



**Keeping
in
Touch**
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The harsh reality of climate change affecting people with leprosy and their communities.

The stories that follow are part of The Leprosy Mission Global Fellowship projects. While not specifically supported by The Leprosy Mission Australia, these stories offer a clear representation of the reality for many people around the world. Those affected by leprosy and disability are at greater risk when climate change impacts their lives.

Motiur has been left jobless by climate change. He was diagnosed with leprosy in 2008. This didn't stop him from making a good living at his tea stall near Dawood Khali River. That was until erosion of the river destroyed his business overnight. He lost his income, profits, and life savings.

Since losing his tea stall, Motiur has been searching for work, a task made much harder by leprosy. In an attempt to cover his basic needs of food, medicine, and other essentials, Motiur took on labour work, but this ultimately made him even more sick and weak.

Sheikh is the leader of a seven member family and a shrimp farm. He was first diagnosed with leprosy in 2021. Flooding and cyclones in Bagerhat added to Sheikh's struggles.

The damage caused by the flooding and cyclones throughout his life has had a big impact on Sheikh. He has had to rebuild his home and his farm eight times.

The climate has harmed Sheikh's shrimp farming as excess salt in the water is affecting the quality of his product. The physical challenge of removing this salt is made harder by leprosy.

"How many times will I have to pay for frequent cyclones? What can I do to recover from financial loss? How can I remove this extreme salt from my shrimp farm?"

Damage caused by flooding in Nepal devastates lives and communities.



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Pray for people like Motiur and Sheikh as they seek to overcome the damage to their livelihoods by climate change. Pray that governments will take the necessary steps to combat the most severe effects of climate change. Pray that God will inspire people to create solutions where none seem possible.

How climate change is impacting the lives of people affected by leprosy

June 5th is World Environment Day. The theme for this year is Only One Earth, focusing on sustainable living. Psalm 24:1 reminds us that:

the earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.

Over and over God reminds us to look after the land so that it can rest, regenerate and supply the needs of all who live in it.

Climate change is increasingly affecting countries where leprosy is present. This is having a severe impact on the lives of persons affected by leprosy and making it harder to end leprosy transmission.

In 2021, James Pender of The Leprosy Mission England & Wales, published a paper looking at the climate crisis and leprosy (visit: www.journal.cjgh.org/index.php/cjgh/article/view/543).

James' paper considers the direct and indirect impacts of climate change on leprosy. It also looks at the increased vulnerability of persons affected by leprosy due to climate change, and examples of how environmental concerns can be integrated into health programs with salutary outcomes for individuals, communities, and the environment.

As James concludes, environmental concerns do not obviously interlink with the goal of defeating leprosy, but thinking more deeply shows that the link is real and cannot be ignored.

Leprosy and climate change facts

- Leprosy colonies in Mumbai are located along storm drains that flood annually
- 4,000 leprosy affected farmers in Northwest Bangladesh were impacted by unprecedented flooding in 2017
- Rice harvests on farms of 'leprosy villages' in Myanmar failed in 2020 as rainfall patterns changed
- We know of people in Nepal who have struggled to get to higher ground during flooding because of leprosy-related disabilities
- Also in Nepal, we have heard of people arriving at shelters during flooding, only to be turned away due to leprosy stigma

Thank you for your generosity of time through prayer.

Please pray for people whose livelihoods are impacted by climate change. Pray for communities under threat from devastating changes in weather patterns. Pray that governments and community groups everywhere will work together, and with more urgency, to address this crisis.



Sundar gives back to his community after receiving support from people like you.

Sundar, 29, lives in the southern district of Rupandehi in Nepal, with five members of his family including two sisters with disabilities.

He is from the untouchable caste. They are the lowest social group based on the caste hierarchy in Nepal. Sadly, this limits his rights and access to opportunities for education and work. Yet he managed to stay in school up to grade 11 when the household workload meant he could not continue further.

Sundar is a member of the Milan Self-Help Group. He is an active member who also facilitates the group for meeting and other decision making. Now he is also one of the active members of his cooperative formed under the IMPACT project. Following on from training in cooperative management and bookkeeping, Sundar is now the secretary of his cooperative.

The IMPACT project that you help support has formed eight Self-Help Groups (SHG's) in the Rupandehi district. From this, the project helped register two cooperatives, merging four SHG's into one. Cooperatives allow larger groups of people to combine resources. They can also establish more formal business structures. Becoming registered unlocks opportunities for the group. For instance, they can access government or non-government grants and other benefits.

This allows groups to look at larger business ideas to increase financial security.

This is a life-changing achievement for members who had lived 'hand to mouth' not knowing if they will earn enough to provide meals for their family. But thanks to you, and other faithful supporters, people like Sundar no longer have to. Thank you!

Sundar has also showed interest in learning more about sustainable livelihood. His cooperative encouraged him to undertake training and become the resource person for livelihood support in their community.

Sundar said **"This is very fruitful training, and I would like to do the nursery business as well as onion farming after this training. For that I would take some land on lease and would do my business."**

Sundar made a commitment to give technical support to his community, cooperative and Self-Help Group members. He has had training in nursery management, learning about growing food, including preparing organic manure. He has also had training in livestock management, especially in raising goats and pigs.

He has taken a loan from his cooperative and started a provision store. From this he earns his livelihood and can pay back instalments of his

loan. Thank you for helping make this possible for Sundar and others like him.

Without your prayer support, people affected by leprosy may not experience God's love through the care they receive. Your amazing Christian heart is essential to God's healing ministry toward people affected by leprosy.

Please pray for the ongoing transformation of the lives of people like Sundar through the IMPACT project.

Pray for Sundar who is also trained as a community champion of the IMPACT project.

Pray for the Self-Help Group and the cooperative as they bring about improvements for themselves and for their community. Pray for the sustainability of these new practices. Pray for the positive environmental effect of this training for the whole community.

Sundar is very thankful for the IMPACT project. He expresses immense gratitude towards the donors who have made this project possible. Sundar hopes the project will continue to help vulnerable people establish themselves.

Thank you for not giving up on people in great need. Your generous heart and prayers make all of this possible. God bless you.

The Integrated Mobilisation of People for Active Community Transformation (IMPACT) Project works with communities in 3 Terai districts: Rupandehi, Kapilbastu and Parasi. The project supports people to recover from leprosy, obtain sustainable livelihoods and increase their inclusion in society.

36 self-help groups (SHGs) supporting over 700 people have been established under the IMPACT project. Through SHGs, people with leprosy, disability and other marginalised people learn important finance, organisation and business skills that will help them to develop sustainable livelihoods. The IMPACT project has supported the SHGs to not only learn the necessary skills to develop small businesses but have supported groups with small loans and have taught groups to save amongst themselves.

In addition, the IMPACT project also provides health education on water and sanitation hygiene, COVID-19 awareness, and education on gender-based violence to the SHGs and their communities.



Floods in Nepal continue to devastate lives and communities.



The Integrated Mobilisation of People for Active Community Transformation (IMPACT) Project is supported by the Australian Government through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP).