



## Sponsorships, scholarships, schools, hostels and health care

... it's all to do with helping children grow up to be contributing members of successful, safe communities. This has been the underlying theme of TRAS ever since George and Inge Woodcock saw the young Tibetan refugees in north India, several to a bed, shivering under cotton sacking in the freezing Himalayan winter and started the Tibetan Refugee Aid Society here in Vancouver. The Society has evolved over time into the Trans-Himalayan Aid Society, taking on many more aspects of community support, but at the heart of TRAS' work is helping the children and youth receive a sound education, decent food and health care, with a secure roof over their heads to keep them warm and safe.

Russil Wvong, TRAS President writes:

Once again, thank you to all our TRAS members! Your generosity and commitment are truly incredible. Together, we've changed the lives of thousands of children and young people in the Himalayas since TRAS was first founded in 1962.

This holiday season, please consider sponsoring a child's education. Through the TRAS sponsorship program, you can support the education of an individual child in the Himalayas, one of the poorest regions of the world. Children needing sponsorship may be orphans; or their parents may simply be too poor to send them to school, or even to support them. For \$480/year, you can help a girl or a boy receive a good education, giving them a brighter future.



On page 2 you can see case histories for four children in need of sponsorship: Karma at Tibetan Children's Village (TCV) in Suja, Kirtika at TCV in Lower Chauntra, Rigzin at the Tibetan Chauntra Settlement, and Tenzin at Tibetan Women's Centre in Rajpur. Besides these four children, we have quite a few more who need support.

The settlements send letters from the children at least once per year, which we forward to you. Often they may include photos, drawings, and report cards.

The sponsorship program supports children until they graduate from high school. Towards the end of each year, we'll ask if you're able to continue sponsoring your child for the coming year.

If you would like to sponsor a child, please email [sponsorship@tras.ca](mailto:sponsorship@tras.ca), or call Joanne at 604-224-5133. Thank you very much for your support!

You can find more information about the TRAS sponsorship program at [tras.ca/sponsor](http://tras.ca/sponsor).

On behalf of all of us at TRAS, as well as our partners in the Himalayas, I hope you and your loved ones enjoy the holiday season. Best wishes for 2020!

# Sponsorship

Currently TRAS sponsors 132 children; 83 are girls and 49 are boys. They live in several Tibetan Children's Villages, Tibetan settlements and Munsel-ling School, all in the Himalayan region of India. In 2020, with their sponsors' support, 10 of these children are expected to graduate from school. We have 30 new profiles of children seeking assistance in their education. If you are able to help one of these children, please contact Joanne at 604-224-5133 or [sponsorship@tras.ca](mailto:sponsorship@tras.ca).

**Karma  
Samten**

*Tibetan Children's Village, Suja*

A very cute and adorable 15-year-old monk. He is presently in Class VI and is a very intelligent and hardworking boy. His father lives in Nepal and is very poor. He lost his mother when he was very young. He was admitted to the TCV School to learn the Tibetan language and culture.



*Tibetan Children's Village, Lower Chauntra*

She is a 10-year-old from Kinnaur, Himachal Pradesh. She has one sibling; her father is a farmer and also raises cattle. Her mother is away working as a foster mother in a school in Manali. Her parents are very happy that she was accepted at the TCV School for her education and to learn the Tibetan language and culture.

**Kirtika**

**Rigzin**

*Chauntra Tibetan Settlement*

Rigzin is a 6-year-old and he attends the Sambhota Tibetan School. In the summer he is a day scholar and in the winter he boards at the school. There are 7 family members living at home, with many health issues. His parents really need the help of a sponsor to assist them in paying for his health and education.



*Tibetan Women's Centre, Rajpur*

Tenzin is a 3-year-old boy attending day care at the Tibetan Women's Centre. His parents do petty winter business for 4 months of the year and his grandmother works at the Centre as a yarn baller. He has two older brothers who are boarding at the Tibetan Homes School in Rajpur.

**Tenzin**

# Projects Update

**A review of TRAS projects and our funding needs for the current year:** *donations have of course arrived throughout the year, but we need a lot more to cover the full costs of most of these projects. Your donations will be very gratefully received!*

- **Voice of Children Education:** this multi-faceted project is doing well, supporting hundreds of children and families through a variety of classes, meetings and events in the villages around Almora and Nainital in north India.

**Fully funded (thank you, Margaret!) for 2020**

- **READI Nepal:** The latest half-yearly report has just been posted on the TRAS website (tras.ca). The students are all doing well, and READI is justly proud of providing quality food (mostly local), clean accommodation and educational guidance to the students in the hostel. The parents are actively involved, both in offering guidance to READI when needed and in providing grains for the kitchen. Recently an eye camp was organized through the local Department of Health and all students and parents had their eyes tested and problems dealt with. It was good to read that the students who have taken the 'Little Doctor' course did a great job volunteering to organize the camp. The Balmandir Secondary School is extremely supportive of this group of village children, giving them every opportunity to participate in extra-curricular activities, and READI in turn was able to help the school by providing two computers this year. The READI library, provided in part by our friends at the Nepal Library Foundation, is in full operation and is well used by teachers as well as students. The flourishing Humla Delights Café is now also the training centre for parents who want to learn how to operate a small lodge or tea house! The Cafe provides funding for the hostel from the café profits, so once again TRAS can reduce the amount of its support.

**Funds needed for 2020: \$22,294 (\$850 raised)**

- **Munsel-ling Roof Repairs:** It is now deep winter in the Spiti Valley, and soon the older students will head south to a hostel near Dharamsala to continue their studies. The younger children will go home to their villages, in some cases with a teacher accompanying them to keep the learning going. It is not possible to heat the large Munsel-ling buildings during the coldest part of the year, and with the road into the valley closed, heavy snow and intermittent power, it is not feasible to keep the main school open. We haven't heard yet if the roof repairs were completed, but it was such an urgent job we are sure they must have been. As soon as we receive a report we will post it on the website – but in the meantime we must finish raising the funds to pay for those repairs.

**Funds needed for this project: \$14,790**

***Late flash: This just in from Munsel-ling: "Sorry for the delay – I got stuck in deep snow in Spiti.***

***Now on my way to Dharamsala – children safe and warm AND NO LEAKAGE PROBLEMS!"***

- **CTA Nurses:** As mentioned on page 7, this worthwhile project is going strong.

**Funds needed for 2020: \$6,301**

- **IDEA Midwifery:** As mentioned on pages 6-7, we are excited about this new project in Nepal, to support rural girls obtain training in midwifery and basic nursing.

**Funds needed for 2020: \$6,160 (\$1,200 already raised, so TRAS is looking for donations towards \$4,960)**



## A lovely lot of "Thank You"!

Remember the heart-warming story in our Spring 2019 newsletter (tras.ca – newsletters) of Margaret Ayer's wonderful gift to TRAS which is funding the Voice of Children project for two years?

Our local partners at VOC told some of the children about Margaret's generosity and many of them made her charming thank you cards. TRAS recently received a large package of them and they have been shipped off to Margaret, but not before we photographed a couple to show you!

# Scholarships

Three of our projects involve giving scholarships to young people to help them further their education: the TRAS Scholarship Fund, the CTA Nurses Training and now the IDEA Midwifery Training. The results speak for themselves. TRAS funding and the students' own efforts lead them to independence and the ability to help their families and communities. Such a worthwhile goal!

## The TRAS Scholarship Fund

*by Lynn Beck, Scholarship Director*

We are very pleased to report that the TRAS Scholarship Fund (TSF) is thriving and has indeed surpassed our expectations. We are happy to continue working with our three partners.

**Munsel-ling School**, our oldest partner, in the remote Spiti valley, has completed 6 years under the TSF. Seventeen students altogether have graduated or are currently studying.

The two new students selected this year are highly qualified. Pasang Dolma successfully passed her pre-med test and is now studying medicine at the government medical college in Himachel Pradesh. Tanzin Trokit obtained 93% in her Qualifying Exam and is trying for acceptance at the prestigious St. Stephens College in New Delhi. She is hoping to obtain a job in the civil service.

An interesting pattern has emerged in that almost all our scholarship candidates use the 3-year scholarship as a stepping-stone for further education. After a B.A. or B.Sc. degree they go on to a B.Ed. or Master's degree, research, etc.

Our initial \$3,000 support seems to go a long way towards even higher education, with the students finding their own extra funding resources!

Some successes: Sherap Dolma, who completed her B.Sc. degree in honors math, is currently working as a bank manager. Sonam Dolker, who also completed her degree in honors math, went on to obtain her B.Ed. degree. Her goal is to return to the Spiti Valley to serve as a teacher in the much-needed fields of math and science.

**Voice of Children (VOC)** had such a high number of applicants for scholarship positions each year that we have expanded the number of new students from two to three.

VOC serves a catchment of 25,000 people in a poor remote mountainous region of North India which has very few resources.

Even though they have only been funded by TRAS for 3 years they have 11 students who have graduated or are currently studying. They are entering phase 2 of funding under a new 3-year contract.

One of the first VOC students to receive scholarship funding, Taniya Tewari, is also a success story. She is enrolled in a local government girls' polytechnic in computer science and engineering. She is going to do a lateral transfer to obtain her B.Tech degree and hopes to get her teaching degree in order to teach other girls these skills! Khushi Budlakoti is in her second year of a B.Sc. Nursing degree; she comes from a very poor family with no hope of studying without a scholarship and is already giving back to her community by volunteering with VOC. She works with teen girls groups to promote women's issues and menstrual hygiene and to inspire other girls to get an education.



*Khushi Budlakoti*

**Dekyiling Tibetan Settlement** is in North India close to Dehradun. After the first 3 years of funding, 4 students have graduated. Two female students have completed their B.A. degree and two have completed shorter diploma courses.

Tenzin Wangmo, after finishing a very practical secretarial course, is concurrently completing her B.A. degree online! Tenzin Choenyi completed a computer software engineering course. Dekyiling has 3 new students enrolled in 3- or 4-year programs.

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## Scholarships (cont'd)

As we can see by the success of the first six years of the Scholarship Program TRAS has obviously tapped into an overwhelming need and desire for students to get further education. The students' letters enthusiastically describe their optimism and gratitude for a better future. They repeatedly thank the donors for "giving them a chance to achieve greatness"!

**Thank you for supporting the Scholarship Fund.**

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## We are delighted to acknowledge several accomplishments by our partners and supporters.

**Sutherland Secondary School** in North Vancouver has just completed its 13th annual 24-hour fast in support of social justice endeavours, and TRAS will once again be one of the recipients of their amazing fundraising efforts. Every year, since 2006, the Student Leadership Council has come up with innovative and fun ways to raise awareness in the school of the needs of children in other parts of

the world and funds to address those needs. The School has zeroed in on Nepal, and has supported TRAS projects there every year. They have raised funds through fashion shows, garage sales, book sales, spin-a-thons (teams keeping cycles spinning all day to garner pledges), dinners, film shows, displays at public community events – and their salesmanship of TRAS handicrafts has never been matched (\$1,200 worth sold at one parent-teacher interview evening – and that was just one of many such sales events!). These students are awesome, well organized, energetic and dedicated! Their efforts were recognized in 2012 by the BC Council for International Cooperation which awarded Sutherland their International Development Week School Award. Our hearty thanks to Sutherland!

**READI Nepal**, our partner in Humla, that remote northwestern corner of Nepal, received word this fall that their dream of building a proper hostel for the village children is about to become a reality! A kind local donor has given READI a piece of land, and they have just now acquired an additional piece for a playing field. But the really exciting news is that their application to the Japanese Embassy in Kathmandu for building funds has been accepted! Many meetings, many letters, inspections (when the tiny plane was able to fly into Humla), and months of nail biting have resulted in success! One of the factors that impressed the Embassy was the ongoing support from Canada (that means YOU, our donors) for this educational project ever since Day One, eight years ago. We wish READI well as they start on this exciting project to create a purpose-built hostel which should serve the scattered village children for many years to come (and the plans are earthquake-proof!).

**Jetsun Pema**, President of the Tibetan Children's Village organization (TCV) for 42 years. Better late than never, TRAS congratulates Jetsun Pema on being presented, in 2018, with the prestigious Nari Shakti Puraskar Award for Women, India's highest civil award recognising outstanding contributions to women's empowerment. Jetsun Pema, the younger sister of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, was asked by him to take over the fledgling TCV in Dharamsala in the mid-1960s, and under her guidance and diligence, TCV has grown to encompass 8 major boarding schools, smaller schools, hostels, vocational training centres, homes for the elderly and a huge outreach program for Tibetan and other Himalayan children. TRAS helped build classrooms for the original TCV school in Dharamsala in the 1960s and continues to support TCV through our members sponsorships of children at 3 of the TCV schools.



60 students learn about TRAS at the 24-hour fast



## SAVE THE DATE! February 26, 2020

Our always fun winter evening at the Gurkha Kitchen in Vancouver will be held again, on Wednesday, February 26, 2020! We'll be sending out final details early in February, so make sure we have your email address if you want to hear more!

## Scholarships (cont'd)

### IDEA – The TRAS Project Has Started!



The Innovative Development Education Academy (IDEA) in Pokhara, Nepal, has been in touch to give us details about the current midwifery training. This is the 24<sup>th</sup> 18-month training conducted by IDEA – and so far 100% of the students in the previous 23 trainings have found work! Of the 40 students in this training, more than 50% are from poor rural regions and IDEA seeks international funds to cover their costs. TRAS has agreed to give financial support to four of these students. They come from far flung districts to the north and west of Kathmandu (the short distances on maps belie the difficulty of reaching these mountainous villages). The four young women share two attributes – the desire to get a good training and the determination to serve their local communities.

The Academy has two large teaching rooms and a library in Pokhara where the girls study under five teachers. Practical training is given, through standing agreements, at five hospitals and also three health posts in the neighbouring districts.



The girls are taught more than midwifery: As they will often be the only source of health care in the villages they work in, they are taught practical nursing as well. IDEA states that its graduates learn to focus on family health care and positive health behaviour, while bearing in mind family, community and cultural traditions. They plan care around the unique qualities and needs of each individual. It is clear the midwives also do a great deal of surveying of the health needs of their wider communities and set priorities for managed health care in their regions. A huge responsibility!

Here are the four TRAS students:



**Manisha Sunar** is from Nishikhola-1, Baglung district which is a remote village, a sunar community. Her date of birth is 02-09-2001. She belongs to untouchable caste. Her parents depend on wage and labour in the communities by working in others' field. Her school life was difficult but managed to graduate in a local school in Baglung, near her community. She applied for 18 months Midwifery course to become a qualified Midwife to serve the rural mothers and child in her communities after the graduation of the course. IDEA provided her opportunity to continue this course with the financial support of TRAS.

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**Reshma Gurung** is from Dharche -5, one of the remote communities in Gorkha district. Her date of birth is 21-02-3-2003. Her family is also poor. She had her schooling in a government school nearby her community. Her father also migrates for seasonal work to support her family. There is not any health delivery services in her community. Her motive is to become a good Midwife and serve the community people in her district. Thus she joined IDEA for the 18 month Midwifery course and IDEA supported her with the financial support of TRAS.



RESHMA GURUNG



MANISHA UPADHAYA

**Manisha Upadhaya** is from Kumalgaun-5, Kalikot which belongs in far-west region, a remote district of Nepal. Her date of birth is 15-05-2002. She is from a poor family. Her father migrates for sessional work to India for the support of the living of her family. She studies schooling education in a school Kalikot. She has witnessed the sufferings of the mothers in her communities during deliveries. That's why she is motivated to become a midwife. She applied in IDEA for the 18 months Midwifery course. Now she is in IDEA to continue her studies to become a qualified Midwife. She is determined to go back to her communities to work after the completion of the course.

**Amrita Gurung** is from Bhorle – 4, Parbhat. Bhorle is a rural community in remote areas of Parbat district of Nepal. Her date of birth is 10-06-2004. She is born in a poor Gurung family who depends on low level of subsistence agriculture in the hills. She studied in a local government school which is free of cost. She has a desire to become a Midwife so she joined IDEA. IDEA provided her opportunity to continue the 18 month Midwifery course with the financial support of TRAS.



AMRITA GURUNG

TRAS wishes them well as they start their training.

## The CTA Nurses Training

Through the Tibetan Department of Education in Dharamsala, TRAS supports 8 nursing students studying for their General Nursing degrees. This project has been running successfully for well over 20 years, with each graduating student replaced with a new one. Some have fallen by the wayside: a couple sadly contracted TB, a few have had the opportunity to move abroad, but the vast majority have been employed in Tibetan hospitals and health centres or in Indian hospitals and private care companies. This year one of our students moved abroad and one graduated, to be replaced with two eager new students from Tibetan settlements.

Sonam Yangzom is from the Dekyiling Tibetan Settlement, which TRAS has helped in many ways. She studied at the Tibetan Homes Foundation secondary school in Mussoorie, gaining an excellent average of 81% in her final exams. She has been accepted for the 3-year general nursing and midwifery course at the Sri Guru Ram Rai University in nearby Dehra Dun.

Tenzin Yeshi is from the Tibetan settlement in Shimla and did her secondary education at the Sambotra School in the Chauntra Tibetan Settlement, where TRAS sponsors several children. Her final grade was a respectable 66% and she has been accepted by the famous Apollo School of Nursing in Delhi for a 3-year course in general nursing and midwifery.

This year's graduating student is Tenzin Norzin, and we are looking forward to hearing if she has found work and how she is getting on.



Left: Tenzin Norzin in her nurse uniform.  
Right: Norzin second from the right with her friends.



## Handicrafts!

Phone Joanne at the TRAS office 604-224-5133 for a colourful selection of shawls, bags and scarves in time for Christmas, and lots of unusual stocking stuffers – have a look at the catalogue on the TRAS website (tras.ca).

# TRAS

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



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

