



A SUCCESS STORY: Funded by you, our TRAS members

The final report from the FSS Society, the local volunteer committee helping the villagers in the Dolakha region of Nepal, makes for satisfying reading. As we mentioned in the last newsletter, all 200 toilets were completed on time and on budget, replacing those destroyed in the April 2015 earthquake. Sounds good, but it sounds even better when you hear the report from their own lips and see the 'photo essay' (see Page 4) of the building of those toilets!

Dr. Sara Shneiderman, Assistant Professor of Anthropology at UBC, was there in December and kindly interviewed three women, asking them if having a toilet made a difference in their lives. Here are their personal stories:

Bimaya Thami, Age 41, married mother of 4

It was time for my eldest daughter's wedding. But how could we have so many guests without a proper toilet? We were lucky that the funds from TRAS to build toilets arrived just when we were setting the date for our daughter's wedding. Once we began building the toilet we gained the confidence to invite all of our relatives. We feel like showing off our toilet to them because it is the nicest part of our home now! We have not been able to rebuild our house itself yet, so we are celebrating in this tin cottage.



I am 41 years old, and I have been living here for 18 years since I got married. My daughter arrived soon after I moved here, and now look - she is getting married. Fifteen years ago, we built this house. That is when we built our first toilet. We were doing well enough here before the earthquake, but it set us back as if none of the things we accomplished in those years had happened.

Now things are improving slowly. This new toilet has brought a lot of benefit to a lot of people. The 6 members of our family use it every day. We are very happy not to be living in the dirt.

Bimala Thami, Age 32, married mother of 2

Just a year before the earthquake my husband rebuilt our home, including a new toilet. It was connected to a biogas cooking system. We put all our savings into that toilet and biogas system, and it improved our life so much. We didn't have to gather so much firewood anymore. Suddenly, everything was destroyed by the earthquake.

(cont'd on Page 2)

A Success Story (cont'd)

Our situation was especially bad because my husband was supposed to be leaving to work in Malaysia the day of the earthquake. He was delayed and spent a lot of extra money rebooking his flight ticket. Finally he left. It was good for us because he can earn money there, but with him gone it is harder for me alone with our two children. Who is going to rebuild our house?

That's why I was so happy when TRAS offered the funding for the toilet. Because our household was part of the TRAS program I also got help with the labour to build the toilet. This was important because without my husband here I couldn't complete the work by myself.

For some time, it was like the old days, when we had to go to the toilet in the open air. This was really difficult for women and girls. Now I am so relieved that we have the new toilet. It is much stronger even than what we had before, built with reinforced cement.



Rupa Thami, Age 22, unmarried

Since I was a small child I had a kidney illness. This made looking after my health very challenging, and has delayed my studies. But I really want to study business and open my own. I'm now serving on the Fashelung Samajik Sewa (FSS) board because I want to learn more about how to do social work in my community.



For about six months after the earthquake, my family had no toilet. I live with my mother, father and one brother. All of us were going outside. For us girls, this is really difficult, especially at our time of the month.

So I was very relieved when we were selected to build a toilet with funds from TRAS. In fact that is how I learned about our local organization FSS, and how they were working with TRAS. I was so happy about the positive way the project was implemented that I wanted to get involved and joined the board of FSS.

For my family the toilet made a big difference. We are in a very bad financial situation due to my medical condition. I have to go to Kathmandu every three months for a check-up and it is so expensive. My parents had to take a loan to afford it. For this reason we have no money to even begin rebuilding our

home. It will probably take at least two years for my father to save enough money from his factory job to start. At least we have the toilet while we wait.

~ Interviews, translations and photos by Sara Shneiderman ~

Bequests keep on giving

TRAS is receiving two wonderful bequests — one from a long-time donor and the other from a lady not previously known to TRAS. We want to acknowledge their generosity and hope that others will be inspired to remember the children of the Himalaya in their wills, so that the work they have supported during their lifetime may continue.

We at TRAS had not known Camilla Morrow, but her friends have told us of her interests and have written about her: "Camilla had a longstanding concern for the plight of the Tibetan people and interest in the issue of Tibetan freedom. She visited Dharamsala many times over the years and made friends that lasted her lifetime. She sponsored a Tibetan family providing funds to support schooling of their children. Camilla received solace and guidance from His Holiness the Dalai Lama's teachings during her life and while dying. In the last decade of her life, Camilla worked with refugees in Mexico. Not having any children, she bequeathed her estate to local and global causes she had supported. Her gift to TRAS continues her earlier support of impoverished and displaced Tibetans. Camilla was an activist, traveler and free spirit who brought caring and joy to all she encountered."

If you would like to learn more about leaving a bequest to TRAS in your will, please contact the TRAS office 604-224-5133 or email info@tras.ca

A Success Story (cont'd)

Further proof of the value of this project comes from Komintal Thami, our contact at FSS, who sent this tale:

My name is Gopilal Thami and I am 47 years old. When earthquake came that time my house was fully destroyed as well as toilet. When I saw my house is destroyed that time I feel so sad, I didn't think about toilet that time But I feel needed thing was toilet rather than shelter because we couldn't show others when we are in doing toilet.

After Earthquake anyhow we are staying with neighbors in a shelter. We stay 6 family 18 persons in a shelter. That time I feel toilet is so important to keep us healthy that time I feel so upset. At that time, I thought that Toilet is more important than house. At that time, I saw everywhere was dirty. I think if we continue like this we would be affected by various kind of diseases. So we make temporary toilet by using trees branches.

After that I heard about FSS toilet program for our village because we stayed near FSS office. I asked FSS Member about it then they called me in their meeting with application to get toilet. When I went to their meeting I saw there were so many more than 150 applications. When I went to attend meeting then I knew that all support came from TRAS through FSS. FSS Inform that first time only 40 toilets are available. I leave optimistically that application in FSS office.

After that day FSS member visit our village then after they make list who needs toilet first installment. On that list I saw my name too. I feel so happy that time, I never forget that time. Next day FSS distribute 40 toilet kits in our ward. I got 5 sacks cement, Iron rod 3 pcs, Tap 1, CGI sheet 3, Banding wire 1 quill, Toilet Pan, Poly pipe 5 meter. When I got the kit, then I collect sand, gravel, stone, wood, then I start to rebuild toilet. I have finished in 25 days. Now we use this toilet regularly. After some weeks 2 people came to observe my toilet and they became happy and I feel so happy that time. Now all our village got toilet from FSS. At last, we want to thank TRAS and FSS very much.

All the funding for this project came from our plea to 'twin your toilet' in December 2015 — and you did — to the tune of \$36,400!

TRAS Lecture Series 2017

"Collaborations in Language: Research Partnerships and Commitments in Nepal"

TRAS is thrilled that Dr. Mark Turin, Associate Professor of Anthropology, UBC, has agreed to give a presentation on working with marginalised Himalayan communities to preserve their language and culture, especially with the Thangmi speaking people of Dolakha, Nepal — the same people for whom TRAS rebuilt 200 toilets after the April 2015 earthquake.

Mark is a brilliant speaker, who will draw on two decades of work in Nepal to deepen our knowledge of the collaborations and partnerships which are helping to revitalise Indigenous Himalayan languages and cultures and to show how these issues interconnect with contemporary Nepali politics.

Please join us and bring your friends!



Tuesday, April 25, 2017

7.30pm (doors open at 7pm)
Unitarian Church of Vancouver
(Fireside Room)
949 W. 49th Ave (at Oak)

Parking in church car park and on street

~ admission by donation ~
~ refreshments and handicrafts ~

The full abstract and Mark's bio can be found on the TRAS website www.tras.ca under *Latest Updates*.

Toilets Help Make Clean Environment

By FSS



Education, Education, Education!

So, the toilets and the library (see Page 7) are the 'immediate' kind of project — where TRAS asks just once for donations to a specific project, the results of which can be seen and enjoyed within months. And your response has been terrific.

But there are other projects which TRAS is passionate about, all to do with education — for without education, the lives of the Himalayan children will never improve. These projects are long-term and results are slow to see — but truly there is nothing more important than to support education for the village children and youth. TRAS educational projects cover **SPONSORSHIP, SCHOOLING AND SCHOLARSHIP**, to help the children from an early age right up to career training, in order to improve their lives and those of their families and communities.

Please help TRAS keep these so-important projects going with your generous donations.

Here's an overview of the three needs.

SPONSORSHIP

Through the TRAS sponsorship program, you can support the education of a child in the Himalayan region, one of the poorest in the world. TRAS members currently sponsor 113 children in northern India, at several Indian and Tibetan schools and settlements, and 9 at universities.

Featured below are 4 children at the Tibetan Women's Centre in Rajpur, Dehradun, who currently need sponsoring. The Tibetan Women's Centre was established in 1965. It is a charitable registered body for Tibetan refugees in India. Today it is one of the oldest Tibetan Handicraft Centres in exile. TRAS paid for the carpet weaving looms and has often brought their wonderful chair mats and carpets to Canada for sale.

The cost to sponsor a child at the Centre is \$220 each year. We will send you a charitable tax receipt. TRAS sends \$200 to the Centre (in two disbursements, in February and June); we use the remaining funds to cover administration costs. Please contact the TRAS office for more details: info@tras.ca or 604-224-5133.



Ngawang Tselha is a 7-year-old girl studying in Stage 3 at SOS Montessori, Rajpur, as a Day scholar. Her family source of income is only from her grandmother's monthly wages working as an Ayah in the crèche and from her mother's petty winter business and so it is not possible for them to cover all their daily needs and school fees.



Ngawang Chonden is a 6-year-old boy at SOS Montessori, Rajpur. He is in need of sponsorship to cover his education fees. The only source of income for this family of 4 is their father's wages working as an embosser at the Tibetan Women's Centre.



Tenzin Dhadel is a 6-year-old boy. He has one older brother and they live with his mother, grandmother and grandfather who has diabetes and urine ulcer. Their only source of income is from his mother's and grandmother's monthly wages which make it impossible to meet daily needs, medical expenses and school fees.



Tenzin Tsetan is a 6-year-old girl currently in Stage 3 at SOS Montessori, Rajpur. She has one older brother who is also in school. They are both being raised by a single mother. The only source of income for the family is from their grandmother who works at the Tibetan Women's Centre as a woolen baller. Their grandfather is semi paralyzed and so their mother must stay at home to look after him.

SCHOOLING and TRAINING

TRAS is currently running three schooling projects: one each for Tibetan, Indian and Nepali youngsters.

- **CTA Nurses Training.** For many years TRAS supported the training of community health workers for the Tibetan settlements in India and Nepal. As things became more settled in the 1980s and 90s, TRAS was asked to pay to train registered nurses for the Tibetan clinics and even hospitals which were being set up in the settlements. Since then, TRAS has been paying for never less than 8 students each year — and every one of them (except two who sadly contracted TB and one who married and moved away) completed her training and has been employed, enriching her own life and those of her family and community. Luckily this project is fully funded for the year from June 2017 to May 2018, thanks to a generous donor. But after that — we will need funding to keep this project going. Does anyone belong to a nurses' group which might like to fund such a training for a young Tibetan woman? The cost is around \$875 per student per year.
- **READI Nepal.** In the north westernmost tip of Nepal change is in the air. The small local charity Rural Empowerment and Development Initiative (READI) is in the forefront of the change — it has introduced the concept of decent schooling for impoverished village children, seated kids from different castes at the same table, introduced the idea of hygiene and sanitation, trained parents in useful skills and opened a café! How wise READI was to look ahead, for now a road and bridge are connecting Tibet to this remote corner of Nepal, and tourists will be flocking in. READI is ready for them, with parents running tea stalls on the road, with a welcoming first rate café in Simikot town, and with children soon to be trained in practical jobs such as building and plumbing for the guest houses which will be needed. All profits will go towards the board and keep for 20 children and the schooling for 30 (10 now back home with their parents). Extra tuition is given to the TRAS kids, along with health care, at the hostel, and they regularly get top marks at school. Their parents are happy. Two more teachers are going to Rato Bangala School in Kathmandu for modern training. Altogether a flourishing project! Well worth the \$23,100 requested from TRAS for the coming year.
- **Voice of Children.** The numbers are mind-boggling! A small staff and many volunteers have helped well over 200 children each year to flourish at school, thanks to after-school tuition, educational outings and group activities. 88 children have been given excellent computer skills training. Over 900 kids and parents now belong to the 20 village libraries — and with their extended knowledge these kids are winning prizes at school. Children's groups, female teenager clubs and women's groups see hundreds come out to learn about their rights, health, safety and opportunities. 100 women have been signed up in a new labour initiative, which gives them tools, help with schooling for their children and a pension! Every year the VOC staff dream up new ways to improve the lives of so many and to pester all levels of government to give these people what is theirs by right. Progress has been made — but as Raghu, who coordinates it all, says, there are miles to go before they sleep. Let's help them get there by continuing to support all aspects of this innovative project! \$28,600 needed this year.



SCHOLARSHIP

Check out the November 2016 newsletter (under *News* on the TRAS website www.tras.ca) for the full story of the TRAS Scholarship Fund. The number of students being supported by TRAS members through the Scholarship Fund currently stands at 12 and will increase to 16 this year in June. They are chosen by our local partners, and so far everyone is female, showing us the particularly great need to support the girls in these impoverished regions. Their degrees range from honours math (4!), teacher training and banking to two Masters in geography and anthropology! These girls are bright and just need the opportunity.

Thanks to two very generous TRAS donors you will have the opportunity to double your donation to the Scholarship Fund. These donors have offered to match up to \$7500 any donation to the Scholarship Fund. Therefore, a donation of \$500 becomes \$1000, enough to fund one year of studies for one of these incredibly motivated young women. Please give these deserving young women the gift of education and a chance to lift themselves out of poverty.

Please donate now to the Scholarship Fund and give more deserving students a chance. Every dollar counts, as we build up this fund to be able to support more students.

TRAS is still receiving anonymous donations via Canada Helps for the completed toilet project: we are hoping the donors will be happy for us to put the money towards an educational project, where funding is definitely needed!
Please let us know — thank you!

A further success ... again funded by YOU!

In December 2016, TRAS asked you to furnish a complete library for Munsel-ling School in the Spiti Valley. A thriving institution with outlying schools, teaching 600 students, this remote complex had just been accredited to teach to Grade 12, but lacked that essential ingredient ... **a library, and again you came through — and funded the entire project cost of \$19,591!**



Lama Tashi, the founder, is so grateful for this wonderful support and sends his heartfelt thanks!

One donor in particular made a substantial donation, and the library will be named in his honour — wait until the library is completed later this year to see a photo of the plaque, and to see photos of the excellent facility being created through all your donations.

THANK YOU!

These girls will soon be enjoying their new library

Board Member Retires

Russil Wvong, President, writes:

Cynthia Bunbury joined the TRAS board in September 2015, but she's been involved with TRAS for many years before that, working with students at Sutherland Secondary School in North Vancouver to widen their horizons on social issues and to raise thousands of dollars for TRAS. Unfortunately, she's had to step down from the TRAS board, due to her workload, but she'll be continuing her fundraising work at Sutherland.

Thank you, Cynthia, for being one of TRAS' most faithful friends!

TRAS

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

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

Name: _____
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- ☐ Please send event information and newsletters by e-mail
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☐ attached is my cheque # _____ for \$ _____ (all cheques payable to TRAS)

☐ charge my VISA/MasterCard No. _____ Expiry Date ____ / ____

Please allocate to:

- ☐ Sponsorship \$ _____ for (name of child/youth) _____
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Mail to: TRAS, 1183 Melville Street, Vancouver BC V6E 2X5
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Thank you for your generous support to TRAS!

A tax receipt will be issued for all donations.

Charity Registration #130620743RR0001

