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Joel Githinji - Nepal November 2016

United Mission to Nepal
PO Box 126
KATHMANDU
Nepal

Dear All

Greetings. The cold season has begun in Nepal.

In Nepal churches are becoming stronger in mission-focused church programmes in communities. The Government does not register churches as legal entities. Because of societal discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice that disrupts generally peaceful coexistence and respected places of worship, any support given by Christians is thought as an indicator of proselytizing. Eight pastors and church leaders were arrested by police when they supported some needy children in one of the schools. The case is still ongoing though they were released on bond. The close monitoring of the Government officials to some specific religious groups keep people in fear of being arrested. There are some Christian organisations registered and they continue to work with communities in remote areas, teaching about the freedom and love found in God and demonstrating that love, not only by words, but with actions. One pastor said "We want to be recognised by our fruits that we are followers of the living God". In Nepal there are many ways to be involved practically in mission through volunteers and youth groups and developing their God-given gifts, skills and talents. The Bible Schools, Pastoral Training Centres and other Christian institutions are preparing some young people for church leadership to strengthening the local churches.

I participated in the Lausanne Creation Care Conference held on 13th-16th September 2016 in Kathmandu on which was relevant to the Nepal context. It was attended by some church leaders and NGOs representatives from Pakistan, Nepal, India and Bangladesh. The participants suggested that Creation Care theology should be sufficiently incorporated in the future and practices shared for better communication and learning. Nepal proposed to organise a 'national pastor's conference' on Creation Care to develop partnership in outworking the mission and to develop theology on Creation Care. Everyone was happy to be able to connect with new people with knowledge and experience. The idea of establishing and expanding the Kingdom of God was considered as the central theme to be undertaken by both church and the Christian Non-Government Organisations. This means that our love of creation and our care for it is a matter of faith. Some may see it only as a social or political issue, which in some sense it surely is, but in our hearts and in our motivations and in our relationship with God we see it as a profoundly spiritual issue. God has a relationship with all of creation. We are called to care for creation. We cannot have a full and complete relationship with God apart from our relationship with creation. When we see the full thrust of the biblical mandate to care for Earth, we can see even more clearly that care for creation is not just one contemporary issue among others. Rather, it is part of our fundamental purpose as human beings and it should affect the way we do everything. As the Bible shows, creation-care is an integral dimension of our calling as humans. We are to love God, love our neighbour, and care for creation. By doing this God's kingdom will be established with love, mercy and justice, society becomes safer, more peaceful and equal. As God's name is proclaimed, people are able to have a relationship with God and other people, through a flourishing biosphere, people will be healthier, happier and able to witness and worship.

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Facilitating Community home based care training for church volunteers. They realised that here are opportunities for serving people in need especially children and families.



Raju's family is living with HIV and has access to treatment and nutrition support. They worship in Assemblies of God Church in Itahari.

I visited Itahari in the south east of Nepal. Raju is living with HIV but his family's housing and economic condition is quite poor. Even though they were in good health condition they are struggling to find a source of income. His manual rickshaw is not in use as battery-powered rickshaws are now more popular for local transport in Itahari. His desire is to have a City Safari rickshaw that costs (US \$2500) so that he can continue to support the family and repair the house. Their children are regularly going to school.

It was also encouraging to visit Kamala and her children seem to be doing better.

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Kamala's first born child was in school, the one sitting on the ground is living with HIV and the one I am holding was born free of HIV as Kamala had enrolled in mother to child prevention programme. The husband was a driver and he passed way from a road accident. Kamala still keeps goats and chickens for her income.



Ms Sapana (on my left) is now working as a house help to support her two children in school and her health has improved.

I visited families supported by UMN partner Nawa Jeevan Sewa Samaj and I was encouraged to see those living with HIV benefitting from counselling, treatment, and medical checkup and income generation activities. There is close collaboration with the local government agencies. People living with HIV who reported a high degree of integration in the community tended to be more positive and hopeful about assistance available to them and what they received.

The feedback from UMN Interns who attended HIV training was encouraging especially the comments made during the evaluation. One of them said “despite attending HIV training conducted by others this one has become my eye opener as even technical knowledge is also backed up with Biblical perspective. Now I am confident and thinking to start such training in my church it is very important”. Some expressed that they were not receiving real facts about HIV through awareness programmes conducted by other civil society organisations. After training they committed to start education on prevention and link with those living with HIV in churches and communities.

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The Integral Mission forum was held on 25th October 2016 and attended by church leaders and Christian NGOs representatives. It was a meeting for sharing the lesson learned from the ministry among the needy people from various districts. The church and the community mobilisation process is having a positive impact. The reflection and bible study groups were functioning and people in church learned individually on how to listen to God, obeying in actions and the impact of prayers. The process is ongoing for 20 churches in Nawalparasi and Dhading Districts. More Christian leaders and organisation will be encouraged to join Integral Mission Forum which will become a movement in the future, creating opportunities for sharing information, encouraging, dealing with challenging situation facing Christian and communities. I collected HIV related books from different sources that will be distributed to 2 Bible schools libraries for references for HIV and AIDS course.



I received an award for having served UMN for 10 years. It was encouraging for me to reflect on how God has been faithful in this transformation journey.



Retreat with a Bible study group: God is raising men and women to serve in this nation.

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Please pray for the following:

- Strength, endurance and supplies for those rebuilding their homes in Dhading, Sindulpachwok and Gorkha.
- Comfort for those grieving the loss of their loved ones
- Wisdom and guidance for the government as they assess needs and allocate resources for the rebuilding of schools, hospital and home.
- Protection from extreme cold conditions and diseases especially for children and the elderly without access to proper housing, sanitation or living in temporary shelters.
- Opportunity to earn a livelihood, especially for those who are injured or care for their dependents.
- Christian workers to reach remote villages with love and the hope found in Christ.
- International and Local Missionaries who leave their homes to serve God. Pray for the health, safety, and encouragement of their family members.

The next plan of action:

- Continue with remaining trainings
- Visit Dhading cluster for UMN Partner meeting
- Organise 2 HIV trainings for Bible schools
- Support in programme report writing
- Write a concept paper for funding and follow-up
- Participate in Gender and Development training
- Organise for handing over
- Leave Nepal on 29th December 2016 and travel to Church of Scotland for deputation.

I am thankful to God for his guidance, protection and blessings to my family. During US election everyone was wondering about the outcome though the situation seems to normalise.

The UMN staff, friends, community leaders, beneficiaries started sending their best wishes to me as I prepare to leave Nepal on 29th December 2016. I will greatly miss them!

Thank you and God bless you for your support, prayers and friendship.

Joel, Agnes, Grace and Francis