

TOGETHER *in* NEPAL

MARCH 2023



HOPE IN HARD PLACES

By Ben Thurley

A friend recently asked me, “What gets you out of bed every day? What keeps you motivated?” It was a great question. I had just come back from Nepal and had been reminded again that our friends and partners there often struggle to find the resources they need to support their communities. They are doing work that is difficult and sometimes dangerous. Their communities and, indeed, the nation of Nepal face huge challenges to overcome poverty and deep-seated inequalities, to preserve the environment, to build resilience in the face of disasters and climate change and to create opportunity for all.

How do you not despair when there are so many difficulties and tragedies?

What keeps me motivated is hope. Not blind optimism. Not feel-good sentiment. But that sometimes

raw and painful hope that through the work we support in Nepal, something new is born.

In a Self Help Group in Kalikot, a sense of possibility and purpose emerges among women who had previously felt isolated and ignored. With new hope that that they can make change, these women establish small businesses, begin to speak up for their own dignity and security, and create new possibilities for themselves and their daughters and sons.

A baby is born, herself a tiny sign of hope that her parents have for the future. And she comes into the world safely because for the first time in an extremely poor community in West Rukum, there is now a birthing centre to provide a safe place for mothers to deliver and from which pregnant women will receive the attention and care they need.

A woman, nearing the end of her life, suffering from leprosy and the disabilities it inflicts, experiences something new – love and care – where previously she had experienced traumatic pain and rejection.

Hope is not always easy. The struggles and pain and failures along the way are real. But my hope comes from, and lies in, the God who is always doing something new. God who created a beautiful something out of chaos and nothingness, who brought a people through the wilderness, who brought life and salvation, even from crucifixion and the depths of the grave.

I have hope that God continues to do new things and to bring life and hope into the lives of people who struggle or are oppressed. And who invites us all to not grow weary in doing what is right, but to work with hope and renewed energy for the good of all.





WOMEN IN NEPAL:

UNIQUE CHALLENGES, CREATIVE RESPONSES

The women of remote Kalikot, Karnali Province, are strong, creative and determined. Like many women in Nepal, they face multiple challenges. Their voices are still often dismissed or minimised. With male family members often forced to seek work outside the district, they shoulder the daily responsibility of managing the home and family as well as the fields, vegetable plots and farm animals. Harmful social practices such as chhaupadi – the isolation of women and girls during their menstrual periods because they're considered to be ritually impure – are still common.

Recognising the central role of women in these communities, INF Nepal has been working to establish Self Help Groups that provide a place to plan, train and act for change.

Nirkala BK tells her own story

My name is Nirkala BK. I am now 29 years old and I am married with two daughters and one son.

During winter, it is dry in our area and we have scarcity of food. In the rainy season, we face higher risks of landslides. In such circumstances, it isn't possible to grow enough crops to feed the family the whole year round. The main crop here is maize in the rainy season and barley in the winter but the crops grown in my field are not enough to feed my family even for three months. My husband has to travel to India, working as a daily labourer so he can earn money for our support.

Seeing the situation of the people of this region, INF Nepal formed the Laliguras Self Help Group last year, which meets twice a month. In the

meetings, we discuss the problems and strengths of the community including ways to generate income and provide loans to the Self Help Group members. Every group member contributes 50 rupees each month (approximately AUD 60 cents) towards the group savings.

As a member of the Self Help Group, I received three day training organised by INF Nepal on how to sew reusable sanitary pads. After the training, I was given a sewing machine and 40 metres of material to make the sanitary pads.

My vision is to help provide alongside my husband, pay for all the things my children need for school – books, stationery and uniforms. It's not easy selling these sanitary pads among the women and

girls in my community as they are not aware of and not in the habit of using sanitary pads. This has been a challenge for me to become a local entrepreneur.

It's also a challenge to raise awareness about the importance of reproductive health for women and girls and to break taboos about talking about menstruation. So, I plan to promote the pads in my group and amongst the local business people to make my place the hub for sanitary pads. This is a part of our educating our community about women's issues and is important for our future.

I am grateful that INF Nepal is working to encourage and empower the people of my community.



THE CHANGE WE'RE CREATING

Christmas Fundraising Campaign 2022

Your gifts are now supporting more than 4,000 people in West Rukum.

Funding target (including Birthing Centre): \$57,346
Funding outcome: \$47,735

Thank you so much for your generous gifts and enthusiasm for this project. Our partner Shanti Nepal has already inaugurated the Birthing Centre in a temporary facility, with its first delivery taking place on the day of the official ceremony!

Walk for Nepal (Pilot)

Total funding target: \$5,505
Funding outcome: \$5,648

This fantastic fundraising effort allows the Kalikot Water Sanitation & Hygiene (WASH) Project to support:

- **90 Self Help Groups** who teach skills in food production and livelihood opportunities
- **7 clean water** and sanitation projects in schools
- **Training** to combat violence against women and children.

Walk For Nepal was the brainchild of two long term supporters of International Nepal Fellowship Australia – Brian and Heather Wheatley in Adelaide. Having lived and worked in Nepal, they were keen to commit to walking to raise money for the Kalikot project. Why not take part in Walk For Nepal 2023!

Visit us at inf.org.au/walkfornepal to find out how to get involved.

OPPORTUNITIES TO BE INVOLVED



Ask Me Anything

A webinar with Ajay Sharma and the people of Tikapur

You are invited to join this online conversation with our partner organisation WACT about their work providing new opportunities for the people of Tikapur. Bring your questions about life in remote western Nepal, about Christian community development work and what keeps our partners motivated in difficult circumstances.

When: Tuesday 28 February 7:30pm

Register here: inf.org.au/events



Bible Beyond Borders

A scripture sharing webinar for Australians and Nepalis

In Nepal, like the Bible, there are shrines atop hills and statues of gods in marketplaces. People toil for their daily bread.

Reading the Bible along with Christians in Nepal – Pastor Ramesh Regmi and project leader Prema Roka Regmi – brings the stories, events and parables of the Bible to new life. Be inspired and challenged in your own walk with Jesus this Easter.

When: Mondays 8pm – 20 March, 27 March, 3 April

Register here: inf.org.au/events



INF Australia Gathering

The INF Australia National Gatherings are back! International and Australian speakers will provide inspiration and insight for your journey of justice, mercy and faith. Workshops, seminars, music and food will feed the mind, body and soul.

When and Where:

6/7 October – Sydney

13/14 October – Brisbane

Register here: inf.org.au/conference



A LITTLE GOES A LONG WAY

REFLECTIONS FROM DIANA MARSHALL

By Santosh Nepali

"It was really hard coming back, I didn't want to leave Nepal. We just loved being there, meeting people and seeing the work first hand".

Diana Marshall is a retired nurse who visited Nepal on a recent vision trip along with her daughter and other supporters of INF Australia. They visited Green Pastures Hospital in Pokhara, Shining Hospital Banke, Shining Hospital Surkhet and a community development project in Banke with partner Milap.

Diana heard of INF Australia from her church which has been supporting INF through different ministries for nearly thirty years.

"Even meeting some of the missionaries, having conversations with them and seeing photos is lightyears away from actually being there," she says.

When I asked Diana "What was the most significant experience of your trip?" she answered without hesitation: "Spending an afternoon with four older ladies who have suffered from leprosy most of their lives. It was wonderful to see how

well they were cared for. Their physical care was excellent and they were so loved."

INF Australia supports a wide range of projects in the areas of health and disability, women's empowerment, livelihoods, disaster risk reduction and adaptation to climate change.

"One of the pictures that I have in my mind and in my heart is of a young girl from the remote village out from Nepalgunj," Diana remembers. "As well as her mother tongue and Nepali, she has also been learning English at school and is remarkably articulate in English. She wants to continue her education."

Diana says she's really impressed with the work of INF and the impact it has among the communities.

"Whether it's caring for leprosy patients or aged people, supporting Self Help Groups to address their issues or opening an opportunity for

young girls for further education, the work INF Australia does through the local partners is very effective," Diana says.

"Often people like to give financially to support. Some might think 'I don't have very much I can give'. But one of the big things I've realised is that even if it's a small amount, it can still make a big difference in the lives of people who are working and are in need. Those small amounts can help in the seed funding for the Self Help Groups or for children to attend the schools."



Like to visit Nepal?

See INF's projects or go on a fundraising trek. Get in touch with us on (02) 9411 1195 or ausoffice@au.inf.org