

25th May, 2015 - Newsletter No. 7, "Earthquake in Nepal"

First impressions of Kathmandu – collecting our shipment of relief supplies

25th April, 2015 – exactly one month ago – was a day that changed everything.

Large regions of Nepal were devastated and thousands of people lost their lives. Millions of people have lost their homes.

Now I have been back again in my Nepalese homeland for 2 days. During the last few days before my flight a great deal of preparation work had to be done. And whilst I was doing all the shopping in the town centre in Düsseldorf, I noticed the wonderfully decorated shop windows, the flowers, and exclusive goods of the best quality. I had never really been aware of them before. Normally I rush past these places, because they simply do not interest me. The trees with their luscious green leaves, in the lush green grass, were also a true treat to the eyes and soul. Once again I really consciously absorbed all the beautiful things that surround us here in Germany. I hope that in this way I shall be able to keep my inner balance. Had these two worlds that I live in already been so extremely contrary before the disaster happened?

This time my arrival in Nepal was quite different. I was already able to see numerous brightly coloured plastic tarpaulins out of the plane window during our approach before landing in Kathmandu. At the first onset, the huge devastation of the houses could not be fully recognised from outside. It was a strange feeling setting my feet on the ground, knowing that it had been quaking so extremely here just a short while ago.

At the entry point everything ran swifter than ever before. There were perhaps 10 to 15 "foreigners" applying for a visa. I did not have to wait very long for my luggage and 30 minutes after landing I was thus able to push my trolley to the airport building. Temba was already waiting for me and it was great to see each other again.

The difference in temperature to that in Germany was also great! 35°C and 85% humidity awaited me. The typical chaotic traffic in Kathmandu also greeted me with blaring horns. On the way from the airport to Lazimpat (district in the north of Kathmandu) I was unable to see any devastated houses or places. A wall of the former King's Palace Narayanhiti had collapsed but otherwise there still seemed to be a lot intact. According to the reports in the media, 90% of Kathmandu was said to have been destroyed. My first impression was somewhat different.

Apparently there have already been several aftershocks since my arrival, with a magnitude of 4 and 5. However, I did not notice anything, nor do I now.

Nevertheless, in the remote areas a large number of landslides have been triggered by renewed aftershocks. In the Annapurna region between Beni and Tatopani, a landslide dammed the Kaligandaki River. But after 6 hours, the fear of a huge flood wave could be ruled out.

On Saturday, we set off to collect the 126 plastic tarpaulins that we had bought from Metro, and the 8 containers filled with tents, blankets, sleeping bags and insulation mats, from Sigrid and Walter. What a good thing that Temba had already applied for, and been issued the documents for the duty-free collection at the Social Welfare

Council (Registration Office for national and international relief organisations in Nepal) a few days beforehand.

Despite presenting all the papers, there were a few officers and helpers who wanted to earn something on the side through our cargo dispatch of relief supplies. But they did not manage this with Temba.

After 3 hours of running backwards and forwards, and identifying the deliveries, we were at last able to drive into the cargo customs clearance with our small lorry. In next to no time we had loaded everything. And our documents were then examined at another control point. At last - we had managed everything.

In order to put our goods in a safe place in temporary storage we were allowed to use the storage facility/office rooms of our transport company, Milan Transport. Since these rooms are occupied day and night we were sure that our relief goods would not "run away".

After this operation we set off to Thamel (tourist area) to enjoy our well-earned dinner. The roads looked really deserted, but in this area there were hardly any houses that had collapsed, or suffered any destruction or damage. The typical souvenir and trekking shops and restaurants are open. In the Gaia Restaurant we were able to enjoy our food and drink, as always. We quickly managed to find a taxi for the return drive back to Lazimpat.

Today, we also set off with Kedar from the German Nepalese Help Association (Deutsch-Nepalische Hilfsgemeinschaft (DNH)), to collect the other relief deliveries from Air Cargo Kathmandu. We wanted to take receipt of the 170 tarpaulins donated by the Würth company. Since the collection had run so quickly yesterday, we were already looking forward to the relief goods being quickly cleared and handed over. But since we are in Nepal, this was unfortunately not the case. In the morning we were sent, with all our documents, from the Air Cargo building to the International Airport. Apparently the cargo delivery from Turkish Airways was still supposed to be there. Even after searching for 6 hours, comparing, and identifying everything, we were unable to find the delivery. Either the goods had already been at the Air Cargo Centre in the morning, or whilst we were on our way to the International Airport they were being brought from there to the Air Cargo Centre. We shall make a second attempt early tomorrow morning and I hope we shall be able to collect the tarpaulins.

We should like to take this opportunity now of thanking Jörg most sincerely for his commitment and all the organization work. We are extremely happy about the donation of the tarpaulins, including the transport from Germany to Kathmandu. A big thank you also goes to the GNHA for the formal handling. 70 tarpaulins are to be used for setting up provisional "classrooms" for the schools that are supported by the GNHA. We shall be taking 100 tarpaulins with us to the Langtang region.

We would also like to mention that we received a generous donation at our Nepal Bazaar, which Helga had collected within her circle of friends and acquaintances. Georg, Monika, Martina, Markus and Mario are also collecting donations for our projects within their circle of friends. Beatrix and Peter could even be seen on the MDR TV Talkshow, "Unter uns" (Between you and me). You are able to watch the programme under the following link after the first 15 minutes:

http://www.mdr.de/mediathek/fernsehen/video272936_boxIndex-3_zc-196590ba_zs-2d7967f4.html

At this point we should like to thank everyone who has given us such tremendous support. Our thanks go to everyone, of course, and also to the many others who are supporting us in the background. It is simply fantastic and absolutely overwhelming. OUR HEARTFELT THANKS!!

We are now in the process of uploading a few videos (e.g. Kyangjin Gompa after the earthquake, helicopter evacuation in Kyangjin Gompa and distribution of aid in Gre), which our team members have made available to us, in our YouTube channel "BergSherpa".

<https://www.youtube.com/user/BergSherpa>

If everything runs as planned, we would like to set off on Wednesday to the Langtang region. We sincerely hope that the tarpaulin collection and the monsoon rain will not cause our plans to fall through.

Namaste

Temba & Sabine