



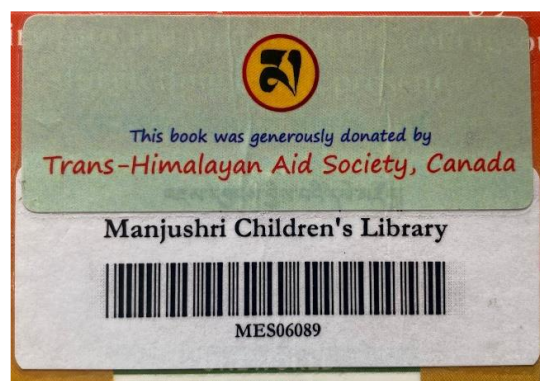
## Education, Education, Education

*“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use  
to change the world” ~ Nelson Mandela*

His Holiness the Dalai Lama would agree — in fact, when the Tibetans first fled to India in 1959 one of his most urgent wishes was that the children should be educated, both in traditional Tibetan and in modern western subjects.

It has long been the mandate of TRAS to support education for children and youth in the Himalayas and, whereas for the past two years we have been concentrating on COVID-19 relief, this year has seen a variety of projects to support education for Tibetan and Himalayan children, many funded thanks to the **Yosef Wosk Family Foundation**.

In Dharamsala, Tibetan children have a small, bright, cheerful library filled with books in Tibetan and English. The library is run by Manjushri Education, a group consisting in part of people who worked for the Department of Education of the Tibetan government in exile and who saw a real need for books on topics beyond the standard textbooks. There are over 2,000 Tibetan and Himalayan children in the Dharamsala area, and hundreds of them are already enjoying the library, its many programs — and over 700 recently purchased books (half in English and half in Tibetan), each with a label inside stating ‘donated by TRAS’.



## Education, Education, Education (cont'd)

A further initiative of Manjushri Education was to supply Tibetan youngsters with building blocks with Tibetan alphabet letters. These solid, colourful wooden blocks, carefully sanded and painted, are a delight.



Each block has two Tibetan characters on it (in the printed style of u-chen and the more cursive, informal style of ume), pictures of objects, numbers and shapes. They are fun to use, will build fine motor skills and will help children become used to the alphabet of their traditional language. Manjushri Education has supplied every Tibetan nursery, pre-school and primary school in India and Nepal with two sets of the blocks, reaching about 4,000 children: and they have offered the sets at 50% of cost to Tibetan parents in India and Nepal and everywhere else Tibetans have settled. Again, the Yosef Wosk Family Foundation has been a much-appreciated donor towards this innovative project.



A decade ago, Yosef Wosk, the lover of libraries, helped TRAS open village libraries in the villages in our Voice of Children project area. Twelve villages in the Nainital and Almora districts of north India have thriving little libraries with large memberships of children. Local schoolteachers appreciate these libraries, as do adults in the villages. Often, they had never seen a book before, never mind a current newspaper. These libraries have become a hub of village life, with lots of information about government programs, agricultural and health advice, as well as a source of books and current news. After ten years the floor matting had worn out and more books were urgently needed. The Foundation came to the rescue, and now each library has new matting, new books and more periodicals.

(LEFT: One of the original libraries with an influx of new books. Note the Safety First book held by a mother.)

(continued on Page 3)



## Education, Education, Education (cont'd)



And at the request of Voice of Children staff, the Foundation has supplied the funds to open 10 new libraries in even more distant villages. The requests for more libraries came from the local children and the Voice of Children staff welcomed these requests. It proves that the first libraries are a great success. It also gives the VOC staff a foot in the door, as it were, to these remote villages. Now they can visit and gradually suggest other means of help in the form of such things as women's meetings, health camps, meetings for teenaged girls and agricultural and irrigation suggestions.



Munsel-ling School in the Spiti Valley has a wonderful library, the Dr. Yosef Wosk Library, consisting of several rooms, each dedicated to a different subject. The hundreds of children at the School visit the library on a daily basis and even in holiday times the Library is kept open for them to use. With the ever-increasing school population and the academic success of the School, a supply of new books would be very welcome, we were told. Sadly the staff person who looked after the library amongst other duties died this past winter (see In Memoriam). A young man, Chhering, has been hired to replace him and is learning the ropes. We are just waiting for a wish list of books from him for the Foundation to spring into action and answer this request up to \$2,250.



How the children's knowledge of their own culture and the wider world has been expanded! Yes, in some few instances they have access to computers and phones, though reception is 'iffy' in the mountains. But a book is always available!

*Top: One of the new libraries run by Aman  
Middle: Yosef Wosk library at Munsel-ling School  
Bottom: New matting and books in a new Vimarsh library*

## ~ ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING ~ Wednesday, September 20, 2023

The 61st annual general meeting of TRAS is planned for Wednesday, September 20 at 7.30pm PST. This meeting will be via Zoom so those from out of town may join too.

Please register with Joanne at the TRAS office  
604-224-5133 | [info@tras.ca](mailto:info@tras.ca)



## TRAS DINNER | Tuesday, June 13, 2023

### 7pm (doors open at 6pm)

Finally, the Board has decided it is worth trying to host a dinner again! It will be so satisfying to meet again in person! The last occasion when we met with members was at our dinner in February 2020, just before the pandemic took over our world.

Please join us for a tasty meal at the Mount Everest Kitchen and Grill, 538 Seymour Street, Vancouver. Chat with the TRAS directors and admire (and purchase!) handicrafts! For the set menu, please visit [here](https://tras.ca/news/) or go to <https://tras.ca/news/>

Space is limited so reserve your place quickly. Tickets are \$35: to pay by credit card, call 604-224-5133 or make an e-transfer to [info@tras.ca](mailto:info@tras.ca).

There is street parking, a parkade opposite the restaurant (\$12 for the evening), and for those who come by public transit, it is just a block and a half north on Seymour from Georgia.

(photo credit: doliska.com)



## A Wonderful Talk by Tsering Yangzom Lama



If you missed Tsering's talk, more's the pity! She talks as eloquently and as intelligently as she writes and it was a joy to welcome her as our guest via Zoom on February 27. The best you can do now, if you did miss her talk, is to rush out and buy her book, a beautiful and poignant portrayal of a Tibetan family fleeing from their homeland into Nepal, interspersed with the story, decades later, of some of the family's travails in Canada.

Mati Bernabei was one of the many TRAS supporters who listened to Tsering's talk. She writes: "Tsering Yangzom Lama's book, and her openness in sharing its meaning and meaningfulness to the Tibetan community, are an inspiration. Her on-line presentation, hosted by TRAS, felt like a fireside chat amongst friends."

(photo credit: Paige Crichter)

Many people in the TRAS community have travelled through the Himalayas and lived amongst people in the Tibetan refugee communities. Tsering took us back there and brought to light complexities and nuances of cultural and community life that are not always obvious to outsiders. I read the book slowly, in small chunks, because I needed to pause between sections to savour, and process, the beautiful, painful, hopeful, journey. Tsering wonderfully evoked the complexities of individuals, communities, and relationships.

Additionally, it's an 'every refugee' story, in some ways. As a public school teacher in Canada, I deeply appreciate the glimpse that Tsering provides into ways that many of our students and their families carry their histories in their hearts, bodies, minds, and souls, for generations."

*We Measure the Earth with Our Bodies* should be on your bookshelves!

TRAS hopes, in the future, to host another talk by an author of a book on Tibet.

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# Sponsorship Report

*by Joanne MacLeod*

Sponsoring a child so that they can receive an education is a wonderful way to bring Nelson Mandela's words and His Holiness' vision to fruition. TRAS always has a list of children whose future will be better thanks to the chance to go to school. For Tibetan children, there is the added benefit of learning about their ancestral home and keeping their culture alive.

The sponsors for these two children have had to give up their sponsorships this year and we are looking for others to step up and take over so that these children know they continue to have someone to support them.



Tanzin, a 13-year-old boy, was born in the remote and underdeveloped village of Chango, Lahul, Spiti. Farming is the main income resource of the village. His parents are both farmers and their income is very small. Tanzin has one sister and one brother. He attended day school in his village before receiving the opportunity to attend the Tibetan Children's Village School in Lower Chauntra. He is doing very well in all subjects. He likes to play football and Messi is his favourite player. Tanzin has been sponsored since 2020 but his sponsor has withdrawn from the sponsorship program in 2023. Spiti is 330km from Chauntra, and of course is cut off completely during the long winter months, so his parents rarely see him. It will be a comfort to him to know that someone in Canada cares enough to pay for his education.

**You can sponsor Tanzin for as little as  
\$40/month (\$480/year)**

Tsering is a 12-year-old girl. Her father is unemployed, and her mother works at the Tibetan Women's Centre in Rajpur as an apron weaver. She has one older sister and one younger brother who is studying in the Tibetan Homes School. Her mother's health is not good, and she needs to take medicine every day. The only source of income for the family comes from her mother which is not adequate for them to meet their daily expenses and their children's school fees. Tsering has been sponsored since 2017 but her sponsor has had to withdraw from the sponsorship program in early 2023. Tsering lives with her family and goes to the local school, so in her case it is just the lack of school fees that holds her back.

**You can sponsor Tsering for as little as  
\$20/month (\$240/year)**



**If you are able to help one of these children, please contact Joanne  
at the TRAS office | 604-224-5133 | [info@tras.ca](mailto:info@tras.ca)**

# In Memoriam

TRAS was saddened to hear of the death of a long-time supporter — **Robert Fitzpatrick**. He and his wife Marthena have long been supporters of TRAS and Marthena wrote to us after Robert died. We asked Marthena why they had chosen to support TRAS all these years — and she replied, “Robert and I supported various favourite charities that we came upon by reading or by chance. I think we learned about TRAS from a brochure in the program for some musical event.

*We became enamoured of the simple, grassroots and effective projects  
which we learned about and became TRAS supporters.*

After Robert died, and the Bob Walker Memorial Fund was mentioned in your newsletter, I knew this would be a wonderful way to help support TRAS and to leave a legacy for Robert and what he cared about in this world.”

Marthena has set up a Memorial Fund in memory of her husband, and we thank her most sincerely for her compassion in doing this.

TRAS had been honoured to help set up memorial funds for several past supporters and encourages those who wish to make donations to them to do so. TRAS Memorial Funds honour Robert Fitzpatrick, Bronwen Gouws, Georgina Henderson, Bob Walker and Ray Yee. You will find them on our TRAS website under ‘Donate Today’.

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TRAS also mourns the recent loss of a young member of one of our longest-standing partner organizations in India.

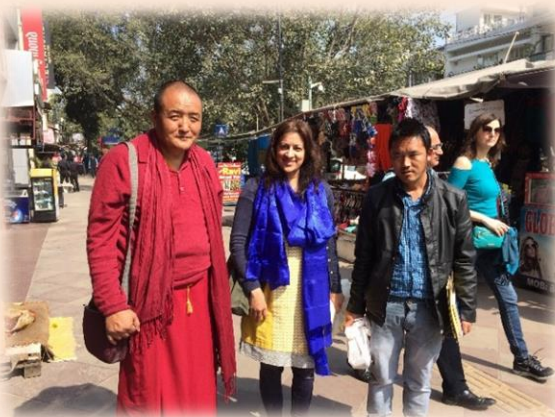
**Thuktan Yeshay** worked as Lama Tashi’s deputy, doing administrative work for the Rinchen Zangpo Society for Spiti Development and Munsel-ling School.

Thuktan corresponded with TRAS regularly about the sponsorship and scholarship programs and also about the many projects TRAS supported there. Joanne found him so helpful, and they chatted often. Thuktan had been orphaned as a child, and at the age of six his uncle managed to enrol Thuktan in the hostel in Dharamsala where the Spiti senior students live in the winter while they study for their Grade 11 and 12 exams. Lama Tashi guided the young Thuktan throughout his schooling and then arranged for TRAS to find a sponsor to help him go to university. The late Jessie Kaye sponsored him while he did his Bachelor of Science degree, followed by courses in Buddhist philosophy and leadership.

His favourite quote — as published on his Facebook page — was by the Dalai Lama: “We can live without religion, wealth and fame but humanity can’t survive without human affection.”

TRAS director Videsh Kapoor, who monitors our Munsel-ling School projects and who has visited the School many times, writes of Thuktan:

*“He did a lot to advance the activities of Munsel-Ling School through grant-writing, networking, and communications with partners. He was an invaluable assistant to Lama Tashi. He was kind, compassionate, and conducted himself with professionalism, grace, and humility.”*



(L) Lama Tashi, founder of Munsel-ling School, with Videsh Kapoor (TRAS director) and Thuktan | (R) Thuktan above a snowy Spiti

He is much missed by his wife of two years, the School and by TRAS.

## IDEA's Latest Idea is a Success!

Education and health overlap in this project. The Innovative Development Education Academy (IDEA) in Nepal seems to have come up with a winning solution to the government's closure of their 18-month midwifery course which TRAS had been supporting. In a previous newsletter we reported that the Ministry of Health had closed all such courses unless the institute running them had their own 100-bed hospital. That was an impossible dream for IDEA and yet they had the knowledge, the classrooms and the staff. They have come up with an accelerated advanced course, 3 months long, to train those who already have a medical background in how to handle difficult births. There would be 15 participants in the three month course and the course would be offered once each year, costing \$17,000 a year. It is called the Skilled Birth Attendant (SBA) course.

TRAS agreed to fund a pilot project in 2022, running from September to December. It had not finished when our last newsletter came out, but now we can report fully on its success.

### Here is the report from IDEA.

"The Ministry of Health has adopted a policy to offer SBA training to health personnel. There is high demand for skilled health personnel in Nepal specially in the rural communities. As per the changing trends and innovations taking place, health personnel need to be equipped by special training such as SBA to offer better services for safe deliveries in the communities. Thus, in consultation with the concerned authorities of the Health Ministry, IDEA managed SBA training in 2022.

This program started at the beginning of September 2022 in Pokhara with 15 participants. This program was completed by the second week of December 2022. All 15 participants have got a placement of work in their respective communities. The local Municipal authorities have already offered them employment contracts on a temporary basis. Upon their satisfactory performance they will be offered permanent positions when the Public Service Commission opens national vacancies. Priority will be given to those who are working on temporary placements. They are eligible to continue their services on temporary contracts until they are permanent staff.



IDEA believes that this training is a success as it is based on problem-based skill teaching learning. The participants apply their newly learnt skills and knowledge into their daily responsibilities as per the situational problems."

The 15 young women selected are all in their early twenties and had previously completed IDEA's 18-month midwifery course with its lengthy practicum in Pokhara hospitals. The SBA training added advanced training in handling emergencies. The 15 graduates came from far flung villages in the Nepalese countryside and have each returned to work in her own village. The results are promising and the Ministry of Health is satisfied. **TRAS has agreed to support the SBA training for four more years (2023-2026) and currently needs \$17,000 for the 2023 year. Any donations you make to this project will be matched by a generous donor.**



# 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**

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