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Location: **Kathmandu, NEPAL**

Mission: **Programme Advisor and Expatriate Support**

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Lockwoods' Journey

The recent months have seen us on more journeys than we had expected, but it seems that covid-19 has had that effect on all of the world! We left Nepal at the end of January due to visa issues. At that time, the Covid-19 situation in Nepal had abated, and we felt that in returning, we were leaving the frying pan and going into the fire, as Northern Ireland was suffering badly. We have been in Northern Ireland since then and are unsure when we will return at this point.

General update on United Mission to Nepal (UMN)

The saga of the renewal of UMN's agreements continues. Since January 2020, UMN has no General Agreement, and since November 2020, it has had no Project Agreements. The initial problems with the Hospital Agreement have been managed with the establishment of the Medical Development Trust. However, the fine details still need to be finalised. The frequent lockdowns caused by Covid-19 has hampered the process. In addition, there is a deepening political crisis with Nepal's parliament dissolved for the second time in five months. A general election has been called for November. Experience of election season suggests that an already slow process of signing agreements becomes even slower.

Covid-19 in Nepal

The first wave of Covid-19 in Nepal was relatively mild to the point that by February, public health measures had been relaxed. However, by the end of April Nepal, has followed India in its devastating second wave. This saw schools shutting, severe lockdown restrictions with people only allowed out of their homes to shop between 7 am to 10 am, and the closure of air travel, including international

flights. Fines have been introduced for any breaches of the restrictions.

UMN's Cluster Work

Throughout this whole pandemic, UMN continues to work and serve the poor and needy in Nepal. The lull in the first wave allowed us to reopen our cluster offices and restart community work. Although there are strict restrictions in the second wave, the cluster offices still provide relief and support to local government facilities, particularly health posts and border checkpoints.

UMN's Hospitals

The two UMN hospitals have been at the forefront of our Covid-19 response providing ongoing primary healthcare, particularly in maternity and isolation facilities for sick Covid-19 patients. In the last few months, we have been heavily involved in the maintenance cycle, repairing and upgrading both hospitals' oxygen plants. This is especially important in Okhaldhunga as it is the only hospital in the district that can refill oxygen cylinders. Although the hospitals are under extreme duress, they have the well-earned reputation of never turning away any patients who come to them.

Prayer points

- Pray for the acceptance and signing of agreements between UMN and the government of Nepal to continue the cluster community work and the running of the two mission hospitals.
- Pray for the challenging situation in the mission hospitals in Tansen and Okhaldhunga as they provide primary healthcare and are at the frontline of covid-19 response.
- Pray for us as a family as we work through the changes that covid-19 has necessitated.