicate that this was not the case. Few respondents in either group noted bringing anything of value with them from Tibet. Each respondent was specifically asked about such items as cash, jewelry, Thangka religious paintings, animals, hand-knotted carpets, and other household items.

Of those bringing valuables out, all respondents indicated that the valuables had been sold. For example, all settlement residents and five settlement departers indicated that they had sold their valuables for subsistence purposes during the time of their flight and before settling at Jawalakhel. (However, among the six survey respondents in private business who never lived in the settlement, one did invest proceeds from the sale of valuables brought from Tibet in business.) The incidence of bringing valuables from Tibet is shown in Table 5.

Jawalakhel settlement officials provide no formal credit structure or other assistance to settlement residents who wish to establish private businesses outside of the camp. Departure from the settlement instead is linked to specific job opportunities outside of the Handicraft Center or the opportunity to live with

Table 5. Number of Respondents who brought Valuable Household Items from Tibet and Reasons Valuables were Sold

Group	Brought Valuables		Reason Sold	
	No.	% of Group	Subsistence	Investment
Settlement Resident	2	17	1*	0
Settlement Departers	6	55	5	1

*The other respondent said that valuables were taken at the border with Nepal.

relatives who have established themselves outside of the camp.

Nonetheless, settlement departers who stayed in the Jawalakhel area typically remained in the carpet industry, with a high proportion moving into positions of ownership of factories and/or retail shops. The Handicraft Center thus appears to play a key role in providing training and familiarity with the carpet industry, thereby contributing to the economic success of Tibetans who leave the settlement.

Education

Among the clearest differences between settlement residents and settlement departers are the incidence and level of education (number of years of formal schooling), the incidence of literacy in Tibetan, and speaking ability and literacy in other languages. These results are shown in Tables 6 and 7.

Table 6. Literacy in Tibetan and Incidence and Average Years of Formal Education by Group

	Literacy rate of respondents (percent)*	Percent with formal Education	Average Years of education (those with schooling)
Settlement Resident	67	42	6
Settlement Departer	91	73	10

* Literacy in Tibetan was interpreted loosely as the ability to read Tibetan prayer books, which accounts for the high rates found.

Table 7. Additional Languages Spoken and Literacy by Group

Group	Nepali		English	
	Spoken	Literacy [†] (Percent)	Spoken	Literacy [†]
Settlement Resident	42	17	25	25
Settlement Departer	100	55	91	73

[†] Literacy in both cases was defined simply as the ability to read the language.

Because of the use of systematic sampling, the results of this comparison can be taken to be representative for those refugees living in the Jawalakhel area. Given the different histories and services provided in other settlements in Nepal, it is likely that surveys in those areas would reveal different results concerning departure from refugee settlements. However, the significant differences between settlement residents and settlement departers found in Jawalakhel provide useful reference points for such future inquiries both in the context of Nepal and among other refugee communities elsewhere.

ASPIRATIONS AND NEEDS AS EXPRESSED BY TIBETANS THEMSELVES

Expressed Needs

Like most refugee populations, the Tibetans in the Jawalakhel area are keenly aware of the needs of their community. The survey thus included a series of qualitative questions about the needs and aspirations of the Tibetan people. The questions were open-ended (i.e. "What is the greatest need of the Tibetan people in Jawalakhel?") and open to wide-ranging interpretation. Nonetheless, the answers were surprisingly consistent, making it possible to summarize the following results.

These results are representative of all 39 respondents interviewed, including settlement residents, settlement departers, and Tibetans in the Lalitpur area who never lived in a refugee camp. No distinction was made between settlement residents and settlement departers as in the above sections. Nor were respondents limited to a single answer.

Improved educational facilities and lower school fees were cited most often as the greatest need for the community, as shown in Figure 5. The majority of non-settlement residents send their children either to Nepali private schools or to Tibetan schools in India despite recent construction of a new primary school in Jawalakhel and a Tibetan-run high school in Kathmandu. Although not part of this survey, informal discussions with respondents suggest widespread belief among those living outside of the settlement that camp schools are inferior to private Nepali schools. In contrast, many camp residents who send their children to the settlement schools expressed concern about rising school fees.

Housing and sanitation also rank high among the expressed needs of Tibetans, reflecting the lack of space and indoor plumbing within the settlement. In contrast, a relatively low percentage of respondents listed improved medical care as a pressing need in the community. This may reflect the subsidization of medical care for all Tibetan refugees and the completion of a new medical clinic in the community, which

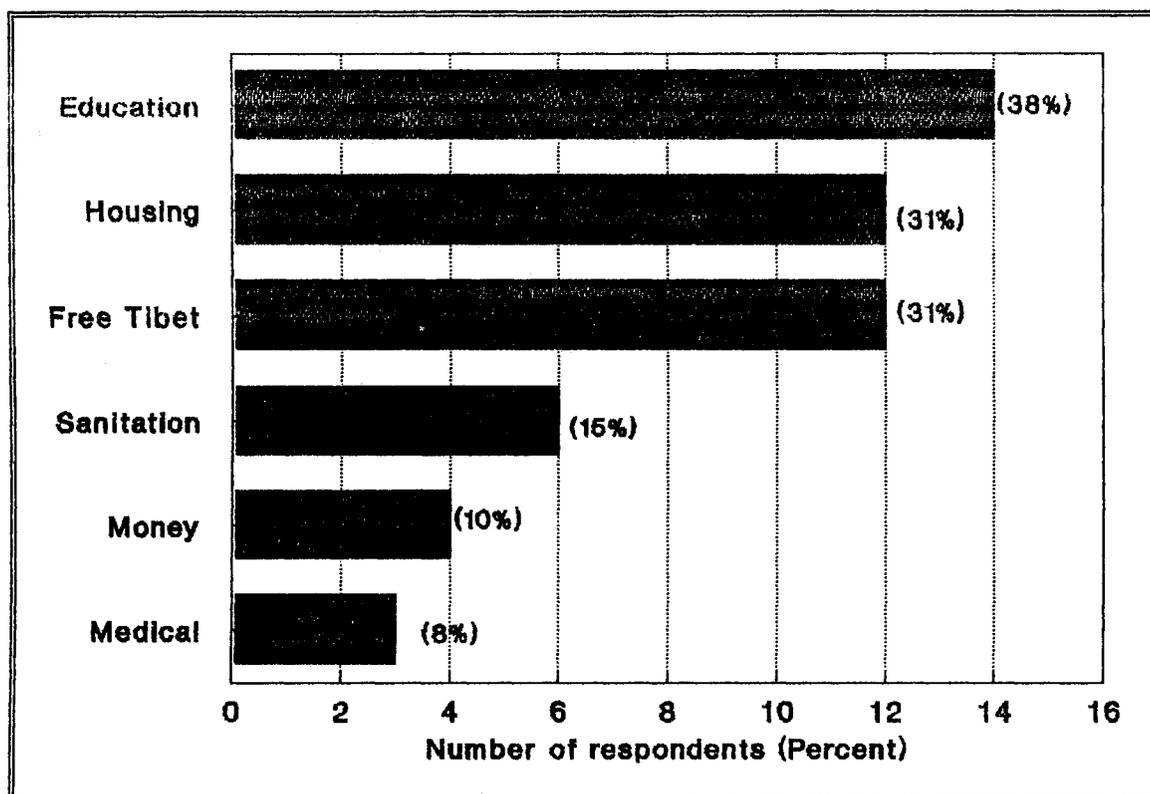


Figure 5. Greatest needs expressed by Tibetan refugees

provides both Western and traditional Tibetan medicine. Moreover, as Heslop suggests, a large percentage of Jawalakhel residents seek medical assistance at the nearby Patan Hospital.¹³

Aspirations

Despite successful development of the carpet industry, the Tibetans in the Jawalakhel area expressed strong desires for their children to pursue careers outside of the textile business. One-third of the respondents said they wanted their children to become doctors, while others expressed hope that their children will become engineers or clerical/business workers. Less than one-fifth of the respondents expressed a desire to have their children remain in the carpet industry, and most of those specified a desire to have their children in sales or exports rather than production. Despite strongly stated desires for improved educational facilities, only ten percent said they hoped

¹³ Heslop, *op. cit.*, p. 6. Lack of expressed concern over medical facilities in the Jawalakhel area is in contrast to preliminary findings of exploratory survey work conducted by authors in the Swambu Tibetan neighborhood of Kathmandu.

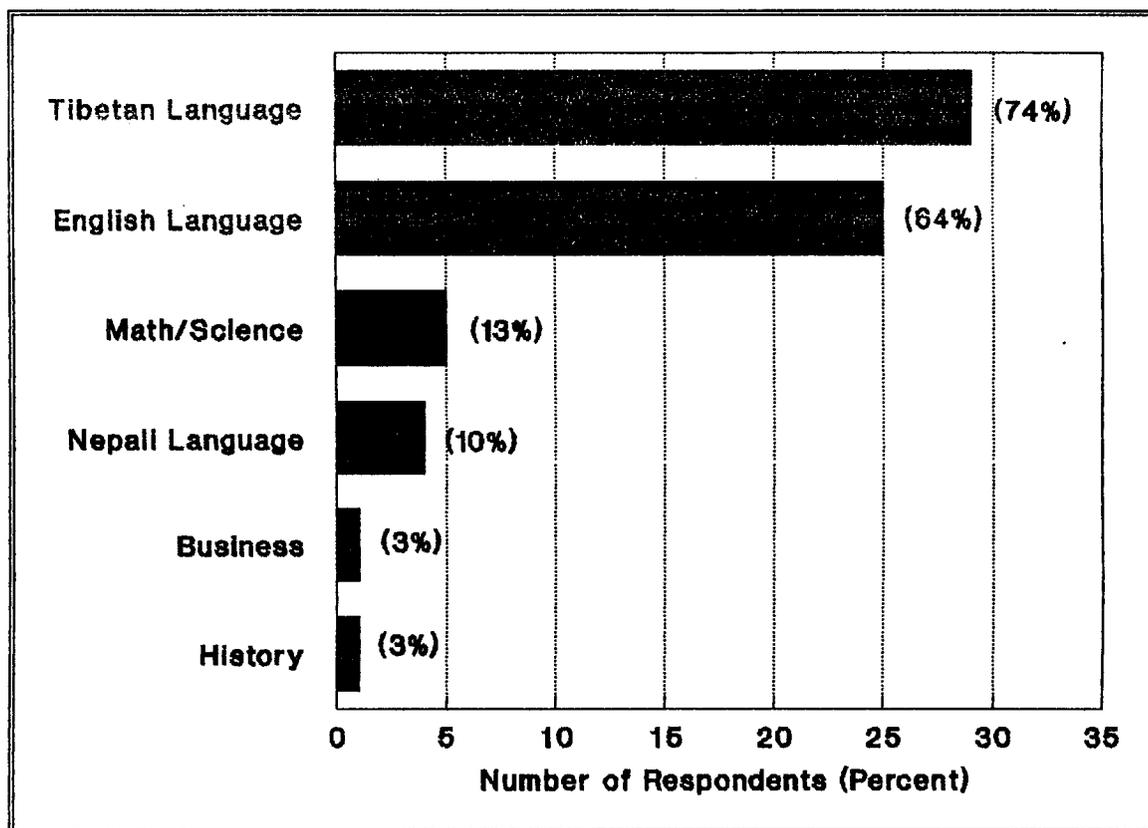


Figure 6. Educational priorities for children identified by respondents

their children would become teachers. An equal number indicated a preference for having their children work for the Tibetan government in exile. Only one respondent expressed a desire for having a child become a monk, although it is traditional that at least one child from every family is placed in a monastery at an early age. Figure 6 presents the employment aspirations that respondents expressed for their children.

The desire to preserve Tibetan culture and tradition was reflected in responses to questions about school curriculum, shown in Figure 8. Nearly three-quarters of the respondents cited Tibetan language and culture as the most important subjects for children to learn in school. More than half cited the English language as one of the most important subjects to be taught in school, compared with only 10 percent who said the Nepali language should be learned. This suggests a relatively low desire for integration into the Nepali community.

CONCLUSIONS

Prevailing wisdom in refugee studies focuses on the establishment of camps as a sometimes-necessary evil. Often, such settlements are designed for the convenience of international assistance organizations by making it easy to deliver assistance and exert control over refugee populations. The drawback of the approach is the creation of long-term dependency by refugees on aid donors and isolation from the host country culture.

The history of the Jawalakhel settlement is one of successful transfer from dependence on foreign aid providers to Tibetan management. A large portion of this success is due to the development of a profitable carpet industry. Tibetan refugees in Nepal also benefitted from a cooperative host government that initially provided free land and has a policy of non-taxation on carpet exports. Moreover, they also participated in unique foreign assistance programs that envisioned a self-sufficient settlement that would provide employment and education as well as assistance to the refugees.

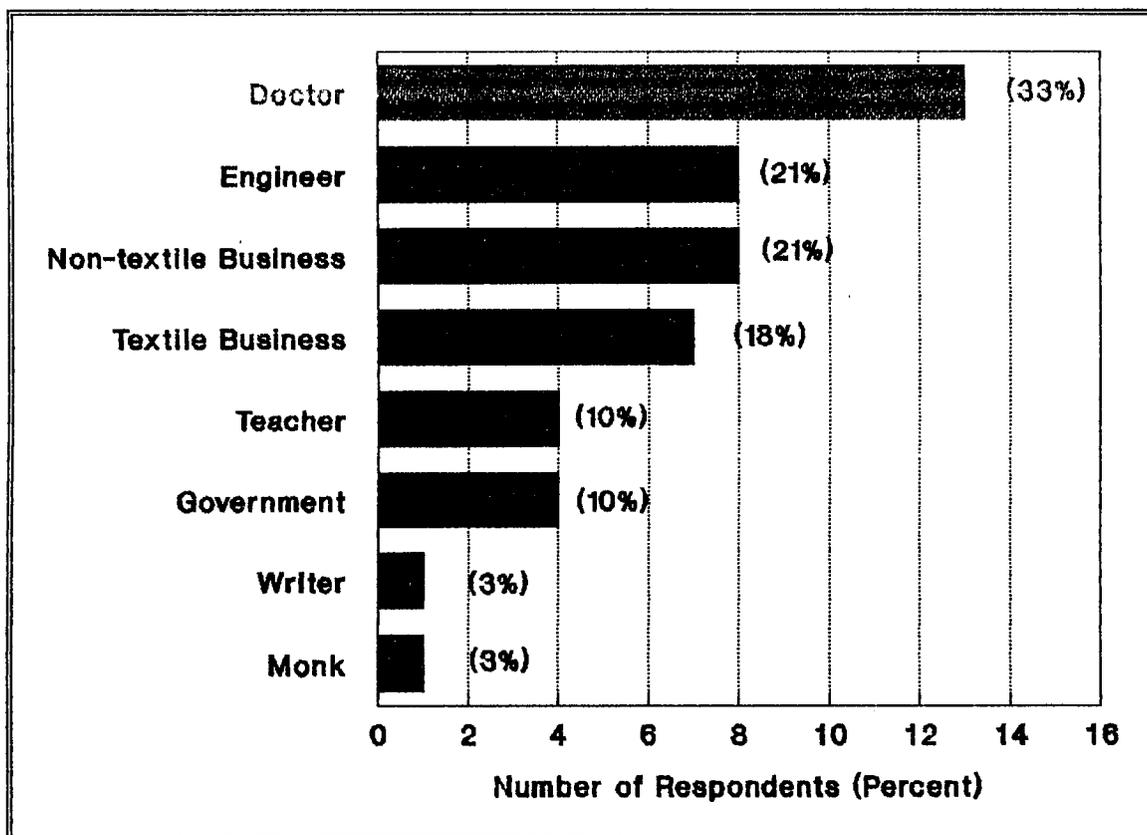


Figure 7. Desirable professions for their children cited by respondents

Within that context, the results of this survey suggest that the Jawalakhel settlement has had both positive and negative impacts on the lives of Tibetan refugees, and particularly on their ability to become economically self-reliant. The continued operation and expanding service role of the camp, some thirty years after its creation, can be interpreted both in terms of self-perpetuation and as responsive to the very real needs of Tibetans living in exile without government services.

The results presented above suggest that the services available to settlement residents, especially the assistance for education, have contributed to some residents' ability to establish successful businesses outside of the settlement. The training function of the camp is reflected by the high number of settlement departers who remain in the carpet industry.

For other Tibetans, however, the survey results indicate that wages and work at the Handicraft Center probably serve to bind refugees to the settlement, constraining their financial resources and the development of non-carpet vocational skills among those with aptitude for other occupations. Households with more than one wage-earner, however, often appear to keep one family member employed at the Handicraft Center -- with its associated housing and social benefits -- while other family members establish outside businesses. In contrast, single people or families with only one wage earner appear to have more difficulty making the leap from Handicraft Center employment to outside businesses and self-settlement.

Other than educational support, Tibetans seeking the vocational training and capital to invest in businesses outside of the settlement must rely on themselves. A few settlement departers indicated that they had borrowed from relatives and acquaintances on an interest-free basis in order to start businesses outside of the settlement. Credit and other financial aspects of the specific transition from the settlement to outside were not explored in this survey. It remains a point of inquiry whether more services could be provided that would enable refugees to support themselves outside of the settlement if they are capable and desirous of doing so. Is there a role for a camp-related savings institution that could provide investment capital to Tibetans? What legal and other constraints to this exist in the context of Nepal?

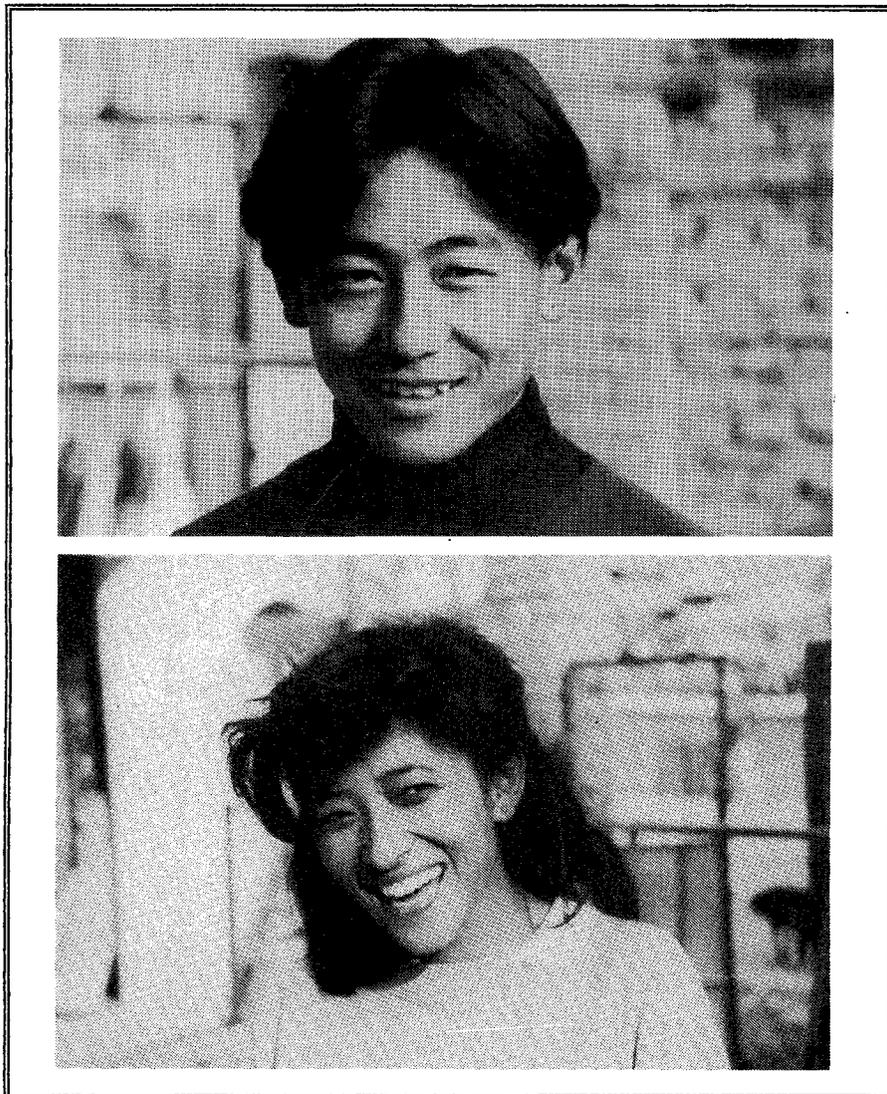
Education appears to be a strong determinant of who will leave the settlement. Literacy, multiple language skills and secondary schooling all were correlated with settlement departure. It is likely that the settlement departer's ability to succeed in private business was aided by higher levels of education, generally obtained in Nepal or India during the period they or their parents were living in the settlement.

In this context, it is important to note the trend among economically successful Tibetans in Nepal to send their children to private schools in Nepal or India, potentially widening the educational and economic gap between camp residents and Tibetans who live outside the settlement. Although not fully explored by this survey, many Tibetans who send their children abroad for schooling expressed dissatisfaction with teaching in Tibetan-run schools in Nepal. For settlement residents, however, school fees and related expenses were cited as the greatest obstacle to post-primary school education for their children.

Not all Jawalakhel settlement residents expressed a desire to leave the settlement. The survey results -- reinforced by the perceptions of the Tibetan settlements residents -- indicate that the camp and Handicraft Center provide a social safety net for those refugees who are not able or motivated to adapt to and achieve economic independence in Nepal. The holistic structure of the settlement, including a job, school, medical care, housing, and provision for retirement ensures a basic standard of living for camp residents/ handicraft center employees. (Unfortunately, due to its small size, the camp cannot accommodate all those who would prefer to live there, and thus some Tibetans living in the Lalitpur area may have an even lower standard of living.) In addition, the camp and handicraft center have been the setting for the development of service institutions -- Snow Lion Foundation, medical center, etc. -- which serve the wider (non-settlement) community as well.

Finally, the settlement acts as vehicle for preserving Tibetan language and cultural heritage in exile, serving as the site of traditional Tibetan holiday celebrations and meeting place for all Tibetans in the Jawalakhel area. The settlement thus serves as a bridge for the transfer of cultural history between generations, as well as between Tibetans who remain in the camp and those who leave.

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