



President's Appeal

As we approach the holiday season, I'd like to thank TRAS members once again for your generosity and commitment to helping people in the Himalayas, in Nepal and northern India. TRAS shows that even a relatively small number of people working together over a long period of time can make a huge difference.

TRAS has supported the Munsel-ling School in the Spiti Valley, in northern India, since it opened in 1996. It has been very successful in providing a good education to its students, despite the remote and isolated location.

Last year, Munsel-ling wrote to ask for TRAS's help with building laundry facilities. The key problem is water availability.



Clean clothes at last!

The population nearby is only around 200 people, while the school has up to 600 students from the mountain villages. This leads to potential conflict over water usage. Until now, the students have been using a gray-water pond to wash their clothes. This pond then drains into a channel the villagers use for irrigation. When the students use it to do laundry, the soap and grime often flow into the villagers' fields, causing conflicts between the villagers and the school.

Moreover, when the students are unable to clean their clothes properly, this can cause hygiene and health issues, such as scabies.

To address this situation, the school asked for help with building a large water storage tank and two laundry stations where the children can wash their clothes, one for boys and one for girls, as well as a soak pit to remove the soapy residue before the water reaches the farmers' fields.

President's Appeal (cont'd)

The source of water is a surface spring which isn't being used by the villagers at all. Without a reservoir, the water would be wasted.

One question we had was where the water would come from in the winter. The surface source is not available in the winter, but the population of the school is also much smaller during that time. (From mid-January to March, senior students continue studying in Dharamsala, and the younger children go home to their villages. Munsel-ling has started sending teachers to villages to continue running mini-schools).

With your support, the laundry project will help the children at the school keep their clothes cleaner, improving their health, and at the same time reduce conflict between the village and the school over water.

TRAS's goal this year is to raise \$19,000 to support the Munsel-ling Laundry Project.

Will you help us?

If you'd like to make a donation in someone's name this holiday season — towards a project, the Scholarship Fund or a general donation — we can send a card to them on your behalf. Please call Joanne at the office (604-224-5133) by December 7, so that she'll have time to mail out the cards before Christmas.

Thank you for your help! I hope you enjoy spending time with family and friends over the holidays. Best wishes for 2019!

Russil Wvong, President

Barbara's Tibetan 'treasures' and other handicrafts



TRAS has received some interesting items for our handicraft sales! Joanne MacLeod, our Office Manager, has just returned from a vacation in Nepal (her first visit!) and brought back pretty necklaces made by a Tibetan refugee family and a variety of lovely Nepalese goods. And we have just received some Tibetan 'treasures' from Barbara Kubo, a long-time sponsor of children through TRAS.

Barbara and her good friend, the late Jeannie Kuyper, met at UBC and decided upon graduation to travel the world together in 1965. When they reached New Delhi they worked for a while. Jeannie got a job with CUSO and Barbara taught in an Indian school. When summer holidays rolled around, they decided to visit Dharamsala, where CUSO had Canadian women working with the recently arrived Tibetan refugees. One of them was Judy Pullen Tethong

who befriended the two Canadians, and through Judy Barbara stayed to teach Tibetan children at one of the transit camp schools. She stayed for 18 months, charmed by the children and aghast at the condition some of them were in. Judy herself had taken in several children and had an ayah to look after them. The ayah wanted to train as a nurse, so Jeannie and Barbara paid for her tuition – the first of many Tibetans they ended up sponsoring, through TRAS, once they returned to Canada.

The bazaars in Dharamsala were full of Tibetan artifacts which the refugees had traded for food and clothing, and Barbara bought brass pots, jewelry, carpets, beautiful little seals (for pressing a signature into sealing wax), felt boots, clothing. Barbara has kindly given her collection to TRAS, to sell, with the proceeds going to a project. We will have these items, along with a good selection of Tibetan woven bags and the Kullu Valley woolen toques, gloves and shawls for you to see at the office (phone Joanne at 604-224-5133), and we are hoping to find a couple of locations for a sale.

Could anyone help with a venue?

Sponsorship Report

The children TRAS is featuring this year have been accepted into the Tibetan Children's Village School in Chauntra, a Tibetan settlement in North India. At the specific request of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, TCV has taken in children whose families live in remote pockets of the Himalayas, with no local opportunities to study in their native language, Tibetan. It's a win-win situation for these kids, because they get a good all-round modern education AND get to study Tibetan – a far cry from the little village school they might have been able to attend, learning in Hindi or a local dialect which would both seem quite foreign to them.

Please contact Joanne at the TRAS office (info@tras.ca) if you are willing to help one of these eager youngsters. The cost is \$440 a year.

**Sonam
Chosphe**

DOB Dec 25, 2004 | TCV Lower Chauntra

Sonam's family settled in Kargil, North India. The village is very remote and underdeveloped. Majority of the population is Muslim, with Buddhism a minority. His parents sent him to the TCV in Lower Chauntra so that he can learn the Tibetan language. His goal for the future is to become a veterinarian.



DOB Sep 18, 2006 | TCV Lower Chauntra

Karma was born in Tun Village. This is a remote and underdeveloped village in Jammu & Kashmir. His parents are farmers and income of the family is very little. The parents are not able to pay for the education of their 3 children and there are no Tibetan schools in the village. His parents sent him to the TCV so that he can learn the Tibetan language. Math is his best subject.

**Karma
Lotey**

**Phurpa
Tsering**

DOB Sep 12, 2005 | TCV Lower Chauntra

Phurpa was born in Tawang, near the Tibetan border. Moenpas are the main tribe in the region and they speak their own Moenpa language. It is very difficult for his parents to educate all 4 children so have sent Phurpa to the TCV in Lower Chauntra. TCV gives special consideration to children of the Himalayan region and Phurpa is very fortunate to receive this opportunity. Math is his best subject and he would like to become a scientist.



DOB Dec 21, 2006 | TCV Lower Chauntra

Stanzin was born in a poor village called Upti. His parents make a living from agriculture and raising animals with most of the work taking place in the summer. Winters are very harsh with heavy snow. His father also works as a teacher in a small school. Stanzin was very happy to receive admission in a Tibetan school where he can learn to read and write the Tibetan language. English is his best subject and he likes to read.

**Stanzin
Norbu**

TRAS is happy to announce that **Jennifer Hales**, long-time director and President for three years, has re-joined the TRAS Board after a short absence. We are glad to have her back, with her knowledge of the region and of many of our partners and projects there and with her deep understanding of TRAS' mission.



TRAS Scholarship Fund Update

by Lynn Beck, TRAS Scholarship Fund Director

We have reached our target! We currently have 18 students being funded through the TRAS scholarship program.

We have six students funded from Munsel-ling School, Spiti. We have 4 students funded in partnership with Dekyiling Tibetan Centre.

There are eight students supported by TRAS with Voice of Children (VOC). Unexpectedly an additional student is being supported, not by TRAS but by the VOC community! Maya Nayal heard about the TRAS Scholarship Fund from a friend and applied, but the VOC scholarships had already been awarded and she was turned down. She wrote again, explaining her family's financial woes and that she had been accepted to study Office Management at Almora Polytechnic. The staff agreed to meet her and were so impressed with her determination and dedication, they decided to try collecting funds from VOC well-wishers and friends, and they were successful. Maya has more than justified their trust in her – she received 80% in her first semester exams.

This illustrates how high the interest in and demand for scholarship positions is. It shows that TRAS has touched upon a real need for post-secondary education in the poor underserved areas of India. It also illustrates how a community can be inspired to do even more once a worthwhile program has been established.



Maya Nayal

These 18 students (1 male, 17 females) have been given a valuable opportunity to improve their lives, thanks to your generous support.

Thank you for enabling these students to strive and hope for a better future for themselves, their families and their communities.

Please give generously to keep this program going!



TRAS Fall Dinner

Tuesday, November 20

**Gurkha Himalayan Kitchen,
1141 Davie Street, Vancouver**

TRAS directors are looking forward to the Fall Dinner at the popular Gurkha Kitchen in Vancouver. The event is sold out, as usual, and we shall enjoy chatting with old and new friends! Make sure TRAS has your email address so that we can inform you of future events!

Update on Projects

TRAS has supported four projects in 2018. The Munsel-ling Laundry is described on pages 1 and 6. Then there are the Tibetan trainee nurses, the Indian children under the auspices of Voice of Children in the villages around Nainital and Almora, and the Nepalese children in far distant Humla supported by READI Nepal.

The Tibetan Nurses



Tsewang Lhamo

For many years now, TRAS has been supporting young Tibetan women as they train to become nurses. Each year, the Department of Education of the Tibetan Government in Exile (CTA) receives hundreds of applications from Tibetan students hoping to receive help to get further education or training. Around four hundred a year are given scholarships, of whom 40 train to be nurses. TRAS regularly supports 8 of these nursing students. In recent years they have come from 17 different Tibetan settlements from all over India and Kathmandu. They have trained at 17 medical institutions (many of them the best hospitals in India), mostly in New Delhi, Bangalore and Mangalore. And then they get jobs – it's almost guaranteed that every one of them will find work, which is a very satisfactory outcome. Even so, there are problems: the young women who work in private hospitals, clinics and home care are not paid nearly as well as those who work in the big government hospitals, which may be the reason why several of 'our' students opt to go on to train for a further two years after receiving their nursing degree. This extra training would lead to a much better job and help them fulfil the goal of being able to support their families as well as being fully independent themselves.

TRAS is keen to keep this project going – the young women tell us that if it hadn't been for the TRAS support, they would never have been able to start training in the first place. We recently heard from Tsewang Lhamo, who was supported by TRAS from 2011 to 2014. She is now working with a private agency called Care 24, Delhi, which offers professional care from trained caregivers who help the patient recuperate at home. This agency has branches in Mumbai and Delhi providing various health care services from elderly care to infant care.

She is working as a home nurse, which means she has to attend a patient allotted to her by the agency and her work timing is 12 hour/ day. However, she is planning to work in a regular hospital soon. Most of the nurses are independent but she says that it is quite difficult to help their families on a low income. According to her, it's not so difficult to find a job in India, especially for nurses due to the high numbers of private and govt. hospitals. But there is a difference in the salary they receive at private institutions as compared to Govt. hospitals. With her 4 years of experience she will soon be able to find a better paying job.

Funds needed for 2019: \$6,949

The Nepalese Children (READI Nepal Project)

We highlighted this excellent NGO and the work it is doing in our Dec 2017 and Spring 2018 issues (see newsletters on the TRAS website at www.tras.ca) . Suffice it to say that this project is still going strong, with the children doing extremely well in school, and being well looked after in the rented hostel. All facets of the project are improving and growing, and now that it has built up a good reputation, more help is arriving in the form of funding, a large supply of books and a growing clientele at the cafe. The hostel, the library, the parental income schemes, the school reports are all more than satisfactory!

READI is now working on plans to build its own permanent hostel (with funding from the United States and a gift of land locally) so that more children can benefit. A request for a reading room to add to the library books may be coming soon. The difficulty in getting to Humla is always a problem, and, for instance, limits the possibility for the parents to sell their apples and apricots further afield. The next six-monthly report is due soon and will be posted on the TRAS website (www.tras.ca).

Funds needed for 2019: \$25,000

Munsel-ling School: Their clothes are clean... now we have to pay!



Their clothes are clean! Now we have to pay! The Spiti Valley, way up in the mountains, has a very short season for construction, so when TRAS guaranteed to find the funds for the laundry stations, the Munsel-ling School went ahead and got things going. \$5,000 had come in in June from our donors, thanks to the Canada Helps challenge, so we sent that as the first payment, fully expecting construction to stop for the season before the project was completed. But no – they got it nearly all done and the children were using both laundry stations by the end of the summer! So now we need to raise the rest! \$19,000 is the overall cost, things being extremely expensive in Spiti, so **we are looking for \$14,000. Can you help?**

These laundry stations are like nothing you've seen before (maybe nearer scrubbing clothes on river rocks than using a machine!) First, for each of the two stations, a very large area was cleared and flattened, and a cement floor laid, with low walls around it. A large water storage tank was built, to contain the run off from the surface spring. Hundreds of feet of pipe bring the water to the two stations, where outlets in one wall give access to the water.

The children thoroughly wet their clothes, slap them down on the floor, soap them well and scrub with vigour. Then they rinse them in clean water in large buckets, squeeze them by hand and finally hang them on the overhead structures to dry in the sun and wind. The dirty soapy water then flows into a specially built soak pit before it ends up in the farmers' fields. Three excellent results: The clothes are cleaner, being washed more often and in clean water; the children will be healthier as skin problems lessen; and the farmers are no longer complaining (a fourth result might be rather wet kids!).

And more good news: although TRAS had said we wouldn't be able to raise money to roof the stations, a motor bike group happened by on a mountain touring trip and the men agreed to pay for the roof for the boys' laundry station. Hmm – maybe we should encourage a group of women bikers to make a trip – and pay for the girls' station roof!! Any takers?



The main water storage tank



The boys scrub their clothes



And now it's time to dry the laundry!

Funds needed for 2018: \$14,000

The Indian Children (Voice of Children Project)

Based in Nainital and Almora, the two local NGOs supported by TRAS work in many isolated villages to improve the lives of children through a variety of initiatives.



Priyanka was 9 years old when she started coming to the tuition centre last year. She hardly spoke, was terribly shy and, even though she attended the local school, could not read or write. She could not look at or play with the other children, nor could she respond to the teacher. The change in Priyanka in a year is heartwarming – she speaks up, plays with the others, is trying to read and write Hindi, loves to draw and paint, and is a confident young girl.

The 2018 numbers are astonishing:

- 292 primary school aged children helped in education and tuition centres
- 29 high school children received extra coaching in Math, Science and English for two hours after school each day (weekly in the winter)
- 161 mothers met at Women's Counselling and Resource Centres for legal advice and protection against violence. The staff linked them with government programs such as free gas hook ups for 10 very poor families and helped them with registration for marriage, domicile and caste certificates, all of which lead to benefits.
- 59 children regularly attend the daily computer training classes, and four women are now attending too
- the Fellowship program offers school supplies and shoes to help destitute children stay in school – 46 benefitted

Then there are the meetings and children's groups:

- 58 meetings catered to over 400 children in total
- 84 meetings for more than 500 women

Not to mention the fairs and excursions and celebrations for International Women's Day and Environment Day! Read the entire report on the TRAS website. www.tras.ca

Funds needed for 2019: \$28,250

**Make the most
of your donation
to TRAS**

Everything is NOT equal when it comes to making a donation to TRAS!

If you want the children to benefit the most from your donation, please consider sending your donation by cheque to TRAS.

Here's a list of the service charges made by other methods:
 Visa credit card: 1.85% | Master Card: 1.87%
 Canada Helps: 3.5%

There is a further monthly fee collected by the two credit card companies, depending on the total amount received each month. Cheques and transfers of securities don't cost TRAS a penny! We do acknowledge that a cheque means you will have to add a stamp to the envelope provided, though.



Thank you!

TRAS

Supporting health and education for
children and youth in the Himalayas



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Thank you for your generous support to TRAS!

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