



## News and Current Events :: Earthquake: Pray for the people of Sikkim

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The Aftermath of the Earthquake

September 29, 2011

The funeral service for a Gospel for Asia-supported missionary's wife who died in last week's earthquake was conducted in the shell of the church building destroyed in the disaster.

Nirmala Tamang was crushed by a collapsing church wall while trying to escape the Sept. 18 quake. Nirmala's husband, B. Tamang, is a Gospel for Asia-supported missionary serving in Sikkim, India near the epicenter of the quake.

"The entire Gospel for Asia family is saddened by the death of Nirmala," said K.P. Yohannan, Gospel for Asia President. "She faithfully worked alongside her husband to bring the love of Jesus to the people of Sikkim."

A team traveling to bring comfort to the family and help with Nirmala's funeral reported firsthand on the damage the quake left behind.

Contact between the missionaries on the field and the leaders was sporadic since communication networks were down. Team members were forced to redirect their travel several times as they encountered roads blocked by debris and landslides.

"Our leaders could have given up and gone back home, but they knew it was important to be there for Pastor Tamang and his church, so they prayerfully continued," Yohannan said.

After a grueling journey, the team finally arrived in Pastor Tamang's village. They assisted with Nirmala's funeral service. Afterwards, they fanned out to assess the damage and talked to dozens of people whose homes were completely destroyed. They also prayed with these families and encouraged them in the Lord.

"This dedicated team of GFA leaders returned to their home offices fully prepared with information and the details they needed to equip our Compassion Services teams to go back into these devastated villages," Yohannan said. "Our Compassion Services teams are now ministering to hundreds of people who are living outside in the elements because they are unable—or afraid—to return to their homes. The cold weather is settling in and these devastated people need our help."

Many of the locals, including people who attend Pastor Tamang's church, also lost livestock during the quake.

"We plan to replace those animals with gifts provided through our Christmas catalog," Yohannan said.

#### Ministry Affected by the Quake

The quake was a definite blow to Gospel for Asia's ministry in Sikkim. Initial reports indicate that 10 families from the local churches lost their homes. Two missionaries also lost their homes as a result of the quake. Two church buildings completely collapsed. Ten other churches are damaged, but not completely destroyed. Compassion Services teams will help the people rebuild their homes and churches.

"The missionaries who serve as pastors of these churches will not let this slow them down," Yohannan said. "They will continue to worship the Lord and teach His Scriptures in alternate locations until their church buildings can be rebuilt. Some of them will meet outside, while others will be able to meet in homes or rented spaces."

#### Outside the Epicenter

The epicenter of the earthquake was in Sikkim, but the effects were felt hundreds of miles away. In neighboring Bihar, India, a church and several believers' homes—including those of Bridge of Hope children—were destroyed.

The earthquake was also felt in the neighboring country of Nepal. While it wasn't as intense, the quake did cause substa

ntial damage to several ministry sites in the country, including several local English medium schools.

The schools, which are housed in simple concrete block buildings with tin roofs, are not safe for students, so school has been halted for the time being.

There are only a few reports of damaged homes and churches in Nepal.

What's Next?

Compassion Services teams are already in the affected areas tending to the immediate needs of the people by providing them with food, water and warm blankets. The teams will work in the areas for the long-term, arranging for supplies to help the people rebuild their homes and providing necessities, such as bed linens and cooking utensils, which were lost during the quake.

"Our Compassion Services teams know it is of vital importance to provide both practical, physical help, along with spiritual comfort," Yohannan said. "That's why they will take time to pray for those affected by the quake and offer them the hope found in the love of Jesus Christ."