

MANGALA DEVI UPDATE

February 2017: It was exciting to be heading back to Mangala Devi. Last time we visited, while the setting sun was providing a stunning backdrop, it was in stark contrast to the ground in front of us. A patch of earth had been cleared of debris and rows of benches set up. Open to the elements, it was hard to imagine how the teacher of this little school had managed to keep classes going for nearly a year.



The immediate task was to build temporary shelter from the monsoon rains. Thankfully it was completed just in time - the 2016 monsoon was brutal. Our build team tried several times, to get to Mangaladevi during that time but the road was impassable, not even the four-wheel drive could climb through the mud. In late October, the road finally became navigable and thanks to a generous donation from the staff at Pantheon we were able to start building in mid-November.

So, in February 2017, we returned with [John Hall and his team from Leadership Challenges](#). There's a new road for the final 2 hours of the journey - it's much wider and safer but every bit as bumpy and dusty as the old road. As we drove through the final river and started the climb everything looked much the same as it had the year before. That was until we reached Likhu and we could see across to the next ridge, still a pile of rubble but amongst the rubble stood a new blue building. It came as a surprise to find that the track had been extended all the way to the village. As we drove closer to the school we could see the whole village had turned out to greet us - you can never become immune to the rows of shy smiling faces.



The shyness soon turned to giggles when the grown-ups piled into the classrooms and sat at desks that were much too small! The **British School of Paris** had raised enough at their Christmas 2016 fair to fill a jeep with exercise books, pens and pencils, all the books for a library and sports equipment. At first the children were shocked never seen so much school equipment. Then when we opened the box of donated toys and they were amazed - I don't think any of them had seen toys and I know they'd never seen Lego before. The highlight of the afternoon was when John bought out a couple of rugby balls he'd been keeping hidden. While football is the national sport, no one had even heard of rugby so the strange oval ball caused a curious glance or two. The children thought it was fantastic and set about playing straight away. Is it possible that we may be responsible for introducing rugby to Nepal?!



All too soon the sun was setting and we still had a 3 hour journey ahead to our night stop so regretfully we had to say our goodbyes.