



BRANNGO Chairman's Letter – February 2023

Dear BRANNGO members,

As I'm writing this I can see out of the window that it is snowing in a rather half-hearted sort of way, so we are not entirely out of winter yet – but the cherry trees are blossoming too which is a cheering sign that spring is definitely on the way!

There were no formal BRANNGO events in February, but on 4th March there was an excellent webinar presentation by 'Shine Together'. This organisation brings together those with experience of caring for others in Nepal to help young people in the sector build self-confidence and form relationships and connections, and to explore social issues and advocate change. Dikshya, Junu and Birendra told us about the remarkable and inspiring work they and their colleagues are doing which has provided many valuable insights, such as the importance of kinship relationships when dealing with care issues, the invidious nature of volunteering in care homes, and the vital necessity to tackle education, health and social care in children's lives holistically. I strongly commend the presentation to you which BRANNGO members can view on the BRANNGO website [here](#).

On the 16th February several of you were able to join me at the Britain-Nepal Society Annual Supper in London. It was great to see you there and I hope you, like me, found it a good opportunity to network with like-minded people. The BNS Chairman, Andy Sparkes, was kind enough to mention some upcoming BRANNGO events in his speech which was a great help in getting the message out to a wider audience.

On the 21st February I met Sarah Mackaness, the Chair of our Education Working Group, and Rachel Magowan, our webmaster, for lunch at the India Club. It was great to meet them both face-to-face for a change, but I mention it because the three of us agreed it might be good to try and arrange similar gatherings for BRANNGO members in future. I've experienced informal lunches of this sort run by other organisations and they are generally very well-supported, not least because the India Club is in a very convenient location and serves delicious Indian food that is excellent value for money. For BRANNGO it will be yet another way in which we can usefully exchange ideas and information. We'll discuss this proposal in the BRANNGO Committee Meeting on 31st March and if we get the thumbs-up will set something up later in the year.

On the 23rd February I attended the Nepal Army Day celebrations at the Nepalese Embassy in London. It was a good opportunity to meet some old Gurkha friends and I also had an intriguing discussion with the Chinese Military Attaché, Senior Colonel Mao (no relation, apparently....). It was interesting because he was born and brought up in Hong Kong rather than mainland China. I complimented him on his almost accentless English. "Oh yes" he said "I studied international relations at Cambridge". One wonders how many of the British Embassy staff in Beijing speak Chinese as fluently or studied at a Chinese university.

I have previously mentioned that I have been in touch with the Nepal Federatie Nederland (NFN), an organisation very similar to BRANNGO. I shall be going to their conference in Holland in late May, but in the interim I have been talking to Jeroen van den Bergh, their representative in Nepal. He runs a team of about 10 people who carry out programmes on behalf of the Nepal Trust, NFN's sister organisation. Jeroen spoke a lot of sense about how NGOs should best collaborate and communicate when it comes to delivering charitable aid in Nepal, and the NFN/Nepal Trust set-up in many respects mirrors what BRANNGO is trying to achieve in partnership with the Britain-Nepal Society in setting up a charitable trust. It is early days yet, but I can see tremendous potential both to learn from our Dutch colleagues' extensive experience (they have been working in Nepal since the 1990s) and also possibly to partner with them. Watch this space!

Looking forward to the BRANNGO programme for the rest of the year, the Education Working Group is meeting on 17th April and on the 20th April we have our conference at the Nepalese Embassy in London. Plans for the latter are coming together well, and I'm delighted that since I last updated you Mr Kul Acharya, the President of the Non-Residential Nepalis organisation, has kindly agreed to come and talk to us. We also now have speakers from The Glacier Trust and the Himalayan Trust who will contribute a lot to the environmental theme of the event. As well as having a slew of very interesting speakers it should be an excellent opportunity to network and as numbers are limited I would encourage you to book your places as soon as possible by emailing Carol at treasurer@branngo.org.uk.

On the 21st April the Health Working Group is meeting, and this will be followed by a presentation by Dr Sunil Shah, an oral and maxillofacial surgeon who is also a Trustee of Making Faces and the Cranial Facial Centre (CFC). Full details are on the website. I do hope those of you with an interest in medical matters in Nepal will join us.

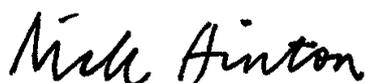
The Health and Education groups are working with Dr Sara Parker to plan a combined event at John Moore University, Liverpool, on 6th and 7th July 2023. The working title is 'Celebrate & Share Nepal' and it will be free-to-attend. The organisers are currently inviting people to register an interest in attending in order to assess numbers and also expressions of interest in particular topics to be covered. More information will be published in due course but if you are interested in going or have ideas about the agenda please let Carol know (email above) so she can collate the information and share it with the organisers.

We remain on track for our next London conference on 10th October. It is some way in the future and details will follow later, but please make sure you have the date in your diary if you think you would like to attend. It will be a more interactive event than the April event at the Embassy, and judging by feedback from the similar event in October last year it will be particularly valuable to those running NGOs.

I am also very pleased to say that following a discussion with Embassy staff in Kathmandu we now have a date, 22nd November, for the BRANNGO conference there. I am delighted that we have it off the ground and most grateful to Her Excellency the Ambassador, Nicola Pollitt, for giving it the green light. (She will have moved on to a new role by then, but is confident her successor will be equally supportive). A few of you have already said that you intend to be in Nepal for it and we already have a few local attendees lined up, but do please let me know if you have not already expressed an interest or would like to suggest a local organisation or individual who should be invited.

Arya's latest synopsis of news from Nepal is being sent out with this letter of mine. Do please remember that in addition to helping to promote BRANNGO, Arya is there to assist BRANNGO members, so if you have issues or questions about matters Nepalese that you think she might be able to help with please get in touch with her (aryashree.a@gmail.com).

Kind regards,



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