



TRAS Annual Projects Report

April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021

This has been an extraordinary and difficult year for the entire world because of the COVID-19 pandemic, and our hearts went out to our partners in India and Nepal. Those two countries suffered particularly from the mass movements of migrant workers who were forced through lack of work and wages to return to their villages, inadvertently taking the virus with them.

Our TRAS members have been incredibly generous in response to this calamity and we have been able to offer help in a small but meaningful way. Where TRAS has sent roughly \$75,000 to \$80,000 in project funding over the past few years, this past year we sent \$95,625, with \$4,570 waiting to go and a further \$21,000 raised and ready to go before the year end. THANK YOU on behalf of the TRAS board and our partners in the field.

Hers is an overview of the projects undertaken in the 2020-2021 year:

#293: CTA Nurses Training

– our 8 students all continued to study, but remotely. Practicums and exams were delayed, of course, but the Tibetan Department of Education was expecting to select new students as soon as possible, and TRAS will support them. **\$5,178 for that year**, is fully funded from donations.

#297: Voice of Children Education Project



– at first all classes and contact with the village children ceased (and while the staff were waiting it out, they turned to helping the most needy in the villages – see later). But as soon as the government allowed the staff to travel to our project villages, classes were set up, with masks, hand sanitizers, social distancing and clear instructions for the children’s safety. These classes were a life saver, as schools were all closed, but the older students were able to continue their studies for important exams, the younger children did not miss out on early learning, and the all –important work of teaching human rights, good health habits, etc. continued. The two computer classes were able to keep going, but of course new ideas like driving lessons for girls and other innovations were put on hold. All the usual extra activities which broaden the children’s minds, experience and view of a wider world were completed virtually. We applaud the dedicated staff who kept things going in spite of lock downs, personal illnesses and the dire situation in that hard-hit region. During the year **TRAS sent \$31,418**, of which \$13,523 were new donations, the rest coming from general funds. (Also during that year, the government of India introduced more

stringent rules for sending funds to Indian charities, and our Voice of Children project, run by two charities, has now divided into two separate components – AMAN and VIMARSH).

#300: READI Nepal Education Project

– Humla is so isolated that the community luckily did not suffer much from the pandemic. The school and hostel were closed by government order from time to time, then reopened, but the



children were helped even when at home and all seems to be well with them. READI is busy constructing a new school so that they have a permanent location, but of course that is very much on hold at present and we are not sure what the future holds. The good news is that the older students were able to sit their school leaving exam and all did well. Two students gained admission to technical institutes, but whether their classes have

started yet we have not heard. **\$17,000 was sent**, with \$12,836.88 in new donations towards this amount.

#328: IDEA Midwifery Training

– Of course the institute had to be closed and the students sent home. Our 4 TRAS students continued studying from home and TRAS, thanks to a generous donor, was able to send an extra \$2,400 to pay for computers and internet access for them in their remote villages. They were able to take their final exams and somehow did a three-month internship. The government then closed all technical training facilities, so new students have not yet been selected, although TRAs intends to pay for 10 rural students when things start up again.

#329: Munsel-Ling School, Spiti, Flush Toilet Project



– the building of these much-needed sanitary facilities had started when the entire region went into lockdown, and the project was put on hold because of lack of labourers and materials. **\$5,000 was sent as a first payment**. The project was slated to be completed later in 2021 (we have just heard yesterday that the toilets are successfully finished and in constant use – the photos will appear in the September newsletter).

#330: Voice of Children Emergency Response Project –

While the VOC staff were unable to continue education projects, they reached out to the local government and received permission to travel to remote villages to take emergency food and sanitation rations to the most needy families. They also were able to supply the village isolation



centres (where the returning migrant workers were housed) with urgently needed supplies. They did a fantastic job, on the front line, you might say, of rescue workers, using their considerable organizational skills, their enormous energy and their innovation to bring relief to hundreds of families. As the situation became even direr due to thousands of returning migrant workers and with no opportunity for local day work, VOC

continued to help in so many ways, and thanks to our donors meeting the need, TRAS sent 4 payments amounting to **\$18,392**.

#331: Snow Lion PPE Project

– an urgent appeal for supplies for the Tibetan settlements in Nepal came in November 2020



from the Tibetan Department of Health. The pandemic had spread rapidly, exacerbated by the return of thousands of workers from India. TRAS was impressed with the sensible precautions taken by the Tibetan communities themselves to keep their residents as safe as possible and to prepare for the arrival of the virus. TRAS has worked over the years with the Snow Lion Foundation in Nepal, the Tibetan body which looks after schools, clinics, health centres and an old people's home for the Tibetans in the settlements and scattered

throughout the country. TRAS agreed to send \$14,000 to supply the clinics and health centres with full PPE and to provide masks, hand sanitizer, cleaning supplies and other needed supplies to the schools and old people's home as well. **\$7,000** was sent immediately and thanks to their swift precautions these communities seem to have done remarkably well. They also set up a building to house the sick, where they could be cared for and fed. They were also able to supply food to those completely on their own. TRAs members sent in \$10,972, and we are currently awaiting a financial statement before sending the rest of the project funds.

#332: Munsel-Ling School Rocket Stoves

– this project was to replace the old very smoky wood burning stoves with 65 of a new type designed specially for the Himalayan region. This design cuts down 90% of the damaging



smoke and produces the same amount of heat for half as much wood. This will improve the health of the students and staff and will be a great benefit to the environment, as forests are in short supply in that desert landscape. TRAS was able to approve this project in March 2021, and hearing that the local supplier had 30 of the stoves on hand, and labour available for installation, sent the first payment of **\$9,237**. These 30 stoves were delivered and installed, in readiness for the reopening of the school in the summer. The rest of the stoves would be ordered for whenever the road to Spiti opened for another delivery and for labourers to arrive. The Spiti Valley sensibly locked itself down completely in April 2020 and consequently has suffered minimally health-wise, although most projects and schooling were on hold.

By March 31, 2021, TRAS had received \$20,000 in memory of Ray Yee, a passionate Vancouver supporter of the Tibetans, who had worked tirelessly on their behalf for many years. We were all saddened by Ray's sudden and unexpected death, but touched that his family and friends asked TRAS to handle the donations sent in his memory. It was decided to fund projects for the Tibetan schoolchildren in Arunachal Pradesh – the children who did not have the chance to come to Canada in the Canadian government's resettlement project. Just a note to bring you up to date – over \$40,000 have been received and hundreds of children are now enjoying new sports equipment, musical instruments, refurbished school buildings and more in the most remote of the Tibetan settlements in India.

TRAS acknowledges the wonderful generosity of our donors and thanks them particularly for stepping up in the time of the pandemic AND continuing to support the usual ongoing projects as well. And my personal thanks to our directors who help with projects: Megha Shakya who is our contact with READI Nepal and IDEA, Sanjeev Singh who is our contact with AMAN and VIMARSH, Videsh Kapoor who knows Munsel-ling School so well, Raheesa Jina who has taken on the Snow Lion Foundation work, and Kate McInnes who is alerting people through social media about our projects. And a special thank you to Joanne McLeod in the office who keeps everything ticking over!