



SEASONS

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Go to www.inf.org.au/journey-with-jumla for videos, photo galleries, stories, and more.

Nepal has six seasons, not the four many Australians are used to. In addition to Spring (Basanta, roughly March–April), Summer (Grishma, May–June), Autumn (Sharad, September–October) and Winter (Shishir, January–February), Nepalis recognise the Rainy Season of the summer monsoon (Barkha, July–August) and a Late Autumn or Pre-Winter Season (Hemanta, November–December).

This is not just a useful piece of knowledge for Nepal-themed trivia nights. In Jumla, where most people are dependent on agriculture for their livelihoods, being prepared for the changes each season brings can be a matter of survival.

The people of Jumla have always been resilient and have learned to manage under difficult conditions. Steep slopes, poor quality soil and limited rainfall across the district force families to plan carefully and work constantly to make the most of their opportunities to grow food and earn an income. Because of Jumla's extreme cold, the wheat crop is planted in October and not harvested

until June. Millet is planted in April and harvested in August. Potatoes are a winter crop that are planted in February and harvested in August.

Yet, even with the best planning in the world, things are difficult for most families in Kanakasundari Rural Municipality. Particularly during the months of April, May and June, many households experience food shortages and hunger.

These seasonal changes also lead to people leaving their homes often for weeks or months at a time. Around the month of May, some people travel north into the high hills and mountains, searching for yarsagumba (*Ophiocordyceps sinensis*), a parasitic fungus that grows out of a caterpillar grub and is known for its medicinal qualities. And after the summer crop is planted in July, many men leave their homes and travel to the cities and towns in Nepal's plains to the south, or cross the border into India, seeking work as agricultural labourers or in other seasonal jobs, such as construction. Most of these jobs are difficult and some are dangerous, but families could not survive without the

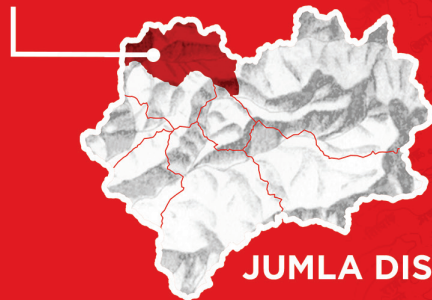
extra income they provide.

The seasons not only mark periods of risk and planting or harvest times, but also the major festivals which are times for rest and celebration. Harsh winds and droughts may strike in April, while insect pests also thrive in the warm, dry weather. The heavy monsoon rains bring the risks of landslides in July and August. Storms and hail often strike in the Autumn and Pre-Winter seasons. Frosts may devastate winter crops in February.

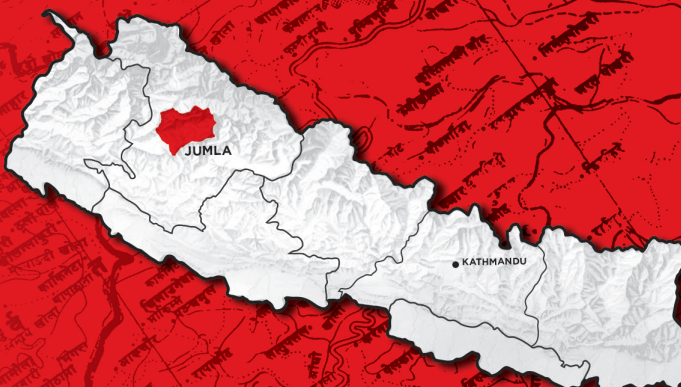
Of course, the seasons also mark the moments to plant and harvest staple crops of wheat, barley and potato, as well as the major festivals which are times for rest and celebration. The women of Kanakasundari take part in a special festival called Teej in August – September, while the major religious celebrations of Dashain and Tihar occur in October and November.

INF works with poor farming communities to build secure livelihoods in this rugged, beautiful and challenging environment. Together we are working to move beyond survival towards "life in all its fullness".

KANAKASUNDARI RURAL MUNICIPALITY



JUMLA DISTRICT



ABOUT KANAKASUNDARI RURAL MUNICIPALITY

Population: 13,200 [2011 Census]

Religions: Hinduism, Buddhism & Christianity

Elevation: 2400–3000m



68% of the population have food sufficiency for less than 6 months of each year

68%



98% of households rely on seasonal migration for income

98%



Almost 9% of people have a disability [compared to the national rate of 2%]

9%



50% of households lack safe drinking water

50%

STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

Through INF Nepal's Women's Empowerment and Livelihoods [WEAL] Project, supported by INF Australia, communities are becoming more self-sufficient and sustainable and also more resilient in the face of disasters and climate change.

Just this year, 258 members of 102 Self-Help Groups were trained on ways to improve their agricultural productivity and to respond to changes in the climate. This included training in the construction and use of greenhouses, seasonal and out-of-season vegetable farming, as well as the preparation and use of compost and organic fertilisers and pesticides.

Because of this training, many families have established kitchen gardens to grow a wider variety of vegetables. These gardens improve the food security and health of families. They are also environmentally sustainable and sensitive, fertilised with manure and kept free from insect-pests with organic pesticide.

Self-Help Group members have all received training on disaster preparation and response. All Self-Help Groups have developed plans to reduce the risk of disaster and to respond quickly to fire, landslides and storms. Self-Help Groups have also received funding from INF Nepal and from the Rural Municipality to restore trees on bare hillsides and to build check dams to improve water storage and access, as well as reduce the risk of landslides.



It's harvest time on the community farm

GOING GREEN

In Luma village of Kanakasundari Rural Municipality, the extreme cold of winter makes vegetable production extremely difficult. Green vegetables are not available during this time of year, so the community depends on less nutritious food like potatoes and dried vegetables for daily sustenance. Meeting together to discuss this issue, the members of Sundar Self-Help Group asked for INF Nepal's help to construct a community greenhouse.

INF Nepal provided the plastic sheeting and materials needed to build the greenhouse, along with irrigation pipes, water drums and vegetable seeds. Members of the Self-Help Group worked together to build the greenhouse and keep it in good repair, to plant the seeds and keep the crops watered and free from weeds.

This greenhouse makes it possible for the community to produce healthy, green vegetables despite the cold conditions. The very first crop provided sufficient for all the families in the Self-Help Group. Not only has it boosted family nutrition, it has also saved time and money and nurtured a strong sense of cooperation among the community.

Padam Kali Shahi, one of the members of Sundar Self-Help Group says, "We are happy that we can grow the vegetable seedlings in the greenhouse and distribute them equally among the Self-Help Group members. It means that we have sufficient vegetables in our kitchen garden for all our families."



A Self-Help Group member tends to a thriving crop in her greenhouse

FAMILIES IN JUMLA

Reflections and Resources for Families and Children



ACTIVITY

- 1** Read the front page article together as a family and make a note of all the things that happen for the people of Kanakasundari during different months and seasons. How does this compare with what happens during the different months and seasons where you live?
- 2** Create a “Seasons Collage” or drawing for Jumla. Divide a page into six segments and draw pictures of some of the things that happen in each of Nepal’s six seasons.

Create a “Seasons Collage” or drawing for the place where you live. Divide a page into four segments (or the number of seasons you experience) and draw pictures of some of the things that happen in each season where you live. You could also include a collage of leaves or plants that can be found during the season.
- 3** INF Australia has developed a simulation game for classrooms or family groups that helps people experience a little bit of what life is like for families in Jumla. Visit www.inf.org.au/seasons to download a playable PDF or to find out more about hosting a *Seasons* simulation game at your school, church or group.

If you have enjoyed this issue of Communities of Hope / Journey with Jumla, please share it with friends and family to let them know about the amazing work of INF among poor communities in Nepal.



INF Australia receives support from the Australian Government through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program [ANCP]. We are also a signatory to the ACFID Code of Conduct demonstrating high standards of transparency, accountability and governance.



A Christian mission serving the physical and spiritual needs of Nepali people

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