

PARTNER PLAN

Malcolm & Cati Ramsay - Nepal November 2013

c/o United Mission to Nepal
PO Box 126
Kathmandu
Nepal

Dear Friends,



Easily heavier than the lady underneath these mattresses!

Malcolm writes: At this very moment Cati and I should be sitting on the bus to Tansen Mission Hospital for our bi-monthly visit there. Instead we are confined to Kathmandu as there is a nation-wide transport strike which means that throughout the entire country any vehicle larger than a push bike or motorbike risks being attacked if it moves.

The reason for this strike is that the General Elections are due to take place on 19 November. A splinter party from the Maoists vehemently opposes the timing and conditions of the Election, and they have vowed to make it ineffective. So they have imposed a 10-day ban on all transport anywhere in Nepal to prevent both campaigning and the actual vote from taking place.

So far there have been quite a number of violent incidents against those few vehicles that have dared to ignore the ban. Some have been petrol bombed and set on fire. A bus was set ablaze, but thankfully all the passengers managed to escape through the windows. In addition bombs have been set off near meetings of political parties, or near campaigning points, or beside roads as politicians' vehicles have passed. At least one election candidate has been abducted. Here in Kathmandu there is an uneasy sense of waiting to see what will happen. In other parts of the country - especially in the Terai which is the flat hot area of Nepal closest to the border with India - the situation is far more volatile, and much more likely to lead to violent conflict.

Of course some of you will read this letter long after the Election has taken place. We hope that the outcome will receive some coverage in the UK media. However whatever the results, at this stage people are very pessimistic that the Election will achieve much. More than 120 political parties have registered to compete. There are 601 seats in the Constituent Assembly, (for a population of 27 million). According to one account Nepal has 125 ethnic groups, 127 spoken languages, scores of castes and three distinct ecosystems. This makes political consensus very difficult. It is likely that no one party will win an outright majority. So after the Election the horse-trading and jockeying for power will start all over again.



Sunset over Macchhapuchre (the Fishtail)

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A patient being taken on the hospital 'buck' from Tansen to Kathmandu

The last Constituent Assembly failed because it could not agree on the wording of the revised Constitution. There is little hope that the new Constituent Assembly will fare any better. Meantime the ordinary people of Nepal cry out for at least the bare essentials of good governance: for water to flow from the taps, for the electricity to work when it is dark or cold, for the roads to be properly maintained, - to say nothing of the needs in healthcare, education, and employment.

Please pray for Nepal, and its long-suffering people. Pray for the newly elected leaders that they would be people of vision who work for the common good, and not for party advantage. Pray for the churches that they may work out what it means to be salt and light in a country that has very little experience of how democracy works. Pray for UMN that we may continue to strive to be true to our vision statement: 'Fullness of life for all, in a transformed Nepali society.'

Cati writes: We have been hugely grateful to all those churches who have been so generous in raising funds for the treatment and rehabilitation of disabled children here in Nepal, and particularly of the wee boy, Nisan, whose progress following correction of club feet we have written about previously. One day we still hope to be able to travel out to his village in Bajhang and see for ourselves the difference his treatment has made. Thank you for your support! Funding for that project is now sufficient so if there is any interest in raising further funds we would strongly recommend an invaluable Medical Assistance Fund at Tansen hospital whereby treatment can be offered free to any who are unable to afford it themselves. We are sending more detailed information about this MAF to the Presbytery Clerks of the two presbyteries we are linked with, to distribute to any who might be interested. Malcolm and I are particularly glad to encourage support of this work in Tansen because of our own involvement with the staff at Tansen and the inspiration we have received on each visit. So many of the families we've seen in the hospital have barely enough to survive on from one day to the next. Yet they often travel huge distances to the hospital, bringing sick family members whose lives are quite literally in the hands of medical and surgical staff. Wonderfully, the existence of this MAF means that no-one is denied treatment as a result of being unable to pay.



Starting day 3: Chhomrong to Dhovan



Massage travels down to the shoulders

Cati continues: We were thrilled to discover that Angus and Hannah were going to come on holiday with us in Nepal during October. We spent most of their twelve days trekking to Annapurna Base Camp and had a wonderful time catching up with one another in all sorts of ways. The climb up was gruelling in hot sunshine which even a group of trekkers from Mumbai said was beyond their own level of comfort! In contrast our descent coincided with some really dreich weather that we later discovered was due to the awful cyclone in India. However on the most important day, we found ourselves climbing the final stretch to Base Camp on a perfectly clear day and were

rewarded by seeing the Annapurna peaks gloriously illuminated at sunrise once again in all their breath-taking beauty.

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Total collapse of someone's home due to road widening in front!

Among other activities during the two remaining days before they left Nepal, Angus decided to have a professional shave by a barber. We were treated to the most entertaining performance imaginable, involving not simply a shave using a typical cut-throat razor, but also an increasingly enthusiastic if somewhat theatrical massage and manipulation of his head, neck, shoulders and arms, each as unexpected as the next stage! Watching Angus' facial expressions and listening to Malcolm's contagious guffaws of laughter was unforgettable for everyone present and surely made for one of the most gratifying clients the barber had had that day!

Waving goodbye after a very special but all-too-swift reunion was desperately painful! An abrupt reminder of the struggle we feel sometimes in living so very far away from those we love most. Instant communication via email and skype is tremendous but nothing really measures up to face-to-face time together! Fortunately our work since then has been exceptionally busy, serving not only to distract but also to remind us of the reason

why we are living and working here!

With love and prayers,

Malcolm and Cati

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