

Claire and Alex update # 1 October 11th 2026

Wonderfully familiar, and always unexpected; stunning and struggling. Two weeks in and that's very much our experience of this time in Nepal so far.



Our journey here was both familiar and new, flying via Sri Lanka for the first time, the stopover being by an Indian Ocean beach rather than the floor of Delhi airport. The five days without our luggage was the unexpected bit. A wonderfully helpful young Nepali woman at the service counter made a couple of phone calls and confirmed that our bags were still in Colombo but would come on the next day's flight then straight on to Pokhara. Claire asked her how confident she was that that would really happen. She was very confident. And comforted Claire saying "ma'am at least you can enjoy the moment ". Very philosophical.

Adding "maybe it happened for a reason " Now you wouldn't get that at Heathrow! Sure enough, a couple of days later, we and our bags were happily reunited. We never discovered the reason!

This time we made the Kathmandu to Pokhara journey by air because the road was still barely passable following the catastrophic flood on August 26th.

The country

Although over 5,000 people, including foreign nationals, remain missing, the Nepal government made the hard decision last week to end the search and rescue operation following the flood, including the search for victims. The focus now, and for a long time to come, will be on recovery for survivors and remaining communities, and infrastructure reconstruction. With nearly 33,000 people affected and around 7,500 homes damaged or destroyed, roads, bridges, power, water supplies and hydro schemes damaged or destroyed, the government estimates the cost will be around £3.7 billion.

You may have seen Prime Minister Balendra Shah's address to the UN Assembly (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x2yyO1zLI7g>) last month, reminding the world that it is developing countries like Nepal which are disproportionately suffering the cost of climate change they didn't cause, and appealing for more determined global collaboration to mitigate climate impact and reduce disaster risk. And news of another flood sweeping away homes and fields in another area of Nepal following heavy monsoon rains is coming into our phones even now while we write this.

INF teams continue to be involved in the relief and community restoration work. The Nepali colleague who's coordinating the work explained to me how different this disaster is to the 2015 earthquake. Then there were destroyed or damaged buildings, but they could be repaired or rebuilt. There were injured people who needed treatment. But with the flood, there's nothing left. As he starkly explained, the people who were swept away are gone. Those who survived, were physically largely uninjured. The buildings which were sitting higher than the water level are largely unaffected, but where buildings were in the path of the flood, there's absolutely nothing left but sand.

At the end of the recent INF annual conference, everyone quietly left the room with lit candles to place outside in memory of the thousands of lives lost.



Our work

This year, there is no longer a paediatric speech and language therapy outpatient department at INF's hospital, in large part because the young therapists have left to work in Kathmandu. So Claire's work this time is going to look very different. This week she and a Nepali colleague have been giving daily therapy to a little five year old girl who was an inpatient at the hospital. Next week she is starting some practical sessions with a young gentleman who suffered a stroke 6 months ago and is needing to practice using Nepali and English in real life contexts. After that who knows...

In a way, Alex's work this time reflects Claire's. A number of management reports recently commissioned by INF have highlighted some of the concerns which were part of why the young speech therapists and

others have left. The organisation has ambitious change and growth plans, and continues to serve well the people of Nepal, especially the poor and marginalised, but with limited people capacity, and organisational challenges, adapting for the future is not easy. Alex's role in this is primarily supporting the leadership team as they seek to engage with these challenges.

The joys of everyday life

- We are happily settled back in the flat we stayed in last year and have been warmly welcomed by the landlord.
- We have been lent much more functional bikes than we used last year with brakes and gears that work and comfortable seats! The roads are mayhem but our confidence in navigating ourselves around the road chaos is growing fast!
- We've discovered a shop that sells frozen peas!! And we are enjoying foods not available at home such as dragon fruit and a Nepali squash.
- We are taking a trip up to Lower Mustang over the Doshain public holiday next weekend, its a high altitude wind swept area, unlike anywhere else in Nepal.
- We are back worshipping with our old church (below) and reconnecting with friends which is always humbling.



We'll be in touch again in a couple of weeks, and in the meantime, thanks for your interest and support.

With our love
Claire & Alex

If you're someone who prays, please include in your prayers...

- Wisdom and realism in our work
- Courage for INF's leadership teams
- Wisdom for the Nepali government in making difficult decisions about the reconstruction and restoration of life in the devastated region
- Our continued health, and safety in travel

If you'd prefer not to receive these updates, please just let us know.