

Nepal

This small land-locked country is amongst the least developed countries in the world. Around one-third of Nepal's population live below the poverty line. Agriculture is the mainstay of the economy, providing a livelihood for 75% of the population.

The country is coming to terms with significant political changes in recent years, including the end of the 10-year Maoist insurgency in 2006 and the overthrow of the monarchy in 2008.

The population of Nepal is around 31 million, over 80% are Hindu. Prior to 1950 there was no known Christian church in Nepal, though small groups of Nepali Christians, living in North India close to the Nepali border, were meeting regularly for fellowship and waiting for an opportunity to bring the Good News of Jesus Christ to Nepal. Today Christians make up 2% of the population.

Earthquakes

Located on the boundary of two major tectonic plates, Nepal has suffered four major quakes in the past century. The earthquake that struck on Saturday 25th April just before noon local time, was in the Gorkha District between Kathmandu and Pokhara. Registering 7.8 in magnitude, it was the worst since 1934. A number of strong aftershocks also occurred, causing further damage.

It is estimated that eight million people have been effected. The death toll on Wednesday, 29th April was over 5,000 with fears it will rise much further.

Tens of thousands have been made homeless and an estimated 1.4 million people are in need of emergency food aid. Clean water, food, blankets and electricity are in short supply. Hospitals are overwhelmed and there are fears for an outbreak of disease.

A lack of equipment and expert personnel, as well as landslips and periodic bad weather, is hampering the rescue effort; especially in the more remote towns and villages near the epicentre.

PCI personnel serving in Nepal

Peter and Valerie Lockwood from First Bangor Presbyterian Church have been serving in Nepal since 2012 with PCI's partner – the United Mission to Nepal (UMN). Peter is UMN's Programme Advisor. He is a qualified civil engineer and his engineering skills are invaluable at this time. Valerie works in UMN's Personnel Department. Their three children are also with them.



After the earthquake Peter, who was at UMN's expatriate retreat in Pokhara along with almost all of UMN's expatriate staff, travelled to Kathmandu and is assessing UMN's properties and the houses of expatriate staff for any damage.

Stephen and Laura Coulter from Kirkpatrick Memorial Presbyterian Church in East Belfast arrived in Nepal in January 2015. They are currently completing a period of language and orientation. Laura will soon be joining



UMN's peace-building team, which works in five locations across the country. Laura's role will focus on mediation. Stephen will support the work of a national mental health network advocating for and providing better mental health interventions. Following the earthquake, Stephen travelled to Kathmandu International Study Centre (KISC) to engage in post-trauma training with students.

United Mission to Nepal

Established in 1954, UMN is a cooperative effort between the people of Nepal and a large number of Christian organisations from nearly 20 countries. It strives to address the root causes of poverty as it serves the people of Nepal in the name and spirit of Jesus Christ. The Presbyterian Church in Ireland has partnered with UMN since April 1979.



Multicultural teams of Nepali nationals and volunteer expatriate staff work alongside local organisations in less developed areas of the country, building partnerships that lead to healthy individuals, families, and communities.

UMN's immediate response to the earthquake - in accordance with their emergency plans - has included providing staff with expertise to other agencies.

They expect that longer-term involvement will be focused on the Dhading District of Nepal which is one of the worst affected areas. Two of UMN medical staff are assisting a hospital at Lamjung, and two others are joining an International Nepal Fellowship medical team in Gorkha.

Christian Aid and Tearfund

Both Christian Aid and Tearfund have sent emergency response teams to Nepal following the earthquake. They are providing urgent medical assistance, food, water and shelter to those in need. They are also involved in the rescuing of people trapped under rubble and transporting the injured to hospital.



Further information

Presbyterian Church in Ireland, Mission Department, Assembly Buildings, Belfast, BT1 6DW

T: +44 (0) 28 90417 263 E: globalmission@presbyterianireland.org

W: www.presbyterianireland.org | www.pcimissionoverseas.org

Christian Aid: www.christianaid.ie | **Tearfund:** www.tearfund.org | **United Mission to Nepal:** www.umn.org.np