



A young mother and child in Dhamaura village, beneficiaries of the Village Alive Project

## Irish Aid brings more villages alive

Four more villages will join Nepal Leprosy Trust's Village Alive Project this November, thanks to a three-year grant from Irish Aid's Civil Society Fund matched by partner funding.

The project empowers marginalised low-caste communities in rural Nepal to improve basic services such as sanitation, education, water and health facilities. The communities also develop economically by setting up savings clubs and small businesses.

Nepal Leprosy Trust supports people

affected by leprosy and now also those with lymphatic filariasis (commonly known as elephantiasis) to form self-help groups, which go on to lead Village Alive Projects. In this way, formerly stigmatised leprosy patients become highly respected leaders in their communities.

Such collaboration between Nepal Leprosy Trust and local communities is the fruit of more than twenty years' work by the Community Development Department in Lalghadh Leprosy Hospital & Services Centre. Each village must reach specific targets to participate in this project.

# Colourful tapestry of people, prayers and praise



Nearly 400 people including villagers, Christians from the area and supporters from the early days of Lalgadh Church joined this joyful celebration.

They gave thanks and praised God for the church, which He has grown and blessed in the midst of a Hindu culture. It was a joy to see some worshippers reconnect after many years and hear the stories: how the jungle was cleared to build the church; how the original little bamboo building was burned down, and how it was rebuilt with concrete blocks.

Supporters from the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, India, and Ireland attended. Many who couldn't make it to Nepal sent congratulatory wishes. November 2018

Norman Meeten, founding chair of NLT UK and Dambar Aley leader of Lalgadh church awaiting the ceremony. They later share the candles and the cut the cake to celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Lalgadh Church in south-eastern Nepal.



Norman Meeten and Dambar Aley prepare to cut the cake.



The beautiful tapestry protects worshippers from the sun



Mike Houghton (r) General Manager of NLT UK and Durga Singh, retired senior staff member, receive their Nepalese welcome rosette and scarf. Second row (right to left), Mike and Sue Wells, Vera McEvoy await their official welcome



Anniversary gift of a linen and cotton lectern cover for the church from all in NLT Ireland



He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ. Philippians 1:6

# An invitation to be part of God's work in Nepal



Healing hands: Dr Krishna, Medical Co-ordinator of Nepal Leprosy Trust and Lalgadh Leprosy Hospital chats with Bal Kumari. Photo: E. Thomas for NLT

Imagine going blind.  
Imagine being thrown out of your house.  
Imagine living on a riverbank.  
Imagine strangers taking you in, giving you a home, a life, a dignity, when no one else would.

That's what happened to Bal Kumari, an elderly lady rejected by her family when they discovered she had leprosy, until Nepal Leprosy

Trust (NLT) stepped in with Jesus' love. NLT empowers and brings the gospel to some of the poorest and most marginalised people in the world: those affected by leprosy in Nepal. While the disease is relatively easy to cure with antibiotics, the associated stigma can ruin lives as it is traditionally viewed as a curse. NLT treats the disease and beats the stigma through its community work and hospital in Lalgadh.

Thousands have been medically treated and empowered through practical supports.

NLT's ground breaking approach brings the love of Jesus by helping the most rejected to become the most respected in their communities. They spearhead projects such as schools, digging wells and toilets and establishing small businesses with support from NLT.

As the church in Lalgadh celebrates its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, churches around Ireland are invited to support NLT's work, which has received international acclaim.

If your church would like to support or find out more about this pioneering charity, please contact Vera at [info@nlt.ie](mailto:info@nlt.ie) or phone 086 2584367



# The power of a group: how belonging boosts well-being

Nepal Leprosy Trust combats leprosy by tackling both the physical disease and social stigma in Nepal. As people affected by leprosy are cured, and then empowered to help themselves and others, their self-esteem and status grow.

This is an excerpt from a year-long study\* to measure the impact of this double approach.

'Belonging to groups that are valued has profound and positive implications for health and well-being ... Conversely, groups that are stigmatised often experience isolation and structural inequalities, which can undermine these resources and effects - a form of 'social curse'. This study explores the social psychological foundations of self-help groups run by Nepal Leprosy Trust, which are based on participatory community development principals and aim to eliminate stigma and empower people affected by leprosy in Nepal. Participants were diagnosed and managing the effects of leprosy with the assistance of self-help groups in 10 rural

villages in Southern Nepal.

Participants completed measures of self-help group belonging, social participation, internalised stigma and well-being. Results indicate that ... for people affected by leprosy, feelings of belonging afforded by the self-help group indirectly linked to increased well-being [and] social participation and this was related to reduced feelings of internalised stigma and increased well-being ... The current study offers novel and promising evidence that group-based interventions have the potential to offer new supportive identities that reduce stigma and promote health in the most adverse of circumstances'.

*\*The study results from a collaboration between Professor Orla Muldoon and Dr Sarah Jay, University of Limerick Psychology Department, and Mike Winterburn, NLT Ireland chair. Funded by an Irish Research Council New Foundations Award 2017- 2018*



Participants completing the study in Chandranagar village (right) and Manara village (left)

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Nepal Leprosy Trust Ireland would like to thank all those who support our work. If you would like more information on any item covered in this edition please contact us by email: [info@nlt.ie](mailto:info@nlt.ie) or telephone: 086 2584367.

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