

Advocate | Empower | Integrate



# ANNUAL REPORT

2023

# 2023 IN REVIEW



Dear Friends,

It's now close to a decade for the BCCO serving the refugee community in need in Central Ohio, primarily focusing on the Bhutanese-Nepali population. We feel a deep sense of gratitude and privilege to be in a position to serve the most vulnerable members of the community. Indeed, in the midst of all the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, we realized that many other refugee and immigrant groups didn't have the same access to services and government benefits. Thus, we opened our doors to other refugees and immigrants who could benefit from the services available through BCCO. Although a majority of our clients are Nepali-speaking Bhutanese, we now serve Pakistani, Afghan, Burmese, Somali, Latino, Ukrainian, Middle Eastern, and East African communities as well.

Our work has had an impact beyond Central Ohio. Over the past three years, we have engaged in advocacy work in collaboration with Peace Initiative Bhutan (PIB). In March of 2023, we were able to send four women delegates to represent the entire Bhutanese diaspora at the UN Women Summit. Later in the year, we organized the UN General Assembly Sidelines event in September to discuss the plight of the remaining refugees in camps. Importantly, we brought the issues of visitation rights and the release of political prisoners in Bhutan to both houses of the US Congress and the White House.

At home we continue to innovate in our approaches to addressing the most urgent community needs and have expanded our programs to support recently relocated families in Central Ohio.

We have seen many families we serve grow stronger, improve their lives, buy homes, and start new businesses. Their children are attending higher education institutions and vocational schools and are creating pathways to great careers. These are the successes that give us great hope and keep us motivated to work harder to strengthen our impact.

Access to mental health care, good job opportunities, quality housing in safe neighborhoods, and higher education and training is still an ongoing challenge for the majority of our community members. With that in view, BCCO strategically looks forward to focusing our growth in the next five years on the provision of robust services in mental health, stable and affordable housing, and youth programming, with a goal of improving the quality of life for our clients in Central Ohio and beyond.

I am personally very thankful to have such an amazing team as my staff, the BCCO Board of Directors, our financial supporters, and, importantly, our community fellows. It is all of you who make this work possible, and I am grateful for your continued support and belief in the power of our collective efforts.

Sincerely,  
Sudarshan Pyakurel MAM S W LSW  
Executive Director  
Bhutanese Community of Central Ohio  
Founder&Director

# Table of Contents

**Mission 4**

---

**Meet Our Team 5**

---

**Core Programs 6**

---

**Cultural Campaigns 8**

---

**Community Impact 9**

---

**Financial Snapshot 10**

---

**Acknowledgments 11**

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## OUR MISSION

EVERYDAY, THE BHUTANESE COMMUNITY OF CENTRAL OHIO SUPPORTS REFUGEES AND IMMIGRANTS WITH ESSENTIAL, CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES AND EMPOWERS THEM THROUGH EDUCATION AND ADVOCACY.

BCCO SERVES AS A RESOURCE TO LOCAL AND STATE AGENCIES AND ORGANIZATIONS, AND AS A NATIONAL MODEL FOR OTHER NON-PROFITS WHICH SERVE NEW AMERICANS.



# Meet our 2023 team



**Sudarshan Pyakurel**  
Executive Director



**Mani Biswa**  
Program Manager



**Yamuna Adhikari**  
Case Manger



**Reeku Baraili**  
Program Manager, RAPP



**Soma Thapa**  
Program manger ORR



**Hailey Crook**  
Communication  
Coordinator



**Shambika Raut**  
Social Work Intern



**Shreejana Bastola**  
Youth MH Coordinator



# Core Programs

## Partnerships

BCCO is dedicated to being a comprehensive, one-stop resource for our community, providing diverse support services all under one roof. By partnering closely with organizations such as Community Refugee and Immigration Services, ETSS Tawahedo Social Services, US Together, Asha Ray of Hope, Jewish Family Services, North YMCA, and Franklin & Licking County Job and Family Services, we address essential needs directly or through partner referral. As we continue to grow and adapt, we actively seek out new partnerships to enhance our services and expand our impact, ensuring that we serve our community where it is needed.

- Housing Support & Rental Assistance (ERA)
- Elevate!: Mental Health and Wellness Support
- Refugee Agricultural Partnership Program (RAPP)
- Case Management & Outreach
- Temporary Assistance for Families in Need (TANF) Summer Youth Employment
- Youth & Family Support, and Referral Program



In 2023, the Refugee Agricultural Partnership Program (RAPP), funded by the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), supported 27 participants in leading urban farming and community gardening projects. Through collaboration with Ohio State University, the program facilitated the production of fresh produce sold at local farmers' markets, providing participants with supplemental income while increasing access to culturally significant produce in the community.

At two garden locations, the North YMCA and Heart of Ohio at Capital Park, a total of 1,500 pounds of fresh produce was harvested and distributed to individual community members. Additionally, RAPP provided 45 hours of training in urban farming, including a Mental Health First Aid session, and established two new farming sites in partnership with YMCA North and Heart of Ohio. The program's development was guided by logic models, significantly enhancing participants' knowledge and skills in urban farming.

**"It was a challenge recruiting people that fit the guidelines and there was a lack of funds and resources."**

# Working with the Youth

The Elevate! initiative in Columbus promotes community health and wellness through events, health fairs, health insurance assistance, and mental health resource connections to empower individuals in taking control of their well-being.

The Elevate initiative, sponsored by the City of Columbus, has made significant strides in promoting health and wellness throughout the community. By fostering a healthier environment and providing accessible resources Elevate! aims to empower individuals to take charge of their health and well-being.



**“There is a need for culturally appropriate intervention. There are only two mental health professionals that speak Nepali.”**

**TANF Summer Youth Employment Program**  
This initiative, funded by Licking County Job and Family Services, supported six high school interns from Licking County. Under the program, we successfully placed these students with four different employers, with an additional four employers participating. Each intern completed 160 hours of work in an office environment, where they received specialized training. The internships included valuable experience with home health care facilities and other nonprofit organizations.



**“It was a challenge finding and matching the right employer with the interns and their career paths”**

# Cultural Campaigns



The Bhutan Memory Podcast (BMP) involves four high school and college students learning podcast production while capturing oral histories from older generations. This project aims to produce bilingual podcasts that highlight Bhutanese experiences and educate youth about their heritage. It serves as an archival effort to preserve and document the stories and themes of Bhutanese people, with a focus on education and youth perspectives.



Scan to browse BMP project



## Community Support

Our community support initiatives provide targeted funding to individuals and projects that address local needs and enhance community engagement. Notable among these is the Namaste 5K project, a sports tournament that promotes health and wellness within the community. These support programs are diverse, aiming to enrich the community and foster cultural advocacy across various areas.



Our Cultural Enrichment Campaign featured music expert Karma Bomzan from Darjeeling, India. During his visit, Bomzan made a meaningful impact on the Bhutanese community by using music as a tool for mental health support and healing.



During his three-month stay from October to December 2023, he performed eight times, mentored local artists, and conducted workshops, fostering hope and connection within the Bhutanese Nepali music audience. Funded by BCCO and supported by local artists, this one-time project emphasized cultural ties and Northeast Indian and Nepali influences, with BCCO providing technical support to enhance the program's impact.



## Community Impact



### Peace Initiative Bhutan (PIB)

The Bhutanese diaspora's resounding call for justice and healing echoed at the United Nations Sideline Event on September 8th, hosted by the Peace Initiative Bhutan (PIB). Their historic gathering, themed "Voices of Resilience: Building Bridges for Peace in Bhutan," highlighted their unwavering commitment to addressing past injustices and garnering international support. Over three decades, Bhutanese refugees have faced separation, trauma, and mental health challenges, but the younger generation, growing up in the United States, is driving change.

PIB, led by dynamic young leaders, is actively advocating for solutions and building global alliances. Let's stand with them and support the cause of the Forgotten People of Bhutan.

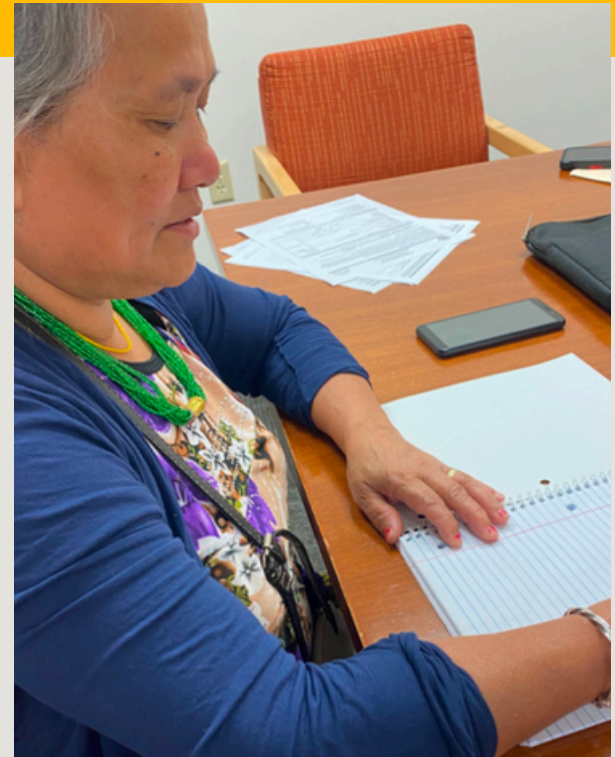
### Housing Stability Program

BCCO processes applications for Emergency Rental Assistance and provides education and access to resources to prevent homelessness among Franklin County and Licking County Residents.

**In 2023, we served 136 families with Rental Assistance**

### Youth Mental Health Conference

Reported from the Columbus Dispatch, “Panelists and speakers at the ‘Resilient Minds’ conference Saturday in Reynoldsburg discussed how the quest for identity, familial responsibilities, intergenerational trauma and cultural stigma can place extra stresses on new American youth. Around 100 students, parents and health professionals from Asian, African and Latin American background attended the event.”



## FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT

	2021	2022	2023
Revenue	\$394,959	\$303,096	\$458,284
Expenditures	\$275,923	\$356,941	\$392,030

# Board of Directors

**Jhumanath Acharya**, Board Chair  
School Family Engagement and DEI  
Coordinator, Licking Heights School District  
**Rohit Subedi**, Treasurer  
Real Estate Agent, Emerger  
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**Dr. Jacklyn Kirsch**, Secretary  
Assistant Professor, The University of Texas

**Dr. Taru Saigal, M.D**, Health Committee Chair  
OSU Wexner Medical Center, Physician  
**Dilli Sharma**  
Business Analyst, Vaco LLC  
**Jody Korte**  
AVP Community Partners, CareSource  
**Dr. Binaya Subedi**, Research Ethical Chair  
Associate Professor, OSU  
**Kamal Subedi**, Physics Lecturer  
Columbus State Community College

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

### Thank you to our Generous Donors

HHS (office of Refugee resettlement (ORR)  
Refugee Agricultural Partnership Program (RAPP)  
Franklin County Commissioners Office Community  
Partnership Grant  
The City of Columbus  
Emergency Rental Assistance • Elevate Grant  
NAMI Franklin County  
Franklin County ADAMH Board  
Ark Builders  
Columbus Foundation (mini grant)  
United Way of Licking County  
United Way of Central Ohio  
Licking County Job and Family Services  
Summer Youth Employment Program  
Nakshatra Foundation  
Columbus Public Health  
CareSource  
Amazon  
Ohio Commission on Minority Health (mini grant)  
Thank you to our generous Partners  
Franklin County Job and Family Services Franklin County  
Park and Recreation Community Refugee and Immigration  
Services  
Ohio Asian American Health Coalition Asian Festival  
Corporation  
Asian American Community Services  
Asha Ray of Hope  
Us Together  
Jewish Family Services  
Ethiopian Tewahedo Social Services Licking County  
Developmental Disability Licking County School Districts  
YMCA of Central Ohio  
Community Montessori Columbus  
The Red Cross of Licking County Northland Community  
Council Center for New Americans

## Advisors

**Rebecca Nelson**  
**Arati Maleku**  
**Gary Snyder**

The Health of Ohio Primary Care Dream Team Lending  
Everest Lending Group  
Anomatic  
Home Central Realty Namaste Financial Solutions  
Franklin County Public Health AKid Again  
Columbus Urban League  
Legal Aid Society of Columbus Franklin County Fire  
Noble Dental  
Molina Healthcare  
Lifeline Pharmacy  
Buckeye Healthcare  
OSU College of Social Work Ashland University  
Franklin University  
Fortis College Columbus State  
Big Brothers Big Sisters  
Premier Choice Health Services  
OSU James Center  
Wellcare Pharmacy  
Almis Home Healthcare, LLC Gautam Insurance Agency  
LLC  
Mid Ohio Food Collective Department of public safety Jon  
Mullineaux  
Prime Home Care  
Child Develop/Prenatal Health Psychology Goodwill Ohio  
Nationwide Children's Hospital  
Ohio Health  
Humana  
Franklin Count Auditors Office  
Legal Shield  
SARNCO (Sexual Assault Network of Central Ohio)  
Ohio Dermatological Association



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