The Monsoon – Rain, Flooding, Landslides, Death, Destruction, Disease, Poverty … all nearby and in surrounding Terai districts of Nepal

Lalgadh Leprosy Hospital & Services Centre, Nepal Leprosy Trust, (LLHSC/NLT)

From the entire grateful team - Lalgadh Leprosy Hospital & Services Centre (LLHSC), & Dr Graeme Clugston, Medical Director & Meena Clugston, Nursing Advisor - 30 August 2017

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It’s been pouring rain for weeks – throughout most of July and August - with thunder and mighty lightning strikes as well … but it’s also hot and humid, wet, very muddy, and with extreme flooding around LLHSC area across the Terai in surrounding Districts.

Extreme flooding across southern Nepal due to the monsoon – hundreds of deaths, 90,000 homes destroyed, 461,000 people displaced so far

Many destructive landslides – the effect of the monsoon on previously earthquake weakened-land

More about the flooding below.

Meantime, LLHSC keeps providing compassionate quality medical services to huge patient numbers - 600-800 outpatients a day - and despite the rain and floods, reaches out every day through its Community Programme, across the flooding to the thousands of poor, ill and needy including leprosy-affected, the marginalised, destitute, untouchables (Dalits) and others in dire poverty.
LLHSC’s hospital services look like this as the monsoon continues...

The monsoon pouring its rain on the Outpatients Department

The Inpatient Hospital wards – wet wet walkways ... as lunch is served
The monsoon season is our busiest season at Lalgadh Hospital. Daily outpatient numbers swell to 600-800 per day – sometimes more. Every year the enormous annual patient load increases further. Last year (2016) we treated 103,890 patient-consultations, of whom 12,375 were leprosy consultations, 19,706 were children, and 1,280 were new leprosy patients. Leprosy is still spreading in the ultra-poor conditions in this poorest part of Nepal.
Increasing illness during this monsoon season is especially due to water-borne and infectious skin diseases, often combined with malnutrition especially in children. Often brought on by food shortage (foodstocks and crops destroyed by flooding), gastrointestinal infection (contaminated water). Malnutrition lowers immunity and increases susceptibility to other diseases. These range from diarrhoeal diseases and dysentery, cholera, typhoid, hepatitis, acute respiratory disease, meningitis, and mosquito-borne diseases such as malaria, dengue fever, lymphatic filariasis, Japanese encephalitis and other diseases due to contaminated food and water. And the poor cramped close contaminated living conditions contribute to the spreading of leprosy, tuberculosis and other infectious or neglected tropical diseases of poverty.
The Ratu River – the river that runs next to the hospital – is dangerously flooded and has burst its banks. Flooded rivers and continuously heavy rains have flooded much of the surrounding area, villages, districts.

Although the monsoon is a usually a joy for many farmers because it is essential for rice planting and transplanting – and Nepal faces severe food shortages in many areas - this year it has brought death, damage and destruction. In what the United Nations is calling the worst monsoonal flooding in Nepal for 15 years, the result has been during July and August up to today ...

- Over 150 deaths
- 90,000 homes destroyed due to heavy rains, flooding, and landslides.
- 461,000 people displace
- 35 Districts affected (along southern Terai of Nepal)
- Crops worth tens of millions of dollars have been destroyed and some 70,000 livestock have perished
The flood waters from the monsoon and swollen Himalayan rivers affect not only Nepal but flood into neighboring states of India and Bangladesh as well. The United Nations reports today that the death toll from monsoon floods in Nepal, India and Bangladesh has climbed above **1,200 deaths and at least 41 million people have been directly affected by flooding and landslides**, resulting from the monsoon rains. Here is a glimpse of what people are facing – especially in the areas and nearby Districts close to Lalagadh Hospital...
Trying to pump clean water while muddy contaminated floods surge

(a) Mud everywhere - house damaged, family wondering what to do.
(b) A few wet muddy belongings salvaged from the flood
(a) Monsoon-damage house propped up ... but it won’t last.  

(b) Ram Nandan – he is a long-standing leprosy-affected staff member from LLHSC’s footwear dept. – his left leg was amputated years ago due to leprosy – he now has a prosthetic left leg. His house is monsoon-damaged.
These families’ houses are flooded or destroyed - they do their best with whatever they can fund to set up and survive in temporary housing on dryer ground.

In Sindhuli District – immediately north of LLHSC, the monsoon has brought multiple landslides. The ground remains fragile as a result of the massive earthquakes and aftershocks in April-May2015. Our access to Kalika School high up in remote Sindhuli, that was severely damaged by the earthquakes, and where we are helping needy the school children there and helping build a new school, has been cut off by landslides. We will have to wait for the landslides to be cleared before we can return there.
LLHSC’s Community Programme is struggling, in the face of this year’s monsoonal disaster, to provide its outreach program for many thousands – especially for leprosy affected, marginalised, untouchable, stigmatised communities in the 4 Districts adjacent to LLHSC, whose total population is 2.5 million people. The monsoon rains, mud and flooding make it nearly impossible at times to support the difficult-to-reach poor and needy villages where leprosy and other diseases of poverty are still rampant.

Right now, with such severe monsoon flooding and destruction, there is an enormous need for flood-relief items such as clean water, food relief or rations, tarpaulins, blankets, clothes, water purifiers and mosquito nets. And with the increased disease and infection rates, support for sick children, pregnant mothers, and other severely ill, transport to hospital, and medicines for local or temporary clinics, are all urgently needed.

LLHSC is well placed to help with support through its extensive network of 101 Self Help Groups (SHGs) which are established across the 4 adjacent Districts. These village SHGs currently have 2,460 beneficiaries - especially leprosy-affected but also other marginalised, needy and disabled village folks.

But I’ll tell you more about LLHSC’s outreach work in the next Newsletter. Meantime...

Please keep the front-line work of Lalgadh Leprosy Hospital in your thoughts and prayers - especially the patients, the children with leprosy, the community outreach to the poor and needy and to those enduring and trying to survive the awful destructive effects of the monsoon and landslides, the staff and all their exhausting work, the mission, effectiveness and safety of Lalgadh Hospital.

And if you would like to help with funding support for LLHSC’s urgent work, bank account details can be found here ...

Act for helping Lalgadh Leprosy Hospital - Nepal Leprosy Trust

... and they are also on the LLHSC website in the “Support Us” section: www.nepal-leprosy.com

Many many many thanks, warmest wishes .... and God bless!

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