



President's Report

As we approach this holiday season, I reflect back on all that has been achieved during 2024, TRAS's 62nd year supporting children and youth in the Himalayas.

In the following pages of this Winter Newsletter, you'll read about the remarkable efforts, accomplishments and future goals of the grassroots, locally-run organizations in the Himalayas that TRAS funds – providing education to children from remote impoverished villages, giving youth the opportunity for post-secondary education, and improving the health and living conditions of communities.



Their successes would not be possible without your donations.

On behalf of the entire TRAS board of directors, I send my sincere gratitude to you, our donors, for your generous support.

I hope you and your loved ones enjoy the holidays.

With best wishes for 2025

Russil Wvong | President, TRAS

A Successful Year!



Yes, there have been devastating floods, terrible pollution and problems galore, but look at the TRAS projects where local Tibetans, Indians and Nepalis have been quietly working away to improve lives in their villages and settlements. In nine villages in the foothills of the Himalaya and higher up in two remote villages in Zanskar and Spiti, in one tribal village in Nepal, in eight teaching hospitals around India, in 15 tiny birthing centres in Nepal, and in seven Tibetan settlements in north India your dollars have been changing lives for the better! And if you directly helped one person, you may be assured that help will spread out to improve life for many.

We have chosen a few personal stories to remind you that 'projects' are not just words on the computer but real people whose lives **you** have benefited.

(photo: Rainbow School's TRAS library at top right)

A nurse in training (CTA Nurses Training for eight Tibetan students)

Dawa Lhamo comes from a Tibetan settlement in the far northwest corner of Nepal and travelled all the way to the southern tip of the subcontinent to attend a teaching college in Karnataka. What a journey that must have been!

Dawa writes, "It has been good here in my college. It has been a great journey! I have learned many sides of this profession and practised in hospital the procedures that are taught in the theory classes. I am glad that I chose this profession and I would be very thankful to help people in need. Moreover, I am grateful to receive this enormous support - without you I can't imagine my life as a nurse, and I will be forever indebted to your kindness and generosity.

Summer is always flourishing in this area! Lots of love and hugs, Dawa Lhamo".



Two libraries take shape (of 15 new libraries funded this year)

Rainbow School library, Zanskar, Ladakh: Zanskar in far-off Ladakh is cut off from the world for five months of the year under a frigid blanket of snow that closes roads and requires children at the Rainbow School to take a three-month winter break because the deep chill in their unheated school makes studying impossible.



This three-year-old school is adding rooms each year, and in 2024 the TRAS library was finished! A wooden floor and walls protect the books from the constant dust of the traditional mud structure, shelves are groaning with hundreds of books and the child-sized tables are in constant use by children enjoying the thrill of reading. The principal says, "Observing our students immersed in reading in such an inspiring environment is indeed a pleasure. The library has had a profound impact on fostering a love for reading among our students."



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A Successful Year (cont'd)

Sundrawati Village School library, Nepal: Meanwhile in the Thami (a small marginalized ethnic group) village of Sundrawati in Nepal, hard hit by the devastating 2015 earthquake, the local school library is finally full of books again and comfortable furniture. The principal writes of the pleasure this brings to the children who were deprived for so long.



Call the Midwife (SBA training for 15 health workers in Nepal)

Until recently, calling a midwife was the last thing a pregnant woman in a remote Nepali village could do. The Skilled Birth Attendant (SBA) training is changing that. Meet Nirmala.



"My name is Nirmala. I am 29 years old. I am from rural community of Bara district. I come from a poor family who depend on subsistence agriculture. My father used to migrate to India for seasonal work and my mother cared for the children. As the oldest child, I had to support my mother in domestic chores. I still had a dream to become a Midwife to help the mothers in my community who have been facing many health problems. But my family's economic condition made this impossible without financial support."

One day Nirmala saw an ad in her village for the IDEA 18 month midwifery training and her father took her to Pokhara to learn more about it. She was able to receive a TRAS-supported placement and completed the course in 2021. She was referred to a birthing centre in Sulikot in rural Gorkha, where she volunteered her services. She was concerned, though, that many deliveries were being sent to hospitals, with many deaths occurring on the way due to distance and poor roads. When Nirmala heard about IDEA's intensive Skilled Birth Attendant training, she applied, and earlier this year received training through this TRAS project.

Nirmala writes: "There were 15 participants in my batch of SBA training. The training was focused on how to handle normal and complicated deliveries. During the clinical practice, I conducted 10 deliveries to save the lives of children and mothers; I also assisted with 10 cases and provided post-natal care to the mothers and children.

Then I returned to the Sulikot Birthing Centre, and after completion of the internship, the Municipality offered me a contract employment in the same centre. I have now conducted pre and postnatal care, 30 deliveries, six national campaigns of vaccination and referred just three complicated cases to the hospital.

Hence, I am confident that I can handle my responsibilities in the Government health institutions no matter where my placement will be. I have high Skilled Birth Attendant knowledge and skills. I am happy with the SBA training and thank IDEA for managing this training. It will help my contract lead to a permanent position. I believe IDEA should train 200 SBAs to help the government services all over rural Nepal."



TRAS is funding 60 SBAs over four years.

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A Successful Year (cont'd)

A young lad goes to Delhi (Hope for Children, VIMARSH, helping 140 children)

The "Hope for Children" project, launched in November 2023, embarked on a journey to uplift the lives of children from marginalized families across nine remote villages in Almora and Nainital districts in the state of Uttarakhand in northern India.

This initiative, run by the NGOs, VIMARSH and AMAN, is more than just an education project; it is a comprehensive effort to address the education, healthcare, and basic needs of these underserved communities. With a deep commitment to bringing about meaningful change, the project seeks to offer not only academic guidance but also essential health services and a network of support that can nurture children's growth and potential.



Gaining the support of the village elders, leaders, health workers and teachers, Hope for Children has made huge strides in one year, opening nine education centres, nine libraries and a computer centre, and conducting meetings and health camps for children, adolescent girls and women – and even running a children's fair (see photo above). Meet one of the youngsters, Vishal.



Vishal resides in Simalkha Village with his parents and siblings. His father is a labourer and supports the family through his earnings. Vishal is a dedicated member of the VIMARSH Children's group, and has been a member of the VIMARSH library for the past six months, regularly borrowing books.

In October, an online meeting was organized on the theme of child rights and issues related to violence against children, with participation by children from six districts of Uttarakhand. Two children from each district were selected. Vishal participated in the online meeting, and his presentation on these critical topics earned him first place in the competition.

Vishal was the only participant selected from his district to represent Uttarakhand at the National Action and Coordination Group & Violence against Children India forum in Delhi. He said that his involvement in the VIMARSH children's group and library contributed significantly to his success.

Vishal has demonstrated exceptional leadership and commitment, setting an example for his peers. His participation in national-level forums will bring attention to the issues affecting children in Uttarakhand and will also encourage more children to actively engage in discussions about child rights and social change.

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We would like to give a huge shoutout to Chris at **Prompt Printers**, 265 E. 2nd Avenue, for handling all our printing needs throughout the years – and for many more years to come. **Thank you, Chris!**

A Successful Year (cont'd)

A girl becomes a leader (Hope for Children, AMAN, serving 206 children)

Babita lives in Almora district. She belongs to a large, poor family. Her father is a labourer, while her mother does agricultural work to support their family. Despite their efforts, the family's economic condition remains fragile.

Before Hope for Children came to her village, Babita stayed at home to manage household chores after her parents left for work. She missed school frequently. As a result, her academic progress suffered, and she felt disconnected from her studies.

In a significant turn of events, an education center was established in her village under the Hope for Children program. Initially, Babita was reluctant to attend. However, after a worker from the center spoke to her and her parents about the benefits, she decided to give it a try. Gradually, her siblings also started attending the center.

At the education center, Babita found a welcoming and engaging environment. She began attending regularly and showing a keen interest in her studies. Her enthusiasm and active participation did not go unnoticed, and she was soon elected as the president of a children's group in her village.

Babita now attends school daily with renewed interest and continues to be actively involved at the education center. She serves as an inspiration to other children in her village, showing that with the right support and environment, anyone can overcome their challenges and achieve great things.



Here's how you can help!

Sponsor a child

- \$480 per year per child

Donate to the TRAS Scholarship Fund

- \$1,000 covers the cost of one scholarship per year

Support a project for 2025

- CTA Nurses training: \$6,000 needed for eight Tibetan nursing students
- IDEA SBA training: \$17,000 needed for 15 Nepali young women
- Hope for Children (AMAN): \$15,000 needed for education centres, computer classes, health initiatives and the regular group meetings and activities for children, youth and mothers
- Hope for Children (VIMARSH): \$15,000 same need as for Aman

We are fortunate indeed to have received full support for 15 libraries from the **Yosef Wosk Family Foundation**. The **Ray Yee Memorial Fund** continues to provide the three distant Tibetan schools in Arunachal Pradesh with much-needed repairs, supplementary diet and supplies for the children. The Tibetan Homes Foundation, Mussoorie, Supplementary Diet project is supported by the **Tibetan community in Alberta, matched by Telus**. We are incredibly grateful to all these donors.

If you would like more information about any project or a breakdown of costs, please contact Joanne at the TRAS office (604-224-5133 or info@tras.ca).

TRAS Sponsorship Report

by Joanne MacLeod

Would you like to support a child's education and give them a chance for a better future? TRAS's sponsorship program will let you do just that.

Below, with the parents' consent, we highlight the story of one of the children currently sponsored by a TRAS member to give you a sense of the need and how sponsorship can help.



Tenzin was born in 2019 in India and started school in 2023, being sponsored by TRAS members. The school writes:

“She loves to eat momo and thukpa which are traditional Tibetan food and loves to draw. Her grandmother is not feeling well and takes medicine every day and she also has a younger sister living at home. Her mother is a weaver of Tibetan aprons and her father is serving in the army. The source of income for this family is very low, therefore she needs support for her educational fees.”

We have just received the following letter from her mother to her sponsors:

I hope this letter finds you in great spirit. I am writing to express my heartfelt gratitude for your generous sponsorship of my daughter's education. Your support means the world to us. It brings me immense joy to see my daughter excited about learning and exploring new idea. It is truly inspiring to know that there are compassionate individuals like you who believe in the importance of education and the potential of young minds.

Thanks to your sponsorship, Tenzin will have the chance to attend school, where she will not only learn essential academic skills but also develop her creativity and social abilities. Your kindness is not just an investment in her education, it is an investment in her dreams and aspirations.

We are deeply grateful for your support. Warmest regards, Tenzin and family

As you can see from her mother's eloquently written letter, her family is truly grateful.

TRAS is grateful to all current, past and future sponsors as we receive many letters like this and see firsthand how valuable your support is.

If you would like to sponsor a child, email us at info@tras.ca and we will send you a profile and photo of a child on our waiting list. The cost is \$480 per year. More information is available on the TRAS website.



Talking of success...

We all enjoyed the **TRAS dinner at the Momo Hut** in Vancouver – so much so that we are holding another one!

Mark your calendars: Wednesday, February 26, 2025

Doors open at 6.30pm, with dinner at 7pm. Expect good food, sparkling conversation and lots of treasures to buy! More details to come.

TRAS Scholarship Report

by Lynn Beck

The Scholarship Program is thriving with 23 students currently supported in their first, second and third year of studies. Six excellent students in very diverse programs have been selected for funding this year.

Rinchen Zangpo Society for Spiti Development (two new students)

Spiti has chosen both students from poor farming families. Tenzin Dolma and Karma Yulla finished their senior secondary education in the medical stream with the goal of becoming staff nurses. We are highlighting Karma Yulla's story. She writes:



"Hi, Karma Yulla here. Let me give you a brief description about myself. I was born in a very small village in Distt Kinnour. We are a family of 3. Farming is the main source of income for my parents. Very little land for the agriculture purpose. The income of our family is less and expenditure is more.

I came to Spiti Children Home School Munsel-ling at the age of six and completed my schooling there and now I finished my Senior Secondary Education (12th Standard) in the Medical Stream. My aim is to pass the medical exam for staff nurse B.Sc. As my parents are too poor to afford my education, I hope for some help from your side."

Karma Yulla has been selected for Nursing College Nurpur, Kangra, Himachal Pradesh.

Hope for Children (four new students)

In August 2024, AMAN and VIMARSH each gave two scholarships to deserving students across their NGOs' project region in Uttarakhand. The Scholarship Fund is now supporting 13 of their students, with nine in their second and third year of studies.

This year, **AMAN** selected Jaydeep Bora who is currently pursuing a Master's in Physics at Soban Singh Jeena University, Almora, and Chandra Prakash Arya, whose story follows:

Chandra Prakash Arya comes from a Dalit family with limited means. Chandra's father works in a private job, and his mother is a homemaker. The family faces financial challenges, yet both Chandra and his younger brother remain dedicated to their studies.

Chandra completed his high school at NavPrabhat Public School with 89.8% in 2022 and scored 90.2% in intermediate from the local Govt. Inter College, in 2024. He is now enrolled in Dwarahat Degree College, pursuing a B.Sc. in Math. Chandra's ambition is to complete an M.Sc. and pursue a career in research.

Chandra is grateful for the scholarship support provided by AMAN and TRAS, which helps him manage educational expenses and focus on his studies. The assistance motivates him to continue striving toward his goal of becoming a researcher.



VIMARSH selected Krishna Adhikari who is pursuing a three-year polytechnic program in computer science with a goal of becoming a software engineer, and Ankita Jalal, whom we are highlighting.



Ankita Jalal belongs to a farming family. Her father works tirelessly to provide for the family, but financial difficulties have been a constant challenge. Despite these constraints, her family has been a strong source of support, encouraging her pursuit of education.

Ankita's involvement with VIMARSH's adolescent group has inspired her to pursue her dreams. She is now a first-year student in a polytechnic program in Electrical Engineering. Moving to a rented room in Nainital, she manages her studies independently. Her family has taken on debt to cover her expenses, motivated by their belief in her potential.

The scholarship enables Ankita to focus on her studies without additional financial strain. She is deeply appreciative of the support, which helps her pursue her dream and alleviates her family's financial burden.

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The TRAS Scholarship Report (cont'd)

We note that **Dekyiling Tibetan Settlement** was unable to select new students this year because of a change in administration at the school. We continue to fund four students from previous selections.

The quality of students our partners select is reflected in the rich diversity of the programs they are studying. It is inspiring to learn of their ambitious goals and dreams. We thank you, our loyal donors, for your unwavering support over the years.

TRAS

Supporting health and education for children and youth in the Himalayas

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Let's support the kids!

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

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- Please send me information on Planned Giving

- attached is my cheque # _____ for \$ _____ (all cheques payable to TRAS)
- charge my VISA/MasterCard No. _____ Expiry Date ____ / ____

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Thank you for your generous support to TRAS!

