

# Alan and Megan Barker

Prayer letter, November 2018

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## *Dashain greetings from Nepal*

### WORK UPDATE

We had hoped that this letter would begin with the good news that Megan has her visa, but sadly that is not the case. In fact, it seems to have gone backwards with the latest decision by the ministry needing to be challenged by INF, so please keep praying for a breakthrough and that this can be resolved soon.



*Megan at the OT gathering*

Meanwhile Megan is keeping busy with this and that, although it is hard to keep motivated with the lack of structure in a 'working' day. She has been specifically told not to have any regular times of coming and going to the hospital, but pops in several times a week just to keep up relationships ready for when the visa is granted. She is able to go for specific events and so recently helped to host the biannual gathering of Nepal's OTs.

A particular highlight last month was our visit to Surkhet which we mentioned was planned in our last letter. It was good to catch up with old friends and for both of us to get a clearer picture of how things are there. Megan was asked to review the rehab work and so was able to encourage the two remaining therapists and will return next month to continue to assess, encourage and make further recommendations for the future.

Alan is now working in the newly formed 'Partnership and Communications Department', which brings

donor-related work together with the marketing and communications areas. For the time being, he will continue in a similar role with donor (or partner) relations as before until a suitable Nepali 'Partnership Manager' can be recruited. After that he will focus more on training and capacity building of the donor team. During the next six months or so he will also be helping to implement various recommendations that have come out of a wide-ranging review of INF's work. It's an interesting but challenging time as there are many forces that are affecting the work of INF, such as the government restructure and the increased scrutiny of expatriates working in Nepal, alongside changes in donor requirements and changes in focus in development work in general. How INF responds to these and other factors is now the priority for the leadership over the next year.

### PERSONAL UPDATE

We have just had the opportunity to attend the wedding of a friend of ours. It's the first time we have been to the full ceremony of a Hindu wedding and so it was a privilege to be there, counted as family.

Being in Kathmandu for the wedding gave us time for catching up with friends whom we hadn't seen for a while. It has also meant we have been able to spend some time with our daughter, Gemma, as she has been in Nepal with her work.



*Hindu wedding ceremony*

## AN INSIGHT INTO IMPACT

Every Friday at the hospital where Megan will work, the staff gather for a short time of peer support and training. A few weeks ago, it was the turn of the OT department to lead this and Megan was greatly encouraged by the way in which Juna and Laxmi ran the sessions. They got everyone, doctors and nurses included, actively involved as they all had to be wheelchair users or carers and negotiate around the hospital site. At the end they all congratulated our wheelchair dependent peer counsellors, saying that they make it look so easy when in fact getting around in a wheelchair is a huge challenge. We hope the staff will now be much more understanding when new wheelchair users are struggling.



*Wheelchair training session*

## LESSONS FROM LOCAL PEOPLE

As we write this letter, it is holiday season. Firstly, it is such a lovely climate at this time of year and so trekking season has begun. Also, the main Hindu

festivals are at this time of year. Currently, Dashain, a 15-day festival, is being celebrated. This is a time for making sacrifices and offerings to appease the gods, but also a time when families gather together, even coming back from overseas to be here in Nepal. In November, Tihar will be celebrated which you may know as Divali or the festival of lights. These are difficult times for our Christian friends as they seek to maintain their family ties with grace, whilst also standing firm in their beliefs and practices.

## REQUESTS

### Join us in being thankful for:

- A safe and enjoyable trip to Surkhet and the work still going on there
- Time of catching up with friends in Kathmandu

### Join us as we ask for:

- A breakthrough with Megan's visa
- Ongoing wisdom and deepening relationships in our current roles, especially for the new Partnership and Communications Department Alan is working in
- God-given wisdom for the INF leadership as they look to the future and respond to the current challenges
- Wisdom and grace for our Nepali Christian friends during the festival season

*Alan and Megan*

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