



President's Message

Dear Donors, Sponsors and Volunteers of TRAS,

THANK YOU from all of us on the TRAS Board for your support and generosity. You are the reason TRAS is able to continue its work for children and youth in the Himalayas. We are very grateful.

2010 has been a busy and successful year for TRAS in terms of child and youth sponsorship and project funding. Thanks to your generous donations, we are sponsoring well over 200 children and youth and have fully funded a number of important education and health projects in the Himalayas - from innovative literacy programs, vocational training and day care centres to health education initiatives, infirmaries and specialized paediatric eye care. Looking towards 2011, we are excited to be continuing our support of many of these projects. Please take a look at the map and project list on pages 2 and 3 to see the projects and their funding needs, as well as the location of schools and orphanages where TRAS members sponsor children.

While ensuring our current projects and partners are well supported, TRAS continually keeps an eye open for new projects and partners, knowing that the needs of Himalayan communities for the health and education of their children and youth are ongoing. The TRAS Board is carefully considering some recently received requests for funding for a number of new projects – an integrated rural development project in the remote Manaslu region of northern Nepal, a physiotherapy centre for physically disabled Tibetan children in Dekyiling Tibetan Settlement in India, a science lab and a solar power project at Munsel-Ling School in Spiti, and practical support for Buddhist nuns in the Pin Valley. We will keep you updated by newsletter, or please check for updates in the projects section of our new website: www.tras.ca

2010 has also been a productive year for our dynamic, committed and talented volunteers upon whom TRAS relies to perform the majority of the Society's work, and who work alongside Armila Shakya, TRAS's cheerful, helpful and indispensable part-time Office Manager. Volunteers include the eleven directors on the TRAS Board who work tirelessly for TRAS, and the many individuals who create, fold and mail newsletters, design and maintain the website, perform office tasks and archival work, sell handicrafts and help run large events such as the Hycroft fair and the Nepali Film Festival. A special and sincere "thank you" to them for the thousands of hours they cumulatively give to TRAS each year.

The ability for TRAS to function well, therefore, is dependent on the combined contributions of financial donations and volunteer hours. As TRAS enters its 49th year of successfully supporting Himalayan communities, please consider donating to one of our projects, sponsoring a child, or offering your volunteer services. If you would like to make a "gift donation" in the name of a family member or friend, we would be happy to send a Himalayan card to the recipient. Please call or email Armila at the office by Thursday, December 16 to allow time for her to process your donation and send the card.

Thank you so very much!

On behalf of the TRAS Board of Directors, I wish you and your loved ones a delightful holiday season and a happy, peaceful and healthy 2011.

Jennifer Hales, TRAS President

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List of Recently Completed and Current Projects

(see map on following page for the locations of projects and sponsorships)

1. HIMACHAL PRADESH, INDIA

Central Tibetan Administration Nurses' Training, Dharamsala

- Nurses' training and/or BSc for 8 Tibetan girls in Indian teaching hospitals, \$8,339 (fully funded). Completed.
- 4 new nursing students taken on in 2010 (fully funded for 2010). **Needs \$3,212 for 2011.**

Little Flowers Crèche, Dharamsala

- Crèche maintenance for children of Tibetan government workers \$2,750 per year. **Needs \$2,675 for 2011**

Munsel-Ling School, Spiti Valley

- Nurses' salaries \$2,350. Completed
- Child/youth sponsorships (at the School and in colleges in Shimla, Delhi etc.)

Tibetan Children's Village (TCV) School, Dharamsala

- Child sponsorships

Tibetan Children's Village (TCV) School Suja, Bir

- Child sponsorships

Sambhota Schools Society, Dharamsala

- Publication of 20 classical Tibetan stories for children \$4,388 funded for 6 books. **Needs \$730 per 1,000 copies of 14 books for 2011.**

SHARE, Manali

- Vocational training for young Indian village girls and boys \$3,212 per year (fully funded for 3 years)

2. UTTARAKHAND, INDIA

Dekyiling Crèche, Dekyiling Tibetan Handicraft Centre, Dehra Dun

- Crèche maintenance and after-school care for weavers' children \$3,488 per year. **Needs \$3,488 for 2011**
- Child sponsorships

Tibetan Homes Foundation, Mussoorie

- Child sponsorships and donations for Old People

Tibetan Women's Centre, Rajpur

- Child sponsorships

Voice of Children, Almora/Nainital Districts

- Women's Health Workshop \$705. Funded by UBC/GHI. Completed.
- Health and education programs for Indian children in 5 villages \$5,500. Year 1 completed. Year 2 will continue the educational work and the strengthening of teenager, women and children's groups, and encompass 8 villages. **Needs \$12,644 for 2011**
- Circulating library project: 1 central library and 5 remote village libraries. **Needs \$5,470 for 2011**
- Flood disaster relief fund \$5,000 from TRAS, \$731 from members. Completed.

3. HUMLA DISTRICT, NEPAL

READI Nepal Education Pilot Project in Villages in Humla District

- Education and social cohesion for low caste and poor children in the most remote and poorest of Nepal's 75 Districts. Year 1 fully funded. Year 2 will continue the work. **Needs \$9,000 for 2011**

4. KATHMANDU, NEPAL

Buddha Academy Boarding School

- Vocational training (carpentry, tailoring and electrical) \$11,000. **Needs \$11,000 for 2011**
- Infirmary maintenance \$3,600 per year. (fully funded)
- Child sponsorships

5. SIKKIM, INDIA

Padhamchen Village in the Himalayan foothills of eastern Sikkim, school hostel

- Construction of third floor of hostel for village children to attend high school (co-supported by Tibetan Children's Education Foundation, a US NGO) \$9,036. Fully funded.

6. LHASA, TIBETAN AUTONOMOUS REGION

Lhasa Institute of Eye Care

- Training of paediatric specialist and treatment for 16 children with complex problems. (Funded through the Tibet Development Fund with funds remaining from the final disbursement to the now-closed Lhasa Yuthok Kindergarten).

7. ARUNACHAL PRADESH, INDIA

Tuting Tibetan Adult Literacy Project

- Tibetan literacy training for 208 illiterate Tibetans \$2,926. Fully funded.

8. ARUNACHAL PRADESH, INDIA

Choepheling Tibetan Settlement, Miao

- Child sponsorships

9. KARNATAKA, INDIA (south India, not on the map)

Doeguling Tibetan Settlement, Mundgod, Tibetan Old People's Support (donations to pay for medical needs of the elderly)

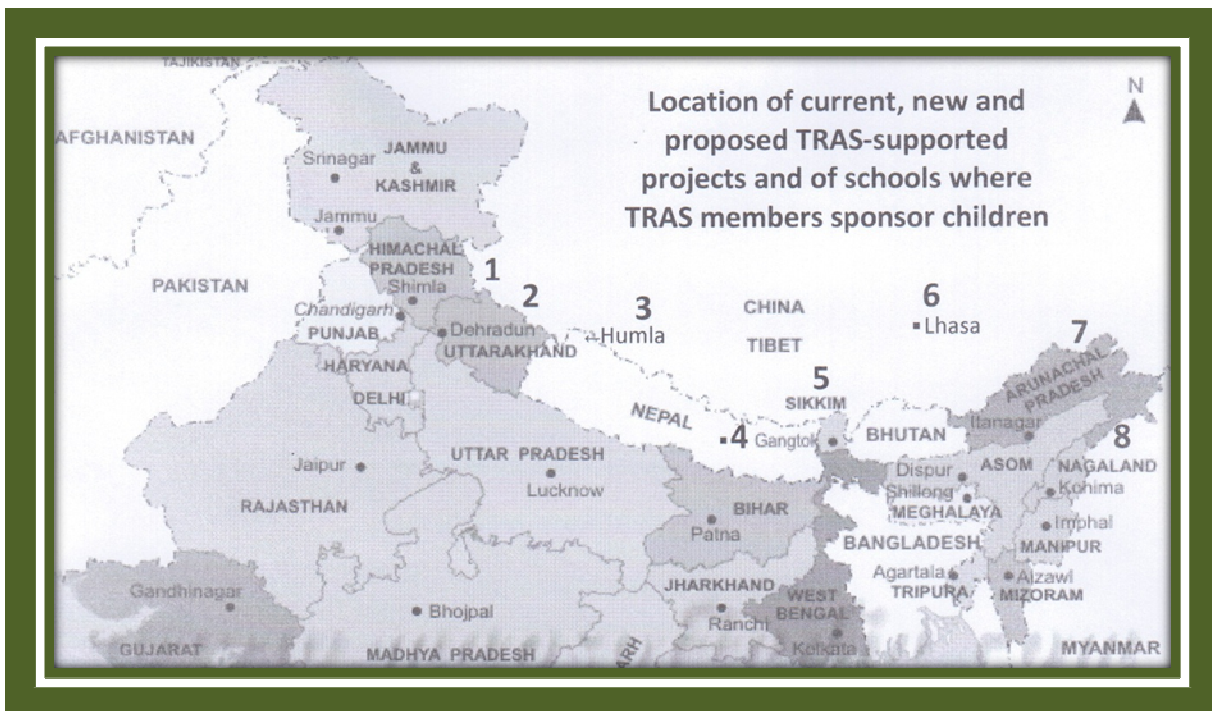
- Child sponsorships

Tibetan Women's Centre, Mundgod

- Child sponsorships

Altogether, TRAS has committed just under \$85,000 to projects so far in the 2010-11 year.

List of Recently Completed and Current Projects (cont'd)



We have been blessed with continued support from our members and from other NGOs – once again Libraries Across Borders and Nepal Library Foundation have responded to the need for books. And once again Sutherland Secondary School in North Vancouver is enthusiastically selling TRAS handicrafts and has already held a fast to raise funds. Over 60 students raised the required funds to be allowed to participate in the 24-hour fast. Dorje Namgyal, the Principal of Buddha Academy where the Sutherland funds will go, is full of admiration and thanks that students, who could have spent the day and evening eating all they wanted, should choose to fundraise and fast to help poorer students in Nepal. **THANK YOU, SUTHERLAND!!**

Volunteer Corner

Volunteers are key to the operation of TRAS and we are so fortunate to have such a dynamic team. We wish to extend a special thanks to all those who participated in the 'Christmas at Hycroft' event. Special recognition goes to **Kathy Gibler, Handicraft Coordinator**, for her unwavering commitment to making the event a success for TRAS.

This month, we highlight Maria Rubinchik Maria is one of our energetic volunteers, who works for TRAS every time she is in Vancouver, and remotely via email when she is in Kamloops, studying for a Bachelor of Tourism Management degree at Thompson Rivers University. Maria says "I spent 4 months in Nepal in 2008, and had the opportunity to make many wonderful Nepali friends who were kind enough to share their culture and family life with me. I thought Nepal was an amazing contrast of people who were so poor, and yet were so sincere and grateful for everything they had in their life.

Upon returning to Vancouver, I decided to join TRAS as a volunteer in order to give back to a country that opened my eyes to a completely different world. So many people in Nepal are living in poverty, and any little bit we can do to help means so much to them, whether it's sponsoring a child, building a school, or improving their health standards. I am very much looking forward to helping TRAS with its local projects and getting more people involved with this organization".

Maria has most recently helped with archival work, the website design and selling handicrafts at Hycroft. She will next be helping us prepare for the upcoming Nepali Film Festival. Thank you, Maria!



SPONSORSHIP

Give the Gift of Sponsorship: It's Priceless!

A \$400/year donation will provide food, education and healthcare for a child, and a secure place to live. Give now and help a child break out of the cycle of poverty. Phone or email the TRAS office for more information. We have lots of children waiting for sponsors! (604-224-5133, tras@portal.com).

What better gift this season! Ensure the well-being of a Himalayan child; create global awareness in your own child or grandchild, and receive a Canadian tax receipt for your donation.

**First Report from the SHARE Vocational Training Project**

We have just received an excellent report from our partner SHARE, in the Kullu Valley, north India, about this pilot project offering training in computer and English language skills to village youth. TRAS has partnered with SHARE on a variety of initiatives over 20 years, most notably the building of over 1,000 toilets in the hillside villages. For some time now, Ren Madan, President of SHARE, had been asking us to help him offer skills training to village youth, so that they could compete in the job market in Manali, the nearby town and tourist destination. The project has been running for 6 months, with some surprising results. Ren's proposal was for 30 young people in the first year.

- 25 signed up. 2 have dropped out – one boy was not serious about studying, one girl married, but hopes to return to be able to help her husband in his work.
- The goal of 40% female has been passed – 50% are female.
- The computer course has gone really well – Ren is amazed how well they pick it up.
- 6 have opted for a further 6-month computer course to enable them to study accounting and Hindi typing.
- They have a very poor foundation in English, so this course is going slowly and will have to be augmented
- Another surprise – 2 students are keen enough to study math and science for admission to engineering institutes, and have been helped to do this in nearby cities.
- Four already have jobs and this will help with their career advancement.

Ren also planned a career counselling course in two high schools. This will happen in March, but meanwhile 13 teachers from one school are enthusiastically improving their English skills in a refresher course designed for them – another unexpected benefit of the project.

**2011 Nepali Film Festival**

by Marina Guy, Events Co-ordinator, with photos above by Beck Lamb

TRAS and Langara College Continuing Studies are proud to present the **5th Nepali Film Festival** on **Sunday, April 3, 2011** at Langara College (100 West 49th Avenue, Vancouver).

The date has been set and the films are being sourced - all the details are coming together for another engaging Film Festival. This one-day festival will feature inspiring and thought-provoking films by Nepali filmmakers as well as a Himalayan market where many treasures can be found. All proceeds from the festival will go to TRAS-supported projects in Nepal.

We are currently compiling a committee to voluntarily coordinate all the details of this event and are looking for individual, community and business sponsors to support the festival financially or in-kind in return for advertising opportunities. If you would like to volunteer for the festival or learn more about festival sponsorship opportunities please contact our Events Coordinator, Marina Guy, at marina.guy@tras.ca.

For updates on the Nepali Film Festival please visit the TRAS website at www.tras.ca. We look forward to seeing you there!

Kicking Off the Holiday Season at Hycroft



In late November TRAS took part in the annual **Christmas at Hycroft** event coordinated by the University Women's Club of Vancouver. Almost 4,000 guests came through our room on the third floor of the grand Hycroft mansion to view our various handicrafts. It was a busy, successful weekend with many of our customers leaving with a pair of our angora wool gloves and a toque, perfect for keeping warm in the chilly weather.

A full roster of volunteers kept our room perfectly organized and warmly greeted every guest. It was great to see lots of new faces volunteering at this event.

We would like to thank all the volunteers who helped make it such a success. A special thank you goes out to Kathy Gibler and Cheryl Sullivan for coordinating the many details of this event. The handicrafts are now back in the TRAS office, to help you with your Christmas shopping!

A Tale of Two Libraries

We told you in the Fall issue that the Nepal Library Foundation (NLF) had given TRAS a grant to purchase books for the **READI Nepal** education project in Humla. Luckily, Megha Shakya, who is advising TRAS on its Nepali projects, knew that the wonderful Rato Bangala School in Kathmandu (where the two Humla teachers received extra training) has its own publishing house. He asked the school to help the project by selecting suitable books for a variety of ages, and the school obliged. The books have been selected and packed up. We are waiting to hear how they have been received by the children at the Humla school. Once they are stacked on shelves, this will be the very first library in Humla! Naresh Koirala of the NLF explained in a recent talk that reading is not part of the culture in these mountain villages. The people have no time in their labour-intensive days, there is rarely light to read by at night, and in any case there are no books. The NLF is doing its best to change this, through the provision of books, and we are grateful to them for helping TRAS start the ball rolling in Humla.

The second library tale is actually of 6 interconnected libraries! In the north Indian villages serviced by the **Voice of Children** project there are also no books, no access to libraries and no tradition in the homes of reading. Voice of Children workers are encouraging education through day care centres, early childhood and school preparation centres and scholarships to help older children return to school. They encourage reading as a great source of knowledge. Their project proposal, accepted by TRAS in October, is to set up a main 'storehouse' library in one of their little offices, and then to set up a system of circulating libraries in 5 villages. A villager will be in charge of each, and gradually plans for the borrowing of books will be worked out. To begin with, readers must come to the libraries and read there, but the hope is that once the joy of reading and learning catches on, a better system of checking out books will be created, and eventually the hope is that the libraries will be self-sustaining through small fees. Current newspapers and periodicals will be provided, along with brochures on vital topics such as health and agriculture.

Website Up and Running!

Cheryl Sullivan, Fund Raising Director, writes: "We are pleased to announce the completion of the TRAS website redesign. Please visit the new site at www.tras.ca. Heartfelt thanks go to Malcolm Ellis and his team at *Magnum Creative* for so generously donating their time and expertise. The efforts of the redesign committee, board member Marina Guy and volunteer Maria Rubinchik and of the board members involved in rewriting the content, are greatly appreciated". **And a huge 'thank you' to Cheryl herself, who voluntarily co-ordinated this effort and did so much of the time-consuming work!**

Report on the Flood Damage

by Raghu Tewari, VOICE OF CHILDREN Project Coordinator

As reported earlier the state witnessed an unprecedented rainfall during this rainy season. The incessant rain wreaked havoc. More than 200 persons lost their lives. Landslides and cloudbursts have compounded the problems and suffering of the people, particularly in the Kumoun division, which includes the Voice of Children villages. In Almora nearly 20 villages have been totally devastated. After Almora, Nainital is worst affected.



Present status

More than 3000 people have become homeless as around 1100 houses are totally destroyed or have become unsafe for living. Despite help from NGOs and government departments the people are still facing an acute crisis of food and drinking water shortages. Housing, shelter for animals, sanitation and hygiene are other problems. People are still in shock. Many of the people lost their animals, agriculture land and crops. Children have lost their books, clothes, toys. Given the mountainous terrain and the fact that almost all road links suffered heavy damage, providing relief work was difficult. Rankhila, Naukuta, Pathura, Janauli, Khalad and Pangkatara villages (where the TRAS-supported programme is going on) have suffered considerably.

Work done by AMAN & VIMARSH (the two local NGOs)

Immediately after hearing the news of massive destruction our team members of VOICE OF CHILDREN along with volunteers visited the worst affected areas to take stock of the situation. The team also contacted several government officials and social workers for arranging immediate relief work and search and rescue operations, and arrangements were made to provide relief rations (rice, wheat, oil, salt, etc. and clothing, mattress, blankets, etc) to affected people. Attention was given to the people from weaker sections of society, particularly women, children and scheduled castes. An appeal was also made to all friends to provide possible support. TRAS responded to our call and came forward to help. With this help, we were able to provide relief food, along with clothes and blankets. With the emergency support provided by TRAS Canada, relief material was provided to 62 families of the villages of Almora and Nainital districts.

Raghu tells two stories to illustrate what happened and how Aman and Vimarsh helped with the TRAS funds.

Case 1 - There are 30 members in this extended group of relatives. They earn their livelihoods as daily wage workers and mule transport. They had bought mules with the help of a loan. Not only their houses were damaged but also they lost all their mules in this disaster. These families have no shelter and have no job to buy bread. With the help of TRAS/AMAN three families were shifted into the primary school and one into the house of local village head. Beddings were provided to these families and AMAN is also helping two of these families in constructing houses.



**TRAS funds paid for relief supplies
for 62 families**

Case 2 - Mrs. Kamala Devi, belongs to a poor schedule caste family and lives with her 6 children and husband. Her husband is suffering from kidney stones, but has to work as daily wage labourer. One night, one of the walls collapsed due to rain. Since they had no other shelter, they continued to live in the house. The next night the roof of the house came down. Though no one got hurt, the family lost most of their belongings. Unfortunately her husband also fell seriously sick that night but no relief could be provided to him. He was left in pain for the next two days as roads were blocked and he could not be transferred to nearest hospital. Presently the family is living with their neighbour. Two of their children have also fallen sick because of exposure in rain. TRAS/VIMARSH provided rations and clothing to the family as well as INR 5000.00 to buy medicines and other support.

Third Floor Going Up

The photos would make Canadian builders do a double-take: flip flops, rickety scaffolding, no hard hats in sight – but in typical local style, the construction gets done! TRAS is delighted that the plan to add a third floor to the hostel is going ahead well. This is the project to house children from poor villages in Sikkim so that they can go to high school in the little town of Padhamchen. TRAS is co-funding the project with the Tibetan Children's Education Foundation, and one of their members has sent photos from a recent visit to see how the construction is going. The hostel currently has two floors, large bare rooms with beds, one for girls, the other for boys. A kitchen and bathroom are attached to the building. The new third floor will give the 50 children somewhere to sit at tables to eat and to study, and room to play. As Marion Tipple said in our April 2010 issue, the magnificence of the scenery belies the poverty and lack of opportunity for the villagers. We hope the improvements to their hostel will help the children to study more easily and successfully, so that they can make something of their lives.



Update on Sambhota Schools Publishing Project

We are delighted that we have been able to make a start on the publication of the 20 books of classical Tibetan literature, written in the simpler Umed Tibetan script. There is so little published in this script, which children learn first, which is why the Sambhota Schools Society wants to publish stories which will be easy for children to read; stories that will teach them some of the great writings of Tibet, and give them a sense of the rich culture of their homeland.

First of all, a portion of the bequest made to TRAS by Dr. Michael Futrell has been allocated to the publication of 5 of the series. Dr. Futrell was an educator all his life, deeply interested in Tibet, and we are sure he would be pleased to know that his bequest is helping to keep the language and literature alive for today's children.

Then we heard from Libraries Across Borders that this project will be the recipient of their fundraising for the current year! They held a reception at the Café Kathmandu in late September and are planning an on-line book auction to start things off.



And thirdly came the lovely news that one of our long-time members is paying for the publication of one of the books in honour of her father. Georgina Brunette, who is a lively 'nearly 100', has been surrounded by books and the love of reading all her life, thanks to the influence of her father, Dr. Norman F. Black. He was the first person to receive a PhD in pedagogy from the University of Toronto, and did early teaching in a First Nations school. He wrote several books for primary school children, and was always interested in books to get children started on the road to learning. What a perfect match, to do the same for Tibetan children in his honour! The books will carry a dedication to the people they honour, so Dr. Futrell's and Dr. Black's love of learning will live on.

Is there someone YOU would like to honour in this way? Would your bookclub like to do a fundraiser to publish a book? Cost to publish 1,000 copies of a book: \$730.

TRAS

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

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TRAS Victoria Comes to a Decision

After over 40 years of actively supporting the work of TRAS, the Victoria Branch has decided that all good things come to an end, and they will no longer be a 'Branch', although individually they will all remain members and supporters of TRAS.



How can we thank them enough! Don and Heather Edwards, returning from two years in India in the late 1960s, met the Woodcocks and immediately started helping. A small band of faithful members joined them over the years, and they fundraised every year through selling Tibetan carpets and handicrafts, staffing tables at the Hillside Mall Fall Bazaar, and running their own successful garage sales (with the help of their children, long since grown up). The carpet sales continued until this year, thanks to the stalwart work of the late Martin Sweney.

Judy and TC Tethong have been their "on-the-spot connection and mentors for over 30 years", as Georgina Henderson (their rep on the TRAS board) once wrote, and for the past many years, their carpet sales profits paid for health care for the elderly Tibetans in Mundgod, south India. The Rossiters acted as sponsorship secretaries for several years. Peggy Larson (above) sponsored Tsetan Chonjore when he was a boy in Mussoorie. He now teaches Tibetan language at the University of Virginia and still calls her 'Mum'. Fiona Odgren worked on the TRAS board until she moved to Victoria, and joined the group there. Georgina and her husband Irwin have lugged carpets back and forth and worked at so many tasks – the list goes on and on! **We thank every one of them for their years of hard work and support, and look forward to staying in touch.**