



## President's Message

"I lived in Delhi with my parents as a little child; my father was a labourer, my mother was a maid. Then my father died. My elder brother is also missing; no one knows where he is. After that I came to live with my grandparents in the village. I could not read, because I had not been in school. AMAN helped me and I was able to start school in class 5, appropriate for my age. AMAN helps with providing my school dress and books and supplies for school. I started in class 5 and I'm now in class 8. I like to read and study; I want to improve my future."

*Nilu, a girl about 15 years old, one of many children helped by the **Voice of Children** project*

"I got married when I was 11 years old. Before the wedding, my husband and his family had promised that they would send me to school but that did not happen. Instead they involved me in household work", says Mrs. Hiramata Budha, the mother of Kopila, a student in the **READI Nepal** education project. She says "Kopila has a bright future as she is getting quality education instead of early marriage".

**These are just two of the reasons we are passionate about helping the children of the Himalayas, and we're asking for your help to support these two projects.**

**READI Nepal.** TRAS continues to support this local charity and its project to educate disadvantaged children in Humla, one of the poorest districts in Nepal. Many of the children are staying at a hostel and attending school in Simikot, the capital of Humla; others live at home and attend school. Half the students are girls.

But there's more: regular health checkups for the children, warm clothes, good local food, and primary health care training for parents to improve the children's health and learning ability. Families are given skills training and opportunities to raise them out of poverty. Teachers are given extra training. And READI works hand in hand with local communities to fight against the child marriage custom that is rife in this remote mountainous region. The project cost for 2016-2017 is \$25,850.

**Voice of Children (VOC).** With two partners in northern India, AMAN and Vimarsh, TRAS is supporting the VOC project to improve the education of children from villages in the Nainital and Almora regions, in the foothills of the Himalayas. The villages in the project are between 2 and 27 kms from the nearest roads, and children walk long distances to school. The dropout rate was high to begin with, especially for girls.

The aims of the project are to provide support for children in school, help them with their studies, encourage their parents to let them stay in school, and advocate for the right of children to receive an education. And they're working! VOC has also set up support groups for adolescent girls and women, who learn about issues such as women's health, domestic violence, and local self-governance. We've seen this project grow from early childhood centres to computer training courses for older youth and the selection of university students for the TRAS Scholarship Fund. The project cost for 2016-2017 is \$28,050.

On behalf of the TRAS board of directors, thank you for your continued generosity. Best wishes to you and your loved ones for the holidays, and for 2017!

*Russil Wvong, President*

# Child Brides

This October, Save the Children published a new report shining a spotlight on child brides. Every seven seconds, a girl under 15 is forced to marry, leading to a cycle of disadvantage. UNESCO says the number of women married in childhood is still increasing. Pregnancy is the leading cause of death for girls aged 15 – 19. India and Nepal are two of the 'culprit' countries.

## But take heart: You are doing something about it!

We cannot emphasize strongly enough how much you are accomplishing in raising the stakes for the girls in the villages of Humla, Dolakha, Nainital, Almora, and Spiti!

Every time a girl is sponsored so that her education is paid for, or a village girl is able to stay in the hostel in Humla and go to school; every time a parent is persuaded it is worthwhile sending girls to school, and a girl is accepted back into school; every time a partner builds a greenhouse, and a girl's health improves; every time a girl joins a club for teenage girls and learns how to look after herself in a strong and confident way, and books are available for a girl to take home and read; every time a young woman is accepted into a university program and is granted one of our scholarships, the chances of her going right through school and getting a job increase – and the chances of her marrying too young, and bearing children when her own body is still a child's, decrease!



(We KNOW it works! For years TRAS donors supported SHARE, an NGO in Manali, north India – and they reported a huge decrease in child marriages and in maternal and infant mortality, thanks to the TRAS health and education programs.)

You are helping TRAS support children and youth in the Himalayan region – boys as well as girls – but it is clear that our partners in the field are making sure girls have equal opportunities. Look at the numbers:

In the Humla hostel run by **READI Nepal** there are equal numbers of girls and boys.

In the **Voice of Children village libraries**, more girls than boys are registered card holders, and it is for the girls' sakes that the VOC staff and volunteers visit parents to persuade them to let the girls stay in school.

Teen boys need to learn to respect girls – but the VOC staff feels clubs specially for teen girls are an even more important first step. VOC is also pushing village leaders to prevent girls being married off too young.

**The Scholarship Fund** is offering university scholarships to those chosen by our partners – and in each case they have selected girls.

**Here's a review of what your donations have accomplished in 2016.**  
**Please help TRAS keep these programs running in 2017 – for the sake of the girls!**

## AGM

The 54<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of TRAS was held at the new office on September 13, 2016. Russil Wvong presided and paid tribute to retiring director Cheryl Sullivan. He also introduced the new BC Societies Act which comes into effect November 2017. Kevin Yuen, Treasurer, said the Society must continue to fundraise strongly to cover our project costs. Lynn Beck, Scholarship Fund director, has exciting news (see page 3). Daphne Hales gave the project report (see pages 4 and 5) and Joanne MacLeod gave the sponsorship report. The officers and directors of the Society are listed on page 8. The financial report will be found on the TRAS website [www.tras.ca](http://www.tras.ca).

A big thank you to Cheryl Sullivan, who has stepped down after serving on the board for seven years, including serving as President for the last three years. She's provided tremendous leadership: with her business experience, she's done a great job of spotting problems and acting on them, keeping us organized and following up on issues. She has compiled our policies and procedures, so they're not just in our heads. Thanks to Cheryl we have a new website. And it was a lot of fun working with her – we'll miss her!

# The Scholarship Fund

## by Lynn Beck

2016 has been a very exciting and busy year for the TRAS Scholarship Fund (TSF). The first 2 of the 6 candidates selected from the **Munsel-ling School in Spiti**, have graduated with Bachelor of Arts degrees.

**Tenzin Yangzom's** is an inspiring success story. Tenzin was accepted to the prestigious Girls College in Chandigarh and graduated top of her class with a B.A. in Geography. She is shown in the picture below receiving first prize for the highest marks! She had been accepted into a Masters program in Geography, to be followed by Teacher Training, but Tenzin had no financial means to continue her studies. TRAS has made an exception in her case and is funding her for another 3 year scholarship.



In Tenzin Yangzom's words: "Your support has a great impact on my life. It has really helped me to stand in today's world with confidence. I would have been nothing without your support and guidance."

The other graduate, **Tenzin Angmo**, has also done very well, has graduated with a B.A. and has been accepted into a 2 year Teachers Program.

Our partner the Rinchen Zangpo Society for Spiti Development which administers the Munsel-ling School in Spiti has done so well with the first phase of the TSF that the TRAS board has approved funding for the second phase. The first 2 candidates selected are **Tenzin Yangzom** as mentioned above and **Ringzin Angmo**, who completed a Bachelor of Science degree with honours in Anthropology,

but had no funds to continue her education, as she comes from a poor family in the remote Khwik Village of Spiti. With TRAS support she has been accepted into a Masters of Science Program in Anthropology.

Our two new partners have just started their first funding cycle:

**Voice of Children** has been working with TRAS since 2009 on education and health issues among children and their communities in the remote villages in Uttarakhand. Opportunities for secondary education are very limited, especially for girls from this impoverished region. Without education the options in life for girls are very limited. The demand for scholarship positions was so high that our partner had great difficulty selecting from 7 strong candidates. For the first year only we are supporting 4 students instead of the usual 2.

**Tanuja Tewari** passed the entrance exam to the Gov't Girls Polytechnic College Almora for a 3-year diploma in the Computer-Electronic Science Program. **Upsana Tulda** will pursue a Bachelor of Business Administration. **Anjali Tewari** and **Babita Khatri** are both pursuing BA degrees.

**Dekyiling Tibetan Centre** handicraft and sponsorship manager, Kesang Wangdu, felt very strongly that without education the fate of girls was precarious and the need was very great. **Tsering Dekyi** and **Tashi Choedon** are the first 2 candidates chosen from Dekyiling and are currently enrolled in a BA program in Dehradun.

The enthusiasm and positive response of our partners has shown us the very great need for post-secondary education, especially for girls, in the Himalayan region. Indeed, all twelve of our currently funded students happen to be girls! This is not our policy with TSF; rather it speaks to the overwhelming lack of opportunities for girls in the impoverished regions.

**Your support will enable the students  
to help themselves, their families and  
communities to break the cycle  
of poverty and ignorance.**

**Thank you for your support of the TRAS Scholarship Fund.**



# The Project Report:

## A year in review

Thanks to your generosity, TRAS was able to send \$86,950 to our project partners in the past year.

### 7 projects were completed...

**Munsel-ling School** completed the wall around the agricultural compound, and veggies are planted in the now-safe greenhouses and in between them as well!

**Dekyiling Tibetan Handicraft Centre** received the last TRAS payment towards the crèche for weavers' children. The crèche is nearly empty nowadays; the children all in school and the toddlers from the earlier days of our support long since grown up and working in the Tibetan government-in-exile and a variety of businesses and able to support their families. Kesang Wangdu, the manager, writes: "Your generous contribution has been very helpful to our students and to doing something good for our community".



**The lunch program for the school in Phadamchen**, Sikkim, was given a final extension of three months' support, and was then taken over by the Tibetan Children's Education Foundation in the US, with whom TRAS has worked before at this school. The *Tibetan Socks* donations will still go to the school, via TCEF.

The greenhouse at the school is in full swing – spinach is coming along nicely, tended by the two women employed to look after it, so 'mission accomplished'!

**Sangam Women's Computer Literacy program** was a success with 73 women trained, several already finding employment and many (along with their children) continuing to benefit from the library's computers, which were purchased for the project.

**The village libraries in the Voice of Children villages** are doing well, with a greatly increased readership! Our three years of maintenance are now at an end. Several libraries are now run by the villages and are thriving.

**Humla Delights Café** suffered a setback after the earthquakes last year – no-one wanted to risk going inside a building and tourist trade was down – but this year things are better! Profits go to the READI Nepal hostel, and imagine our delight to see a large photo and glowing article about it in Nepal's leading daily paper! (it's on our website).



### 4 projects are ongoing...



**Nepal: In Humla, READI Nepal** continues its good work, and makes changes as needed. This year, the government school had improved its level of education, so 20 of the children in the READI hostel were enrolled in it while living in the hostel. 10 families felt financially ready to look after their children, who now go to their village schools. All still receive regular health checkups, warm clothes, stationery and toiletries. The two teachers initially trained under this project have moved on, after several years of dedicated service to the READI project. They plan to train two more, for the government school. Parents continue to learn more about health issues and livelihood skills.

## The Project Report: A year in review (cont'd)

**India: Nurses Training for Tibetans (Central Tibetan Administration):** Two of the TRAS-supported students have completed their training and their 6-month internship – congratulations! A third sadly had to drop out because of ill health, so we have picked up 3 new student nurses to add to the 5 still in training (fully funded to 2018).

**India: In the hill villages near Nainital and Almora, Voice of Children** helps 232 children go to the education centres after school, join children's groups, go on outings, produce a newsletter and run an annual fair. The computer training remains popular. Meetings galore are held to encourage civic participation, better health, and protection for girls from babyhood to adulthood (159 women attended a meeting advocating against female foeticide).

30 meetings of the teenaged girl clubs were held. On Youth Day 116 girls from VOC attended a rally, demanding sanitary pads, iron and folic acid tablets to be given out at school from the Chief Medical Officer. In International Youth Action Month, 250 youth helped clean up a river.



**Nepal: In Dolakha, the small but vigorous NGO Shree Fashelung Social Services (SFSS) HAS REBUILT ALL 200 TOILETS FOLLOWING LAST YEAR'S EARTHQUAKE!!** – each a sturdy room with septic tank and a tap nearby. They are now in use by the grateful families. What a great way to lower disease – and to give privacy to girls and women. We are so impressed with the speed and efficiency with which this rebuilding project went ahead! Watch the website for a full report.

### What's a library without books!

**Munsel-ling School** has sent a plea to furnish its library. At last this successful school in the Spiti Valley has a small building fit for a proper library. The school has been accredited by the Indian government to teach to Grade 12 and offer the nation-wide school leaving examinations (such a feather in their cap!). So they need books – and more books!

TRAS member Carole Nakonechny visited the school two years ago and writes about her experience. The state of the library hit her hard. Her complete essay is on the TRAS website: here is an excerpt.

"I was an "accidental tourist" at Munsel-ling in the summer of 2014. I am a retired ESL teacher so news of an amazing school in the vicinity got me to Rangrik village, to the "school at the end of the universe".

Spiti, the location of Munsel-ling, is one of the most isolated regions in India. The mountain landscape is very dry and rugged, massive in scale. . Winter brings fierce cold and isolation; Spiti is unreachable by any roadway for seven months of the year.

Munsel-ling School has grown steadily in this environment for years. The government schools were impossible to maintain. Teachers were intermittent and the students had no way to travel or maintain residence near the school. Now over six hundred students live and study at Munsel-ling. The results are spectacular in the context of the situation.

Diya, a British volunteer English teacher, offered to show me the library. She unlocked the door and I peered into the dingy half-light.

**I stood there, my mind blank, not understanding what I saw.**

**"You mean this one giant book shelf? That's it? That's the only library they have?"**

Old editions of a few classics, dictionaries, degraded magazines, some Indian folk tales and National Geographics. Stacks of old tests. Piles of detritus. The library was extinct!"

**So, friends, will you help? TRAS will forward your donations.**

\$19,591 will furnish 5 rooms (Science, Literature, Arts and commerce, Children's books and Tibetan language) with tables, chairs, benches, shelves, steel cabinets and books. There will also be a main reading room, a junior reading room and a librarian's office. Why not furnish a complete room for \$2,500 – imagine the joy of knowing you have created the Science Section – or the Tibetan Section, or the English Section ----- or pay for a cabinet, a chair, books----? Thank you!



## Where did your dollars go in 2016?

To these out-of-the-way corners of the Himalayan foothills and mountain ranges...

Nainital/Almora Region. When a TRAS director admired the incredible scenery, a VOC volunteer said "You don't notice it when you are trying to survive here".

Humla, Nepal. Nearest road – 10 days' walk away.

Dolakha. Epicentre of the 2015 earthquake

Spiti. Home to the villagers whose children attend Munsel-ling School (photo credit: Brian Harris)



### TRAS Fall Social

Wednesday, November 30, 2016

Join us for a pleasant evening of good food, entertainment and information about some of our projects! An e-blast has gone to our e-mail list, or phone the office for more details.

**Gurkha Himalayan Kitchen, 1141 Davie Street, Vancouver**

## Sponsorship

TRAS members currently sponsor 118 children at 6 intuitions in northern India and we thank those members for their support and commitment. 9 of these children are currently pursuing a Post-Secondary education.

Is there room in your heart for one of the 3 children in this issue? There are many more in our files waiting for sponsors. Please contact us at [info@tras.ca](mailto:info@tras.ca) or call 604-224-5133 if you would like to sponsor a child. The office is open part-time so please leave a message and your call will be returned.

Here is an excerpt from a Tibetan girl's recent letter to her sponsor

“When I was in Tibet I didn’t get opportunity to attend in school. I live at home and help my grandmother. When I was 12 years old I came to India. In 2008 I started to learn A,B,C and 1,2,3..now I am study in class 11th. I think I am lucky girl as I would not get the opportunity to study if I was in Tibet. --- Lastly, but not the least I would like to hold both of my hands in front of my small red heart, and say my warmest thanks to you once again. Being a student who came from Tibet, I am much attempting to study to make a resourceful person in this world. Therefore, you are the one who supported and helped me. I only hope that there are many more people such as you in this vast world, so that our world might be living in a peace and harmony way. May all the happiness all around the world fall in your family”

As a sponsor you will receive a progress report of the child after each academic session as well as a letter and picture of your child. We have more information about how the program works on our website, [www.tras.ca/sponsor](http://www.tras.ca/sponsor).

The mothers of the first two Tibetan children work as carpet weavers at the Tibetan Women’s Centre in Rajpur.

**TENZIN NAMDOL** – Tenzin is 5 years old and is currently in Stage II at the SOS Montessori, Rajpur. Her father is in the army. Together their monthly wages cannot meet all the family expenses and school fees. They need your help with a sponsorship. (\$220/year).

**KALDON NORBU** – Kaldon is the only child in the family. His father works a petty business in the winter selling goods on loan. But last year due to the late monsoon he couldn’t sell his things on time and so the family is now in dire poverty. His mother’s wages are not enough to cover Tenzin’s school fees and also meet the daily needs of the family. He is in need of your support for his education. (\$220/year).

**KARMA WAESAL** – Karma will be 10 years old in November. His parents came from Bhutan to Dekyiling Tibetan Centre and his mother attended school when young but could not continue due to family difficulties. Currently Karma is reading in class III and his mother hopes that he will receive a sponsorship so that he can continue his education. (\$400/year).



**TENZIN NAMDOL**



**KALDON NORBU**



**KARMA WAESAL**



# TRAS

## Supporting health and education for children and youth in the Himalayas

1183 Melville Street  
Vancouver BC  
V6E 2X5

Tel: 604 224 5133  
Fax: 604 738 4080  
E: info@tras.ca  
W: tras.ca



### Patrons

John Conway  
Joan Ford  
Dorothea Leach

### Board of Directors

President – Russil Wvong  
Treasurer – Kevin Yuen

### Directors

Frank Beck, Lynn Beck, Cynthia Bunbury,  
Abby Fitch, Marina Guy, Daphne Hales,  
Videsh Kapoor, Megha Shakya,  
Sanjeev Singh

### Office Manager

Joanne MacLeod

### Newsletter Editor

Daphne Hales

### Newsletter Design

Beck Lamb

### Tax Tip!

If you have securities (shares or mutual funds) that have appreciated in value, you may consider making your donation in the form of securities. When you donate them to a registered charity, you don't pay capital gains tax: the charity gets the full value of the securities, and you receive a tax receipt for the full value. For more information, please contact our office, or see the CanadaHelps website.

Tell your friends about TRAS and encourage them to get involved!



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

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

- ☐ Please send event information and newsletters by e-mail  
☐ Please send me information on Planned Giving

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

### Please allocate to:

- ☐ Sponsorship \$ \_\_\_\_\_ for (name of child/youth) \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ Project Donation \$ \_\_\_\_\_ for (name of project) \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ General Donation \$ \_\_\_\_\_ for wherever it is needed most

Mail to: TRAS, 1183 Melville Street, Vancouver BC V6E 2X5  
☎ 604 224 5133 Fax 604 738 4080 E-mail: info@tras.ca Web: tras.ca

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

A tax receipt will be issued for all donations.

Charity Registration #130620743RR0001

