



## TRAS Directors on the Move

In recent months, three TRAS directors have visited India and Nepal. They have returned full of respect for our partners there and convinced the work is worth doing.

**Videsh Kapoor** met up with Lama Tashi Namgyal in New Delhi to discuss the TRAS projects at Munsel-ling School in Spiti, northern India.

**Sanjeev Singh** visited some of the Hope for Children villages in northern India and sat down with the kids in an after-school program.

**Megha Sakya** touched base with staff of TRAS's three Nepali projects: IDEA, READI Nepal and the Dolakha school.

Here are their reports.

**Videsh** met Lama Tashi, founder of the Spiti Rinchen Zangpo Society, in New Delhi and learned that education is flourishing. The main **Munsel-ling School** has over 500 students, and, including the satellite schools in remote valleys and the college students, there are 1000 students of all ages in the Society's care. Munsel-ling is now accredited to the highest national standard. But Spiti is known for its harsh climate and difficult conditions, and Lama Tashi asked TRAS to consider funding a new solar water heating system to take advantage of the sun from April to November and to lessen dependence on expensive wood, oil or diesel in the frigid winters. Videsh confirmed TRAS's high regard for the work of Lama Tashi and the Society in educating the children and creating a solid core of well-trained people who work for the betterment of the community, but the cost of this proposed project is high \$20,900 – we will have to deliberate.



Lama Tashi

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## TRAS Directors on the Move (cont'd)

**Sanjeev** writes: "I recently visited the Hope for Children projects run by Aman and Vimarsh in Almora and Nainital districts of Uttarakhand and, as after earlier visits, I came back with memories and conversations that will stay with me for a long time.



My first visit was to Vadla village. I also met children and women from Bajgal and Pankote. All three villages are remotely located, and one can see the poverty and socio-economic disparities which were prominent. The community is dependent on subsistence agriculture for their livelihoods and very often children are aiding parents in farming activities. However, the enthusiasm of children and women is worth mentioning. Everyone wanted to chat and share their stories.



One particular conversation with a middle-aged woman in Vadla village stood out for me. Growing up, she was not able to finish school for reasons beyond her control, yet she spoke with passion about her dreams for the children in her village. Every day she ensures that school-going children in her neighborhood attend the TRAS-funded education centre. During the rainy season and chilly winter, she goes to the education centre in the evening to ensure young children return home safely. She is also continually active in organizing the local women, holding meetings and motivating young adolescent girls to attend meetings.

In her own way, she is leading change — driven not by formal education, but by belief, hope and love for her community's future. This is worth a celebration. I see a new beginning for children, full of promises.

I also went to computer centres run by Aman and Vimarsh in Govindpur and Simalkha villages. These centres are well attended by schoolchildren of all ages. Apart from learning how to use computers, developing skills in the use of various software tools, I saw that the instructors were also keen on enabling children to use digital technologies safely and effectively for learning, communication, and participation.

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## TRAS Directors on the Move (cont'd)

At Govindpur, I spoke with volunteers and staff of the Hope for Children Project. A couple of volunteers from the previous Voice of Children project (now self-supporting) also joined the meeting. They shared their experiences of implementing project activities and the challenges they faced in the new villages. The set-up at the Govindpur library, funded by the Wosk Family Foundation through TRAS, is elaborate. The books are properly indexed and are open not only for children but for adults as well. They have reading tables and chairs in the library for the convenience of the visitors.



I also had the privilege of meeting Bharti Pandey who is a beneficiary of the TRAS Scholarship Fund. She is currently enrolled in a master's program in Journalism and Mass Communication (you can read more about Bharti on Page 6).

Another heart-warming experience was at Unchakot Talla village. A group of over 20 children were at the education centre even though a wedding celebration was in full swing in close vicinity. They were very chatty, and full of enthusiasm to show me what they do and learn. One shared a story, two others were singing, while another group did an impromptu dance performance. It was worth watching children engaged in activities, enjoying each other's company and seeing the physical, emotional, and psychological safety these centres were providing in building their confidence and self-esteem.

An interesting encounter at Unchakot Talla village was with young Bhavesh and Vivek. They run the TRAS/Wosk library in their village. They explained the procedure of lending and returning books. Out of curiosity, I asked children attending the centre to pick up one book from the library which they have read in the past month. Everyone enthusiastically picked one book to show me. A couple of them also shared what was in their book.

Along with requests for new books in all the five centres I visited, children politely pleaded for sports equipment for soccer, volleyball, badminton, cricket and board games for indoor activities. I told them that I will pass on their message to TRAS and will explore if this could be supported.

Another observation from this visit was the number of young women volunteers both Aman and Vimarsh had been able to draw from the community. Invariably all the volunteers are pursuing post-secondary education either through local colleges or via distance education and have dreams for a better life and are committed to bringing change into the community. They are role models for the children.

What has brought me the greatest joy is not just inching closer to achieving the program goals and/or delivering on TRAS yearly commitments — but it is the moments spent with so many children and the communities we have been working alongside. Such encounters are deeply humbling and serve as a gentle reminder of why we do what we do."



**Hope for Children** is certainly a worthwhile project, but it's quite a large one (about \$35,000/year) for TRAS to sustain. Donations to it in the last fiscal year were \$12,000.

The TRAS Board has just approved the project for a further two years, so TRAS will be fundraising hard to keep this project going. If you'd like to help with a donation, please contact the TRAS office.

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## TRAS Directors on the Move (cont'd)



**Megha** writes, "On my recent extended visit to Nepal, what I noted about the socioeconomic and political situation is the persistence of poverty, social inequality, and political instability. There are significant challenges in the health care and education sectors in which TRAS's partners work. While I was there, I was very much hoping to meet some of IDEA's Skilled Birth Attendants (SBAs) to get their perspectives and experiences with the training, funded by TRAS. Unfortunately, Mr. Devkota, the director, was away for most of my stay in Nepal, but he managed to come to Kathmandu to meet me before I left. He explained that the SBAs are gainfully employed. The 30 SBA graduates whom we supported in 2023 and 2024 are currently working in 30 different health posts of the Gorkha district. I find it a positive result because the Gorkha district ranks below the national average in the human development index of Nepal. The cost is \$18,700 for each batch of 15 students.

I have been very impressed with the SBA project and Mr. Devkota's management and dedication. I found him to be a genuine and trustworthy person. If funding were available, I would have rallied for support to scale up the SBA program to reach out to more districts in Nepal. The SBA training helps not only to generate employment for rural women but also to help save the lives of birthing women and babies in Nepal.

My meetings with our other partners, READI Nepal and Dolakha Sundarawoti School, were fruitful, with requests for help which TRAS may consider in the future."



### 63<sup>rd</sup> TRAS Annual General Meeting

**Wednesday, September 10 | 7pm via Zoom**

For sign-in instructions, please call 604-224-5133 or email [info@tras.ca](mailto:info@tras.ca) no later than September 9.

Although an in-person meeting is preferable, a Zoom meeting permits members from far and wide to join us.

Plans for in-person events are in the works. More details to come!

## And in other news...

TRAS has approved a 3-year extension to the useful CTA Tibetan Nurses Training project, supporting eight nursing and midwifery students per year for their 3-year course at well-regarded Indian teaching hospitals. The students are very appreciative of this financial support. The cost is \$7,700 a year.

TRAS is working with the Wosk Family Foundation's library project to replenish the Hope for Children libraries and also to give grants to a Tibetan settlement library and several Nepali village school libraries. More on this later.





# TRAS Sponsorship Report

by Joanne MacLeod

TRAS members currently sponsor 125 children. This year 13 graduated Class 12 with most of them going on to colleges or universities. Many would not have achieved this accomplishment without your help. Well done!

We have 25 children waiting for sponsors, here are 3 for your consideration.



**Karma** (REC80382) is a 9-year-old boy from Shyo village situated in Tawang, Arunachal Pradesh, in northeast India, 2,719 km from the Tibetan Children's School in Lower Chauntra, where he is studying. He is from the local Moenpa tribe of his region. Farming is the main source of income. His father works as a truck driver and his mother is a housewife. She earns a little extra money doing jobs in the school. There are three children in the family.

His parents are very happy to admit their children to a Tibetan boarding school. He is currently reading in class II and learning basic Tibetan and Mathematics. He couldn't speak Tibetan at the time of admission but can now speak and understand the language a bit. He is staying in home number 15 with another 24 children, and needs your help until he finishes class XII.

**Sangey** (REC80456) is a 7-year-old girl from the small village of Gongkhar in Arunachal Pradesh, 2,715 km (52-hour drive) from the Tibetan Children's School in Lower Chauntra. Farming is the main occupation of the local people and they speak Moenpa and Hindi. The local people practice Tibetan Buddhism. Her parents are both farmers. There are four children in the family. Income of the family is very limited, and her parents are unable to pay for the education of their children.

Sangey studied in class I at a village day school and then was admitted to the TCV School in Lower Chauntra on March 11, 2025. Her parents are very happy she is attending a Tibetan boarding school. She is currently reading in class II learning basic Tibetan and Mathematics. She is staying in home number 6 and is getting love and care from the older children in the home.

Your kind help will give this girl a chance to finish class XII.



**Tsering** (REC80446) is at Tibetan Children's Village in Suja in northern India. She is an 11-year girl from Tawang, Arunachal Pradesh 2,779 km (54 hours) away from the school. She was admitted March 6, 2024 and is currently studying in class V. Her parents have admitted Tsering to the TCV school so that she will receive a quality education and also learn the Tibetan language and traditions. Despite missing her family dearly, she has adapted well to her new school.

Tsering has an elder brother and a younger sister, both are still living at home. Her father works as a mason, taking construction jobs whenever possible, while her mother is a homemaker who also cares for Tsering's grandparents.

Tsering enjoys her time at Suja and has a strong interest in Mathematics. She is doing well in Tibetan and has made great progress since being admitted to the school. She aspires to become a Mathematics teacher, as she loves the idea of teaching and helping children learn.

To sponsor one of these children, please contact Joanne at 604-224-5122 or by email at [info@trac.ca](mailto:info@trac.ca). Sponsorship is \$480 per annum, per child.

# TRAS Scholarship Fund Report

by Lynn Beck

The scholarship program, that started in the spring of 2013 with 2 students as a pilot project, is thriving. As of today, 64 students have graduated in the fields of teaching, nursing, medicine, engineering, journalism: the list goes on. When we reflect on the fact that few of these students would be pursuing their dreams if it hadn't been for TRAS's longstanding support of our four partner NGOs in northern India through projects and sponsorship programs, we see the huge value of maintaining long term relationships and support.

Currently TRAS is supporting 23 students who have been selected by these NGO partners. They are studying in a variety of fields.

The current 13 scholarship students from the **Hope for Children** project, run by local NGOs Aman and Vimarsh, were supported throughout their primary schooling through TRAS-funded educational support centers, computer courses, libraries etc. **Bharti Pandey** is one such student who has benefited greatly from Aman's encouragement. She is finishing her post-graduate degree in Journalism and Mass Communication. She is now applying her skills in the social field, contributing to youth development and community empowerment. She currently works as the National Convener of the Indian Youth Federation. She is also a correspondent for the Sunday Post and Regional Reporter. As mentioned in a previous newsletter, Bharti has managed her mental health challenges with resilience and determination; her success an inspiring example. In her words: "In a society where girls from rural and economically disadvantaged families often face resistance to pursuing education, the TRAS Scholarship proved to be a turning point in my life."



**Munseling School** in Spiti, northern India, has been supported by TRAS for decades. We have equipped science labs and libraries, and improved sanitation to name but a few projects. The first scholarship graduates are now science teachers working in the school using those labs.

The two recent graduates are following their example. Tenzin Gompa has finished her BSc degree and is pursuing a Master's degree in Science. Sonam Gakyit has completed her BA degree and is progressing to a 2-year Bachelor of Education degree to become a teacher.

The two new candidates are also excellent students. Karma Khando graduated with 89% and has been admitted to study anthropology at a top college in northern India. Sonam Chhukit, who lost her father last year, has passed the national exam (NEET) to qualify for undergraduate medical studies.



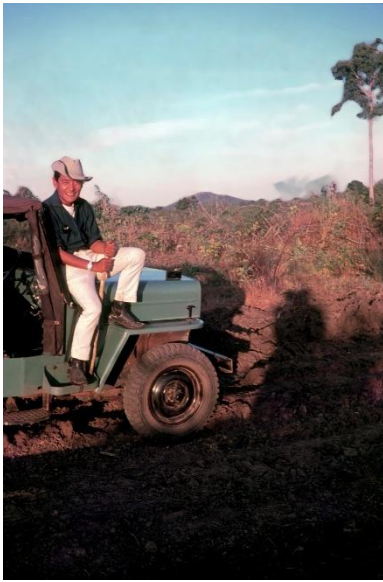
Sonam Chhukit

From **Dekyiling Tibetan Centre** many of the sponsored children have gone on to become Scholarship students. Of the current four scholarship students, three are in a General Nursing and Midwifery 3-year program. One is studying for a 4-year pharmacy degree.

**Thank you for supporting these bright, deserving students in pursuing their dreams through higher education.**

**Sponsorship costs are \$1,000 a year for three years, per student.**





## Remembering T.C. Tethong

A year has passed since his death, but he is not forgotten. T.C. Tethong moved to Canada many years ago, but his spiritual and true home was Tibet, and he worked tirelessly for the independence of his country. Born in Tibet in 1934, T.C. sadly lost his parents at an early age. He was brought up by his loving older siblings and received an excellent education in Tibet and northern India. He was preparing for medical training when his world was upended by the invasion of his country and he immediately started on a new course. First came months of work at a large Tibetan transit camp, followed by an invitation to join the office of the private secretary to His Holiness the Dalai Lama. T.C. played many increasingly important roles in helping the new Tibetan Government-in-Exile. In 1960 His Holiness sent T.C. to university in Germany to study political science. On his return to India, he worked as Assistant Representative of the Dalai Lama in New Delhi and then Deputy Kalon (Minister) of Foreign Affairs in Dharamsala.

Here is where T.C.'s life and TRAS started to merge, as he met and fell for a Canadian girl, Judy Pullen, who was training Tibetan monks to become teachers of the Tibetan curriculum for the thousands of Tibetan refugee children in schools all over India.

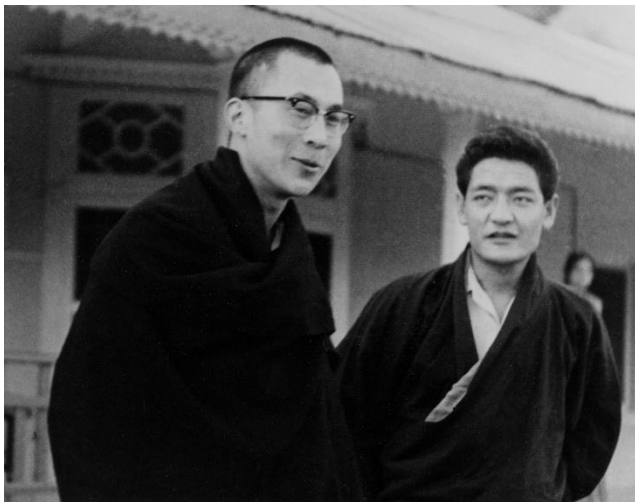
Judy was a volunteer with CUSO (Canadian University Students Overseas) who had been posted to the Tibetan Transit School in Kangra, an Indian town in the valley below Dharamsala. Judy had already been in touch with George and Inge Woodcock, founders of TRAS, about the plight of Tibetan children, orphaned and ill, arriving at the Kangra Transit School. Judy helped arrange some of the first TRAS payments to help the children.

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**“His spiritual and true home was Tibet, and he worked tirelessly  
for the independence of his country.”**

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In 1965 T.C. was sent by the Dalai Lama to assess the viability of agricultural settlements for Tibetan refugees in south India jungles. With his usual positive outlook, T.C. not only declared the area suitable but he asked to be put in charge of a new settlement in Mundgod. In fact, he was later put in charge of all the southern settlements. With the newly arrived Tibetans in Mundgod, they set about clearing the jungle. T.C. and Judy married in June 1968 in Canada and then returned to Mundgod, where they moved into a tent, and then into a bamboo hut. They coped with enervating heat and battled venomous snakes, wild animals and tropical diseases – but out of the jungle they created a thriving township of nine villages which today is home to more than 8,000 Tibetans with schools, a hospital (funded by TRAS), an old people's home (maintained by TRAS for years) and nine monasteries.



Later Judy and T.C. moved to Canada and he taught at the Lester B. Pearson United World College of the Pacific near Victoria, returning for four years to Dharamsala as Kalon (Minister) of the Ministry of Information and International Relations for the Tibetan Government-in-Exile. He never stopped advocating for Tibet's freedom, founding or joining Tibetan organizations in the west. He was pivotal in arranging the visits of the Dalai Lama to Canada and particularly to Vancouver. We remember him with admiration, respect and love.

*Photos reproduced with permission from the T.C. and Judy Tethong Family Archive*

# TRAS

Supporting health and education for  
children and youth in the Himalayas

1183 Melville Street | Vancouver BC | V6E 2X5  
T: 604 224 5133 | E: info@tras.ca | W: tras.ca



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**Thank you for your generous support to TRAS!**

