

# Heather's update - September 2009

Greetings from Varanasi.

I hope that you are all well and have had a good summer. It's weird living in a country that is hot most of the year. You can almost guarantee what the weather will be like and don't have to have a plan B. The monsoon season has now finished but there has not been much rain.



Since I last wrote, I have been busy with the usual activities and language classes. I've been to the village many times for children's programmes and also health care. So many children have boils, impetigo, wounds and other skin conditions. It shocked me to see their skin in such a state. We cleaned their wounds but I felt like I was fighting a losing battle with the lack of hygiene, heat, sweat, dust, dirt, dirty water and other factors that contributed to these conditions. Please keep them in your prayers.

I still regularly attend the Leprosy Hospital. Please continue to pray for them. Our staff have been visiting the local Leprosy Hospital for over 3 years. In the beginning it was quite hard, but now they are quite open to us coming to do wound dressings and teams sharing the gospel. They invite us over for celebrations and meals. We also help with food and medicines. Through caring for their physical needs we are able to show them that God loves them. One day Aran, my medical co-worker, felt he should call the man in charge 'Papa'. The leader was so moved to be called this as not even his own son calls him 'Papa' (his family had cast him out when he developed leprosy). He responded by calling Aran, 'son'. A change happened then. We have become like family.



Some of the people at the Leprosy Hospital. The man in charge is in orange.

I've been to the Hindi school a few times for health checks. Last month I attended the children's monthly birthday party. It was fun. We are currently using the Hindi school building for our Sunday school as the previous location, the area under the big tree in the village, has now been turned into a field. We have to bring the children over a busy road and a railway track to get to the school. This is not ideal, especially if the children decide to come over by themselves. Please pray that we find somewhere to continue in the village.



Please pray for the health of our staff and their families. Lots of people have been sick lately with fevers, colds, flu and pneumonia. We are not sure if it is swine flu. Officially Varanasi does not have swine flu, but then again, it doesn't have any testing facility for it either!!! Rebecca, the 2 year old daughter of Ravi and Vijaya, was rushed into hospital last Wednesday night after she became unresponsive suddenly. She was cold and had turned blue, but praise God, she revived. She was treated for pneumonia and febrile convulsions, and was discharged from hospital on Monday.

I went to the children's hospital to visit her on Sunday. The patient in the bed in the room across from her was ↓



I don't know what is more surprising, the fact of having worked in the NHS and there is an empty bed, or the fact that the bed has been empty long enough for this mother to deliver her egg!! The cleaners clean around them. The other patients in the room look after them.

On the 19<sup>th</sup> of September I leave Varanasi and head up to Guwahati (in Assam State) to attend the Introduction to Primary Healthcare Course. I will be going as student / staff (they have asked me to do some teaching). The 3 month lecture phase finishes on December 18<sup>th</sup>. I plan to fly to Delhi that day, then onwards to Glasgow and should be back in Scotland on December 19<sup>th</sup>. I will try and get down to Wales at some point. I am supposed to be back in India by 3<sup>rd</sup> January to start my 3 month outreach, but due to the holiday season I doubt my visa will be processed in time. So, I am looking to return to India sometime after the 10<sup>th</sup> January. The first half of my outreach *may* be in Delhi. It is strange to think that I am leaving Varanasi in a few weeks and may not return till February/March. I will really miss everyone here.

Thank you again for all your prayers and support. You are all a part of this ministry. I will try and keep in regular contact over the next few months, but I hear the internet connection in Guwahati is not that reliable.

God bless  
Lots of love  
Heather

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