



Slow and Steady

Remember that fabled slow and steady tortoise who won the race? That's the way TRAS works – no headline-grabbing initiatives, no 'wow' factor – but long-term basic solutions that eventually produce solid results. Over the summer we have received several satisfying reports which show that slowly and steadily TRAS and its partners are 'winning' the race.

The **Voice of Children** multi-faceted education project in hill villages around Nainital and Almora in north India opened **20 little village libraries** 2 years ago. Last year membership stood at 517 children and 200 adults. This year 718 children and 213 adults use the libraries regularly. They have become meeting places and resource centres for their villages. They are instrumental in increasing gender justice for females: girl membership is on the rise; newly literate women are connecting with the libraries; they are feeling empowered and are contributing towards development and equality.



Local governments are listening to them and health and educational facilities are consequently improving. A water supply has been tested and purified, the mothers insist their daughters go to school; they demonstrated until the government re-opened and supplied teachers for a school which had been closed.

Voice of Children education centres are making a huge difference this year:



Signing out a library book

- a) education support centres have helped 113 children improve their learning skills by tailoring individual programs for each child for two hours after school.
- b) In 5 villages where the nearest school is 8-10km away and often unstaffed, tuition centres cater to 70 children, giving them a well-rounded education.
- c) bridging courses help children who had to drop out of school – this year 43 children have been re-integrated into school.
- d) 18 children – orphans or child labourers – were given practical help – shoes, school supplies and fees.

Some of their individual stories are heartwarming. Here is one: (for others, please visit the TRAS website). The nearest school to Shabnam's village is several km away through dense forest, home to tigers. Her father said no, she didn't need to go to school. "What happened that caused me to go to school was that AMAN team members started a centre in my village. I joined the centre and prepared for the class 8 exam. In two years I went from class 5 to class 8 and am now in class 11. My childhood dream is to be a teacher.



Now my father says, "You read and read and read! I will do anything for your education." This is a big change in my family. My siblings go to school now, too."

At **Buddha Academy** (BABS) in Kathmandu, the school population has increased so much that a second nurse had to be hired this year for the school infirmary. The good news is that she is an ex-student of BABS, now returning to help her alma mater. The students of BABS are the disadvantaged of Nepal – ***if the school had not been there for her 20 years ago, she might never have had the opportunity to become a nurse and to help, in her turn, the school.***

Dekyiling Creche continues to decrease in numbers as the weavers have smaller families and fewer newcomers arrive from Tibet. But the long term results of early education are strongly felt in this little handicraft community. Kesang Wangdu writes "We strongly and humbly pay our deep gratitude and thanks to TRAS for its outstanding support for Dekyiling and for so many years bringing up the children for their education. ***We are lucky and proud to be worthy beneficiaries of TRAS support, as during the time past many children completed high school and have undergone professional training. As a result many are working in NGOs and private business sectors, proudly helping their parents.***"

Munsel-Ling School in Spiti, north India, has written to tell us wonderful news about some of its graduates. The full story can be found on the TRAS website (www.tras.ca), but meanwhile remember that 20 years ago there were no schools for the children of what were ignominiously labelled 'scheduled tribes'* in the Spiti Valley. Today Munsel-Ling School houses nearly 400 students, has been accredited up to Grade 12, has opened several satellite schools in remote villages – and has welcomed back to the valley a doctor, a vet and a teacher. Each was sponsored by a TRAS member, received their early education at the school, has been hundreds of miles away to university and has chosen to come back and work for the good of their people. Foresters and engineers will be following shortly!



The doctor

The veterinarian

The teacher

**Constitution of India definition 'historically disadvantaged and backward people'*

SHARE is an Indian NGO based in Manali in north India. It was founded by Ren Madan and his wife, with the objective of improving conditions in thirty poverty-stricken hill villages. TRAS helped in the 1990s and early 2000s with a project to build 1,000 toilets, immunize children, enroll 200 families in a health plan, and provide environmental education. After a slow start, with many dubious villagers leery about toilets near their homes, distrustful of needles and doctors, unconcerned about garbage, **here are the results 20 years later**. Ren reports this summer that 95% of the 20,000 village families have a toilet. For many years now, the people have just built a toilet without asking for help. 1,200 families are now enrolled in the family health plan which sees a health practitioner visit once a month, all babies and children are automatically immunized, and plastic bags are now banned by the government. Child mortality rates are way down, water is cleaner, hillsides are becoming garbage-free, children are staying in school longer and simple vocational training has blossomed into the first batch of university students from these villages. ***EVEN BETTER, SHARE IS NOW FULLY SELF-SUPPORTED LOCALLY AND NO LONGER NEEDS TRAS SUPPORT.***

**Sponsorships, education and health projects pay off in the long run!
Please help TRAS continue this important, long-term work.**

The TRAS Scholarship Fund



The Scholarship Fund is in its second year and four talented young people from Munsel-Ling School are doing well in their chosen fields, so slowly but surely life will improve as the Spiti Valley welcomes back these graduates. The first two young ladies are studying to become teachers and the two selected this year are studying mathematics at the famous Miranda College in new Delhi. They both come from extremely poor families in the Spiti Valley, and were given the opportunity to go to school at the Munsel-ling School. They both did very well in mathematics, with one gaining 100% in the final state board exams! One hopes become a banker; the other a maths teacher. Both have written that with TRAS support their dreams and aspirations will come true and they will be able to serve their community and help the children as they themselves have been helped. Each student receives \$1000 a year from TRAS for three years. A donation to the Scholarship Fund will ensure that many more students will be able to fulfil their dreams and use their talents wisely.

Farewell and Welcome

Sadly we have said goodbye to Robin Goulding, who has been our cheerful, efficient Office Manager for the past year. Robin has decided to pursue further studies at the University of Toronto. We thank her for leaving everything in such excellent shape and wish her well in her career.



Joining us now, as our new Office Manager, is Joanne MacLeod, who has terrific office and accounting skills and is already ably picking up the reins. We asked Joanne to introduce herself to you:

"I am very excited about joining TRAS as the new Office Manager. I was born in Nova Scotia and moved to Vancouver in the mid 70's to begin my career in accounting. I love to travel and have spent a lot of time on the coasts and waterways of both North and South America. I recently took an early retirement after 13 years as the Payroll and Benefits Administrator at a downtown Vancouver senior's centre. I am confident that I have the knowledge, educational background, drive and enthusiasm to support the Board of Directors in achieving TRAS' important mission in the Himalayan region."

Joanne looks forward to getting to know our members – do phone or email her!

Children the same the world over

We couldn't help laughing when we read in the Buddha Academy infirmary report that 'there have been many cases of fractures, and stitches required for some small injuries'. That happily conjures up a picture of children free to play and roam and have adventures! It's not all work and no play at BABS!

Erratum

In the spring newsletter we announced that Tenzin Lama is now the principal of Buddha Academy (BABS) in Kathmandu. We were wrong! He holds the position of Sponsorship Coordinator, an important role which brings him constantly into contact with TRAS, as our members sponsor many children there. He also looks after our other BABS projects – vocational training and infirmary maintenance.

The Dalai Lama Visits Vancouver

The Tibetan Cultural Society of BC (TCS) is organising a day of teachings by His Holiness the Dalai Lama at the Thunderbird Arena, UBC, on October 23, in support of the Tibetan Resettlement Project. The next batch of Tibetan refugees from Arunachal Pradesh arrives this fall, and the TCS is spearheading the efforts in BC to welcome as many as possible.

For information and tickets, go to <http://thunderbirdarena.ubc.ca/2014/07/06/his-holiness-the-dalai-lama-visit-to-vancouver/>. The teachings will be in English or translated.

Contact the TCS at tcsofbc@gmail.com if you wish to donate household items for the refugees, or to offer other forms of help.

An exciting addition to the already-wonderful day of October 23 will be an evening concert at the Thunderbird Arena, featuring many well-known musicians. It has been organized by the famous Tibetan musician and artist, Shennepenn, and ALL proceeds will go towards the Tibetan Resettlement Project. More details on the TRAS website www.tras.ca.



VOC Preparing for the Next Disaster

Once Voice of Children staff had dealt with the worst of the emergency, getting food, clothing and bedding to the worst hit in the floods last year, they asked for support to run a **Disaster Preparedness and Risk Reduction Program**. TRAS gladly

agreed, and an excellent program was put in place. Women and children worked together to learn about the natural and manmade disasters which could affect this hilly region – and what to do during and after an earthquake, flood, cloudburst, landslide, or forest fire. They were taught ways to prepare for such emergencies and survival techniques. 263 children and 75 women took part over several meetings in different villages. This was followed by a collective meeting for all the children and others from adjoining villages. The children were encouraged to share their experiences, and prizes were given for a variety of competitions.



Then more in-depth trainings in search and rescue were given to 121 young people by trainers from the National (Nehru) Mountaineering Institute. 60 youth learned about the impact of disasters on children, while 61 learned how to perform rescues from buildings and fires, how to cross rivers, rappel down mountains etc. They performed mock earthquake, accident and fire drills.

All useful stuff in an area so often ravaged by natural calamities.



Sponsorship Opportunities

This month we highlight children from the remote Spiti Valley in north India who have been accepted to the Munsel-Ling School. They all come from the village of Chicham and are in kindergarten. Who knows - these little kids may one day be the next teachers and doctors in the Valley! Sponsorship, to start them on their journey to education and better health, costs \$440 a year. Please contact the TRAS office at 604-224-5133 or email info@tras.ca

Kalzang

Kalzang is a 5 year old boy from a poor family. Both parents work on a neighbour's farm to cultivate crops and they earn a small amount, which is not sufficient to meet the needs of a child in terms of education. His father is not in sound health.

Sonam Ankit

Sonam Ankit is a 5 year old girl. She has two older sisters. Her father is a farmer and he is able to run his house and feed his children, but he is not able to educate them.

Phurbu Dolma

Phurbu Dolma is a 7 year old girl. Her mother is deaf and dumb, living in a centre for the disabled and her father has departed. She has been looked after by her elderly poor grandfather. Emotionally he can support her, but in terms of education he cannot fulfil it.

Tenzin Garden

Tenzin Garden is a 5 year old boy, the youngest in his family. His father is a labourer working in construction. Both parents are illiterate and the father is barely able to feed his children each day. He cannot give quality education to Tenzin.

THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING THESE CHILDREN!

52nd Annual General Meeting

The 52nd AGM of TRAS took place on September 17 at the Langara College Broadway campus. 26 members and guests were present.

Cheryl welcomed everyone and gave her **President's Report**:

"On the heels of a very busy 2012-13 year, 2013-14 was a year for TRAS to spend time internally - strengthening the Society's record keeping and procedures, and ensuring all security precautions are in order. Each year, the guidelines for operating a charity are becoming stricter, and although the Society is in good shape it is crucial that we can show the funds are being utilized as assigned.

We did have one event: the Kick Off to Summer Social held in June, 2013, at the Gurkha Himalayan Kitchen restaurant, was such a success that we plan to make it an annual event.

TRAS is fortunate to attract capable and knowledgeable individuals to the board. We currently have a strong mix with skills in administration, public relations, recruitment, project management, information technology and business leadership, many of whom know the Himalayan region well. We continue to search for new Directors skilled at online marketing and fundraising.

It is with mixed feelings we say goodbye to Jennifer Hales, mixed because while we are happy she shared her skills with TRAS, we are saddened to lose someone who has contributed so much both as Youth Director, President and as the brain child and coordinator of the Nepali Film Festivals; she conducted overseas in-depth tours of projects and tirelessly promoted TRAS through slideshows and events. We will miss her dearly and wish her all the best. It is to be hoped Jen can join us again in the future.

Shortly after the AGM last year, we welcomed another Jennifer to the Board - Jennifer Bond. Jennifer brings strong administration and employee relations skills to the Board and we are looking forward to her stepping into the Secretary position in the coming months.

The dedicated and ongoing support of our volunteers and local partners needs to be recognized as well. Sutherland School Social Justice Club, Langara College and the UBC Community Based Experiential Learning and Economics students continue to actively support TRAS. We thank the staff at MPS Executive Suites, and all the volunteers who do our newsletter, website, E-blasts, and Facebook content

Looking ahead, we will be turning our attention to fundraising, reaching out to like-minded organizations and increasing awareness of TRAS and the work that is being done by our partners overseas.

On behalf of all of us at TRAS and our dedicated partners, we extend a heartfelt thank you to our donors for their continued support."

The **Nominations Report** was given by Russil Wvong, and the directors listed on Page 8 were elected.

Kevin Yuen, Treasurer, was unfortunately out of town, but the good news was that the financial statements had been audited (thanks to the tremendous work of Kevin and Cal Tompkins, our patient auditor) in time for the meeting. Cheryl read the **Treasurer's Report**, and acknowledged the presence of Cal, who has been the TRAS auditor for over 25 years.

Assets, at March 31, 2014, of \$503,000 decreased \$73,000 from 2013 represented by a decrease in cash.

The Society disbursed a total of \$160,000 to cover projects, sponsorships, and scholarships, and \$51,000 for operating expense for a total of \$210,000. Revenue for year totalled \$137,000. The Society received \$122,000 in donations and \$15,000 in investment interest income.

At year-end, net available funds were \$354,000. The difference between assets and available funds are the restricted (committed) funds that must be held to satisfy previously approved project and sponsorship disbursements. Restricted funds at year-end were \$149,000.

A motion to accept the financial statements was carried. Copies of the financial statements are available from the TRAS office. The motion to appoint Tomkins, Wosny, Miller and Company as auditors for the coming year was carried.

Daphne Hales gave the **Projects Report** and highlighted some of the good work our partners in the field are doing. The multi-faceted programs of Voice of Children in India and READI Nepal in Humla, Nepal continue to make a huge difference in their communities, as do the vocational training projects at Buddha Academy, Kathmandu, and through the Tibetan Department of Education in India. Our longstanding relationship with the Tibetan Little Flowers Creche has finally terminated, and the TRAS support for the Dekyiling crèche will cease after one more year. Several smaller projects, covering a wide range of requests, have been completed: a set of DVDs to teach Tibetan worldwide, support for the Kailash Bodhi School, blankets for new students at Buddha Academy, emergency relief and disaster preparedness in Nainital and Almora districts, school lunches in Sikkim and literacy in Tuting. Director Megha Shakya gave an interesting synopsis of life in the northwestern district of Humla and the work of READI Nepal.



READI Nepal school kids in Humla

Lynn Beck shared the good news that the first year of **The Scholarship Fund** has gone extremely well, with two very motivated students from Munsel-Ling School making good use of their TRAS scholarships. They are studying for a BA degree and want to return to Spiti as teachers. Two more students will receive scholarships this year.

Russil Wvong gave the **Sponsorship Report**. TRAS members have generously supported the education of individual children in northern India and Nepal for more than 40 years.

As at March 31, 2014, our members were sponsoring the education of 174 students, ranging from kindergarten through Grade 12, as well as 19 post-secondary students.

Our major partners are Buddha Academy in Kathmandu, Nepal; Tibetan Children's Village (TCV) Suja in Bir, India; Munsel-Ling School in Spiti Valley, India; and Dekyiling Tibetan Society in Dekyiling, India.

TRAS members also support post-secondary students through the Scholarship Fund and the ongoing CTA Nurses Training project.

Russil thanked all of our sponsors for their generosity and commitment!

For more information on the TRAS sponsorship program, please see www.tras.ca/sponsor.

After the formal meeting, Patron and founding member John Conway gave an entertaining short history of TRAS.

Cheryl's slide show of her trek to Mustang gave a wonderful view of that incredible region, and her talk was made doubly interesting in that she compared it to the conditions our Patron Dorothea Leach found on a trek to Mustang in 1997! To read the full description of Dorothea's trek, please look at the Spring and Summer 1997 newsletters on the TRAS website. www.tras.ca

Refreshments, handicraft sales and time to chat with the TRAS directors rounded out the evening.



Paul Horn

TRAS was sad to learn of the passing of the musician Paul Horn this summer. Paul had very kindly donated to TRAS copies of his CD of Tibetan and Nepali music and sounds – a haunting and unique - almost spiritual - journey. The CDs are \$20 each.

TRAS

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

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Daphne Hales

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Office Manager

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Newsletter Design

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How you can help us:

Give to your favourite project!

Sponsor a child!

Donate to the Scholarship Fund!

Like us on Facebook and
share our stories
(www.facebook.com/trascanada)

Like our webpage (www.tras.ca)

Tell your friends about TRAS and
encourage them to get involved!

Sign up for our online
communications by sending your
e-mail to info@tras.ca

Host a TRAS Film Night at your home!

Several members have had great success holding a film evening for TRAS in their homes or a local hall. Now the weather is easing into Fall, how about hosting a cosy gathering of friends to see one of our wonderful selection of movies about Nepal — and support TRAS at the same time?

It's easy! You invite friends and family, and TRAS supplies the films. If you are interested in learning more, please contact TRAS Events Coordinator, Marina Guy (marina.guy@tras.ca).

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YES! I want to help children and youth living in the Himalayas

TRAS #720 – 999 West Broadway, Vancouver BC V5Z 1K5 ☎ 604-224-5133 Fax 604-738-4080
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HERE is ☐ my sponsorship donation of \$_____ for (name of child/youth) _____
☐ my donation of \$_____ for project (name of project) _____
☐ my donation of \$_____ for wherever it is needed most

Name _____ Address _____
Phone _____ E-mail _____

Here is my cheque #_____ for \$_____ payable to TRAS
OR Please charge my VISA/MasterCard No. _____ Expiry Date _____

Please send me information on Planned Giving ☐ Yes ☐ No
A tax receipt will be issued for all donations. **Thank you for your generous support to TRAS!**

