



Back to Normal!?

The heavy clouds over Nepal are slowly beginning to lift.... We can see blue skies once again, after a few months of monsoon, flooded roads [this is the road just outside our office] and landslides in many places. But are the "other" clouds over Nepal lifting yet?

Looking back....

The earthquakes, of last spring, are still dominating

many people's lives and discussions here in Nepal.

Many houses, which have been damaged in the earthquakes, are slowly being demolished here in Kathmandu. Most work is done by manual labour and takes

a lot of time and energy. Other cracks are cemented over and walls repainted. Our garden wall is now painted blue to cover the cracks.

Our Didi has slowly emptied her badly damaged house and continues to live in one room of her brother's house. She can't get on with the job of demolishing and rebuilding until the necessary Government assessment takes place. She can gather the funds, and she can wait. Still life in the city is not so bad.



Our friend Karen just came back from some very remote villages in the Lamjung District, close to the epicentre of the April quake. Some of the remote villages have only just now received tin roofing. Throughout the monsoon they coped living under tarpaulins in the heat and horrendous rain. It's been a very hard summer for many.

Another colleague, Leigh, went to Gorkha district to see how INF's post-quake rebuilding was getting on. He was very impressed with the good work. 115 classrooms have been built and the teachers and parents are very thankful that their kids are back in school. Many households received help and have been encouraged to rebuild earthquake-resilient houses.



It's a long way to go and certainly not an easy one.

A new constitution!



We seemed to have also had several "political earthquakes" recently.

The country has just finalised its constitution, which has been 8 years in the offing. One of the promises of the constitution was, that it would draw people together, and especially consider the marginalised [minority ethnic and lower caste groups]. Sadly this doesn't seem to have happened and in the last two months we saw protests across several parts of the country leading to a number of deaths and national strikes. Currently we have severe petrol crisis as there is still lots of unrest along the Indian border. Another challenging point in the constitution is the freedom of religion. In 2006, Nepal officially changed from being a Hindu to a secular state. Some see this change as allowing for the growth of Christianity within the country [although the church still only accounts for less than 5% of the population]. There are rumours that conversion to Christianity is a sinister plot by western governments to influence the country.

Others dislike that Christians are converting predominantly from the lower castes and feel the Christian faith is destabilising the Hindu social structures. So, some tried to use the time of writing the constitution as an opportunity to push for Nepal to return once more to being a Hindu state and for conversion to be made illegal. We are thankful that Nepal has chosen to be a secular state, although it hasn't yet officially defined what that means. However, the clauses about not changing one's religion are still in...

A new agreement for INF

In this backdrop of international work to rebuild Nepal combined with political discontent, INF is seeking a new 5 year agreement with the government for its work. It is possible that the number of visa posts INF is granted will be reduced; that would cause difficulty in some of the areas where we are trying to provide external expertise. One of the government's requirements is, that every visa post holder needs to have a masters degree.

Please pray for a good and timely agreement between INF and the government.





Normal things in our home

For us, life is pretty much back to normal after a fun, adventurous, busy, cold and very much blessed six weeks in the UK. It was so great seeing so many of you. Thank you for your amazing hospitality, for feeding us, encouraging us, listening to us and supporting us in many ways. It's been a big encouragement to us all and helped us to come back to Nepal! The kids were a bit anxious about returning but we

are so thankful that all four are now very settled and happy again.

All of them enjoy school, school clubs, learning music, meeting friends, swimming, reading books and so much more. Sam loves being in pre-school at

the same school as his siblings. He is always first ready, with his bag packed... and ready to get on with his home work.

Katie does struggle with Maths and English. We appreciate your prayers and wisdom. Especially as we are trying to raise her bilingually like the rest. It just adds another challenge.

We are back to baking a huge mountain of pancakes each Saturday evening for dinner; getting through 28 plastic bags of milk each week [which we have to boil before using]; back to baking 4-6 loaves of bread each week to feed our ever hungry kids; back to packing 20 lunch boxes each week. A minimum of 36 bananas are munched up by our family in just a few days; and each week we generally feed 5-10 other people. All normal. And it's good that things are normal. ;-)

Not so normal

Sandra recently had the opportunity to spend time with some young women whose life is everything except normal. Broken relationships, lots of hurt in early years, women who are in many ways still young, trying to raise their own children. One young Mummy lost her 20 month old baby and then was left by her husband, others have suffered abuse... Do pray for wisdom and that the everlasting love of our heavenly Father really touches the women's lives and hearts.

We are still trying to encourage the leaders of a couple of children's homes in Surkhet. The Mugali Children's Home, now called Grace Home, has 12 kids ranging from 4 to 18 year-olds. It's a big challenge for Ratna and Dipeema, the house parents, to meet various needs whilst often struggling with health issues themselves. Whilst the older boys in the home struggle to pass their year 10 exams, the little ones are still wetting beds and are very dependent.



Communication

It's also normal that James is very busy in his Communications Department. Magazines, calendars, a new INF Website being built, report writing and networking with various INF country offices keep him on his toes.

There is also a wedding coming up in his Department: Arun, who is one of the Graphic Designers will get married next month!

We still have a desperate need for an Writer / Editor - if you know anyone?

James enjoyed a little "break" teaching the 4th workshop for young Christian leaders, which once again, was a big blessing.

Prayer and Praise

- Praise for a good restart in Nepal after a busy deputation.
- Give thanks that the constitution for Nepal has been signed but do please continue to



pray for peace and unity.

- Sandra's Mum was very ill after a lung embolism a few weeks ago. She is recovering well. Papa continues to be weak but is plodding on.

- Give thanks that kids settled well in school and are enjoying it.

- Please pray for our sleep as the landlords dogs often wake us in the night :-)

Lots of love

James & Sandra

+ David + Tom + Katie + Sam

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