



President's Message

It has been seven months since the first devastating earthquake in Nepal and still the people continue their struggle to recover. Prices of goods have escalated, funding and materials for rebuilding are slow to get through to those in need, and income from visitors and tourism has declined significantly. In addition, many people are traumatized and living in fear of being trapped inside buildings.

On September 20th, 2015, the Nepal government passed the long awaited constitution. While many in the country are pleased with this development, others feel marginalized by the result. Protests in Nepal's southern provinces bordering India have sadly resulted in a number of deaths. India has responded by halting shipments of goods into Nepal causing severe shortages of essential supplies, further crippling the country and the tourist industry.

Despite all of these hardships, heartache and challenges, the Nepalese search for ways to rebuild. Their resilience and optimism is evident in their efforts to move forward.

The TRAS Board of Directors has been exploring ways to help with rebuilding in Nepal. We have learned that villages in the more remote areas of the region are still not receiving much needed assistance to replace infrastructure damage. For this reason, we have assessed opportunities to help those hardest hit areas most in need. On page 2, you can read about the project we have chosen: to replace 200 toilets in Dolakha, Nepal. This area was flattened by the second large tremor on May 12th.



Of course, we also continue to support development initiatives in the Himalayan region through a variety of projects, programs, and education sponsorship. The scholarship program has been so successful we are now looking to expand it.

Through the generosity of TRAS donors and volunteers, we continue to give Himalayan children and youth an opportunity to improve their health and living conditions. We give our heartfelt THANKS to you for your past support and for thinking of us during this season of giving.

On behalf of all of us at TRAS, and our overseas partners, I wish you and your loved ones a safe and delightful holiday and all the very best for good health and happiness in 2016.

Cheryl Sullivan, President

Twin your toilet through TRAS ... with a toilet in Nepal!



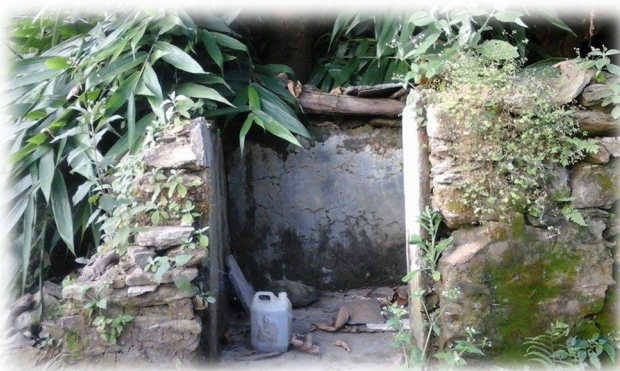
As Cheryl mentions on page 1, the TRAS board has chosen as its rebuilding project the proposal to build up to 200 latrines in villages in the Dolakha district. We wanted to select a project which would bring long term benefits to the local people, and this one fits the bill. Dolakha had done well over the past few years at encouraging hundreds of villagers to build latrines, use them and maintain them properly, to the point where the district had received recognition as an 'Open Defecation Free Zone'. This was a real feather in their cap, which added to the misery when just about every latrine was reduced to rubble in the May 12 earthquake. Of necessity, people took to the fields again – which we know from experience can lead to polluted water, illness and lack of privacy, particularly for girls and women.



Rebuilding these latrines will improve health, reduce child mortality (as it did in the villages around Manali when TRAS funded the building of over 1000 latrines there) and bring comfort and pride back to the villagers. These people lost everything, and have to start from scratch to rebuild their homes and their lives. At least we can help with the latrines!

The TRAS rebuilding fund stands at \$17,059! Enough to buy 82¼ latrines so far! Now we need to raise funds to supply the rest of the families with materials to build a latrine – will you help us?

**Twin your toilet with one in Nepal – and every time you use yours at home,
think about how happy you have made a family there!
Twin one on behalf of a loved one or friend as well.**



Most were reduced to rubble – this one was badly damaged and unsafe

Each latrine costs \$210 for a simple structure containing a ceramic footplate which drains into two cement-lined pits just outside. When one pit is full, the other pit is used, while the first side dries and then is cleaned out. Each latrine has a water pipe leading to it and a tap. The water supply was damaged during the 'quakes, but was fixed within 10 days. Now we need to add the tap and the latrine.

This brings back happy memories of the 'Loonie for a Loo' campaign run by long time TRAS member, Jessie Kaye, whose daughter made a huge cardboard cut-out of an outhouse and people in Hamilton rose to the occasion and literally covered it with loonies! This wonderful gesture paid for several of the toilets built around Manali.

Here's how the cost breaks down:

\$34 for the footplate

\$76 for cement and rebar for the floor and walls

\$100 for roofing, water pipes and tap

Now let's see how many toilets we can build for the Nepalese villages!

Report from the Field

We have just received a report from Lama Paljor in Sikkim about the lunch program at his little school in Phadamchen village. TRAS originally funded this program for one year, while Lama Paljor got the school going, with the bamboo walls and wet, muddy floors transformed into a brick building (thanks to a French NGO's support). Lama Paljor had quickly discovered that the village children would go home at lunchtime to a meagre or even no meal. Many had a long walk to home and back. The result was tired, hungry children, often late, who could not concentrate and were often sick.

TRAS does not take on long-term maintenance projects, preferring to help local people develop sustainable projects. So we promised a year's worth of lunches – then another, while Lama Paljor looked into building a greenhouse and sourcing other income. Last April we told him that we would provide 6 more months of support, while the greenhouse (which TRAS helped fund) was built. Unfortunately prolonged torrential rains and landslides (in part due to the upheavals of the earthquakes in the Himalayas) have delayed the construction. The materials have been bought and the land levelled, but construction has not yet started.



Lama Paljor has sent the 6 month report: the program has helped enormously, because this meal is the most substantial meal of the day for most of the children, as they come from very poor families. The children appear healthier and they are doing well in their studies. They are able to stay all day in school and no longer fall asleep in class. There is less sickness. Their mothers can now work and almost all are farming or doing road work. But Lama Paljor feels he still cannot ask the families to contribute as their situation is so limited as far as earning money is concerned; for instance, the road work is inconsistent – they may work one month and then there is no work for a month or so.

TRAS is so glad the lunch program had such positive results, and is loath to see the children backslide, so we have offered an extension of three months. Will you help us fund this project? \$1,980 will feed 50 children for three months. And remember to look at the www.tibetansocks.com website to order the colourful cozy socks that also support this project!

Speaker Series 2016

The first TRAS event in 2016 will be a talk given by Dr Mark Turin, Associate Professor of Anthropology, University of British Columbia, on the topic of post-earthquake Nepal and how the country is doing after the physical earthquakes of last spring and the political 'earthquakes' of the fall, which rumbled around the issues of the new constitution and subsequent turmoil. For over 20 years Mark's focus has been the Himalayan region, particularly Nepal, and he knows the country intimately. This will be a fascinating, well-informed, and up to date talk.*

Date: Friday, March 4, 2016

Time: doors open at 7pm; talk at 7.30pm

Place: Sutherland Secondary School
1860 Sutherland Avenue, North Vancouver

Handicrafts for sale

Chai will be served

Entry by donation to TRAS

* Please email or phone the TRAS office now, if you wish to be reminded of this important talk nearer the time, or in case there has to be a change of date or venue. We can send out a general email, but for those who do not have email, we need to receive a phone call from you. Thank you!

The TRAS Scholarship Fund: A Challenge

TRAS has embarked on an exciting initiative. The TRAS Scholarship Fund (TSF) is now in the third year of its pilot program.

Our partners overseas had expressed a need to provide post-secondary education, especially for girls in remote isolated villages in the Himalayas. In response to this request TRAS initiated a pilot program with our longstanding partner, Rinchen Zangpo Society for Spiti Development, which runs Munsel-ling School in the Spiti Valley. Each year two worthy students have been selected to have their university studies supported by TRAS. Each student receives \$1000CN per year for 3 years.

Currently we have two female students completing their B.A.degree and four female students enrolled in a B.Sc.program. These six girls are bright, determined students from poor rural homes with no hope of continuing their education without TRAS support. Not only are they role models for other students in their isolated villages but they wish to return as educators themselves to Spiti.

To quote Tashi Angmo, the most recent candidate selected, “To be a good teacher and serve my younger brothers and sisters of Spiti Valley would be my life’s greatest achievement.”



Due to the success of the pilot project we have invited two trusted TRAS partners from other regions of India to submit applications to the TSF.

The Dekyiling Handicraft Centre in Dehradun is a Tibetan community long supported by TRAS through projects and sponsorship. In response to the TSF opportunity Kesang Wangdu, the manager, replied, “I am extremely grateful to TRAS for supporting children for post-secondary education. Earlier we have had children needing sponsorship but we failed to get new sponsors after class X. I therefore have no words to thank TRAS for supporting this genuine problem faced by many students after class XII.”

The Voice of Children project, run by two Indian NGOs in Nainital and Almora, will also be selecting two students. Raghu, the co-ordinator, writes: “Especially for girls it will be great opportunity to become independent because after 12th standard generally their parents do not allow them to continue their studies and they go to their marriage ceremony. Generally their husbands work in very low paid work and poor working conditions in Metro cities of India and after marriage the girls face more challenges in their life. This effort can change their life.”

A very generous TRAS donor has offered to match Scholarship Fund donations up to \$10,000. Therefore, \$500 will fund a deserving student for one year [\$1000] of university education.

Please donate today!!

Give the gift of education to bright girls like Tashi Angmo
and help them to lift their communities out of poverty.

Lynn Beck, Scholarship Fund Director

Have Computer, Will Travel

We mentioned in the Summer 2015 newsletter that the Voice of Children project in northern India had replaced the early childhood education program (now run by the government) with a computer training program for youth. In the villages around Almora a computer teacher was hired and a room was transformed into the computer centre, in a central location which most of the villagers were able to reach. But in the Nainital district, where the local NGO Vimarsh runs the Voice of Children project, there were no teachers, nor a central convenient spot to run such courses. Hence the travelling young woman who is running their courses. This sounded like an interesting concept, so we asked for the full story.



Vimarsh writes... "Miss Bhawna Nainwal belongs to village Sakdina in the Betalghat block of Nainital district. She completed her studies up to class 12 from Semalkha Inter College and then applied for private higher education program (*correspondence course*) and is presently in the third year of her B.A. course. Prior to her higher education, she enrolled for a three month basic computer course in Bhowali. When Vimarsh decided to commence its computer training program in Semalkha Nyay Panchayat for students in the villages, it conducted a survey and found out that no-one except for Bhawna had the prior basic knowledge of computer. Since the organization required personnel for giving the training, it approached Bhawna for this purpose and asked her to undergo one month revision of the course she had previously enrolled in, so that she could train her students thereafter. Initially, Vimarsh organized a training program for one month, for which Bhawna walked 2km every day from her home to get trained in Semalkha. Thereafter, the first training centre was opened in Jinauli which is 3km away from Sakdini, and Bhawna walked there every day to give training to the students. After three months, the training centre was shifted to another village, Tari, which is again 2-3km distant from her home. When Bhawna was asked for her experience as a trainer she said that it's a great initiative to train students in such remote villages and the training is instilling confidence in and enhancing the skills of the students. Currently, she is travelling every day to train school students in Tari at appropriate timings so that their schooling is not affected. She has trained 38 students in Jinauli and is training 32 students in Tari. Apart from the students, 2 teachers of primary school, 2 *aganbadi* (*child care*) teachers and 1 member of our women's group are also being trained.

Besides, in the free time, Bhawana gives training to the women groups on domestic violence and women protection act."

When she was asked for a personal comment, here's what Bhawana says about her experience... "I earned a new identity in the society. People have started knowing me as the computer trainer. I am being able to handle the students; I was given respect by my family members and by the society that a girl earned employment in the form of a computer trainer. Whatever I am earning today I spent it as per my wishes and even support my family financially. This has also instilled confidence in me that I can achieve anything. Besides, I have become capable of talking openly on women's issues with the women and adolescents at village level. I would like to say to the students, especially girls, that it's a great privilege for them to undergo a computer training program in their villages, thus, they should make the most of it and imbibe confidence to stand up on their feet".



Bhawana's day starts early, with household chores and working in the family field, then she walks to the village where she is teaching computer skills. After she returns home, she spends the evening studying for the BA exams. She had to go to the university (50 km away) to register and take the entrance exam, and at the end of the year she will return to sit the final exam. What a win-win situation! TRAS and Vimarsh are lucky to have the help of such a clever young woman, and the opportunity has given her confidence, job experience and an income. Our congratulations to Bhawana!

TRAS Projects supported this year

The TRAS Board of Directors and the Office Manager, Joanne MacLeod, have been diligent in reducing costs wherever possible. We have moved to a less expensive office space, reduced office hours and looked at every area of our expenses for reduction. The TRAS Treasurer, Kevin Yuen, advises that we have now spent all income from investments and must fundraise for all future project commitments. Therefore, the Directors have agreed to cease accepting new project applications until we are able to ensure that we can secure funding for our commitments.

Here's what we committed to this year.

Projects:

Tibetan partners

- **Department of Education, Central Tibetan Administration**, Dharmasala: Nurses training for 8 students. \$5,977 (\$747 per student for one year - fully funded until 2018)
- **Dekyiling Tibetan Handicraft Centre**, north India: final year of crèche maintenance for weavers' children. \$1,100

Indian partners

- **Voice of Children**, in 12 villages near Nainital and Almora, north India: multi-faceted education project for nearly 300 children. \$26,358 (\$87.86 per child for one year)
- **Voice of Children** remote libraries maintenance: 20 libraries. \$5,388 (\$269 per library for one year)
- **Sikkim School Nutrition**, Phadamchen, Sikkim: lunch program for 50 children for six months (April 1 – October 31). \$3,969 with a further three months (November 1 – January 31) \$1,980
- **Sikkim greenhouse**, Phadamchen, Sikkim. \$440 (also supported by Tibetan Children's Education Foundation, USA)
- **Munsel-ling School**, Spiti, north India: Agriculture compound wall final payment. \$7,848

Nepali partners

- **READI Nepal**, Humla District, Nepal: education and hostel for 30 children. \$23,100 (\$770 per child, including income generation training and health information for families)
- **READI Nepal**, Humla District, Nepal: second payment for start-up costs and training for the Humla Delights Café. \$2,708 (one year project)
- **Nepal Library Foundation**, Kathmandu, Nepal: computer training for village women final payment. \$275 (one year project)



The Scholarship Fund:

- **Rinchen Zangpo Society for Spiti Development**: 6 university students for one year. \$6,000

The TRAS Rebuilding Fund:

- **Dolakha District**, Nepal: \$17,059

Total: \$102,204

We are well over half way there – please help us achieve our goal!

Sponsorship Report

Russil Wvong, Sponsorship Director, thanks all of you who do the very important work of helping to educate and care for needy children in India through the TRAS sponsorship program! It's the time of year when we renew our commitment by sending in our sponsorship payments for 2016. If you have already done so, please accept our thanks. If you still have to do so, please accept this as a reminder, and our thanks in advance!

They say it takes a village to raise a child – in our case it takes loving strangers a world away from the Indian villages and Tibetan settlements the children call home. And the results are heart-warming, as we see children gain an education which will lead them to employment and independence!

If you wish to learn more about the TRAS sponsorship program for school-aged children and post-secondary education, please contact Russil at sponsorship@tras.ca

Kick off to Fall Dinner

What a delightful evening October 27 was! The Café Kathmandu glowed, Deborah's songs soared and the noise level rose as friends greeted each other and new acquaintances were welcomed! It was a great evening, with delicious food, and everyone enjoyed themselves. Do join us for the next of these lively events, to meet TRAS directors and members, and to learn a little more about TRAS projects. Grateful thanks to Deborah, who volunteered her musical talents at the last minute when Aisha could not join us, and to those who donated to the READI Nepal and Scholarship projects!

Hunt for special gifts at the TRAS Handicraft Open House!

Visit the TRAS office at Vantage Point, 1183 Melville Street, Vancouver, and Joanne will be there to show you our lovely selection of hand woven shoulder bags and chair mats made by Tibetan weavers, soft angora and sheep's wool toques, gloves and shawls made by Manali village women, delicate scarves hand made in Nepal, Tibetan cards, and Paul Horn's haunting Nepali and Tibetan music CD. Just ask for Joanne at the front desk.

Drop by the first two weeks of December, on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays between 10am and 2pm (Dec 1-3 and 8-10). The office is easily reached by bus or sky train and there is plenty of metered parking right outside or in the parkade just east of the office. Phone 604 224 5133.



To...

- the three TRAS members who have volunteered to join the newsletter mail-out team. Welcome to Shirley, Sue and Carol!
- the four members who offered sheets and tables to the Tibetans resettling in the Vancouver area - their donations were much appreciated
- the Chartwell Churchill Residence which gave us the opportunity to sell TRAS handicrafts at its lovely craft fair on November 21
- **wonderful volunteers** Beck Lamb for newsletter layout and Maria Rubinchik for website and Facebook postings

TRAS

Supporting health and education for children and youth in the Himalayas

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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 (tras.ca)

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



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

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

- ☐ Please send event information and newsletters by e-mail
☐ Please send me information on Planned Giving

- ☐ 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) _____
☐ Project Donation \$ _____ for (name of project) _____
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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.

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