

Nepal Leprosy Trust

Changing lives

KALPANA'S STORY



Kalpana is a 29-year-old mother who is affected by leprosy. She has 4 children under 8 years old – one is disabled by cerebral palsy and the fourth was born at Lalgadh in February (2016). Her situation has become extremely difficult, and the team at Lalgadh need to intervene rapidly to save this family from disaster. Her story illustrates the challenges of the caste system, of being affected by leprosy and of having a disabled child in a country where there are no formal support services.

Kalpana comes from a village in Sindhuli district. Her parents have some land, but are not well off. When Kalpana was 15 years old she eloped with a young driver, and they were very happy and had two girls in the early stage of their marriage. In due course Kalpana's family allowed her and her husband to live with them again, until they discovered that Kalpana's husband was from a low caste. They issued an ultimatum – "Leave your husband or leave the house!" Kalpana left with her husband and two daughters.

Things were fine for a while and they had a third child, a boy called Tilak. However, things deteriorated when Kalpana came to Lalgadh for examination in April 2014 and was found to have leprosy. She was given a two-year course of multi-drug therapy treatment, which she tried to keep secret from her husband. But he found out, and then the fear and stigma of leprosy unravelled this little family. He made her eat separately from the family and tried to stop her from touching their children. Kalpana could not bear this, and said he could beat her or whatever, but she was their mother and would look after them as a mother must. The situation worsened when it became apparent that their son had cerebral palsy, and then, six months ago, Kalpana's husband suddenly left. Kalpana was 3 months pregnant, and now had no home, no job, no money, no husband, and was unwell with leprosy.

For a while, Kalpana rented a room in Bardibas, about 5 km from Lalgadh, but she could not earn enough to maintain the family, so eventually the landlord evicted her and the children. Three weeks ago, she gave birth to her fourth child at Lalgadh Leprosy Services Centre, and she is currently being cared for in the in-patients unit there.

Kalpana is broken-hearted at the loss of her husband, whom she still loves, and is often overcome by despair; but she keeps rallying to care for her children. She has no idea what she can do, as she is still on treatment for leprosy and is weak. She has a new baby and her other children are still very young. Tilak is looked after a lot by his two older sisters, Smiti and Sushma, but he needs a lot of daily care. They certainly have no opportunity for schooling at this stage, unless things get a little better. The grim reality is that there are no obvious answers. In Nepali culture Kalpana is treble "cursed" – by her single motherhood, by having a disabled son, and by leprosy.

There is no system in Nepal for helping people like Kalpana, and her parents do not want her back. This family is therefore very vulnerable and our Community Team is looking for £2,500 to help with some land and housing and, later on, a small business startup to provide an income for them. There are other needs of course, but this would be a good starting point for the team to work with. We would also like to set up a fund that we can use to help others like Kalpana, who find themselves in impossible situations because of leprosy.

If anyone would like to contribute to helping Kalpana and others like her, please let us know.

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Lydia Children's Fund

A good education is one way to better your life, wherever you live in the world. However, for many of the poor people we are in contact with, it can be very hard to access education without some help. The children below were being sponsored until recently when, sadly, their sponsors passed away. Although we can cover a short gap in funding, we will need some more sponsors to provide the £12.00 a month each for the continuation of their education. If this is something you would like to help with, please contact Mildred on 020 8940 1200 or email info@nlt.org.uk

Many Thanks



Binay is 16 and his mother died when he was 5. He is cared for by his grandparents who are both affected by leprosy. They need help to pay for the last years of his education.



Manju is 15 and her father died some years ago; her mother is sick. Her older brother earns a little, but not enough to pay for her education. She would very much like to study to be a nurse if she can finish school.



Rashmi is 12 and has been doing well at school, supported by Lydia Children's Fund. She has an older sister and a baby brother, and her parents are both poorly-paid daily labourers.

More handicraft outlets needed

One of the best ways to help Himalayan Handicrafts in Kathmandu is by selling their products and keeping the products moving. We have found that the most efficient method is to find shops prepared to sell NLT's fair trade products. Once a good relationship has been established with a retail outlet, they place orders and we post goods directly to them.

If you know of any shops likely to sell our handicraft goods, we would be grateful if you could explore the possibility of them including our products amongst their range. Do let us know if you have any interested retailers.

Contact Enid on
020 8940 1200
info@nlt.org.uk

Help in the office at Richmond is still needed, and we would be thrilled to hear from anyone who is interested.

There are various ways that a person can help :-

- spend a few hours a week regularly helping with various administrative tasks;
- and/or helping at fairs and events locally;
- sorting things out (such as our stock)!
- helping spread the message about leprosy, and our work in Nepal...

**For information
phone us on 020 8940 1200,
Email: info@nlt.org.uk**

**If you would like to receive your copy of the newsletter by email to save NLT some postage, please let us know by emailing us on:
info@nlt.org.uk**

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R** To order an Easter bunny please contact us on
020 8940 1200
or
info@nlt.org.uk



TC016 TC002 TC003
£5.50 p&p £0.60 £7.50 p&p £0.60 £7.50 p&p £0.60

Speaking Team!

We have a group of four people, Enid, Mildred, Naomi and Mike who are all happy to form a small team to visit your church, school, club or group and give a talk, drama and/or slides. We do not make a charge for this, but we do like to bring NLT handicrafts to sell!

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The Blockade is lifted in Nepal



Cars queuing for fuel

We are pleased to report that after more than 4 months of strikes and acute shortages, caused by blockade of the Indian border, agreement has been reached and things are returning to normal. The border crossing points are open again, but it will take many weeks before fuel and gas stocks are back to former levels. In the meantime, travel

is still a bit uncertain. Nevertheless, there is great relief amongst ordinary Nepalis, and we are grateful for all those who prayed for this resolution. This will also mean that relief work for people in the hill districts can continue after a long period when it was not possible.

The next group of Medical Trainees



David

Many of you know that we have supported several young people who grew up at Lalgadh and wanted to become doctors, with their medical training. In each case, the funds for this have come from various individuals. Medical training is very expensive in Asia, as indeed it is here, and although the families of these young people have raised a lot of money themselves, it has still taken significant external support. These young people represent the next generation of doctors that we hope will work at Lalgadh helping people affected by leprosy and the many other poor folk who



Anand

come for medical help. We now have several Christian young men and women qualified as doctors, two of whom are working at Lalgadh and another is about to join. Three more young folk are in training and one of those, David, who grew up at Lalgadh, started a year ago and is doing well in a medical college in Bangladesh. Another, Anand, who also grew up at Lalgadh, started his training last September, also in Bangladesh. Both David and Anand need help with ongoing costs. If you would like to support them, please let us know.

Sponsored Walk along the England-Scotland Border



The Rev. Bob Higham was a trustee of NLT UK for several years in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and has done a number of long distance walks to raise funds for charities working in India. This spring Bob is planning to walk the 96-mile England-Scotland border with his daughter Shirley to raise funds for NLT. It would be

great if people could sponsor him through his Justgiving page, or by sending us your support directly through the donation button on the NLT website. A cheque payable to Nepal Leprosy Trust can be posted to our office in Richmond (please specify 'Bob's walk').



Border country

Many Thanks

Dr Graeme Clugston



Graeme

Congratulations to Dr. Graeme Clugston, the Medical Director at Lalgadh Leprosy Services Centre (LLSC), who was honoured in the *Australia Day Honours List* in January this year. He is now an Officer of the Order of Australia. He received this for distinguished service to medicine and to the community of Nepal, particularly people with leprosy.

Graeme, along with his wife Meena and other staff members from LLSC, has been much involved with the earthquake relief effort and has accompanied several deliveries of food and supplies into the hill areas north of Lalgadh. In



December and January, after managing to obtain some fuel for the Landrover, the team was able to deliver 1,400 blankets into the high hills of Sindhuli district, travelling on difficult roads including the one pictured above. Many of the folk in these high altitude villages still do not have proper shelter, and



Meena, Graeme, Suman

have had to do their best through the cold winter weather. The villagers were of course very grateful for the blankets, so speeches had to be made.

Over 300,000 families have been in difficulty in the hills due to the earthquakes, with little prospect of help as long as the blockade was in force. Now that the strikes and blockade are over, it is hoped that relief work, and help with building new houses, can resume soon. A



Meena

major challenge is the continuing aftershocks, several times a week, with magnitudes between 4 and 5. These are causing more landslides, and also breaking down temporary housing. Life is extremely hard for these people - do please pray for them.

Christmas is special at Lalgadh

Can you imagine Christmas at a remote leprosy centre in Nepal? Well, Christmas can be fun wherever it is, but at Lalgadh it is especially fun, as people who do not have the slightest idea what Christmas is about are swept along by the games, food, and, best of all, the Christmas story. All the patients get presents, watch Christmas plays, and eat special food together. And we wonder why they don't want to go home!

For many of our patients it is extremely hard for them to understand why anyone would want to help them, or give them care and compassion, when their culture tells them that they have no worth and must deserve the terrible things that have happened to them. The Christian message tells them that they are loved by a compassionate God who really does care, and even though many of them have had a very rough deal, their experiences at Lalgadh often affect them deeply. Some patients find the capacity to reach out and encourage other struggling patients, and some become key members of self help groups, supporting the group and affecting their communities in positive ways. This process of change begins when they see a different way of living, thinking and behaving towards others, in action. Christmas is a good time!



Twitter

NLT now has a Twitter account.

You can either go to our website to see the tweets, or if you are a tweeter yourself our hashtag is:-

@NepalLeprosyTr



Future Events in 2016



11th June, Ham Fair



18th June, Strawberry Tea (venue to be confirmed)



9th July, St. Margarets Fair



17 September, sponsored walk (location to be confirmed)