



TRANS HIMALAYAN AID SOCIETY

Fall Newsletter

September 2005

HATS OFF TO OUR NEWEST FUNDRAISERS!

Over the past few months TRAS has been thrilled to receive unexpected help from young people in North Vancouver, Vancouver and Toronto for two of our projects in Nepal.

At **Argyle School in North Vancouver**, Grade 12 student Lena White, who had long wanted her school to connect with a school in a developing country, was inspired by TRAS director Brian Sheffield, a teacher at her school, to consider the Buddha Memorial Academy in Kathmandu. "It was a perfect fit", says Lena. "Here is a school really helping needy children, run by a [Tibetan] refugee who had himself been helped by TRAS and was now doing something for his community."

Lena encouraged her school's administration to allow a student committee to start work. She writes: "A committed group of students known as the 'Himalayan Connection' fundraised nearly \$2000 for the Buddha Memorial Academy in Kathmandu. This initiative, supported by teacher Brian Sheffield, included both a fundraising raffle and a Himalayan Evening. The evening featured a vege-

tarian Nepalese dinner, a screening of the film *Call it Karma*, exhibits of Buddha Memorial Academy's students' artwork, Nepalese photos, and vendors' tables. The students devoted countless hours to making the evening a success: planning, decorating, and cooking for the event. Their efforts were well rewarded: the evening was a triumph!"



The students hope also to engage in a cultural exchange with the Academy, which might include letters, artwork, and photos. *(continued on page 2)*

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URGENT! BUDDHA ACADEMY NEEDS YOUR HELP TODAY!

Dorje Namgyal, the principal at Buddha Academy in Kathmandu, one of TRAS's long-time partners, has appealed for **emergency funds** to rebuild the walls surrounding the school.

Weakened by monsoon rains in August, the walls collapsed in two places, killing one child and injuring another.

The total amount required is estimated at **C\$15,000**.

TRAS appeals to its members to make a **special financial contribution** towards the rebuilding of the walls. TRAS has forwarded \$1000 as an interim measure.

If you would like to contribute, please write "**For Buddha Academy Wall Rebuilding Fund**" on your cheque.

Thank you for your support!

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE,

By Russil Wvong, President

TRAS's annual general meeting for 2005 was held April 27, at the Lutheran Campus Centre. Thank you to everyone who came to the AGM, and to all of our members--it's your generous donations and sponsorships that make TRAS's work possible.

We had a number of changes to board responsibilities at this year's AGM. Marion Tipple, who has served as President for the last four years, is taking over Sponsorship from Joan Ford, who is stepping down from the board but will continue to be a patron of TRAS. Daphne Hales, who served as Newsletter Editor for many years, is taking over as Projects Director from Lynn Beck; and Heather Hamilton-Wright is taking over as Newsletter Editor. Thank you to Marion, Joan, Lynn, and Daphne for all of the hard work that you've put into TRAS, and that you're continuing to put in!

I'd also like to thank Aranka Anema, who has run the TRAS office for the last year, helped the board put our fundraising strategy in place, and organized many events. Aranka will continue to help out as a volunteer on one of our board subcommittees.

And I'd like to welcome Debbi Salmonsens, who is taking over at the TRAS office from Aranka. Debbi has 15 years of experience with non-profit organizations and fund-raising, having worked as Operations Director, Executive Director, Development Director, Marketing Director, and Special Events and Volunteer Coordinator. Her most recent experience is as Operations Director at EAGLE (Environmental-Aboriginal Guardianship through Law and Education) and Executive Director at Make-A-Wish Foundation of BC & Yukon. We all look forward to working with Debbi.

The goals of the TRAS board over the next couple of years are pretty straightforward: we'd like to raise public awareness of TRAS, bring in more money, and fund more projects. Thank you again for your generous support! I look forward to serving as your President in the next year.

HATS OFF TO OUR NEWEST FUNDRAISERS

(continued from page 1)

Such an exchange promises to enrich both schools." Argyle looks forward to putting on another event for the Buddha Memorial Academy this winter, again featuring a slideshow and an authentic home-cooked Nepali dinner. Time, date and location will be announced in our next newsletter.

Lena is so encouraged by the success of this event that she would be happy to help other schools set up similar connections. Contact the TRAS office if you know of a school which might be interested in getting involved.

A second group of students has been helping TRAS spread the word about its work. The film class at **Crofton House School in Vancouver** interviewed TRAS personnel, and using footage shot by TRAS director Jen Hales, has made a lively video of life at the Buddha Memorial Academy and how TRAS is helping people in the Himalayan region. The video was premiered at the TRAS AGM in May. We are hoping our contact with Crofton House will continue!

In Toronto, a group of Nepali young people, keen to do something tangible to help their beleaguered countrymen, put on an evening of Nepali film, music and dance to raise funds for the Nagarik Aawaz project in Kathmandu which helps youth displaced and traumatized by the Maoist rebellion. (See "Building Peace in Nepal", page 3 and "Dabali – The Stage", page 4.)

Our thanks to all these young people for supporting TRAS projects!

Did you know that you can plan future gifts to TRAS?

Planned gifts can take many forms, including a simple bequest in your will, a life insurance program, an annuity or naming a beneficiary of your RRSP or RRIF.

If you would like to discuss making a future gift to TRAS, please contact the TRAS office at 604-224-5133. We would be happy to discuss the options available to you in strictest confidence.

Nepalis in Canada Raise Funds for Peace in Nepal

In July, TRAS facilitated the transfer of funds raised by a group of Nepali youth in Toronto at its May 2005 innovative fundraising event, Dabali (see page 4), to Nagarik Aawaz for its 2005-2006 Displaced Youth Volunteer Program (DYVP). These motivated young people are committed to raising awareness about the conflict in Nepal, and to supporting local efforts by Nepalis in Nepal to achieve peace. Nagarik Aawaz is a human rights and peace-building NGO in Kathmandu. Nagarik Aawaz had sent TRAS a DYVP project proposal last October, at a time when TRAS did not have the funding to support the DYVP. Thanks to the recent Dabali donation, TRAS has been able to support the Nagarik Aawaz DYVP as an official TRAS project. TRAS thanks the Nepali group and welcomes donations to the DYVP in order to continue to support Nagarik Aawaz's important and necessary peace building work with youth

BUILDING PEACE IN NEPAL NAGARIK AAWAZ'S DISPLACED YOUTH VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

by Jennifer Hales

A protracted and violent civil war between a Maoist resistance movement and the Nepali government has been staged over the last nine years in Nepal. Over 11,000 people have been killed and thousands more have been displaced from their homes and villages. The insurgency has grown and spread to all regions of Nepal, hampering economic development and political freedom, and resulting in massive human rights violations.

Nagarik Aawaz: "Citizens' Voice"

In June, 2001, amid escalating violence, Rita Thapa, a Nepali social activist, brought together a group of concerned citizens to work for conflict resolution, human rights and peace building. This ultimately led to the founding of Nagarik Aawaz (Nepali for "citizens' voice") a non-partisan, non-profit NGO based in Kathmandu and committed to working towards a more peaceful and democratic society.

Displaced Youth Volunteer Program (DYVP)

Nagarik Aawaz established the DYVP in 2003 to address the needs of and to support youth displaced from their homes and villages, who are often without work and are dealing with high levels of psychological trauma.

The DYVP's long-term vision is that the youths will

gain the necessary experience and skills to function as peace and reconstruction workers ("peace ambassadors") at the local level in both urban and rural areas of Nepal. Graduates have expressed that the program helped them emotionally and to improve their health, behavior and confidence. Most are either working or volunteering with peace and human rights NGOs as "peace ambassadors", self employed or resuming their studies.

The DYVP has been expanded throughout Nepal in partnership with local organizations in remote rural areas in Far-Western and South Eastern Nepal with seed grants from Nagarik Aawaz. With a recent grant from CEDPA/Nepal, another funding agency, Nagarik Aawaz will continue to expand its activities to 7 districts of Nepal for a 1 year period.

The DYVP includes the following components:

NGO Internships: Nagarik Aawaz places the youths as interns in Kathmandu-based NGOs where they learn office skills, develop their understanding of the host NGO's programming and project work, and receive close mentorship from the host NGO staff. Each youth will spend 2 to 5 days per week for one year in the NGO's office. NGOs are carefully selected for their rights-based and gender-sensitive approach, field of activity, and interest in peace-building. *(continued on next page)*

Peace-Building and Conflict Resolution Educational Program: The DYVP provides the youth with a year-long peace-building and conflict resolution educational program, including monthly training workshops and two 3-day residential training workshops on development and peace.

Shanti Sahayog Bhancha ("Peace Lunches"): DYVP youth run a weekly soup kitchen or "peace lunch" to feed the hungry, and homeless people on the streets of Kathmandu. With donations of rice, vegetables and dhal from local shopkeepers, the youth cook and serve a healthy lunch each week.

Professional Psychological Support: Psychological counseling sessions with clinical psychologists are held for those youths who are highly traumatized or emotionally very unstable.

English language training: Nagarik Aawaz arranges for volunteer English language teachers to instruct the youth in basic English speaking and writing skills.

Monthly Stipend: Many of the youths arrive in Kathmandu with little to no money, and are often without contacts in the city to find shelter. To help the youth during their transition to the city, Nagarik Aawaz provides each with a monthly stipend of Rs. 2000 (approx. \$40Cdn) for one year.

2005-2006 DYVP

32 displaced youth, including 11 young women, have been accepted into this year's DYVP. The youth have just completed a 2-day orientation session and have begun to run the weekly "Peace Lunches".

Youth
volunteers
preparing
**Shanti
Sahayog
Bhancha**
("Peace
Lunches")



DABALI.... THE STAGE

Nepalis in Canada Raise Money for Peace in Nepal

By Muni Ghimire, Dabali Co-Organizer, Toronto



Nepalese musicians of Toronto organized a fundraising event - 'Dabali (The Stage)' on May 14, 2005 at The Now Lounge in downtown Toronto. Dabali,

which in Nepali means a public stage, symbolically reflected the event's goals: 1) To promote the local Nepali music scene in Toronto; 2) to raise awareness and funds for human rights issues in Nepal.

Attended by over 100 people, the event raised \$2,602.75! All proceeds from the event were donated, via TRAS, to Nagarik Aawaz, a human rights and peace building organization in Kathmandu, working among other things on supporting people who have been displaced, widowed or orphaned by the ongoing Maoist conflict. (See preceding article.)

The event started with the screening of a documentary film *The Killing Terraces* (2002), by Dhruba Kumar Basnet, renowned Nepali journalist and filmmaker. Shedding light on the political economic causes of the current civil war in Nepal, the film explores the tragic day-to-day human consequences on innocent rural citizens of Nepal. The film screening was followed by a very informative and lively discussion led by a 3-member panel and then by a rocking musical program that showcased live performances of original Nepali songs by Nepalese musicians. Themes ranged from a love left behind in Nepal to a call for peace and unity. The signature fusion music combined western and Nepali musical styles. The evening finished with open dancing.

*For Dabali information contact:
Muni Ghimire, munigh@hotmail.com*

GOOD NEWS FROM THE FIELD!

TRAS has recently received reports from three small but very successful educational projects: the Dekyiling Creche, where babies and toddlers of Tibetan weavers are looked after; the Spiti School, where TRAS has furnished a library; and the Sacred Heart Convent, where Sister Sarguna oversees the vocational training of boys from very poor families.

The Dekyiling Tibetan Handicraft Society is one of the largest Tibetan refugee settlements in northern India with 3,500 people. The women receive training in traditional Tibetan weaving. They then are employed with the Society or weave in their own homes to earn an income for their families. Recently, the local Indian authority helped the Society to start a crèche to care for the children, and TRAS has committed to maintaining it for 5 years. At present 65 women are employed to weave in the settlement, and the creche looks after 23 children, ranging from newborn to 3 years. The older children receive basic teaching to ease their way into kindergarten. All receive fresh milk, fruit and multi vitamins, and they are well looked after daily by two caring ayahs.



The Spiti School, near the Tibetan border, takes in children from the villages of this remote, harsh treeless valley. In the school's early days, TRAS first supported a teacher training program for local girls, who boarded at the school and later provided funding for training the houseparents of the school's boarders. More recently, TRAS has made it possible for the school to acquire computers.

Last year we received a request for library books.

Venerable Tashi Namgyal writes "It was one of our important dreams and a necessity for our school to get recognition as a high school from the state government." Now that a room has been built and the books purchased, he says "This project is really able to give good energy to the mind of many people as vegetables give energy to the body." The library is being well used by 356 students, 55 staff members and by those parents who can read.



The Sacred Heart Convent is one of the Carmelite convents in India which TRAS has supported for many years. The **vocational training project for boys** enrolled 75 boys from 3 states in a variety of courses on skills for self employment. 30 have now graduated and found jobs. Sister Sarguna, who oversees the program, writes "The youth learnt to stand on their own feet. They support their families now. Their standard of living is better and their basic needs are fulfilled. They are now just above the poverty line.... We also teach them to help the underprivileged once they come up in life."



SPONSORSHIP REPORT

The four children below need your financial assistance! All four are from Buddha Memorial Children's Home in Kathmandu, a project that TRAS has supported for many years. As you may notice, two of these children have the same name, Pema Gyalpo!

Prajal Kafle is 7 years old. His family moved to Katmandu 2 years ago from the Jhapa district of Nepal, where his father had been a hawker selling fruits on the roadside. After a long search for a job, his father was hired as a security guard at Buddha Memorial and Prajal has been accepted to attend classes at the school. However, Prajal's father cannot afford the schooling costs.

Manisha Panti is 8 years old. She and her two younger brothers live with their parents in a small mud house in the Agrakotse district in southwest Nepal. The family has a small plot of land where they grow maize and wheat; they have no other source of income. Her parents are illiterate. Since there is no school near their village, Manisha was brought to Buddha Memorial, where she now attends Nursery level. Manisha needs your financial support to continue her schooling.

TRAS Tours to Northern India *Coming soon !*

In the next year, TRAS is hoping to offer its members an opportunity to join adventure tours to Northern India to visit small Himalayan villages, monasteries and TRAS projects supported by your generous donations. Tours will be organized by a reputable local travel company and accompanied by a TRAS Director. A portion of the cost of the tour will go towards further support of TRAS projects. More information will be provided in future newsletters. Call the office at 604-224-5133 to express your interest..

Pema Gyalpo was born in 1996 in the Humla district, in a very remote village where there is no electricity or roads. His parents are farmers. He has 3 brothers and one sister, all at home in the village. As Maoist problems have prevented him from going to school in his village, Pema was sent to Kathmandu for an education. He was accepted into Buddha Memorial where he is attending Nursery level. However, his family is unable to pay the school fees.

Pema Gyalpo is 14 years old. He has been attending Buddha Memorial for several years and is now in eighth level. His family lives in the mountains in Nubri, in the Gorkha District of Tibet. A younger brother, 2 sisters and his parents live on a small plot of land, where they have a few goats and grow barley and potatoes. However, the soil is poor and they seldom have good crops so Pema's father also works as a porter. An older brother is a monk at Kopan Monastery in Kathmandu. As Pema's previous sponsor is unable to continue funding, we are in need of a new sponsor so that Pema can continue his education.

HEARTFELT THANKS

TRAS acknowledges with gratitude the generosity of the families and friends of two TRAS members who sadly passed away in the last 12 months. The work that TRAS does for the children of the Himalayas was close to the hearts of **Heather Phillips** and **Eric Van Doorninck**. Their families' thoughtfulness in suggesting that donations be sent to TRAS in lieu of flowers will help TRAS continue the work which both Heather and Eric supported so well.

TRAS Projects Funded in 2005

EDUCATION

Little Flowers Creche: Dharamsala, India. Day-care centre for children of Tibetans working for the government-in-exile \$1,500

Dekyiling Tibetan Settlement: Dekyiling, India. Daycare centre giving care and nutrition to children of weavers. \$3,080

Lhasa Yuthok Kindergarten: Lhasa, Tibet.

Kindergarten in the Tibetan part of Lhasa giving a good start to children of traders. \$3,902

SHARE Environmental Education for Youth: Manali, India. School program to encourage recycling, composting, waste management. \$1,700

Munseling School Library: Spiti, India. Books purchased to create library and give high school accreditation. \$2,000

HEALTH

Kullu Valley Sanitation and Immunization: Manali, India. Toilet construction in 30 villages; family health plan; immunization for all children; waste management training. \$18,880

Buddha Memorial Home: Kathmandu, Nepal. Construction, stocking and maintenance of the infirmary for boarding school taking in Tibetan and Nepalese children \$3,600

Rinchen Zangpo Society: Spiti, India. Construction of greenhouses to grow nutritious vegetables and heat buildings in harsh, cold area. \$4,000

VOCATIONAL TRAINING

Buddha Memorial Academy: Kathmandu, Nepal. Vocational training in tailoring, carpentry or electrician course for school leavers. \$9,212

Central Tibetan Administration: Dharamsala, India. Nurses' Training. Nurses are trained in Indian hospitals, then work in various Tibetan settlements. \$7,645

Sacred Heart Convent: Kerala, India. Vocational training for unemployed boys in a variety of technical skills, leading to employment. \$4,808

Incarnation Convent: Bangalore, India. Nurses' Training. Village girls are trained in local hospitals and are able to support their families. \$3,107

Nagarik Aawaz: Kathmandu, Nepal. Trauma counseling, skills training, peace training, and job placement for youth displaced by Maoist rebellion. \$2,602

INTEGRATED PROGRAMS

Anapurna Conservation Area Project: Sikles region, Nepal. Seven villages benefit from an integrated project for improved agriculture, forestry, health, income generation, adult literacy and village governance. \$10,000

**YOU MAY NOW USE YOUR CREDIT CARD TO
MAKE A DONATION TO TRAS!**

PLEASE GO TO OUR WEBSITE

WWW.TRAS.CA

HIMALAYAN FESTIVAL 2005

Last year's successful Himalayan Christmas Bazaar will be expanded into a two day event! Mark your calendars for Saturday and Sunday, November 5 & 6 and do your Christmas shopping early! This lively event will offer a wide assortment of crafts from the Himalayan areas and will feature entertainment, talks and displays.

Visit the TRAS table for popular crafts from several of our partners!

11am - 5pm at the Heritage Hall, 3102 Main Street, Vancouver. Admission: \$2



TRANS HIMALAYAN AID SOCIETY

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Trans Himalayan Aid Society (TRAS)

Annual Membership Donation (\$20)..... \$ 20

In addition, I would like to:

Sponsor a child's annual education (\$360)..... \$ _____

Donate to the project of greatest need (at TRAS discretion)..... \$ _____

Donate to the project of my choice _____ \$ _____
(Name of project)

TOTAL \$ _____

Name: _____ **Date:** _____

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Gifts can be made by credit card at www.tras.ca or phone the TRAS office **604-224-5133**

Or write your address and postal code on your cheque and mail with this coupon to:

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