



## Economy

One of the world's poorest countries, with around one-third of the people living below the poverty line, on less than \$1US/day. Subsistence agriculture occupies up to 90% of the population and accounts for 38% of GDP. Geographical isolation, difficult terrain, poor infrastructure destroyed or damaged by Maoist conflict, rapid deforestation, environmental damage and susceptibility to natural disasters all weigh against development. Recovery will be difficult so long as current political instability remains. Despite the difficult situation, Nepal has made notable progress in the last 50 years since it was effectively an isolated medieval kingdom. Great potential for hydroelectric power and tourism.

**HDI Rank** 144<sup>st</sup>/182. **Public debt** 50% of GDP. **Income/person** \$444 (1% of USA).

## Politics

The ancient and hereditary monarchy ended in 2008 as Nepal became a multiparty constitutional republic. Never ruled by colonial powers, Nepal's political isolation from the outside world ended in 1951. In 1962, the king assumed executive power in a government system with no political parties. The 1990s and 2000s were characterized by painful and disruptive civil unrest provoked mostly by Maoist rebels. A Maoist-dominated government took office in 2008 after two years of wrangling with other parties, but the Prime Minister resigned in 2010. The government remains insolvent, and constitutional reform has been delayed further. The integration of the 20,000-strong Maoist army into the national army is a very complicated and sensitive issue. Also, many groups – such as the Dalits, Madheshis (in the lowland Terai) and the indigenous Tibetan-Himalayan groups comprising the Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities – have grievances with their exclusion from the political process. Addressing the issues of impoverished rural communities and resisting perceived “foreign interference” dominates political rhetoric.

## Religion

Once the world's only Hindu Kingdom, Nepal is now officially a secular democracy. Foreign religious NGOs can operate freely as long as they do not proselytize. Hindu fundamentalism has increased in recent years.

Religions	Pop %	Population	Ann Gr
Hindu	75.01	22,392,497	1.7%
Buddhist	16.00	4,776,429	1.9%
Muslim	4.40	1,313,518	4.8%
Christian	2.85	850,801	5.3%
Other	0.90	268,674	-1.4%
Non-religious	0.75	223,895	6.5%
Sikh	0.06	17,912	1.9%
Baha'i	0.03	8,956	1.9%

# Nepal

## Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal

Asia

## Geography

**Area** 147,181 sq km. A mountainous Himalayan state between China (Tibet) and India. It contains 8 of the 10 highest mountain peaks in the world.

Population	Ann Gr	Density
2010	29,852,682	1.86%
2020	35,268,659	1.65%
2030	40,646,415	1.34%

**Capital** Kathmandu 1,037,073. The city doubled in size during the 1990s. **Urbanites** 18%. **Pop under 15 yrs** 37%. **Life expectancy** 66.3 yrs.

## Peoples

As many as 100 ethnic groups, consisting of over 300 peoples, sub-groups and castes. Caste is often as important a distinction as ethnicity in this strongly Hindu culture.

**South Asian** 78.0%. 285 peoples/castes. Mainly in south and east.

**Hindi** 36.1%. 84 groups. Brahman 13.3%; Tharu 6.7%; Yadava 4.0%; Teli 1.3%; Chamar 1.2%.

**Nepali-Pahari** 25.3%. 35 groups. Chhetri 15.8%; Kami 4.0%; Darjee 1.7%; Thakuri 1.5%; Sarki 1.4%.

**Bengali** 7.9%. 49 groups. Shaikh 3.0%; Koiri 1.1%. **Newar** 5.5%.

**Rajasthan** 1.2%. 24 groups.

**Urdu Muslim** 0.9%. 51 groups.

**Other South Asian** 1.1%.

**Tibetan-Himalayan** 21.5%. 38 peoples mainly in north and west.

**South Himalayan peoples** 20.7%. 19 groups. Magar 7.2%; Tamang 5.6%; Rai 2.8%; Gurung 2.4%; Limbu 1.7%; Sherpa/Bhotia 0.7%.

**Tibetan peoples** 0.9%. 17 peoples.

**Other** 0.5%. Other Asian and Western ethnicities.

**Literacy** 48.6%. **Official language** Nepali. **All languages** 127. **Languages with Scriptures** 8Bi 17NT 20por.

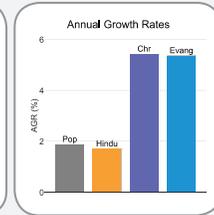
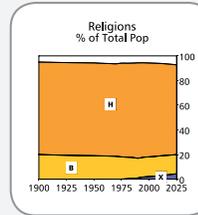
The boundary between Hinduism and Buddhism is often difficult to distinguish.

Christians	Denoms	Pop %	Affiliates	Ann Gr
Protestant	23	0.44	132,000	5.1%
Independent	63	2.41	721,000	5.3%
Catholic	1	0.02	7,000	2.0%
Marginal	6	0.02	5,000	6.1%
<i>Doubly affiliated</i>		<i>-0.04</i>	<i>-13,000</i>	<i>0.0%</i>

Churches	MegaBloc	Congs	Members	Affiliates
Indep Nepali groups	I	2,000	124,000	198,400
House church networks	I	1,200	60,000	108,000
Christ groups (EHC)	I	3,367	50,500	101,000
Nat Chs Fell of N (NCFN)	I	380	33,182	73,000
Assemblies of God	P	382	12,613	42,000
Calvary Churches	I	480	15,833	38,000
Believers Church	I	330	13,200	33,000
Evang Chr Fell of N	I	180	12,917	31,000
Other India-related chs	I	243	12,174	28,000
Agape Fellowship	I	60	9,600	24,000
Nepal Bapt Chr Council	P	115	14,000	24,000
Evang Alliance Ch of N	I	60	7,500	18,750

Emmanuel Church Assoc	I	66	8,000	14,400
Assemblies (El Shaddai)	I	77	6,500	13,000
Bethel Church	I	47	5,200	13,000
Other denominations[34]		793	53,362	91,819
<b>Total Christians[93]</b>		<b>9,780</b>	<b>438,581</b>	<b>851,369</b>

TransBloc	Pop %	Population	Ann Gr
<b>Evangelicals</b>			
Evangelicals	2.8	837,596	5.3%
<b>Renewalists</b>			
Charismatics	2.0	608,197	5.2%
Pentecostals	0.6	169,866	4.7%



## Answers to Prayer

- 1 A new Nepal began in 2008** with the absolute power of the Hindu monarchy yielding to pro-democracy protests. Sweeping political change, begun in the 1950s, has climaxed in the last couple of years. This is an answer to the specific prayers of almost all Christians in Nepal who have interceded for their nation, and it paves the way for new freedoms and opportunities for Christian ministry.
- 2 Sustained church growth over decades** and through many trials gives Nepali Christianity a strong foundation. The first church was formed in 1952 with 29 Christians. At the height of persecution in 1990, there were 200,000 believers. In 2010 there are as many as 850,000 Christ-followers in nearly 10,000 groups. This was achieved by willingness to suffer for the gospel, profound prayerfulness and a Nepali-driven long-term commitment to evangelism and church planting. Now, new social and transformational ministries are growing on the back of this foundation.
- 3 There is a church planted** in every one of the 75 districts of Nepal, and there are at least some believers in almost every people and caste group.
- 4 Praise God for increased unity** within Christianity and for greater cooperation between Christianity and other faiths. The Nepal Christian Society was formed in 1996 as a coordinating fellowship for Evangelicals, the National Council of Churches of Nepal in 1999 for social and national development and Christian Efforts for Peace, Justice, and Reconciliation (CEPJAR) was formed in 2003. CEPJAR later joined a multi-faith peacebuilding process with representatives of all other faiths.

## Challenges for Prayer

- 1 Nepal enjoys a window of opportunity** with the new government and new constitution, but positive strides must be made quickly before disillusionment or entrenchment occurs. With deep divisions still affecting society – various religious groups, deeply opposed political parties – real progress must be made if the new government is to have a true chance of success. The Maoist former rebels, still listed in some other nations as a terrorist organization, hold the keys to the finely balanced government. Pray for wisdom, courage and grace on the part of Nepal's leaders, and that they might put personal or party differences aside and work together to fight the immense economic problems still gripping the country.

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**2** **The many human rights abuses** that occurred during the conflict have not been righted. Justice has not been administered for the bereaved of the 13,000 killed during the conflict – many of them extra-judicially. Not one person has been prosecuted, and the Maoist leadership – now holding Nepal’s reigns of power – would suffer greatly were their excesses and evil deeds brought to light. Unless justice is done and seen to be done, violence will continue to be justified as a means to a political end. Pray for justice and righteousness to be upheld in this country where they have for so long been withheld.

**3** **Socio-economic needs** remain a huge challenge in this beautiful but troubled land.

a) **Poverty and unemployment** keep Nepal from progressing. Fully 47% are underemployed (working less than 40% of their available working hours). Pray for creative and sustainable means of gainful employment.

b) **Young people** comprise two-thirds of Nepal’s population, which is one of the world’s youngest and fastest growing. Most live in rural areas, deprived of education and opportunity. Illiteracy is widespread. Young people are vulnerable to economic exploitation, sex trafficking, drug abuse, HIV/AIDS and radicalization (political or religious). Pray for changes here that offer young people hope and a future.

c) **Despite becoming a secular democracy**, Nepal’s social structures remain dominated by Hinduism. This perpetuates the caste system, which oppresses many, most notably Dalits who make up as much as 14% of the population. Caste discrimination is technically illegal but ubiquitous nonetheless. Converts from Hinduism to Christ usually become outcasts as well. Pray for the shattering of this unjust system.

**4** **Freedom of religion is guaranteed by law**, but only in limited measures. Non-Hindus cannot proselytize. If they do, they risk fines, imprisonment and, in the case of expatriates, expulsion. Despite this law, the Church in Nepal grows because of courageous evangelism. Hindu fundamentalists as well as Maoists often single out Christians; their non-violent nature and connections to the West make them soft targets. Pray for perseverance for believers, that neither laws of man nor threats of violence deter them from sharing the gospel.

**5** **The Church in Nepal continues to flourish** amid pressure as a remarkable indigenous movement; the large majority of Nepali Christians worship and fellowship in thoroughly indigenous structures and networks. The Church is growing in numbers, diversity and maturity, but prayer is still needed regarding:

a) **The public image of Christianity** in Nepal is as a foreign, mostly Western, intrusion that undermines traditional culture and society and appeals only to lower castes. Despite this, Nepal’s Christians are, with increasing confidence, defending their rights and building a fully Nepali, fully Christian identity. Pray for discernment, courage and faithfulness for those seeking to overturn two generations of negative opinion.

b) **Denominationalism**. Many foreign-based denominations as well as indigenous networks of churches are established. Pray that the Church may be kept from division and error. Pray specifically for the Nepal Christian Society (NCS) as it seeks to provide a forum for prayer, sharing, unity and cooperative ministries.

c) **Persecution** remains, though less acute than in the past. It can come from the religious majority but also socially from within families and communities. Pray for grace and perseverance for believers, and that Christians may be accepted and appreciated for their contribution to the country’s well being. Pray also for the efforts of NCS and others seeking to secure the legal and religious rights of Christians regarding arbitrary arrests, evangelism, property, discrimination and other maltreatments.

d) **Partnership between Nepali churches and foreign agencies**. As the Nepali Church matures, it increasingly takes stake in ministry and mission to its own country. Foreign input, especially through finance, often generates tension or dependency and continues to be an issue. But the national Church is flourishing, and indigenous Christian NGOs are mushrooming around the country.

**6** **The next generation of Nepali Christians** must build on the good foundation laid by their elders. Pray for:

a) **Effective transfer of leadership** to a second generation. Along with this challenge is the task of

properly discipling both new believers and the large number of second-generation Christians.

- b) **Leadership training** is possibly the most urgent need in the Church. For years, no formal training was available. Now, there are over 15 Bible colleges and seminaries. Many churches and agencies offer short-term and modular training courses. The majority are linked with the Association of Theological Educators, Nepal. **GFA** has three centres from which 100 Nepali evangelist-missionaries graduate annually. DAI just started Nepal's first accredited Masters in Christian Leadership. The Institute for TEE in Nepal has over 3,000 students in half of Nepal's districts. Despite these developments, there is a huge training shortfall. As the Church grows, the need for leadership-training structures and models becomes increasingly desperate. Pray for a multiplication of feasible, effective methods of ministry training.
- c) **Provision of pastors** amid gripping poverty is a constant challenge. Since Nepal was never colonized by foreign powers and the Church is mostly outside of international fraternal structures, external financial support can be very low, and the temptation to extract income from foreign donors is great. Pray that leaders would learn to function as tentmakers, and that congregations would learn to support their pastors as much as they are able.
- d) **Holistic ministry.** The Church stands at the crux of spiritual and physical needs and is well positioned to minister to both. The time has come for the Church to engage with the many needs in Nepali society. Pray for a paradigm shift in which Christians include social transformation as a key part of evangelization. Nepali Christian NGOs increasingly address holistic needs.

**7** **Christian ministry must address a host of challenges** under the government's watchful eye. High unemployment, illiteracy, low levels of development, environmental degradation and dependence on foreign aid are all being addressed by Christians. Pray for practical, sustainable and innovative ways to address the following issues:

- a) **Child labour.** An estimated 2.6 million children work as child labourers; 70% of them are forced to work 10-hour days or longer. The government seeks to eliminate by 2014 the worst forms of child labour, such as mining and rag picking. Pray for the success of this programme. Education and subsequent development are impossible until Nepal gets children out of the workplace and into school.
- b) **Trafficking of Nepali girls** for the Indian, Middle Eastern and domestic sex trade. There are up to 300,000 girls in India alone (mainly in Mumbai), where they are terribly abused; possibly 90% of returnees are HIV-positive. AIDS has rapidly spread through the rest of society as a result, and there is no coherent national plan for AIDS prevention. Poor and lower-caste girls are the primary targets of this evil trade, and usually as unwilling victims. Nepali Christians reach and rescue some of these unfortunates in Nepal and in Mumbai.
- c) **Health and disease.** Over 20% of hospitals and clinics, and nearly all of leprosy-control work, are Christian-run (TLM, United Mission to Nepal, International Nepal Fellowship, others). Nepal suffers high rates of infant mortality and of deaths during childbirth. Community health is vital; over 80% of diseases are caused by a lack of basic sanitation, and 60% of the 50,000 child deaths each year are caused by malnutrition.

**8** **Pray for the less reached;** around 55% of the population are unevangelized, and a staggering 309 peoples/castes are unreached. Pray for:

- a) **The influential high-caste Hill Brahmin and Chhetri** (Rajput). They represent 30.9% of the population and play a dominant role in shaping modern Nepal. While those in Nepal are more responsive than those in India, pride, fear and longstanding spiritual investments in Hinduism keep most in bondage, unable to openly proclaim Christ as Lord.
- b) **The Awadhi and Bhojpuri speakers and Maithili of the Tarai lowlands** on the Indian border. Few have heard the gospel, and even fewer have responded. The Tharu are more animist than Hindu; many small churches are springing up among them.
- c) **The Mountain peoples,** almost entirely Tibetan-related. Most are lamaistic Buddhists living in isolated mountain communities, such as the Loba people of Mustang. Most groups are small in number, and Christians are few. Among the famous Sherpa of the Everest region, where there is not a single church, there are perhaps 50 believers. Climbing for Christ seeks to reach them with the gospel.
- d) **Tibetan refugees** – long unreached, with no legal status and numbering 20,000. There is now a steady trickle seeking the Lord and a handful of congregations among them. Evangelistic

International Ministries focuses on them.

- e) **The increased number of Muslims.** Most are Bengali, Kashmiri or Urdu-speaking farmers and unskilled labourers. Eastern Mennonite Missions seeks to develop a network to share Christ with them.
- f) **University students.** Over 150,000 students are in higher education – in three universities on 150 campuses. YWAM's seven bases include Kathmandu Centre with 65 on staff. The IFES-linked student movement, University Christian Students Fellowship of Nepal (NBCBS), has 62 groups with 2,100 students served by 10 workers. Campus Crusade for Christ is also highly active with 18 campus ministry teams.

**9 Holistic ministry by foreign agencies** powerfully demonstrates the love of Christ in practical and spiritual ways. The restrictive conditions for entry require authenticity and integrity by these NGOs. Their supportive role is invaluable – in hospitals, dispensaries, leprosy treatment, agriculture, education and assisting society's most vulnerable. The United Mission to Nepal is the largest body, representing 24 agencies from 15 countries. The International Nepal Fellowship has 31 expatriate workers as well as over 300 Nepali staff, mainly in the west of Nepal. India also contributes largely to Christian work, with at least 12 Indian evangelical agencies with GFA the largest. Pray for vision, wisdom and humble faithful service for all working in Nepal.

**10 The Nepali diaspora** is officially two million, but the number of Nepalis illegally working abroad (by choice and increasingly by compulsion) may exceed 10 million. Nearly every family in Nepal has at least one member working away from home. Most go to India, but Nepalis can be found in over 100 nations. Nepalis abroad are more open to the gospel than are those at home. Numerous churches are established among Nepali migrants, even in restricted-access nations. Pray that creative ways might be found to share the good news with these scattered peoples.

- a) **In India, Sikkim state is 75% Nepali,** and Darjeeling district in West Bengal is 60% Nepali. Nepali churches in India, some established since the early 1900s, have sent their first missionaries to Nepal; pray for growth, release from stagnation and greater involvement in cross-cultural outreach.
- b) **Many Nepalis serve as Gurkha soldiers** in the British, Brunei and Indian armies. Others serve as security guards throughout Asia. Becoming a Gurkha is a great honour and a way to financial security for oneself and one's family; competition is fierce. There are some Christian groups working among these soldiers. Pray for effective outreach to them.
- c) **Other Asian nations.** The Persian Gulf nations host 87% of official Nepali migrant workers. Women working here are particularly vulnerable to exploitation and unfair treatment. Pray for outreach to them; they can easily get lost in the crowd of migrant labourers in the Gulf. Malaysia has seen rapid Christian growth among Nepali migrant workers, with more than 50 Nepali congregations now operating there.

**11 Other help ministries** for which prayer is requested:

- a) **Bible translation.** William Carey first translated the NT into Nepali in 1821. Eight of Nepal's 80 languages have a complete translation; an estimated 44 have further translation needs, but low literacy hampers the effectiveness of all translations. Pray for the translation teams. Pray also for literacy programmes that will uplift the populace in so many ways, in addition to Bible reading.
- b) **The Bible Society** registered officially, after years of difficulties in the area. They published a Simple Nepali Bible and the OT in Tibetan. Pray for effective networking with other distribution channels such as The Bible League, Gideons and others.
- c) **Christian literature** can now be freely printed and distributed without censorship. Import difficulties have encouraged local publishing and distribution. Pray for The Bible Society bookshop in Kathmandu and for OM and GFA publishing house and literature distribution teams. EHC has reached 270,000 homes with over a half million pieces of literature, matching the distribution numbers of the Gideons. Good News Publishers and Derek Prince Ministries have also translated and distributed large numbers of books. Pray that these growing ministries might have a long-lasting effect on Nepal's evangelization and discipling.
- d) **Audio Bibles** are popular for the millions of non-readers. GRN produced recordings in over 100 of the known 145 languages and dialects of Nepal, to enthusiastic response. FCBH and the Audio Bible are two such audio resources having an impact among Nepalis.

- e) **Bible correspondence courses** remain a key but under-resourced means of reaching people. More than 290,000 Nepalis have enrolled in a course designed for people from a Hindu background. Much of this is organized by Nepal Gospel Outreach Center (NGOC) and Institute for TEE in Nepal. Many churches have been planted as a result of conversions to Christ from these courses.
- f) **Christian radio.** GFA Radio broadcasts the gospel in over 12 languages on stations across the country, including the government's Radio Nepal. TWR, FEBA and AWR broadcast in several languages as well, and Women of Hope broadcasts several hours a week. Reception, publicity and availability of radios are obvious challenges in this mountainous and poor nation.
- g) **Christian films.** The Indian-produced film *Daya Sagar* on the life of Jesus is popular among non-Christians. Probohdh Group made several Christian films that have powerfully touched the lives of many. Several other Christian film-production ministries are growing in ministry and output capacity. The JESUS film has been widely used, and about 25% of the population have viewed it. It is now available in 19 languages. Pray for the safety of the teams deployed in the mountain regions to show these films and share the gospel.