

Alan and Megan Barker

Moving on

May 2021



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Before starting this letter, we had a look back at the last one we sent, which was in March. How things have changed in two months! We mentioned then that '[covid] cases have been rising a bit in India' and wondered how it would affect Nepal. Sadly things have spiralled out of control in both India and Nepal, as you may have seen on the news.

Nepal is now reported to have the highest transmission rate in the world. Our friends are telling us of the desperate situation in many of the hospitals across the country and especially in Kathmandu. Official figures put the number of new cases per day at around 7,000 and deaths at about 100 but everyone knows the actual figures are much higher. People are avoiding getting tested because of the cost of tests and the stigma if it's known that you have it. At the same time, the health system cannot cope with the numbers of people that do need treatment and many are dying without the care they need. Everyone we speak to there seems to have lost a loved one or knows of someone who has died. Of the tests that are being done, somewhere between 40-50% are positive.

In the last few days we have heard some good news that supplies of oxygen and other equipment are increasing and that the vaccination programme has started again, with supplies coming in from China.



Before we left Nepal for the UK in April, we packed up our home in Pokhara and moved to Kathmandu: that was an interesting experience! There are no removal companies in Nepal, so we booked a truck and driver and enlisted a gang of willing friends to help load all our stuff into the truck at six in the morning! Then we had the 7-hour drive to Kathmandu and before we could unload everything into our flat, we had to arrange for some smaller vehicles first. Large trucks are not allowed inside the Kathmandu ring road during the day, and as our place is about half a mile inside, everything had to be decanted into smaller vehicles first. The truck parked at the side of a road outside the ring road while a couple of pick-ups ferried back and forth a few times to the flat. Willing helpers helped Megan at the flat while Alan stayed with the truck and supervised and negotiated with the truck driver and the pick-up driver. Having started loading the truck in Pokhara at 6am, everything was finally unloaded the other end by 7.30pm. A long day and most things survived without too much damage!

We then had a few days in Kathmandu to unpack and get ourselves a bit more organised before we flew to the UK. And here we are. After quarantine we have been able to visit family and friends, which has been great after so long. While we are here, we will also be preparing for our new role with BMS and with the partner in Kathmandu with whom we will be working when we get back to Nepal. We plan to return to Nepal at the beginning of August but that depends on the situation there as the international airport is again closed at the moment.



As for our new roles we know a little more now. In Nepal we will be working with a BMS partner called 'Human Development and Community Services' or HDCS for short. They run three remote rural hospitals and some community development work based around the hospitals. HDCS also has educational programmes where they support and offer training in rural schools and they also run the school (KISC) that our children attended when we lived in Kathmandu. Alan will be the visa holder and will help find funding for KISC and HDCS. Megan will not have a work visa but will be able to support the HDCS hospital therapy staff and continue supporting the other occupational therapists in Nepal that she already knows. The other area of our work will be spread across BMS partners in other countries in Asia. This part of the work will develop as the year goes on and at the moment is obviously limited to Zoom, or other online meetings, because travel is restricted.



For those of you that pray, please join us in giving thanks for:

Safe travel from Nepal and good times with family and friends

A good 'move' from Pokhara to Kathmandu and the new flat

More clarity about our future roles

And please pray for:

Nepal with the dire situation related to Covid Hospital staff struggling with overwhelming patient numbers and limited supplies

Families that have lost loved ones and those desperate to find a hospital that can offer treatment

Our time in the UK to be useful and constructive

Our daughter, Gemma, and daughter-in-law, Lisa, and their families as they prepare for the arrival of their babies at the end of July/beginning of August.

As always we thank you for your love and concern as you stand with us and support us in our lives and work.

With our love

Alan and Megan

If you would like to support Alan and Megan Barker by prayer and committed regular giving, visit bmsworldmission.org/partners or call 01235 517617 for a 24:7 Partners leaflet.



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