

## President's Appeal

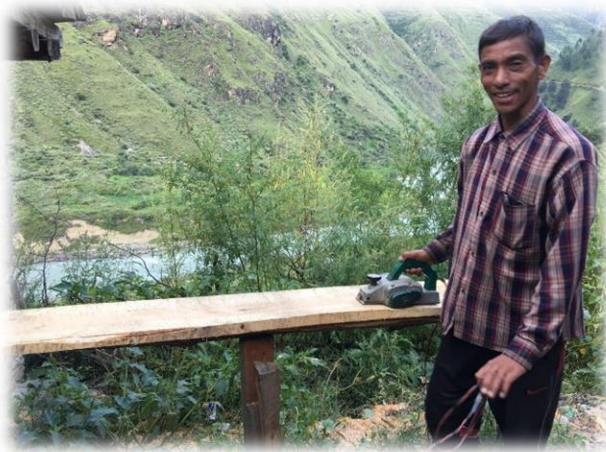
As the holiday season approaches, I'd like to thank TRAS members for your generosity and commitment. The reason that TRAS exists, from its founding in 1962 right up to today, is that our members want to help people in the Himalayas, in Tibet, Nepal, and northern India. I'm amazed and humbled by your continued dedication to helping others, particularly the children.

One of the major projects that we're fundraising for is a partnership with Rural Empowerment and Development Initiatives (READI) Nepal, based in Humla, the poorest and most remote district in Nepal. Although the government has built schools and a few tiny health posts, the sheer difficulty of reaching and supplying them leaves most children without basic health care or education.

TRAS is working with READI Nepal to provide education for 30 children. Twenty attend school in Simikot, Humla's small capital, staying at READI's hostel there, while ten have done so well they have already moved back home and to village schools, but are still mentored by READI. The children have been selected from the lowest castes, minority groups, and the very poor. Half of them are girls. Their parents are happy that the program is bringing together children from different castes and backgrounds to live, study, and eat together, which helps to break down age-old social barriers, and opens up new opportunities for them. They consistently come top of their classes at school. Skills trainings are in the works.



*She's top of her class!*



*A parent who received carpentry training and tools, now self-employed*

In addition to helping the children directly, TRAS and READI are improving the lives of their families by teaching primary health care and supporting income-generating activities. With our help, four of the children's guardians have started apple orchard farming and processing, two are growing and selling off-season greenhouse vegetables, two are running small teahouses, two are helping in the READI café (TRAS provided the start-up funds for this popular place) and one is trained in carpentry. Their success has allowed them to contribute to their children's education, which is an important step towards the sustainability of this project.

## President's Appeal (cont'd)

Dhiraj



Dhiraj is a 15-year-old boy from Chhipra village. He has been living in the hostel and doing well at school. This year, READI has been able to move Dhiraj back home to his widowed mother. Why? First because he is doing well with his studies and secondly because his widowed mother can now afford to pay for his education herself. READI enrolled her in a vegetable gardening program called 'Home Garden' to learn how to grow her own food. She has done so well she now has surplus vegetables to sell and with the profit pays for Dhiraj's education. Jhigi says "Being a single woman, I was always lacking in confidence in front of society. I had no idea about income generation but now I have increased my knowledge and self-confidence tremendously".

TRAS is impressed by READI's ability to work with other agencies — government and private — for the overall benefit of the children and their families. This cooperation spreads in many directions. For instance, with help from the district health officer, the 'Little Doctor' program has now been introduced to the children — they are learning basic first aid and have already had success passing on what they have learned to their families and friends. The district education office has helped with supplying more books for the TRAS library — which is open to the whole community — and now that Nepal has finally had local elections (after a 19-year hiatus) the Mayor has taken a great interest in the hostel and its programs, and has offered advice and help. All this bodes well for spreading the READI philosophy of inclusion and improving lives locally.



*Little doctors*

TRAS's goal is to raise \$27,000 to support the READI Nepal Education Project for this year. Will you help us?

**If you'd like to make a donation in someone's name this holiday season — towards a project, the Scholarship Fund or a general donation — we can send a card to them on your behalf. Please call Joanne at the office (604-224-5133) before December 8, so that she'll have time to mail out the cards before Christmas.**

Wishing you an enjoyable holiday season, and best wishes for 2018!

*Russil Wvong*



Join the TRAS directors for a fun evening of good food and conversation ... and perhaps some shopping — a new consignment of the lovely woollen handicrafts from Manali has just arrived!

~ doors open at 6.30pm ~ appetizers at 7pm ~ dinner at 7.30pm ~

**Remember to book early for the next event if you would like to join us!  
If you did not receive the e-blast invitation, do let the TRAS office have your email address, so that you don't miss out next time.**

**TRAS Fall Dinner**  
**Wednesday, November 29**  
**Gurkha Himalayan Kitchen,**  
**1141 Davie Street, Vancouver**



## “Are there no food banks? Are there no school breakfast programs?”

*(with a nod to Scrooge and his solutions for the poor)*

Well, no, in far-off Humla way up in the Himalayan Mountains, there are no food banks, no resources at all except a small band of locals who want to improve life for the poorest of the poor. **READI Nepal** is doing an exceptional job of encouraging education, health care and income generation, but there is still a way to go.



*Students gather herbal tea plants*

**Food** is incredibly expensive in Humla, because of the difficulty of growing it or transporting it by air (or carrying it for 10 days from the nearest road head). And — no surprise here — **FOOD** is by far the largest item in the READI budget. **It costs \$12,470 a year to feed the hostel students. That is \$623 per child a year, or \$52 per month — or \$1.73 a day.**

We all know that children who don't eat well can't study well and are at risk of failure. The READI students are, in fact, receiving a balanced diet and doing really well in school, maintaining their tradition of scoring higher in their exams and being active in extra-curricular activities. **LET'S MAKE SURE THEY CONTINUE TO SHINE BY PROVIDING THE FOOD THEY NEED. As you prepare warm and welcoming meals for your families and friends, spare a thought — and a donation — for the children of Humla!**

**There may be no food bank in Humla — but there *are* generous TRAS donors who might give \$52 to feed a child for a month, or \$12 to feed her for a week.**

For the 20 children in the READI hostel, life is good by local standards and they are getting nourishing meals — but only because of TRAS' help.

READI Nepal uses as much local food as possible, has started a greenhouse which is providing the hostel with fresh veggies and is teaching the parents to plant grains and vegetables which will survive the harsh climate.



## Here are the new items from Manushi!

Just in time for a chilly winter, we have shawls, scarves, toques and gloves, and the ever-popular dhari caps — all from the Kullu Valley.

Handicrafts can be ordered or bought in person by contacting Joanne at the TRAS office (604-224-5133 | [info@tras.ca](mailto:info@tras.ca))

## Completed Projects

**The 20 Voice of Children Remote Libraries** are now being run entirely by their own communities and by volunteers — just as we had hoped!

**The Munsel-ling School Library** has been completed on time and on budget, serving the huge school population and also welcoming local residents. This is an enormous asset to the school as it moves to providing Grades 11 and 12, as well as being a terrific resource for all ages.

## Ongoing Projects

**CTA Nurses Training for Tibetan girls** continues to provide assistance to 8 students from Tibetan settlements all over India at first rate Indian teaching hospitals. The graduates have no trouble finding jobs either within the Tibetan community or in Indian hospitals. **Cost for 2018: \$7,643**

**Voice of Children Education project** helping hundreds of children in 16 villages in north India in a variety of ways (see story on pages 6 and 7). **Cost for 2018: \$28,600**

**READI Nepal Education project**, providing education, health care and income generation for 30 children and their families in Humla, Nepal (see pages 1, 2 and 3). **Cost for 2018: \$27,000**

## New Projects

**Voice of Children Health Awareness project** for six villages beyond the 16 already in the regular VOC program (see page 7). **This project cost \$4,879 this year.**

TRAS has had several requests which it is considering, depending on available funding.

## The Scholarship Fund

Director Lynn Beck writes: We are thrilled that our 14 students in the TSF are excelling in their studies. They are working very hard and are extremely motivated to succeed. We have just received the exam results for four of the students from the Spiti Valley.

In the words of Tashi Wangmo (BA third year), "I am elated to share with you that I scored good marks (70%) in my exams and I will keep trying to do my best in my coming days. I think I am very lucky...I am very thankful to you for your kind help."

Tenzin Yangzom is pursuing her Master's degree from Punjab University. She has completed her first year of her M.A. with 70%. After a summer vacation in Spiti she started her second year Aug 1st.

Tashi Tsomo completed her BSc (Math honours) from prestigious Miranda House, University of Delhi. After completing her TRAS scholarship she has been admitted to an MSc program in Delhi University, making her family in Spiti very proud.

Sonam Dolkar has completed her second year of her BSc (botany) from Himachal University Shimla. With a 76% average she is an excellent student!

TRAS is very proud of our bright, hardworking students. Thanks to your support they are able to pursue their dreams of creating a better future for themselves, their families and communities. Through education they are able to achieve careers in science, teaching, research, computer science. Without your support they would not have these life changing opportunities.



Sonam Dolkar

**Thank you for your generous donations and your kind support in the future!**

## Sponsorship Report

The Tibetan Children's Village (TCV) School in the Chauntra Tibetan Settlement in northern India caters not only to the local and nearby Tibetan population but also to children from distant settlements where there is no secondary education. TRAS recently received a plea from this school, asking us to find sponsors for some of the most needy children. Our sponsors have long supported students at the TCV schools in Dharamsala and Suja, and knowing what a good opportunity it is for these children to study at the Chauntra School, TRAS is happy to oblige. Will you help us by sponsoring one of these students? The cost is \$440 per annum.

Please contact Joanne at the TRAS office for more details (604-224-5133 or [info@tras.ca](mailto:info@tras.ca)).

### Tenzin Yarphe

Tenzin is a 12-year-old boy. He was born at the Chauntra Tibetan settlement. The place is situated in Himachal Pradesh. Tibetans living in the settlement have no land for agriculture. Petty business is the main source of income. His father is working as a physical training teacher in a Tibetan school. Mother runs a small Tibetan hotel on the side of the road of the settlement. There are three children in the family. With limited source of income his parents are not able to pay for his education.

With recommendation from the local Tibetan welfare office, he was admitted as a destitute child. He is very happy in his new school, learning all the different subjects. He is in Class 7. Tibetan is his best subject. His future aim is to become a Tibetan doctor.



Tenzin is a 13-year-old boy currently in Class 7. Tenzin's family is living in Choephelling Tibetan settlement, situated in remote Miao, Arunachal Pradesh (North East India). Living standards of the Tibetans in that settlement are poor compared to other Tibetan settlements. His parents got divorced and his mother is taking care of him. His mother is doing petty business selling readymade clothes. With little profit from her small business she is not able to pay for the education of her children.

With recommendation from the Choephelling Tibetan settlement office, Kunphel got admitted to Chauntra School as a destitute child. His studies until class 6 were in the settlement school. He is very happy in the new school learning all the different subjects. His best subject is science. His hobby is to play football.

### Tenzin Kunphel

### Tenzin Nyidon

Tenzin is a 12-year-girl, currently in class 7. Tenzin was born at Kapila Nursing home at Palampur. Her parents are living in Bir Tibetan Dege settlement. Her father is doing a sweater business in remote Indian villages during the winter. Her mother is a housewife. With little profit from the small business, her parents are not able to pay for the education of their 2 children.

Nyidon is very happy in her new school learning all the different subjects. Mathematics is her best subject. Her future aim is to become a doctor and help the poor and needy.



Ngawang is a 9-year-old girl, currently in Class 3. Ngawang was born at Kishtwar, a mountainous region in Jammu and Kashmir. Her parents are now living in Bir Tibetan Dege settlement. Her parents are doing a sweater business in Jammu and Kashmir during the winter. With little income from the petty business, her parents are not able to pay for her education. There are three children in the family.

She attended McLeod Ganj Day school until class 2. She is very happy to get admitted as destitute child in TCV School. Her best subject is Mathematics. She likes reading books.

### Ngawang Lhadon



## It's All About the Children

by Carole Nakonechny

*The Voice of Children (VOC) Education project is like a benign octopus, spreading its kindly tentacles in many directions through 16 hilly villages, some of them miles away from roads and all of them poor. VOC reaches out through tuition classes, education centres, village libraries, girl's health camps, youth groups, children's fairs and outings, women's groups and advocacy — touching literally hundreds of children and changing life for the better. And it's all done by a tiny staff and many dedicated local volunteers.*

*TRAS member Carole Nakonechny, who knows and loves the region for its wild beauty, read the recent half-yearly report and was immediately struck by the vivid pictures of the children's lives the report conjured up. These stories are representative of the help given to hundreds.*



Help is scarce for poor families in the isolated high-altitude villages of Uttarkhand. Two NGOs, Aman and Vimarsh together formed Voice of Children (VOC) to target youth and families in crisis.

Every day Manoj's mother faced a harsh ritual; she carried her disabled son 1.5 km to his school on her back. Then she would return, later the same day, to carry him home again.

When Manoj's mother's health broke, VOC tasked volunteers with tutorial classes for Manoj at home. They also managed to get the boy a disability certificate from the state government and are consulting with a doctor about his legs. Now Manoj has a long-term goal; he wants to become a teacher for the differently abled.



Chandan was a seriously depressed high school drop-out. His father, a small farmer and day laborer, had no more money to send his son to school. VOC's youth group, Bal Sangathan, came through with financial aid and Chandan has graduated in the science stream with honors. His family was so delighted, that they managed to scrape together tuition fees and Chandan is now working hard to become an electrician.

Ameena comes from an extremely poor family of scavengers. Her father became ill during his work as a garbage picker, and Ameena had to leave school. This high spirited young woman, described by one teacher as a 'cheerful bird carrying in her heart aspirations of education' reached out to her VOC youth group for help. She has now graduated high school with honors, and works as a teacher's aide at a well-known school in

Delhi. She supports several younger siblings with their education, and when she returns home on holiday, she attends the VOC youth group meetings to inspire and encourage the children.

The Fellowship to Children initiative is one of the strongest components of VOC. This year 52 of the neediest children in the community were supported with the basic notebooks, school bags, shoes and tuition fees. Coaching and heart-felt encouragement are always part of the package.



VOC's future direction can be felt in the excitement of the new village computer literacy courses. Over a hundred students on various levels are eagerly learning MS Office, and typing skills in Hindi and English. The VOC Half Year Report tells us that "the village of Govindpur is buzzing with computer learning activities". A young woman called Neha has become "the shining role model, igniting the young in the area".

## It's All About the Children (cont'd)



After nursing training, Neha did a certificate course in computer education. She then opted to work in the mountains instead of the city. Now “students from different villages are trailing the mountain paths to attend her classes”. Fifteen villages in addition to Govindpur participate in the VOC computer literacy project.

Raghu, VOC’s director, makes his request in these simple words: “These communities still need the valuable support of TRAS.” At present TRAS is the sole support of VOC and all these exceptional young people.

Things have changed for the better over a few years, as VOC staff teach and encourage the villagers to demand what is theirs by right and as they ensure better education and health for hundreds of eager kids. It will cost \$28,600.00 to run this project in 2018.

Please consider helping TRAS to support VOC.

## A Major Health Problem

The Voice of Children (VOC) project, run by two local NGOs from Almora and Nainital, north India, in 16 remote villages, took on an extra task this past summer, with TRAS support — to spread health awareness to 6 even more remote villages. These six villages have large Dalit populations, large numbers of children and a very poor standard of living. VOC staff was concerned that the health of the villagers would be poor — and were they ever right! The meetings and workshops held over the summer confirmed that ignorance, lack of medical facilities and old taboos have created an enormous problem.



In the Nainital district, VOC ran school meetings, a women’s group meeting and a girls’ workshop. The Nainital auxiliary nurse midwife was their resource person. While teaching personal health, hygiene and cleanliness to the children it was clear that the majority of girls were malnourished and had little or no knowledge of menstruation. Gender discrimination? Reluctance by parents and teachers to discuss these matters? Or, as the leaders report, “belief on binding it to the spiritual domain”? VOC found that the women were unhappy with the few and erratic government services available to them. Often, when going to the understaffed district hospital or clinic when pregnant, they were referred to private centres and hospitals — in some cases having to sell land or take out loans to pay for their medical needs. The training for 30 adolescent girls was very useful.



In the Almora district, more than 200 villagers benefitted from two health camps — particularly the women, children and old people. The provincial health department provided a team of doctors, nurses and a pharmacist. Anaemia, malnutrition and high blood pressure are major problems. VOC also organized adolescent girls’ trainings,



village meetings and a school awareness program on personal health and hygiene. They are having the water tested.

At least these problems have come to light — this is a good beginning, but more obviously needs to be done. It takes committed local NGOs to get the ball rolling and to know how to access available help. Voice of Children has done well!



# TRAS

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

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