

## Prayer Letter

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### March 2009

Spring has arrived early this year. Since the middle of February we have had warm sunny days and the evenings and nights have been much warmer than usual. In fact it is the warmest February



since records started to be kept ten years ago. This is not all good news though. Once again the winter rains have failed and there has been little snow in the mountains; people flying in to Kathmandu tell us that the mountains look black in many places instead of white. The rivers are much lower than usual and the smell as we cross the bridge between Patan and Kathmandu is awful. Rain is needed for the crops and to supply water for household use. Kathmandu's water comes from underground, many people use wells and they are running dry as the water table is so low. Later in the year we rely on snowmelt to supply water for reservoirs and hydroelectric plants.

At the moment we only have electricity for eight hours on most days; in our area on Thursdays and Fridays it is from midnight to 4.00am and from noon to 4.00pm. Whilst this is inconvenient for us it is hitting small businesses hard. Our local dairy, Laxmi (named after the goddess of wealth), usually has two freezers full of ice cream but they do not have a generator so the freezers are empty and there is only dahi (yoghurt) and cheese for sale. Photocopy shops can only work for a few hours per day, ladies hairdressers cannot blow-dry and metal workers cannot weld. We have stopped keeping anything in the freezer and only buy meat from the large supermarkets with generators or chicken from the nearby butcher who prepares the meat fresh every morning. Anne has planted runner beans, parsley and other herbs in pots on the smaller, more shaded balcony and they are growing well. We are watering them using brackish



water from the well in the garden. This is now also being carried up to our flat to use for the toilet as mains water is only available every other day and has to be pumped from the pipes if there is power. Our water tanks are almost empty.



#### Power

UMN's work too is affected by the cuts; in Thapathali, where the main offices are, we have to run our emergency generators. There is no power for computers after 5.00pm on any weekday but Friday and we have no power for 2 hours of work time on Monday and Tuesday and one hour on Wednesday and Thursday. The cluster offices where our teams work have no generators so on some days there is only one hour of power during normal work hours. Alan is trying to raise money to buy small generators and laptop computers with a long battery life so that reports can be written and trainings planned.

Our Nepali church has changed the service time to 12.30pm to fit in with availability of power. They had

been hiring a generator for power for lights and the sound system but the neighbours have complained about the noise and with no end in sight to the load shedding (power cuts) the generator hire costs could not be afforded. The power of the gospel message however is changing lives; our worship group are mainly street boys who were taken in by the fellowship.

### **Paesa (money)**

In the present economic situation all charities are finding that their income is falling. Alan is finding it increasingly difficult to ensure that funding will be available for the next financial year that starts in July. Many of our expats are raising their own support from friends, family and churches and so some are beginning to find that their income is falling as friends are struggling to keep up with their donations.

### **People**

The new expats who came last autumn are beginning to settle into their roles now. One couple move to Sunsari in the south east of Nepal later this month. They will be the only expats there although there are some Christian Australian doctors at a government hospital about 40 minutes drive away. The weather will be hot and dry when they arrive and very humid once the monsoon starts in June. Last year's monsoon burst the banks of the Koshi river and the road which has just been re-opened as a dirt track is being blocked by those made homeless by the floods and only receiving help from overseas agencies. The only way to get to and from Kathmandu without going via India is to fly or to cross the wide, flooded river in an overloaded and dangerous ferry.

Six new adults and two children arrived in January and early February and the adults are settled into language and orientation. They are from Sweden, Australia and The Netherlands. One couple is living across the lane from us and the others are nearby. This of course means that good friends are leaving. By the time that you read this we will have had interviews for a new Executive Director and we pray that this time an appointment will have been made. We are thankful that several doctors and their families have recently felt called to serve in our two remaining hospitals. More are at the application stage now, so Tansen hospital in particular will not be so reliant on short-term staff.

### **Politics**

The Constituent Assembly, as the present parliament is called as it has been elected for a period of two years to

write a new constitution for our new democracy, has been in power for 11 months now. There are few changes to be seen and unrest is being felt particularly in the south of the country, the Terai. As I write this most of the east-west highway is closed to traffic by various militant groups. Our friends who are here with Interserve were to have held a weekend retreat in Chitwan National Park but had to cancel as the road was closed. Another friend, who is a doctor in the east of Nepal, had breakfast with us today before flying home. He expected to have to cover the last 30 miles or so by rickshaw. He will doubtless have had to walk part of the way carrying his luggage in order to get past roadblocks.



Law and order is still a problem and cases coming to court are not heard, some for many years. UMN is working in advocacy and empowerment to help people know their rights.

We are planning to make a short visit home in August to see our family and then return to Nepal for at least another year and a half as long as our health is good and we continue to make a useful contribution here.

Thank you all for your interest in the work and your prayers for us, our colleagues and our sending and supporting missions.

*Anne and Alan*

### **Give thanks for**

- ◆ New friends being called to work in Nepal
- ◆ UMN completing 55 years serving the people here

### **Please pray for**

- ◆ Peace and stability in the country
- ◆ Sufficient rain so that the power and water situation will improve (not too much at once to cause floods and landslides!)
- ◆ Those colleagues who are retiring from working here that they will continue to feel God's leading as they settle back in their home countries
- ◆ Sufficient funding for the work of missions
- ◆ The new UMN Executive Director