



## In Their Own Words

In the last newsletter we highlighted reports from our directors who had visited our partners in India and Nepal. Recently we have heard from several of our partners and the youth they work with, so below, **in their own words**, is some of what they want to tell you.

### ~ URGENT APPEAL ~



But first we extend our sympathy to the TRAS-supported IDEA team doing such valiant work training midwives and others in Nepal. Mr. Devkota, the founder of IDEA, was returning to Pokhara from a field trip on September 8 during nation-wide demonstrations and protests when he was crushed by a crowd of protesters and pushed to the ground, dislocating his leg. His laptop was destroyed. When he finally managed to reach the IDEA office, he discovered to his horror that protesters had broken in to gain access to the roof in order to firebomb the house of a neighbouring politician and that thieves had made off with the four office computers. Mr. Devkota told his staff to stay safely in their own homes and is gradually recovering from his injuries.

We would like to help them replace the four stolen computers and the damaged laptop, and are appealing for donations in the hopes the staff will soon be safely back offering sorely needed trainings (midwifery, school health clinician training, teacher training, veterinary training, etc). Please contact the TRAS office to contribute. Thank you in advance for your generosity.

## In Their Own Words (cont'd)

### The CTA Nurses Training

The Tibetan Department of Education, Scholarship Branch, oversees the selection of students studying general nursing and midwifery (GNM) in Indian teaching hospitals. TRAS supports eight students at a time for this three-year course. The Department writes: "We sincerely thank the whole TRAS Canada members, board and staff for their generosity and continued support towards the education of vulnerable Tibetan students all these years."

Here are just two of 13 lovely letters from current and graduated students.

**Tenzin Sangmo**, who graduated last year, writes:

Dear TRAS, I hope you are doing well. I have been meaning to write to you and express how thankful I am for everything you have done for me. Your support throughout my 3-year course of GNM has meant more than any words can say.

*(continued on Page 2)*

## In Their Own Words (cont'd)



When I think back to when I first started the course, I remember having a mixed feeling of excitement and worry to follow my dream of becoming a nurse, unsure how I'd manage financially. Your sponsorship took a huge weight off my shoulders and gave me the chance to focus on my studies without constantly stressing about fees and expenses. Because of you I was able to give my full attention to learning both professionally and personally. The journey wasn't always easy, but it was incredibly rewarding. I've gained so much knowledge and hands-on experience and I've discovered a deep passion for caring for others. And thanks to the strong foundation I built during my GNM courses and with your belief in me, I have taken the next step and am now pursuing my BSc in Nursing at the Rajiv Gandhi College of Nursing.

Thank you from the bottom of my heart for being such a big part of my journey. Your kind generosity has helped shape futures like mine. I hope one day I can pay it forward and be the light in someone else's life, just like you have been in mine.

With love, Tenzin Sangmo

**Lhakyi Dolma**, a second-year GNM student lists what the TRAS support has meant:

- reduced financial stress and I have not had to juggle part time jobs to make ends meet.
- this led to improved academic performance, engaging more deeply with the course material
- increased opportunities to participate in conferences and research opportunities that align with my interests.
- a profound impact on my personal growth - I have developed skills such as time management, teamwork and resilience. I am committed to making the most of your generosity and support and using it to make a positive impact on my community.

Yours sincerely, Lhakyi Dolma



## Hope For Children

Launched in November 2023 in 9 villages in northern India, the project aims to ensure the safety, dignity, and holistic development of children by working closely with families and communities. It emphasizes education, digital literacy, emotional well-being, and life skills, while also empowering adolescents, women, and youth to lead local change for children's rights and welfare.

Hema, a young girl from Simalkha village, is an active member of the adolescent girls' group. After her father died, her elder brother became the sole breadwinner of the family. Hema had completed her schooling and aspired to pursue further studies. However, her brother was against this and was pressuring the family to arrange her marriage instead.



Recognizing her situation, the girls from the adolescent group reached out to Hema's mother. Her mother explained that while she supported Hema's dreams, it was her brother who was opposed to the idea. The group members then decided to speak directly with Hema's brother and counseled him about the importance of girls' education and Hema's strong desire to study further.

Thanks to their persistent efforts and encouragement, Hema's brother eventually agreed. He supported her admission to Baitalghat College this year, allowing her to continue her education.

Hema expressed her heartfelt gratitude, saying:

"If it weren't for the support and strength of the girls' group, I would have never been able to continue my studies. My family would have married me off. This group gives us hope to dream and helps us make those dreams come true."



## In Their Own Words (cont'd)

### TCV Lower Chauntra Tibetan School Library

This is one of 16 libraries supported by donations from the Yosef Wosk Family Foundation. The school principal recently sent this report:

"We are pleased to inform you that the project has been successfully completed. We extend our heartfelt gratitude for your generous support in strengthening our library collection. It has made a meaningful impact. The library is truly the heart of our school, encouraging independent learning and a lifelong love of reading. Already more students are actively engaged in reading and research."

The range of books is impressive, from 'Sapiens' by Yuval Noah Harari to a diversity of children's books. And, of course, many copies of the Dalai Lama's new book, *Voice for the Voiceless* (see page 7 for a review).



### TRAS Scholarship Fund

Two of the first students from the Hope for Children villages supported by this fund recently wrote to TRAS.



**Babita Khatri** was the first in her family of six to complete college. She earned a master's degree in psychology, followed by a one-year professional counseling course. Encouraged by her success after working as a school counselor, she applied for the government counselor post in the family court in Almora. Today Babita proudly serves as a family court counselor after competing and emerging as the top candidate in the state.

"The AMAN-TRAS Scholarship gave me a chance to pursue my dream. Today not only am I living my dream, but I am also helping my siblings pursue theirs."



**Tanuja Tiwari** comes from a remote village, also from a family of six, who stood out for her academic brilliance. Starting with a diploma in Computer Science and Engineering she then completed a Bachelor of Technology degree. Her talent recognized, she was hired by a prestigious Japanese IT firm to work on digital security. To study further she is now enrolled in a Master's Tech degree in Artificial Intelligence (AI) at a Delhi Tech University engaged in research in the field of cryptography.

"The AMAN-TRAS Scholarship just didn't help me pursue education- it gave wings to my dreams. I was able to move from a small village to working in international tech and now doing research in AI. I am financially supporting my family and proudly standing on my own feet."

Words to warm our hearts!

All because you, our supporters, reached out to help.



## Save The Date! Come Join Us!

### TRAS Fall Dinner | Thursday, October 23

TRAS welcomes members and their guests at the TRAS Fall dinner at Gurkha Himalayan Kitchen, 1141 Davie Street, Vancouver

Doors open at 6pm, with dinner served at 7pm

Email or phone Joanne by October 18 for details and to reserve your seat (604-224-5133 / [info@tras.ca](mailto:info@tras.ca))

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

Russil Wvong, President, welcomed members from across Canada, expressing gratitude for their support and donations.

"TRAS exists because there are people here in Vancouver, and elsewhere in Canada, who want to help people in the Himalayas. Instead of sending people overseas to do the work, we work with local non-profits in the region who know what the most important needs are on the ground. I'm always both awed and inspired by the commitment of our donors to TRAS's work in the Himalayas for more than 60 years now, helping to improve the health and education of children and young people in Nepal, northern India, and Tibet.

I'd also like to thank Joanne MacLeod, our Office Manager, and our volunteers, particularly our Board of Directors, who keep the organization running (see list on Page 8). Recently Catherine Douglas and Shelley Guardia joined the TRAS board. Catherine was a professor at the Vancouver School of Economics at UBC, focusing on economic history, technological change, and sustainable development. Shelley ran a tour company for many years, so she's been to the Himalayas many times. Thank you to Catherine and Shelley for joining the board!"



Following are the annual reports for the year April 1, 2024 to March 31, 2025.

## TRAS Annual Sponsorship Report (by Joanne MacLeod)

The Himalayan region is both spectacularly beautiful, and, at the same time, one of the poorest regions in the world. Please contact the office if you would like to sponsor a child. Sponsorship enables children to receive a quality education. This is particularly meaningful for Tibetan children, as it gives them an opportunity to learn more about their Tibetan culture and language.

The sponsorship program began in May 1964 with 13 sponsors. Currently we have 81 sponsors supporting 124 children. Over the years our sponsors have helped over 820 children graduate with many of them going on to post-secondary studies.

In 2024-25, six of the currently sponsored children graduated from high school, and are pursuing a secondary education. One child did not return to school in June, two transferred to another school and one left to join the army.

School reports, letters and cards were forwarded to many sponsors during the year. Many sponsors send cards and letters, and they have been warmly received by the children who love to hear from their sponsors.

Sponsorship disbursements are sent to the schools and settlements twice a year, and we thank everyone who has paid for 2025. Sponsorship renewal letters will go out in December via email.

We would like to give as many children as we can a chance to grow up healthy and with enough education to improve their lives and those of their families and communities.

**On the next page are three recent requests.** Please contact the office if you would like to sponsor a child (604-224-5133 / info@tras.ca). Sponsorship is \$480 a year.



## TRAS Annual Sponsorship Report (cont'd)



**Pema** is a very sweet hardworking 16-year-old girl. She is in grade VIII at the Tibetan Children's Village school in Lower Chauntra and is doing very well.

Her father is a construction worker in her village in Tawang. He cuts boulders into small pieces. Her mother is a home maker.

Pema spends her spare time reading and enjoys reading English. She wants to become a designer when she grows up. Pema is very mature for her age and is a very respectful and diligent young girl. Currently she heads our prayer section.



**Sangjee** was born to a poor peasant family in Demachang village situated in Arunachal Pradesh. Farming is the main occupation

His parents are farmers and the income from their small lot is very limited. They need help paying for their 4 children's education.

Sangjee is 8 years old and is currently boarding at the Tibetan Children's Village in Lower Chauntra. He is reading in class II and learning basic Tibetan and Mathematics. He is staying in home number 8 with 20 other children.



**Tenzin** is an 11-year-old boy. He was born in Manali and his family settled in a village called Dalhousie. His father passed away after a prolonged illness.

There are two children in the family. Tenzin's sister is also at the Tibetan Children's Village school and is currently sponsored by a TRAS member.

Tenzin is reading in class VI and learning different subjects. His best subject is English. He is staying in home number 13 and is helping by sweeping and mopping the floors.

## TRAS Annual Projects Report (by Russil Wvong)

**IDEA (Pokhara, Nepal).** A third batch of 15 students for the Skilled Birth Attendant training started at the end of March 2025. This will help to reduce maternal and infant mortality during childbirth. Given that nearly all the past graduates of these trainings gained employment immediately after the course, we expect a high degree of success. *(Megha Shakya, Project Officer)*



The **Hope for Children** project, launched in November 2023, aims to improve the lives of children from marginalized families across nine remote villages in Almora and Nainital districts in the state of Uttarakhand, India. This is a follow up on the Voice of Children project, extending the services provided by that project to nine new villages. There are 226 children enrolled in educational support programs in the nine villages. This initiative is more than just an education project; it is a comprehensive effort to address the educational, healthcare, and basic needs of these underserved communities. *(Sanjeev Singh, Project Officer)*

**CTA Nurses Training**, via the Central Tibetan Administration in Dharamsala, India: a three-year commitment to support 8 students each year was

completed successfully in 2024, and in February 2025 the TRAS Board voted to extend this project for a further three years. *(Daphne Hales, Project officer)*

*(continued on Page 6)*

## TRAS Annual Projects Report (cont'd)



The **Ray Yee Memorial Fund** generously continues to support the three Tibetan schools in Arunachal Pradesh, which are run by the Sambhota Tibetan Schools Society under the auspices of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile, Department of Education. Roughly \$8,000 allowed these remote schools to make needed repairs to infrastructure, to add nutritious supplements to the basic diet and to supply new beds for the teachers in 2024. In February 2025 the TRAS board voted to send \$8,798 to the three schools for a new water pump for one school, a scooter to help ferry supplies to another, and a supplementary diet for the third school. (*Daphne Hales, Project Officer*)

The **Yosef Wosk Family Foundation** generously provides funding for small libraries in remote villages throughout the Himalayan region where TRAS's partners work, thus fulfilling Dr. Wosk's lifelong desire to provide books to foster learning even in the remotest corners of the world. Funds were sent in the

2024/25 year to 13 small libraries in Tibetan settlements and Indian and Nepali schools. (*Daphne Hales, Project Officer*)

**Tibetan Homes Foundation (Mussoorie).** Canadian-Tibetan Lobsang Dorjee attended THF Mussoorie as a child, and he's now working in IT in Calgary. Lobsang raised \$4500 dollars from Tibetans in Alberta, with generous matching funds from his employer, Telus, to pay for supplementary food for the current students at THF Mussoorie. (*Russil Wvong, Projects Director*)

TRAS heartily thanks the donors whose thoughtfulness allowed these projects to flourish.

## TRAS Annual Scholarship Report (by Lynn Beck)

We are very excited to announce that the Scholarship Fund is starting a new phase of support for the four NGOs in India with whom we partner. The fund is currently supporting 23 students.

- **Dekyiling Tibetan Settlement** has chosen two new students this year. Ngawang Lhamo, with a strong interest in science, passed her CBSE board exams with 90%. She is enrolled in a three-year GNM (general nursing and midwifery) program. Tenzin Dekyi graduated from high school with 80% and is enrolled in a Bachelor of Commerce degree.
- **Munsel-ling School** has chosen very deserving candidates from poor families. Karma Khando, after graduating with 89%, was accepted into one of the best colleges in New Delhi to study anthropology. Sonam Chhukit cleared her National Eligibility Entrance Test (NEET) exam to qualify for admission to an undergraduate medical program.
- **AMAN and Vimarsh**, two local NGOs, run the **Hope for Children** project and are currently conducting interviews for the scholarship program. They will each choose two candidates: Vimarsh alone has ten applicants!

To celebrate this new phase, we are highlighting two success stories. Both women were in the very first group of students selected in the Hope for Children Scholarship Program when it started in 2016 (then called the Voice of Children). Their stories are found on page 3 under "In their own words".



Sonam Chhukit  
(Munsel-ling)

## TRAS Financial Statement (by Kevin Yuen)

TRAS' Treasurer reported that revenue for the year was \$172,000. The Society spent \$199,000 and has a balance of \$358,900, of which \$55,346 are committed funds.

The full AGM reports and the financial statements can be found on the Society's website at [tras.ca](http://tras.ca).



## And, in their own words, our two new directors tell us...



Catherine Douglas

"My commitment to TRAS and the projects it supports reflect my life-long drive to address inequities in the global society and economy. This concern led me to study Economics and to pursue a career teaching, researching and engaging in international development issues. Over the years this came to involve the integration of Community Service-Learning programs at UBC's Vancouver School of Economics. It was through that program that I was introduced to TRAS and its work."

Several of Catherine's students have volunteered for TRAS over the years, a wonderful outcome from integrating TRAS into her teaching.

Shelley Guardia says here's her life in a nutshell!

"I was born and raised in Burlington, Ontario, and moved to Mexico in 1980 to work in tourism. I visited my brother in Vancouver in 1990, intending to stay for the winter, but here I still am, having put down roots! For 30 years I continued working in tourism - organizing and escorting tours worldwide. I specialized in North India, Nepal, Tibet, Bhutan and Pakistan, and spent a few months each year in one or two of these Himalayan areas. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic I closed my business in 2020 and retired."

And now she uses her deep knowledge of the region for the benefit of TRAS' work.

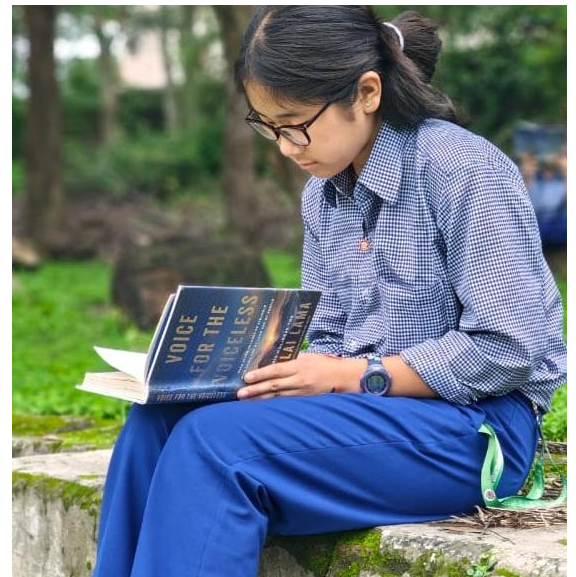


## And, in his own words, His Holiness the Dalai Lama...

His Holiness tells his own story in his new book, just published, called *Voice for the Voiceless*. He tells of 70 years of struggle on behalf of his people and his gratitude towards India and the many countries which have supported him, but also, probably more forthrightly than in previous writings, of the disappointments over lack of support at crucial moments and the ongoing dialogue with China. In his preface, the Dalai Lama states:

"Ours is an existential crisis: the very survival of an ancient people and their culture, language and religion is at stake. Drawing on the lessons learned ... the book also aims to offer some suggestions on what might be the path forward."

Karma Tensum, Executive Director of the Tibetan Children's Education Foundation in Montana, writes: "For anyone even remotely interested in Tibetan issues, this book is a must-read."



# 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**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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☐ Please send event information and newsletters by e-mail

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☐ attached is my cheque # \_\_\_\_\_ for \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (all cheques payable to TRAS)

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### Please allocate to:

☐ Sponsorship \$ \_\_\_\_\_ for (name of child/youth) \_\_\_\_\_

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

