



# Support Nepal UK

## Welfare Centre

## November 2022

### ABOUT the Welfare Centre

For many years our charity's founder, Navin Gurung had a great desire to build a Welfare Centre in his great grandfather's village, Dandaswara. Dandaswara is situated in West Nepal in Syanja region. It will be the place where health care professionals stay whilst working in the surrounding villages.. The Welfare Centre is now complete, having been under construction since 2017. The grand opening and inauguration took place on 6 November 2022.



### The Big Event

The big day arrived, 6 November 2022. Full of excitement and anticipation, after a long drive, we arrived a short walk from the village. We were greeted warmly by villager musicians who led us along the road playing their Nepalese music. It was a thrilling experience to walk behind them and up to the green area (also used as a helicopter landing pad in emergencies) where banners, posters, seating and a lectern were laid out to accommodate the guest speakers and all of us, about 50 in total.



On arrival in this luscious, well kept area, we were introduced to many of the village elders and residents. We were given welcome scarves and beautiful golden marigold garlands. We were then seated and awaited the formal part of the event. This consisted of introduction of the key people in the village who supported the building of the Welfare Centre, Arun Chaudhary from the Arun Chaudhary Foundation and Polly Scott, President of Support Nepal UK.

Mr Prakash Gurung introduced and welcomed us. Navin Gurung delivered his speech in English and he was followed by Mr Kaji Gurung speaking in Nepalese and addressing



the villagers. Mr Mahendra Gurung who is Navin's uncle, introduced the cultural group, dancers who had travelled from Kathmandu to entertain us. Navin spoke again and described how he has been helped and supported with his vision by many people. It is a fitting tribute to his great grandfather who lived in Dandaswara. He introduced Polly Scott, President of Support Nepal UK. She spoke about how



privileged we are to be associated with Navin's vision and the building of the Welfare Centre. She described Navin's drive, enthusiasm and commitment to achieving his dream. Mr Arun Chaudhary, Arun Chaudhary Foundation, was introduced and he talked about his commitment to the project and to making a contribution to the improvement of the lives of the villagers from Dandaswara and the surrounding communities of Kolma, Kaolee and Bahakot.

After the formalities, the ladies of the village served us a delicious lunch of Nepalese bread, chickpeas and potato. The Nepalese bread is a speciality made from rice flour and milk and cooked similarly to doughnuts.

During this time the local children arrived and were organised into orderly lines in age order. The



children approached the tables which were laden with writing materials, books, jotters, toys and confectionery and each child chose a selection of items. They were clearly pleased and happily compared their gifts together. It was a pleasure for us to witness such enthusiasm.

After this revelry, we all proceeded to the



Welfare Centre, a short walk from the green. It was the moment we had all been waiting for, the Inauguration, the result of five years of fund raising and Navin's sheer determination. He had liaised with all the tradespeople, making sure that even the smallest of details were completed to the highest standard.

Outside the gates to the Welfare Centre, Arun and Polly cut the ribbon. This was a truly special moment. Then we all proceeded up the winding steps to the Welfare Centre. What had been



observed as a dot in the distance became a magnificent site in front of us. We all spent time looking around the building, looking at the rooms, shower rooms and the upstairs sleeping areas. We were introduced to the building foreman, carpenter and various other people who were involved in the construction of the Welfare Centre. It is difficult to appreciate just how hard all the workers toiled, carrying materials and equipment uphill for some distance to the site. An example of this, we

were told, is how all the workers carried the stones up to the site for the completion of the outside patio under enormous time constraints. It is truly a magnificent job. All stops were pulled to make sure it was finished for our visit.

The final and most emotional part of the formalities was the installation and raising of the Nepalese and British flags on the flagpoles. This was accompanied by respective national anthems. The sight of the two flags flapping together against the stunning views of the Anapurna Mountain range of the Himalayas, was symbolic, moving and simply beautiful.

With that the formalities were completed and the rest of the time was spent enjoying the whole facility. While the food and drink was prepared in the kitchen, situated to the side of the building, we went upstairs to choose a bed for the night as we were all staying over! The beds are arranged dormitory style and there is plenty of room between each. The area is made comfortable with soft linoleum on the floor. The area accommodates about 20 people.

To keep the evening chill to a minimum, two fires were lit and they enhanced the convivial atmosphere. It was great to have the opportunity to speak with the local people who were involved in the physical effort of building the Welfare Centre and seeing it through to completion.

After we finished eating we were entertained by the dancers who had also danced earlier. They were magnificent performers and danced traditional and modern dances to perfection. They invited us on stage so we all had a chance to show what we could do!

The evening finished around 11pm, as the temperature had reduced considerably. We retired for a cosy night in the dormitory!

