

Prayer Letter February 2009

First of all we would like to wish everyone a very Happy New Year! We hope you all had a good Christmas too, even if it does seem like a long time ago already! A very big thank you to everyone who sent us cards and other greetings for Christmas – we really do appreciate it when we get messages of any kind. Thank you for your continuing interest and support.

Would you like the good news or the bad news first? OK, we'll give you the good news. In our last letter we mentioned about the need for a doctor and a physiotherapist for the clinic here. We are very happy and grateful to report that both posts have been filled. Dr Dinesh Gautam started work in October and seems to be settling in here well. He is a young man with lots of enthusiasm which is good! Bimala started in her physio job in November and Megan is very happy to have a good colleague again. Bimala is fresh out of physio college and so doesn't have much experience but she is willing to learn and is great with the patients.



Megan and Bimala

One of the things that arose during the recruitment process was that it is difficult to get people to fill the posts here. Surkhet is seen as a little bit remote and backward by many Nepalis, especially those from the cities, and so it is difficult to attract young, educated people to higher grade posts. The good, well paid, progressive jobs are all in the cities and places like Surkhet don't have much attraction. We are doubly grateful therefore that Bimala sees her work here as a calling and not just a job.

Megan and Bimala are now working with an ever-growing list of patients coming for rehabilitation and treatment. They have been able to develop the physio and occupational



therapy treatment rooms so they can treat the range of clients that come through the doors, both in and outpatients. The needs are great, the resources are limited and the stories of the patients are all heartbreaking, but Megan and Bimala try to bring hope as well as treat the injuries. One of the problems is managing the number of patients. As the reputation of the rehab unit grows, the word gets out but there are only so many people Megan and Bimala can see in a day.

With Bimala in the rehab department, Megan has been able to do some home visits to clients. This has proved challenging as many of the clients live in remote places several



*Home visits
above and above right*

hours' walk away from roads and decent paths. Difficult for Megan to get to but then she has to assess how a wheelchair user is going to be able to get home and live there successfully. Sometimes there's no toilet facilities, often no nearby water

supply, surrounded by forest and steep hills and that's just the start!

The other good news we are happy to report is that the Nepali occupational therapist in training (and supported by BMS) that we have been following since she started has now finished her course. She has qualified and is now finishing off her internship in India. She is due to return to Nepal in April and will take up a post in a hospital in a place called Tansen, south-west of Kathmandu. That will make three fully-qualified Nepali occupational therapists working in the country.

Alan continues to support the INF Surkhet Programme in administration work and is developing his role on the INFW Board. It was good to have face-to-face meetings in November – easier than the usual teleconference calls and a good time of getting to know the other Board members some of whom he had not actually met until then. (The face-to-face annual meetings last a whole week not just a few hours.) We are also getting to know our pastor a bit better and Alan has been trying to spend a bit of time with him during the week when he can. Last week we moved to a new site and Alan went to help out with preparing the new, temporary building on the land the church was able to buy recently. It is great having more space and now there is room for more new people to join us. He has also recently been giving some English language help to our landlord/lady's great-niece who came to live with them a while ago to continue her education. She is 16 year old and now doing the Nepali equivalent of A-Level stage of education which is not available in her remote home district. So he keeps busy one way or another.

And the bad news? The situation in the country hasn't improved at all since our last letter. In fact it is probably worse. Road blocks and local and national strikes are an everyday occurrence. There is only bickering and infighting among the political parties and no progress on the new constitution. There was hope that things would be different last year after the elections but that seems to have evaporated. The biggest issue that people are dealing with on a daily basis are the electricity cuts. In the capital, Kathmandu, there are scheduled daily cuts of 16 hours! Here in Surkhet we have six to seven hours of cuts a day which is bad enough. There just isn't enough power to go round. Industry and schools are suffering and in some places businesses have had to shut down which causes even more distress and frustration. There is a lot of talk about

what can be done but not much action.

Personally, we had a great Christmas with Rhys and Tete joining us in Kathmandu for a couple of weeks. Carl and Gemma stayed at home in the UK and spent Christmas together and then joined Alan's family later in the holiday week. Gemma is now well into her second year at university and continuing to enjoy it all. Carl and Rhys are enjoying their respective jobs and progressing well and Tete is now considering some further study.

For those that pray please join with us in thanking God:

- For Dinesh and Bimala joining the Surkhet Programme.
- For Rebecca Rai (OT training in India) successfully completing her course.
- For the improving facilities in the rehab unit.
- Safety in travel for Megan on the home visits.
- For a good Christmas holiday.

Please pray for:

- Safety in travel for Megan.
- That Dinesh and Bimala find fulfilment in their work and lives in Surkhet.
- A sensible workload for Megan and Bimala.
- Wisdom for Alan in his roles.
- For Rhys and Tete as they look for the best options for Tete's studies.

Alan and Megan

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