



## Behind the TRAS Projects

In the summer edition of the TRAS newsletter we introduced you to the main partners with whom TRAS runs **SPONSORSHIP** programs. In this issue, we'll introduce you to some of our **PROJECT** partners and take you behind the scenes. There's more to a TRAS project than its name might indicate!

We have recently received reports from Lama Paljor and his little school in Sikkim, from Little Flowers Tibetan Crèche in Dharamsala, and from Voice of Children in Almora and Nainital. They show – as we expected – that your donations are being spent frugally and wisely. Also, they are achieving more than you might imagine.

The **Sikkim Nutrition Project** and **Little Flowers Crèche** are two of our smallest; **Voice of Children** is the largest.

## Sikkim Nutrition Project

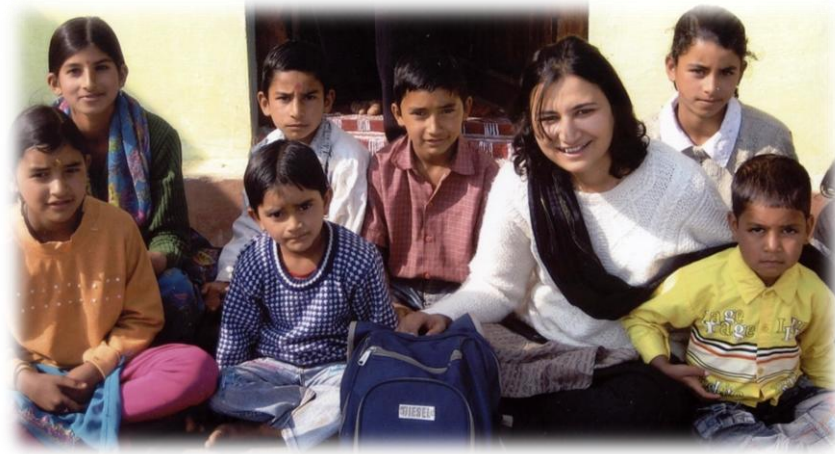
Sikkim is in the remote northern reaches of India, against the border with Tibet. Lama Paljor has taken up the cause of educating the children of Tibetan refugees who live in tiny villages on the Indian side of the border. The men – and many women – work at road building for the Indian Army – backbreaking work, done by hand. Lama Paljor has built a hostel in the nearest little town (TRAS paid for half the third floor and the retaining wall) and now has opened a school to give a decent education to the village and local children. The children from the villages live in the hostel and are given a nourishing lunch, but the local children had to walk home for lunch. He asked if TRAS would provide a school lunch program. *Why, if they could get lunch at home, was this necessary?* Here's the story behind the request: the lunch the mothers could provide was meagre in the extreme; the children were not getting enough nutrition to be able to concentrate; they were often late back to school because of the distances and missed part of the afternoon classes; their mothers could not work because they had to be at home to feed their children. TRAS agreed to a one-year pilot project, and with a mere \$3,014 (.20c per child per day) the children are better fed, the school results are better, the children are healthier and the mothers are able to do other work. He has asked TRAS to provide lunches for one more year and in the meantime is working on plans to come up with a long-term solution which will include building a greenhouse so that fresh veggies will be available year round.



*All gone!*

# Voice of Children

First the many-faceted education project: The two NGOs (Aman and Vimarsh) who run the Voice of Children projects do so much it is hard to encapsulate it briefly: early childhood centres for 41 children, 95 school children aged 6 to 14 studying an extra two hours a day in the education centres, 110 children in the tuition classes, 38 child labourers reintegrated into school through the bridge course, and a further 7 being helped this year, 20 given uniforms, books and school fees through the fellowship program. Not to mention the 23 meetings held on child health, personal hygiene, rights of the child, environment, and the huge fair attended by 213 children where fun and games were mixed with awareness of the benefits of education and hygiene.



*These are the bare facts, but look behind them and you see the incredible dedication of a few local people, minimally paid staff and volunteers who want the best for the village children.* They walk miles every day on hilly footpaths, they overcome apathy in village councils, they urge illiterate parents to let their children attend school, and they pester the government at many levels to provide what should be available, by law, to every child. Here are some interesting scenes from this year's report:

"In the tuition classes, the tutors are youth volunteers and they support the children in their courses."

We have initiated the campaign on adult women's education, the right to free and compulsory education for every child and against female *feticide*."

"Women started asking for literacy classes, often against the wishes of their husbands, so quietly classes have started in 3 villages, and 44 women can now read". But best of all, AMAN started a campaign 'Each one teaches one' and children and youth are teaching the women! And getting more practice themselves. What a win-win situation!

Raulakhark village is remote and isolated from development activities. It is about 14km from the motor road. Mostly religious minorities and deprived section of society live there.

Their livelihood depends on agriculture, animal husbandry and daily labour. The health and education facilities are very poor. Generally children start working at a very early age. Especially the girls go daily to work in the agriculture fields. So due to gender discrimination they do not go to school after 5th class. The seven girls who had to drop out of school in the last few years decided to join the bridge course centre supported by AMAN and TRAS.

Due to distance and dense forest, it is difficult for these girls to reach the Govindpur dropout education centre and they also don't have family support. But the girls wanted to re-continue their education. AMAN team members met with each girl's parents to counsel them for their education. After consistent and regular efforts our volunteers got success to start a bridge course there, but in that village there was no one who could volunteer and support the education of these girls. So AMAN volunteers started the centre and they travelled 28 to 30 Km on foot daily to run the centre. After three months, one social activist from another part of the district was ready to give his services for this education centre. After the dedication of the AMAN volunteers and this activist, the centre became alive and the girls prepared for their 8th standard examination. Four girls appeared in exam through distance mode and passed the 8th standard.

The Voice of Children campaign on the Right to Education Act has strengthened school management committees and helped prepare a report on compliance with the Act. This has been given to government officials.

Monthly women's group meetings on children's education and health have branched out to cover women's health, sexual assault, domestic violence, and taking a local self-governance role. This has led to a women's petition to the Almora Chief Medical Officer to do something about the unstaffed health clinic on which 5 villages depend. The CMO has promised staff, medications, and vaccinations. The clinic is now open; they are still waiting for the pharmacist and medicines. Meanwhile they are making their own herbal ointment for joint pain and 141 women are using it!

"For the capacity building of staff, AMAN is supporting the four volunteers and community worker of VOC Project for the Master in Social Work course from Uttarakhand Open University. VIMARSH is supporting two volunteers of VOC project staff for the MSW course."

**Youth helping children, children teaching their mothers to read, women demanding their rights for the health of their children, girls demanding education and succeeding, staff receiving professional training – look what's going on behind the scenes!**

# Voice of Children Libraries

There are now 20 community libraries in remote villages where previously there were no books, no newspapers and little interest in literacy. Now the communities are interested and involved, providing space and librarians. Children's school attendance and marks have shot up, women are borrowing books, everyone is reading the news and the libraries have become mini community centres. 517 children and 200 adults are library members.

*And even more is happening than meets the eye.  
Meet Uma Devi, librarian.*

At 14 she had to leave school to work in the house and field. At 18 she married a poor farmer and lived with him and their children in poverty, never seeing a book. But her village chose her as their new librarian and her life was transformed. Fearful at first, she took part in the librarian trainings and started practising reading and writing. Now she is keeping the library records, writing daily reports, helping children read books and encouraging women to join the library. In her words, she has regained her confidence and is full of new life. She knows the importance of books and education and will be sure to give proper education to her children.



Uma Devi, Librarian

## Donations to any of the TRAS projects are always welcome. Here's how you can help:

1. Fill in the donation slip enclosed with the newsletter
2. Click on CanadaHelps on the TRAS website ([www.tras.ca](http://www.tras.ca))
3. Phone the TRAS office (604-224-5133)

## Farewell

TRAS has to say 'adieu' but luckily not 'goodbye' to three directors.

**Marion Tipple** has served on the board for 17 years, as director, president and sponsorship secretary. Many of you will have enjoyed the slide shows of her frequent trips to Tibet, seen her photo exhibits or purchased some of the cards she has made of the children's photos.

**Amrit Dhatt** and **Camille Narayan** have also stepped down from the board, but are keen to continue supporting TRAS as much as their busy lives allow them. We thank all three of them for their work for TRAS and look forward to seeing them at many functions.

Sadly for TRAS (but happily for her) **Armila Shakya**, the owner of the warm, friendly voice on the TRAS phone, has found full time employment and is leaving us. We thank Armila for the understanding and commitment she brought to her role as office manager, and wish her well in her new career.



# Little Flowers Crèche

**Little Flowers Crèche** is run by and for the young couples who work for the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) in Dharamsala and for many years TRAS has been its main supporter. A parents' group manages it. They hire women to look after the children, but do all the maintenance themselves and buy as much equipment as the budget will allow. The secretary has just sent in the annual report, and it is a compelling justification for the crèche.



*But why, we might ask, are the mothers not staying at home until their children reach school age? Why aren't their extended families looking after the children, as happens so often in Asia?*

These young people either came alone from Tibet or were born on the Tibetan settlements scattered around India. They are educated; the Tibetan government in exile needs them. This means a job often hundreds of miles from their homes, so when they have babies there is no extended family nearby to care for the children. Dharamsala is an extremely expensive place to live, so the mothers have to work too. Here's the rest of the story, in Tenzin Pema's report:

**Beneficiaries of project:** The primary beneficiaries of the project are the 28 toddlers. They are well looked after by the nannies and are learning discipline and routine, to socialise and to share. They are blessed with healthy growth. 4 more babies will join the crèche this year, and several more in 2014.

The parents pay a small fee per child from their limited salaries, and work hard at maintenance. This year they bought a small refrigerator and a hot water geyser – both necessary for the children's health.

*And if we look behind the scenes, so much more is going on. The secondary beneficiaries are the parents, the CTA and the Tibetan society as a whole.*

- The parents of these toddlers work in different departments of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. They can concentrate on their jobs with full dedication, which enables them to complete their assigned projects on time. As a result, they are free from any complaint from their bosses.
- The working mothers can also work as efficiently as they used to do before having kids. They are not hindered from moving forward with their career and go hand in hand with their male colleagues in their respective offices and departments. Thus the crèche quietly and effectively works towards the empowerment of women. We have several women here in Gangchen Kyishong (the CTA compound) who were compelled to resign from their jobs only because they had to look after their babies. Now their kids are grown up, but due to age, these women are unemployed now. **But such a situation of helplessness is a story of bygone days. All today's mothers continue with their jobs because of Little Flowers Crèche.**
- Additionally, five women earn their livelihood through their jobs at Little Flowers' Crèche. We're very happy that, through the help of TRAS, we are able to provide a small income to these needy women, giving them a sense of confidence and the strength to be self-reliant. Their income helps their family to fulfil their basic needs.
- The CTA and the Tibetan society at large can also be considered as beneficiaries. Having the crèche at Gangchen Kyishong, these young parents do not hesitate to have more children, which ultimately contributes to the population growth of the Tibetan society.
- Five seats in the crèche are always offered to the Tibetan NGOs based in the vicinity of the CTA, such as the Tibetan Delek Hospital. Therefore, all these Tibetan organisations including CTA continue to have experienced staff for years in spite of having kids to look after. This eventually enhances and strengthens the common struggle of Tibet and Tibetans.

# TRAS 51<sup>st</sup> Annual General Meeting

A small gathering of directors and members took place at Langara College on September 4, 2013. We were delighted to see some of our long-time members and to meet a couple of new ones.

As **President Cheryl Sullivan** explained in her report, TRAS outdid itself last year with seven successful events during the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, so we decided to have a simple business meeting for the AGM this year. It was decided to move the AGM to September in order to give the TRAS Treasurer and Audit team sufficient time to have the records of the organization audited prior to the AGM.

"2012 was a busy year for TRAS as we celebrated 50 years of continuous operation and it is my pleasure to report that the organization finished the year in a strong financial position.

The Board of Directors met in February for a bi-annual strategy session. The primary outcome from the session was to focus an increased effort on sponsorship and establish criteria for the new Scholarship Fund.

We continue to see some turnover on the TRAS Board as demands on time and life situations evolve. We welcomed Balraj Dhillon and said good bye to Camille Narayan, Marion Tipple and Amrit Dhadd whom we thank for their contributions to TRAS and look forward to their ongoing involvement and support.

This past year, we introduced the online e-blast and have become more active on Facebook where we now have 101 followers. It is our intent to further expand TRAS' online presence.

Jennifer Hales completed her term as President in December. We thank Jen for her commitment during her term as President and look forward to tapping into her wealth of knowledge as we move forward.

Looking ahead, the Board of Directors will endeavour to support the needs of our overseas partners in a manner that will bring the most benefit to their recipients. TRAS is in the enviable position of having a strong committed Board, dedicated partners and incredibly generous donors."

**Treasurer Kevin Yuen** reported that the following remarks on the 2013 financial statements should be read in conjunction with the audited 2013 financial statements. They are available from the TRAS office and on the website ([www.tras.ca](http://www.tras.ca)).

**Financial position:** Cash increased by \$31,000 over prior year. This is due primarily to gross project and sponsorship donations of \$209,000, minus disbursements to projects of \$87,000 and sponsorships of \$85,000. Marketable securities increased by \$15,000 solely on accumulation of interest.

**Revenue:** General donations were down to \$18,000 from \$78,000 in 2012. However, this was offset by project donations of \$130,000 compared to \$38,000, of which \$90,000 was from two donors for the new Scholarship Fund. Sponsorship donations were down to \$79,000 from \$82,000 in 2012.

**Expenses:** Project disbursements decreased from \$127,000 to \$87,000 as various project commitments were fulfilled for the year. These fluctuations are typical until new project proposals are reviewed and funding is required. Sponsorship disbursements increased to \$85,000 from \$83,000 in 2012. Coupled with the above decrease in donations, there appears to be a growing need for more sponsorship donations.

General, fund raising and administrative expenses totalled \$50,000 in 2013 compared to \$48,000.

A motion to reappoint Tompkins, Wosny and Miller as auditors for the 2013-14 year was approved, and a vote of thanks given to Calvin Tompkins, who has done the TRAS audit for at least 15 years.

**Projects Director Daphne Hales** reported that our partners continue to do wonderful work on behalf of their communities. Several projects were completed during the year:

- At Munsel-Ling School the science labs were fully stocked and the solar water heating system was completed.
- The Sambhota Tibetan Schools Society finished publishing and distributing the 20 very popular Tibetan stories for children.
- The Voice of Children remote library project opened small libraries in 14 more villages.
- The Ngoenga Tibetan School for disabled children near Dehra Dun, India, requested a water purification system to improve the health of the children. This was successfully installed.



*Voice of Children remote library project*

Ongoing projects include:

- Buddha Academy vocational training program and infirmary support
- Little Flowers Crèche and Dekyiling Crèche for Tibetan toddlers in north India
- Central Tibetan Administration nurses training scholarship program
- Voice of Children and READI Nepal educational programs for village children

## New projects

- The Ngoenga School project mentioned on the previous page.
- Kailash Bodhi School in the Kullu Valley, India, for Tibetan and Himalayan children.
- Annual maintenance for the first six remote libraries run by Voice of Children.
- A nutritious school lunch program at the Sikkim school.



During this year, two exciting new funds were created:

- The M and J Fund of \$4,491 was set up through the generosity of a Vancouver couple in suggesting donations to TRAS in lieu of wedding gifts. They have chosen the Voice of Children as the recipient of their fund, to help promote children's health.
- The Scholarship Fund of \$90,000 has been set up thanks to the generosity of two members, for university education.

**Sponsorship director Russil Wvong** thanked sponsors for their ongoing support for needy children. The breakdown is as follows:

- Buddha Academy: 81, Munsel-Ling School: 26, TCV Suja: 24, Dekyiling: 16, TWC Rajpur: 7, and 15 more at smaller settlements. Total: 169
- 19 young people are being sponsored for post-secondary education.

At the strategy meeting, the TRAS directors decided to concentrate on finding more sponsors, because there is such a need. It was clear from Jennifer's visit last year to our partners in India and Nepal that sponsors are sorely needed in all villages and settlements. Reluctantly, TRAS has decided to concentrate its efforts on helping the current partners, rather than spreading our help too thinly over several more.

**Nominations: Patrons** – John Conway, Joan Ford, Dorothea Leach. **Directors** – President Cheryl Sullivan, Treasurer Kevin Yuen; Frank Beck, Lynn Beck, Balraj Dhillon, Marina Guy, Daphne Hales, Jennifer Hales, Videsh Kapoor, Maureen Minden, Megha Shakya, Russil Wvong.



# Himalayan Tragedy

**“Uttarakhand has been transformed into a theatre of horror.  
Devastation on this scale has never been seen before.”**

Here is the report from Raghu Tewari, the director of Aman, one of the local NGOs which head up the **Voice of Children** project for TRAS, on the devastating floods which ravaged the hill villages near Nainital and Almora this summer. TRAS sent \$5,000 for relief efforts, followed by several donations from concerned people who found TRAS' website. Now we hope to help with some of the rehabilitation: will you help TRAS do this?

“Uttarakhand is a fragile Himalayan state and has always been prone to natural disasters. The monsoon of 2010 brought with it such massive losses of lives, property, crops and infrastructure that the state said its development clock had been set back by a decade. Things are much worse this year. Flash floods and torrential rains started in the second week of June and continued till the end of July. The lashing sheets of rain made mountains into free flowing mud and slush as the explosive package joined the existing river system. Rivers suddenly turned semi-solid and flowed with frightening force as liquid mud made its own path, breaking down anything in its way. Many villages have been totally wiped out, with entire habitations disappearing into the swirling waters. Bridges, roads, cowsheds, livestock have vanished.

More than 10,000 people have died; thousands are marooned, an unknown number still missing.

Hats off to the tireless efforts by the Indian Army, and others who have rescued more than 100,000 stranded people. We are so grateful to all who came forward to help.



## Operation Relief

AMAN appealed for help to reach out to the most needy and vulnerable survivors. With the support of TRAS we have distributed relief parcels to 163 families and 40 children. We helped reconstruct one disaster-affected school.



**We have done immediate relief work. Now is the time for reconstruction and rehabilitation. It needs lots of resources. Government and big supporting agencies are starting rehabilitation. If we get some resources, we can create a risk reduction and disaster preparedness program in our working area.”**



**TRAS is committed to helping Aman with this program in the villages where our Voice of Children projects happen. Will you help too?**



**A vivid description of the Voice of Children relief effort will be posted on the TRAS website.**

# TRAS

**Supporting health and  
education for children  
and youth in the  
Himalayas**

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## Patrons

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Joan Ford  
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## Board of Directors

President – Cheryl Sullivan  
Treasurer - Kevin Yuen  
Sponsorship –  
Russil Wvong  
Projects Director & Newsletter Editor –  
Daphne Hales

## Directors

Frank Beck, Lynn Beck, Balraj Dhillon,  
Marina Guy, Jennifer Hales,  
Videsh Kapoor, Maureen Minden,  
Megha Shakya

## Newsletter Design

Beck Lamb

## Keep in touch!

Want to keep in touch with  
TRAS and all our latest news  
and events?

If we don't already  
have your email address,  
send it to us at [info@tras.ca](mailto:info@tras.ca)  
and we'll add you to our list!

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or visit our website [www.tras.ca](http://www.tras.ca)

# Sponsorship Report

**Help!** The children of the Himalaya need your help! Of course, so do children in Africa, Central America – you name it. But for anyone fascinated with the awe-inspiring beauty of the great mountains, here's a wonderful opportunity to do something positive for the poverty-stricken children who have to live there. TRAS has many dedicated sponsors, but we do need more! The number of sponsors has been going down; the number of children in need just keeps on increasing. If you can help a child in need, phone the TRAS office (604-224-5133) Look at the summer 2013 edition of the TRAS newsletter on the website ([www.tras.ca](http://www.tras.ca)) for descriptions of the main schools where TRAS sponsors children – those descriptions did bring several new sponsors, but truly, we need more!

**\$440 a year.** How about giving it as a  
gift to a family, or get together with  
friends to support a child.

And if you already sponsor a child, can  
you tell others about it, and suggest  
they read the summer newsletter  
on the website?

**Thank you!**

