

Your Gurkha Welfare Trust newsletter
Samachara means 'news' in Nepali

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“You were there
when I needed
you most, I can
only give you
blessings and
‘dhanyabad’
(thank you).”

BRAVEST OF THE BRAVE

At 88 years-old Deukumari is full of the steely resolve you would expect from a woman who was married to a Gurkha for many years.

She lives with her daughter Kamala and their family, on the outskirts of Pokhara; Nepal's second largest city. Her mobility is good considering her age, and she has been putting the walking stick we gave her recently to very good use.

A word from our Director



Getting your money to where it's needed most

In this, our first newsletter of 2021, I am pleased to share with you such positive news stories of our work in Nepal and the impact your support is having.

As I am sure you appreciate, we continue to operate in challenging

times, both here in the UK and on the ground in Nepal. However, sharing these stories is an essential facet of our work and one of the things which makes our organisation so unique: when you donate to The Gurkha Welfare Trust we show you exactly where your money goes.

As well as the stories contained within this newsletter, you might also like to have a look at our recently published Annual Review and Annual Report & Accounts which give an excellent oversight on where your money goes and the difference we're making to people's lives thanks to your support.

Shrewd financial management by our Board of Trustees has meant that once again, last year, the money we spent raising funds was almost

entirely covered by income from our investments (89%). On top of that, for every £1 we spent on fundraising in the UK last year we returned £6.22 – an amazing return thanks to your unwavering generosity.

You can read the full documents on our website at: www.gwt.org.uk/annualreview

Jai Gurkha!

Al Howard
Director
The Gurkha Welfare Trust



PENSION POWER

For over 50 years, we have been paying a Welfare Pension to Gurkha veterans and widows across Nepal.

The Welfare Pension and our package of Financial Aid is a lifeline for thousands of Gurkha veterans, their widows, and families across Nepal.



FRONT PAGE CONT...

Deukumari was married to Tambahadur Gurung who was one of over 100,000 Gurkhas who fought alongside Britain in World War Two before being released by the Army during downsizing when the War finished in 1946.

SPECIAL PERMISSION TO VISIT

In July this year, with Nepal in the throes of a national lockdown due to COVID-19 our teams were given special permission to travel to ensure that our vulnerable veterans and widows, like Deukumari, were still able to receive health checkups and any medication they may require.

Three years ago Deukumari had a fall near her home. It left her immobile but thanks to generous donations from our supporters in the UK we were able to pay for her to have hip replacement surgery at a nearby hospital. She has been astounded not just by the results, but by the process itself:

"There's a steel plate inside and I had consulted the surgeon if it could be taken out but he told me that because of my age I may not be able to wake up again when they put me to sleep (laughing), so I said fine leave it there."

We visited her in July to ensure she was keeping well during the pandemic and to provide her with some pain relief medication.

With no pension from her husband's time in the Army, when he passed away in 1984 we began to pay Deukumari a Welfare Pension – enough to survive, in recognition of the debt of honour we owe to her and her family and for the sacrifices they made.

"After my husband's death, I had moved to Pokhara from my village in Syangja with two of my daughters to make a living. I used to work in a wool factory. What I earned was

barely enough to support three of us including my two daughters' education.

"The Gurkha Welfare Trust understood my need and started giving me the Welfare Pension. The rate was enough to cover the cost of my rented accommodation and a bit more"

These days the Pension we pay her is approx. £90 per month and is transferred directly into her bank account, saving her the need to visit our offices to collect it as she did previously. This is now the case for most of the almost 4,000 recipients of the Pension.

"The money is enough to buy food for me. I can also spend some for different ceremonies like pujas."

A PRAYER FOR YOU

During our visit with Deukumari, a deeply religious woman, she took pride in showing us her Japamala, a string of prayer beads commonly used in Hinduism and Buddhism, similar to Rosary beads.

"These were given to me by my granddaughter. She thought I could use it to pray during the day – something to keep me occupied. It has 108 beads including the 'guru' bead (the red strand/flower). Starting at the guru bead, I pull each bead while reciting the 'mantra' (prayer). When I come to the guru bead again, I will have recited the mantra 108 times. That's how you keep track."

We asked Deukumari if there was anything at all she would like to say to those who support The Gurkha Welfare Trust. As she pulled at the beads she said:

"You have been there since when I needed you the most, I can only give you blessings and 'dhanyabad' (thank you)."

Gifting thermal flasks during winter

Winters in Nepal can be bitterly cold, with the temperatures often plummeting to a chilly sub-zero. We help Gurkha veterans and widows prepare each year and gift a Winter Allowance.

Throughout winter, our Pensioner Support Teams delivered thermal flasks to Gurkha veterans and widows.

In the past we have distributed blankets, warm jackets and hats. This year, thermal flasks were requested by many. A hot drink (that stays hot) during the winter months is a luxury that many of them haven't had since their Army days. The flasks hold 1.8 litres of liquid and are made of double wall stainless steel. They're insulated, durable and will keep their drinks warm for hours.

So far, we have delivered over 3000 flasks to Gurkha veterans and widows. They are delighted with their new gifts, although it took some explaining – some had never seen a flask before! One widow needed us to demonstrate how to use the flask and describe the benefits. We managed to convince her in the end.

The elderly pensioners can now keep their water, milk and tea warmer for longer. They no longer need to light firewood every time they need to heat liquid, saving them from using all of their firewood and fuel.



101 year-old Manbahadur Gurung is the oldest veteran to receive a flask so far



Light at the end of the tunnel

KHAGI'S STORY

Last year we told you the story of Gurkha widow Khagi Thapa, who fell victim to 2019's devastating monsoon flooding and landslides.

When we met her last February, she spoke of how the memories still haunt her:

"It had been raining since 4pm the previous day. The rain was so heavy the villagers were saying they had not seen the rains like this in 90 years. I decided to sleep at my cousin's house that night."

"The following morning, I went out and saw that my house had slid about a hundred metres down from where it was. My heart sunk, I didn't know what to do. I cried a lot."

Khagi lost everything that night. But the hardship didn't stop there. Following her husband's death the previous year, the widow had leant on her extended family for support. On the night of the landslide, tragedy

was to strike their family again.

"We lost my brother-in-law that day. The landslide had swept away part of the cowshed in her house, and fearing it would affect their house people started fleeing and during that commotion, he suffered a heart attack and died."



LOCKDOWN DELAYS

We were desperate to get Khagi into her new home as soon as we possibly could. However, when the Government of Nepal implemented lockdown rules, we put the safety of both Khagi and our staff first to protect them from COVID-19.

Hundreds of our projects, including Khagi's home, were halted at the end of March. Lockdown restrictions were particularly difficult for Khagi's house as it is in a remote area of Nepal's Gulmi District, making it near-impossible to transport construction materials.

LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL

Despite the delay in construction, Khagi has been able to start her new life in her earthquake-resilient home. We were delighted to deliver the news to Khagi that we were able to move her into her new home.

"I am very happy. The house is very nice."

"I can't keep continuing staying at other's houses. I can live the rest of my life peacefully there."

"I can only say thank you."



A better future for the children of Nepal

ONE SCHOOL AT A TIME

AT SHREE SARASWATI BALKALYAN SCHOOL WE BUILT:

- Two brand new blocks with eight classrooms in each
- A new gender-separate toilet block with six cubicles and menstrual hygiene facilities
- An incinerator
- A compound wall to keep the younger children safe
- 100 new desks and chairs, bookshelves, 16 new computers, new carpets throughout and other soft furnishings
- A refurb of the GWT-built library and canteen
- Redecoration of the Early Childhood Development (ECD) block

In November 2019, our staff began work at Shree Saraswati Balkalyan Secondary School. Located about one hours' drive from our nearest Welfare Centre in Damak, the school was familiar to the team, with the Trust having built a small extension there back in 2015.

The school was originally established in 1980/81 with classes up to grade three. At present, the school has classes up to grade 12, with over 870 students attending regularly. Unfortunately the school's original buildings had not held up well following the earthquakes in 2015 and subsequent monsoon seasons.

OUR DEDICATED STAFF

The project was overseen by experienced Gurkha Welfare Trust Project Supervisor Mohan Sharma Rupakheti. The task sent him far from home, and throughout construction

he lived nearby, sharing a room with the school's storekeeper:

"The project site is 970kms away from home and it is a 28-hour non-stop journey by public vehicle. There was always a challenge that I would not be able to get home immediately if there was an emergency in the family. But I knew I had to perform my duty."

"During the ten months of the construction period, I was only able to visit my family once, in February, as my second child was born. I stayed at home for two weeks and then returned back to site."

THE CHALLENGE OF COVID-19

The build was finally completed by the end of August 2020, slightly behind the target date of June.

"The main challenge of the build was our time frame itself [...] We did have a schedule in place, but midway, the COVID pandemic arrived."

"As a result, our construction project was totally suspended from 22 Mar to 11 May. My team of skilled labourers were brought from different parts of Nepal and we had to arrange for them to get home as quick as possible (the lockdown was effective from 24 Mar)."

"Construction finally resumed from 12 May but I had to arrange labourers locally and they were slightly slower. I was finally able to extract some of the skilled labourers that had gone home and we arranged for a team of 20/25 people to stay on site together, cook and eat together in order to prevent ourselves the risk of exposure to COVID."

"We were able to complete the

construction and finally handover the building to the School Management Committee on 20 August 2020."

Mohan's dedication and passion for his work was recognised this year by our Chairman, Lieutenant General Richard Wardlaw OBE, receiving a commendation for his efforts at our annual conference.

THE IMPACT OF A NEW SCHOOL

The impact of the new school building to the children who go there and the local community will be huge. Premkumar Rai is a former student at the school who now works there full-time:

"I think the most important aspect of education is 'environment' and 'motivation'. The new building will provide excellent environment. These classrooms will motivate students

to attend classes and study. This will help the overall development of students. Social, mental, cultural and educational development. This will help them achieve it."

To the GWT, the generous donors from UK and all the veterans, I would like to offer them a handful of flowers of respect that never wither."

WHAT'S NEXT FOR MOHAN?

For Mohan, the end of the project is bitter-sweet. Though he gets to return home, he always finds it hard to leave his projects:

"I was very happy as I was involved, literally, in the construction process from the start to finish, every step of the way. For me, the feeling was like raising/nurturing your daughter with much love and care; and letting her go from you when she is grown and

gets married."

I will miss the locality and the school staff as I stayed there so long and got to know so many people."

That said, he's pleased the next one is a little closer to home:

"I have now been deployed to the GWT Welfare Centre in Bheri to look after the 100 earthquake-resilient home builds this year. This time, the workplace is very near to my home. In fact, it is just a 5 min ride on a motorcycle!"



OUR YEAR IN NUMBERS (19/20)

The following extract is taken from this year’s Annual Review, summarising some of our successes over the last financial year. The document is now available in print (please request via our office) and online at www.gwt.org.uk/annualreview



Over **4,400** Gurkha veterans and widows received a pension worth **11,500 Nepali Rupees** per month



The team treated **84,000** medical cases at our clinics and at home by mobile staff



110 new homes for Gurkha veterans and widows were built



We built **3** major schools, worked on **6** extensions and refurbished **32**

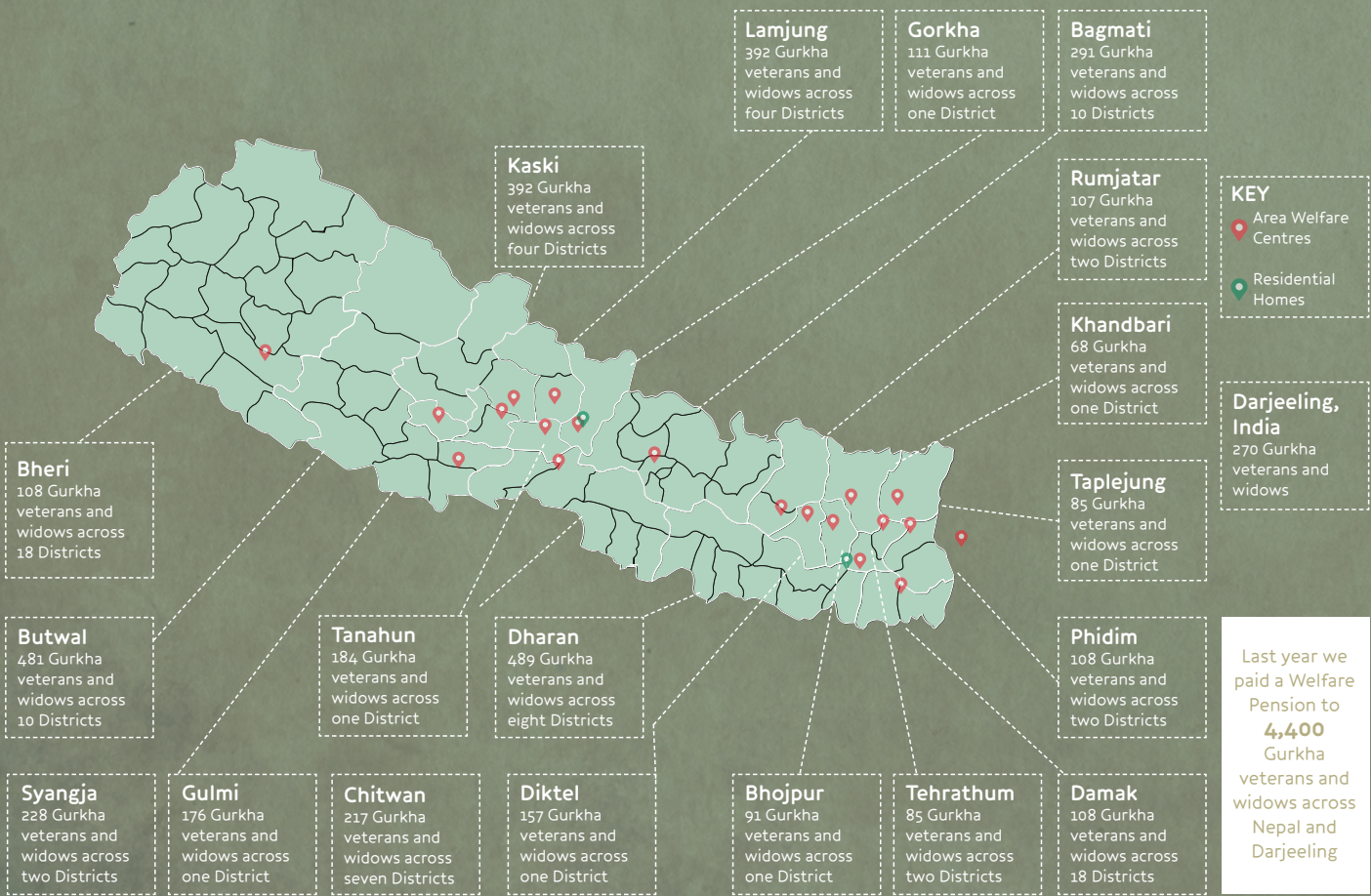


We installed **109** water projects, benefitting **37,500** people across **6,500** households



Our **2** Residential Homes housed and provided round-the-clock care for **43** residents

WHERE DO OUR WELFARE PENSIONERS LIVE?



Resident profile: Durga Lal Pun

THE SEVENTH IN OUR SERIES OF GUEST PROFILES FROM OUR TWO RESIDENTIAL HOMES IN NEPAL

“Whatever happened has happened and what’s gone is gone.”

95 year-old World War Two veteran Durga Lal Pun was born in a small village in Nepal’s Surkhet District; one of eight siblings.

Sadly his father passed away when he was just two years old. His Mother didn’t remarry and had to look after eight children alone.

Durga Lal enlisted in the East India Company in 1943 when he was 18 and fought against the Japanese and Germans in Burma, Najari khola and Kabul. He was the Section Commander and was in charge of 10 soldiers. On one occasion, he was drinking tea in a cave with some of his fellow soldiers when suddenly, enemy soldiers surrounded them and attacked. They were stuck in that cave for two whole weeks with only black tea and one biscuit a day each to survive. Eventually, the Brigade came to their rescue, bombing the area.

On one occasion, when he was part of a machine gun crew, he slipped and dropped a part of the gun. He couldn’t find the part as it was dark. He was later disciplined for this and though he explained how it happened, he was demoted by the Company Commander. Durga Lal became demoralised by this action and resigned from the Army.

Like many of his fellow soldiers, Durga Lal returned to Nepal upon leaving the Army to get married and have children.

Durga Lal moved to our Residential Home in Pokhara in 2017 after his wife passed away. His children visit him there and he sometimes goes to stay with them.

He is extremely happy in the Residential Home and is remarkably healthy for his age. Although his vision is poor now, he is still very skilled in making colourful “Namlo” (the head strap on a Doko basket) and he can both read and write.

The Doko Challenge

The ultimate in running challenges

Based on the traditional Gurkha recruitment race set in the Himalayas, this is a 5km run with a twist and sees participants choose from three weights for their Doko baskets – 5kg, 10kg, and 15kg, all of which are provided.

The Challenge is to complete the course carrying your chosen weighted Doko basket in a time of 46 minutes. Whether you beat the time or not, a deliciously chilled beer and well-earned medal will be waiting for you at the finish line.

Registration is £25 per person and we ask that you raise a minimum of £150 to help Gurkha veterans, their families and communities in Nepal.

Places are limited.
Register now www.gwt.org.uk/doko or speak to Georgia Oliver on 01722 343 112

THE DOKO CHALLENGE NORTH
Greystoke Castle, Penrith
23 MAY 2021

THE DOKO CHALLENGE SOUTH
Wimbledon Common, London
6 JUNE 2021

MORE RUNS AND CHALLENGES IN 2021

VITALITY BIG HALF

25 APRIL 2021

Come together this year and join us at one of London's most popular Half Marathons

HACKNEY HALF MARATHON

16 MAY 2021

Don't miss out on one of the fastest growing half marathons!

BRIGHTON MARATHON WEEKEND

10-12 SEPTEMBER 2021

This course runs along the spectacular Brighton seafront, taking in all the picturesque views.

TRAILWALKER

24-26 SEPTEMBER 2021

100km. 30 hours. A team of four.
Are you Trailwalker strong?

CARDIFF HALF MARATHON

3 OCTOBER 2021

Set in the heart of the capital of Wales, this popular Half Marathon takes you on a grand tour of Cardiff's landmarks and historic buildings.

For the latest information on the events above please visit www.gwt.org.uk/challenges

Elsewhere at GWT



ENTER OUR RAFFLE TO WIN TEA FOR TWO WITH JOANNA LUMLEY

One lucky winner and a guest will enjoy an Afternoon Tea for two at the world-famous Ritz hotel in London, with GWT Vice-Patron Joanna Lumley in March 2021.

Joanna has a long association with the Gurkhas and Nepal, stemming from her father's service as an officer in 6th Gurkha Rifles and has been our Vice-Patron since 2009.

Tickets cost £5 each
Enter now at: www.gwt.org.uk/raffle

THE GURKHA WELFARE TRUST/ BREMONT SPECIAL EDITION

We have partnered with Bremont Watches to create an exclusive and limited-edition timepiece. The Gurkha Welfare Trust/Bremont collaboration is available now for our supporters to reserve.

Based on the Broadsword Bronze timepieces, part of their Armed Forces Collection, the elegant piece features subtle crossed kukris on the face and The Gurkha Welfare Trust logo etched on the back.

More details here: www.gwt.org.uk/bremont

To reserve yours today contact Piers Lawson on 01722 343 102 or pierslawson@gwt.org.uk



THANK YOU JOYCE

Mrs Joyce Roberts was a longstanding supporter of The Gurkha Welfare Trust. She sadly passed away in 2019 and in her Will she very generously left us a gift. She had felt strongly that the Gurkhas' contribution to the British Army should be recognised and that Gurkha veterans and their families should be supported and able to live with dignity. Two of Joyce's own sons served for years in the Territorial Army.

Joyce's kindness has helped us in our work to provide financial, medical and development aid to proud Gurkha veterans, their families and communities.

If you would like to find out how a gift in your Will could help us in the same way, please contact Carolyn Derryman, Legacy Officer on 01722 343 110 or carolynderryman@gwt.org.uk

From the Brigade: Anti-poaching training in Zambia



Gurkhas from The Royal Gurkha Rifles have trained Zambian rangers in anti-poaching skills and tactics – the first UK deployment of its kind in the country.

THE 30-STRONG UNIT SPENT SIX WEEKS IN ZAMBIA

With a large elephant population and rare and endangered species in Zambia, there has been an increase in

the number of groups selling illegal animal products, a trade thought to be worth £17bn a year internationally.

The Gurkhas supported the Zambian National Anti-Poaching Task Force with coaching in interception tracking tactics, evidence gathering, leadership development and medic response training.

The rangers were also shown how to use lightweight patrol packs and first aid kits so they can work further away

from their bases, to cover isolated areas where poachers can operate.

SKILLS EXCHANGE

As well as bestowing advice, the soldiers were able to learn new skills themselves.

Minister for the Armed Forces James Heapey said:

“The UK is committed to tackling the illegal wildlife trade, which had a destabilising impact on communities across Zambia, and the wider continent.

“These deployments are also a valuable learning opportunity for the soldiers, operating in challenging terrain and learning bush-craft from the rangers.”

Major James Marden, Officer Commanding, said:

“This was a unique operation, unlike anything I have done before, enhanced by it being the first British counter-poaching training support mission in Zambia. It was hugely rewarding working with such a diverse team.”

From the archives: The Malayan Emergency

The Malayan Emergency took place from 1948 to 1960. British and Gurkha troops were deployed extensively in Malaya throughout the period to combat the insurgent threat, drawing on the skills which the Gurkhas had perfected during jungle fighting in Burma in the Second World War.

Gurkhas were committed from the outset of the Emergency and were continually on active service throughout the next twelve years, continuing to win awards for bravery in the field of combat.

Find out more: thegurkhamuseum.co.uk

