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Editor's note

At the end of November just past, CEDAR's staff members went to Nepal to visit several partners. During the trip, apart from showing our care for our partners, we also monitored the progress of the projects, hoping that the projects would have better results. In 'Focus' of this issue, is the sharing from our staff about the new project 'Prevention of Trafficking and Exploitation of Women and Girls in the Adult Entertainment Sector' in Nepal and the situation of the beneficiaries. In 'Back to the Bible', we can think about the relationship between climate change and developing countries and how we in rich areas can lend a helping hand from the Book of Jeremiah. In 'Learn a little More', Shreya, a Nepalese teenager, tells us how families in that country suffer from climate change. Natural disasters and poverty have caused people in many developing countries, such as Nepal, to suffer, and children are a more vulnerable group. Therefore, this year CEDAR's 'Red Packet Campaign' uses the theme of 'Children Living in Disasters' to call on everyone to care for and help them.

Focus

The AES Girls We Encountered in Nepal

Written by Ness Ma (Communications Officer)

My colleagues and I had a trip to Nepal. We met our partner (Samari Utthan Sewa) in the southern part of the country for a new project, 'Prevention of Trafficking and Exploitation of Women and Girls in the Adult Entertainment Sector'. We would like to know the progress of the newly launched project on-site. Unexpectedly, one of the stops turned out to be a visit to a 'nightclub'.

We were overwhelmed by the raucous singing and accompaniment in the nightclub that we had to shout to hear each other. Almost every customer around us was puffing out clouds of smoke. They walked up to the stage and swayed their bodies to the music. As for the dancers on the stage, they were all engaged in powerful dance moves. When a song ended, the singers and the dancers became stone-faced and went backstage to rest. When the music was back, they went back to the stage with smiles.

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BEA 015-185-68-00931-7 SSA
BOC 012-581-2-020114-7
DBS 016-478-001364162

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Their big bright smile is clearly commercial to me. It may sound as if I have some assumptions about the industry, but if you have also listened to the sharing of this group of AES (Adult Entertainment Sector) practitioners, the Nepalese girls, you might probably think likewise.

From knowing this group of AES girls to being invited by them to their nightclub show, all happened in one afternoon. On that day, in a hotel, my colleagues and I interviewed some of the AES girls who were invited by our partner. They are the beneficiaries of the project 'Prevention of Trafficking and Exploitation of Women and Girls in the Adult Entertainment Sector' which was launched by CEDAR and our partner in August 2022.

I did not know much about the industry, so I kept asking our partner questions on the way to the interview. According to our partner, adult entertainment venues are not sex trade venues but places for songs and dance performances. Once the sex trade is involved, it is illegal. Therefore, the girls we met indeed work in a legitimate nightclub.



Tears were behind these joyful girls.

The Exploited Minority

Maybe you would ask if they have a legitimate job; what is the role of CEDAR? The eight girls joining our interview shared with us how they had always been exploited.

1. Appalling pay: They work from 6:00 pm to 12:00 am (or even 2:00 am) every day. They dance and sing but only earn up to 10,000 Nepalese rupees (about HK\$600) per month. Lunch in the urban area costs about 500 Nepalese rupees (about HK\$30). In other words, even for the workers with the highest pay among them, their income can barely meet their expenses. Because of the meagre income, some girls chose to provide sexual services.

2. No safety net: there were dancers among the girls we met. However, there were no first aid kits in the nightclub for possible dance injuries. Once injured or sick, they do not want to seek medical attention because it may exhaust half of their monthly income (a girl wore a mask during the interview, and she kept coughing throughout the night when she danced. It was heart-breaking.)

3. Unfair treatment: One of the girls told us that her boss had attempted to rape her. Even though there was supporting CCTV footage, the police still accepted the explanation of the boss: as he was drunk, he mistook her for his sister, and that rape attempt was a family hug. Meanwhile, the girls also have to face illegal deductions from their wages by their employers (or even refuse to pay wages). These girls would

have no access to any kind of legal assistance.

Why do the girls have to endure unfair treatment and put on a commercial welcoming smile for guests every day but not leave or switch to other industries? This is all about their family background. They told us that they were all born in rural families. Their parents inflicted early marriage on them. The only way to resist this coercive culture was to leave home, and now they are homeless. And because of the destitution that runs in the family, they do not have the opportunity to receive an education, so they also lack the skills to earn a living.

The Dalits

Those girls grew up in rural families. Suppose they were also the Dalits (also known as 'the untouchable', at the bottom of the caste system). According to a survey by our partner, 80% of the employees in the adult entertainment sector are Dalits. Although the caste system in Nepal has already been abolished, the locals are still stuck in a discriminative mindset against the Dalits. For example, even if they are sexually assaulted or beaten to death by non-Dalits, the cases are usually dismissed. The Dalits can only take low-paid, labour-intensive jobs, such as cleaners. If a Dalit runs a small business, no one would be willing to invest in the business. In general, the Dalits have fewer educational and career opportunities than the non-Dalits. Among the eight girls we interviewed that day, six were from Dalit families. We were sorry to hear one girl's story of being rejected by her husband's non-Dalit family in inter-caste marriage.

While it may be true that some girls decided to stay because they love performing on stage and earning a living, many were forced to work in the sector to make ends meet. At the end of the interview, some girls expressed their wish to leave the industry, but there were no other ways of living. Some said they wanted to stay but hoped to work with dignity.

Vision

In response to the needs of the girls in the adult entertainment sector, CEDAR and our local partner cooperate to improve their living and working environment with the following interventions: establishing a network of workers, advocating workers' rights to employers, and providing vocational training. In this ministry, we envision a safe working environment for the girls and, at the same time, freedom to leave the industry. We also strive to protect the rights of the Dalits, such that they receive fair treatment at the workplace.

This project was initiated in August, and a network of workers in the adult entertainment sector has already been established. However, it is still unclear whether they can voice their rights against their employers. Because of their sharing, some of the people working in the sector think they are making trouble in their community.

When we left the nightclub, I ruminated over the tears of those girls and their smiles on the stage which I witnessed in the afternoon. Supposedly, the nightclub is a place for entertainment, but my colleagues and I were upset all along. After the talk in the afternoon, we already felt like friends with those girls, and they even invited us to their show. How could they enjoy life while being forced to welcome guests with a commercial smile every day? They were hiding away their tears in front of us. I pray that the road ahead for those girls

will be less challenging and that they will be able to live with dignity and joy in the near future.



After the meeting, CEDAR's staff, our local partner (the third on the left in the back row) and the girls took pictures together. We were like friends. They even invited us to visit their nightclub in the evening.

Back to the Bible

Poor Countries Suffer the Worst Consequences of Climate Crisis

Written by Samuel Chiu

Scripture: Jeremiah 4:1-3

Among the environmental news from 2019 to 2020, the forest fires in the United States, Australia and Europe were the most striking. The scope of the fires was unprecedentedly widespread. The frightening scenes had been widely covered by the media. Severe forest fires in Siberia in northern Asia have continued, and forest fires have occurred along the borders of Lebanon, Syria, and Turkey. Although the relevant disasters and long-term impacts are far more serious and far-reaching than those in the United States and Australia, there were only sporadic reports that completely failed to attract the great attention they deserved. Similarly, in 2020, the wind disasters in the southern United States or the rare floods in the border areas between France and Italy, are far more severe than the disasters in the Philippines, Bangladesh or Mozambique in East Africa, have attracted more public attention. However, climate injustice is not simply a gap in news attention.

In fact, the consequences of increasingly severe disasters - from droughts, famines, floods and forest fires - due to climate change are more devastating for people in poor countries than for those in developed countries. This is not only due to the geographical distribution of disasters, which until now have been more concentrated over a wide area near the equator, but also to the fact that poorer countries lack infrastructure, emergency resources, and rescue and support systems. People in developed areas are more likely to be covered by insurance, and even if the supply and prices of food and essential commodities are temporarily affected, they have spare capacity and financial resources to cope. Poorer countries lack such protection. In fact, the injustice caused by the gap between the rich and the poor is also present in developed countries.

This time, the scripture describes a terrible drought that even water is not available in Judah, and the situation is so miserable. I wonder if we are in a relatively well-protected

and secure area, where water can be diverted from neighbouring regions in times of shortage and where we can choose from a variety of sources of food supply without worry. Can we understand the situation of the poor who have no choice at all in the event of a disaster?

Let's Think

As we look at disasters and human suffering, how can we reflect on our personal responsibility and that of our communities, cities and countries? What can we do to provide support in times of suffering?



Editor's note: You can download more devotional articles on the poor and the church in our app (Chinese only).
Download the app now: <https://link.cedarfund.org/app-247>

Learn a Little More

Words from a Youth of Nepal

Written by Ness Ma (Communications Officer)

In November 2022, the 27th session of the Conference of the Parties of the UNFCCC(COP27) took place in Egypt. Shreya KC, a 24-year-old youth from Nepal, spoke at the conference, 'we constantly live in fear of being drowned(by the ice water).' Why did she say that? What the climate conference has to do with Nepal's glaciers?

In fact, the impact of climate change has not only resulted in such phenomena as storm surges and sea level rise, which we often hear of, but it also led to the threat of flooding in Nepal, located in the Himalayas. The water that floods the country's land is not the sea but the melting ice water flowing off the snow-capped mountains.

Ice water flows to the lakes below the mountain, and the increase in lake water causes flooding and landslides, threatening villages and residents in the valleys below. In fact, the Nepalese government carried out a drainage project to address the threat. The project was launched in 2016 and took two years to drain out over 5 million cubic meters of lake water (equivalent to about 2,000 Hong Kong standard swimming pools). The project cost about HK\$57 million or about 12% of the country's GDP, which is a heavy burden for Nepal.

In addition to the economic burden on the country, climate change also causes adverse effects on domestic households. Shreya KC spoke at the conference that the output value of domestic agriculture had significantly decreased due to natural disasters. Agriculture is the main occupation in Nepal (more than 70%), and climate change has greatly impacted farming. The Chinese website of The New York Times reported in

June 2022 that climate change brought challenges to South Asian countries, and in mentioning Nepal, it pointed out that the increase in forest fires has resulted in deserted farmlands in the mountains and the agriculture at the foot of the mountains also faced the threat of floods, destroying the arable land. These natural disasters are becoming more frequent due to climate change and have long-lasting effects on farming families.

When farming becomes unsustainable and cannot support families' living, financial hardship leads to tension among family members. Other than financial aid, the people also need to develop new ways of survival. For this, CEDAR has included income-generating activities in its poverty alleviation work to help the villagers develop different ways of making money. It also establishes women's groups and networks to empower local women.

In summary, climate change affects not only the weather but also the national economy, people's lives and interpersonal relationships. Most of the causes of climate change have nothing to do with Nepal. At the conference, Shreya KC presented a study to show that the top 10% wealthiest population in the world produces nearly 50% of global carbon emissions, while the poorest 50% only accounts for 7% of emissions. For this, she asked: 'Who will shoulder the responsibility for the loss of our livelihood and our lives?'

As we are living in Hong Kong, one of the wealthy regions in the world, we should start thinking about how to shoulder the responsibility for the losses suffered by other countries' people.

2022/2023 Operating Statements

In the period of Jul 2022 - Nov 2022

Income	HK\$ 6,485,690
Donations	5,630,419
Grants	-
Appeal for Relief	669,621
Other Income	185,650

Expenditure	HK\$ 7,910,223
Development Projects - Asia	3,197,105
- Middle East	-
- China & HK	838,151
- Africa	866,054
Disaster Relief & Rehabilitation Projects	1,220,152
Partnership Development	1,029,389
Administration	759,372

Account profit and loss /(Deficit) HK\$ (1,424,533)

The budget for 22-23 is HK\$26,156,000. Please support our ministry with prayers and actions. Other income included the last tranche of Employment Support Scheme subsidies amounted to HK\$103,600.

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Children Living in Disasters

Your support can help ensure that they have a joyful childhood.

Floods, droughts, heatwaves... as adults struggle with different natural disasters, we can imagine just how much children suffer physically, mentally and emotionally when faced with such catastrophes.



Please help children and their families affected by disaster

Take part in **Red Packet Campaign**

Donate Red Packet Money:

Put 'Lucky' stickers on the red packets received during the festival, and donate them to the poor as signs of blessings.

Share CEDAR's Red Packets:

Fill in the response form inside 'CEDAR's Red Packet' to make a donation, and share 'CEDAR's Red Packet' with their friends and relatives to encourage them to participate in the donation.

Invite CEDAR to share:

We can share the stories of children living in disasters in your church/ school to let more people know their needs.

Participate or Enquire

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