

Journey to Tipling

Sister Lucy George is a member of a small community of Good Shepherd Sisters living and working in Pokhara, western Nepal. Hearing of the lack of proper health care facilities in Tipling, a remote community further to the north, she organized an outreach health clinic to take medical assistance to the people. This is her story.....

Tipling is located in the Dhading District, Nepal. It is a high mountainous area near to the Himalayas. The Jesuit priests have been working in Tipling as missionaries for the last 4 years. As a result many people were converted to the Catholic faith. There are no proper health care facilities in this area. There is only one health centre with hardly any medicine for a large number of people. Some of them have to walk for a day to reach this centre. When villagers become seriously ill, members of the community collect money and send them to Kathmandu by helicopter. It costs around 60 to 70 thousand rupees one way. Sometimes they carry the sick person in a basket and take them to hospital, and this takes nearly a week. Hearing this I felt the need to reach out to these poor people with some medical assistance.



After a long preparation, we started our journey from Pokhara to Tipling on 26th September 2014. We would need to walk for nearly two and a half days to reach there. Our group included Santosh our staff member, Sister Anjali and seven of our home children from Tipling. A few days before we left I had some pain in both my knees, so I was apprehensive about

completing the journey. Luckily we got a local vehicle from Dhading which carried us for 5 hours and reduced our walk a bit. But it was a painful, adventurous and noisy journey. We could hear the screaming of children as they were hitting one another's heads while the vehicle was moving on an uneven, slippery and rocky road.



Anyway we reached Lawang by 2.30pm and started walking towards our destination. Fr. Nobert SJ and 3 of the parishioners from Tipling came to help us carry the medicines and other luggage.



In the beginning I was very enthusiastic as the road was straight but as I started to climb the hills I gradually realized the challenges we faced. At once the children came to my rescue. They gifted me with a strong stick to support myself and keep moving. Thereafter I walked with three legs and climbed the hills very easily.



That day we walked till 8.30pm and spent the rest of the night in a guest house which was an open hall for all travellers. Anybody could stay there by paying 100 rupees for dinner and lodging. They gave some dal curry and rice for dinner. Since I was very hungry it tasted very delicious and if I missed it I would have to wait for 24 hours for another meal. After dinner we massaged our legs with mustard oil which was specially prepared by Sister Jyoti for our journey. It soothed our swollen legs.



The following day we woke up at 5am and started walking. That day's walk was worse than the previous day. I couldn't find any level road. All throughout the day we climbed up many mountains and came down. Some of them were very steep. Before climbing each mountain I looked up to gauge the height and wondered how to reach at the top!!! Reading my mind Fr. Nobert advised me not to look up but to look down and walk. That had a miraculous effect. I stopped looking up and walked silently taking one step at a time and crossed over many mountains very easily. Some paths were very narrow and dangerous to walk due to landslides. We were planning to reach Tipling by midnight.



At 9.30 pm we realized that we were going in a wrong direction and our guides couldn't identify the way properly at that stage of the night. Moreover we couldn't go further due to leeches as they started to feast on us. So we went back to the closest village to spend the night. The next day we walked for three hours and reached Tipling by 8.30 am. That day we took a well deserved rest. We were given accommodation in a vacant house near the parish.



On 29th September, 2014 we started our health camps. Two priests who are there in the mission station and parish youth were very helpful in organizing and carrying the medicine to various villages. We walked 2 to 3 hours every day. We had 5 days of camp and treated 600 patients.

People are very simple and hard working. We could see the whole family, including the children, in the field from morning till evening, cultivating and taking care of the cattle. As a result many of the children do not go to school or they drop out of school. According to the season, they eat either potatoes or corn for their main meal. Only on special occasions they eat rice or something else.

Child marriage is prevalent in Tipling, and due to this the health status of the women is very poor. In most of the houses we found a minimum of 4 to 5 children below the age of 12. It looks like each village has enough children to run a school!



We also took the opportunity to visit the Catholic families and to promote vocations. We had a meeting with the girls who are from 8th to 10th standard. We explained to them the Good Shepherd charism and mission and distributed the vocation leaflets. We hope our shepherd God will inspire some of them to follow his footsteps.



We started our return journey on 5th October. It was an enriching experience for me. I could experience the guidance and protection of God through different people throughout my journey, especially Dili Rani a young girl from the village who was with us day and night from the time we reached there until we left the place. I am grateful to God for enabling me to reach out to the unreachable.

Sr Lucy George