

Alan and Megan Barker

Getting out and about

January 2022



www.bmsworldmission.org/ambarker

First of all, let us wish you all a very happy and blessed 2022.

As our last letter (end of November) was a topical one rather than a focus on what we've been doing, we thought we'd go back through our diaries and see what we've been up to since we wrote to you all in September. We will highlight some significant events since then.

These are our travel events:

September 27th to October 1st, Alan in Chitwan and Lamjung.

October 27th, Megan to Pokhara for World OT Day November.

10th & 11th both of us to Lamjung.

November 27th to December 2nd Alan to Rukum.

December 9th to 12th Megan to Chitwan.

January 9th to 14th Megan to Surkhet

There were a couple of important meetings in Kathmandu, as HDCS held its General Assembly and the OTs of Nepal (ANOT) had their first face-to-face meeting in over 2 years. Also, we have been able to offer some support to the Nepal Baptist Church Council (NBCC) together as part of our new wider role of supporting BMS partners.

There were a few social events including:

A 1st birthday party.

An 88th birthday party.

A school performance about the Nutcracker.

A little New Year get away December 30th to January 5th

Also we had lots of guests passing through – lovely to have this home to share.

To fill in some detail on these diary notes, let's start with the parties. Reaching the first year of life is maybe not as unusual as it used to be here in Nepal, but nevertheless, it is a special time for the family as they feel their child will continue to grow and flourish. Still the under-five mortality rate is relatively high here in Nepal at 28/1000 compared with UK at 4/1000[1]



In Kathmandu the majority people group are the Newari tribe. They celebrate someone reaching the 7th day of the 7th week of the 7th month of the 77th year of someone's life. The next milestone is to replace those 7s with 8s! The father of a friend of ours reached that 88 milestone on December 16th. Sadly, Megan was very busy that day (chairing ANOT meeting), but Alan was able to attend the ceremony when priests came to bless the family (they are Hindu), and especially of course the birthday boy himself.

[1] <https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-survival/under-five-mortality/>



Now to the travel.

It has been good for us to get around to the different hospitals and project work of HDCS. Also, to be able to continue to offer some support for the rehabilitation work in Surkhet, where we used to live. See if you can find all the places we've visited on the map.

HDCS, the organisation that we are now seconded to here in Nepal, runs three community hospitals in remote places. Alan has had the opportunity to visit all three and to hold meetings about some upcoming projects in the areas around two of them - Rukum and Lamjung. We were also able to travel to Lamjung together on another occasion when Megan spent some time with the physiotherapist in the hospital while Alan had some more project meetings. The hospital in the district of Rukum is the most remote of all three. Alan and a small team had a 50-minute flight and then a six-hour road trip to get there. The last three hours of the journey were decidedly bumpy and the 'road' got gradually worse the further we got. The last part also included navigating through a river! Alan and the team spent five days in the area, visiting various local officials and community groups as part of the planning to implement a big project in the area later in the year. There are no paved roads in that area, so every day was an off-road adventure in a pick-up truck! It was good to be there and to be reminded of how tough life is for people in these remote places. One community group we visited mentioned that their nearest health facility – the local government health post – was a two-hour walk from their community. If someone is sick, they have to be carried as there are no ambulances or other means of getting there.

The camp in Chitwan

This was aimed at people seventy years and older and so chairs were provided for them as they gathered as you can see in the photo. Over the course of the two days more than 200 older people were seen by both medics and therapists. Megan enjoyed being there as she was able to do some therapy in her advisory and support capacity.



Update on Covid in Nepal

The Omicron variant is now surging its way through Nepal. Every day we hear of friends and colleagues who have tested positive. We are grateful that so far no one has experienced serious symptoms and that we have stayed Covid-free, despite being in contact with several people who later tested positive. As we write, half the people in the HDCS office are isolating and we have switched to mostly working from home.



For those that pray:

We are thankful for:

Safe travel during all our journeys

The opportunities to visit the HDCS hospitals and offer support to other BMS partner organisations

We are praying that:

The Covid situation will ease and especially that the hospitals can manage the caseload well here in Nepal
We have wisdom as we balance the different demands on our time

Friends that are Covid-positive recover quickly

As always, we are grateful for your love and prayers and please be assured of our prayers for you

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.

