GUIDING QUESTIONS

- Who is responsible for educating the population about changes in civil rights laws? Who is responsible for enforcing those rights or laws?
- How might the poor be affected by changes in the political structure of a country? How might they be helped? Why might poor citizens get overlooked by the political process?
- In Nepal there is a large discrepancy between the percentage of girls who are literate and the percentage of boys who are literate. The country also has a very high unemployment rate. How might these two be related?

GENERAL INFORMATION

Capital City: Kathmandu

Population of Nepal: 29.03 million (2016 est.)

Population of Kathmandu: 1.183 million

Mobile/Cellular Telephones: 27.516 million

Nepal was once a region of small independent kingdoms. Today, the country – while unified – has a variety of ethnic groups, customs, and languages. Nepal is perhaps best known for being the home of Mount Everest, which straddles the border with China and is the world’s highest point.

Nepal is a landlocked country situated between India and China. Northern Nepal, bordering the Tibetan region, is comprised primarily of the Himalayas, the highest mountain range in the world, with cool summers and severe winters. Southern Nepal, on the Indian border, is primarily a region of flat, fertile river plains with milder winters and subtropical summers.
GOVERNMENT

A monarchy for most of its history, Nepal has suffered political unrest since the early 1960s, with factions supporting a constitutional monarchy and those favoring a republic vying for control. Nepal is currently a republic with a prime minister and president and, in early 2013, a new interim government was sworn in to oversee elections. The elections occurred, but feuding political factions failed to meet a January 2015 deadline for implementation of a new constitution. The prime minister serves as the head of the government, while the president serves as the head of state.

PEOPLE

Education

Percentage of the population considered literate: citizens over the age of 15 able to read and write

Females  53.1%
Males  76.4%

Ethnic Group Distribution (2011 est.)

Chhettri  16.6%
Brahman-Hill  12.2%
Magar  7.1%
Tharu  6.6%
Tamang  5.8%
Newar  5%
Kami  4.8%
Yadav  3.9%
Other  38%

Religious Group Distribution (2011 est.)

Hindu  81.3%
Buddhist  9%
Muslim  4.4%
Kirant  3.1%
Christian  1.4%
Other .8%

Languages (2011 est.)

Nepali (official)  44.6%
Maithali  11.7%
Bhojpuri  6%
Tharu (Dagaura/Rana)  5.8%
Tamang  5.1%
Newar  3.2%

Other  23.6%

Rural vs. Urban

Percentage of the country’s population living in urban areas: 18.6%
A majority of Nepalese live in small villages and are supported by agriculture.

ECONOMY

Nepal, one of the world’s poorest countries, is built primarily on agriculture and tourism. Political instability has discouraged economic investment, but the area has great potential for hydropower due to rapid run-off from the Himalayas into fast-flowing rivers. Massive earthquakes in 2015 damaged or destroyed infrastructure and set back economic development. Political gridlock and recent public protests have also hindered post-earthquake recovery and prevented economic reform. Additional challenges include its landlocked location, persistent power shortages, and limited transportation infrastructure.

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in US$: 21.2 billion

Currency Exchange Rate: 1 US$ = 108.8 Nepalese Rupees (2016 est.)

Annual Imports and Exports

Nepal imported $7.116 billion in petroleum products, machinery and equipment, gold, electrical goods, and medicine in 2016.

Nepal exported $898.4 million in clothing, pulses (legume crops), carpets, textiles, juice, pashmina, and jute goods in 2016.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Quartz, water, timber, hydropower, scenic beauty, small deposits of lignite, copper, cobalt, iron ore

RESOURCES

- Khan Academy at www.khanacademy.org
- The World Bank website at www.worldbank.org

All data was reported in 2015 unless otherwise noted.