

# SPONSORSHIPS BANDAIDS OR SOLUTIONS?

In the last Newsletter we cheered the 35 year achievement of TRAS in growing from the early sponsorships arranged by George and Inge Woodcock to keep starving refugee Tibetan children alive through the harsh Himalayan winter to one of our latest projects - a computer and desk top publishing training course for Tibetans. A growth worth cheering!

But what of the notion of sponsorships? Have we moved on so far that we have forgotten our very first project? Is there still a need for such basic help, in the face of all the developmental issues we now address? The answers are plain: NO we have never deserted our sponsorship projects, and YES there is still a need to help the most dependent and fragile section of the world's community - children.

Food, shelter and love should be the rights of every child, followed



*TRAS sponsored project*

closely by education and training. TRAS knows that no community will become self-sufficient if its children are not healthy and educated, so in helping communities in the Himalaya, it is obvious that we must still look after the wellbeing of the children. We do this work through local partners who can be trusted to do their best for the children.

To be sure, things have changed in our sponsorships over the years. In the early days we concentrated our efforts on the Tibetan Homes Foundation in Mussoorie and the Tibetan Children's Village in Dharamsala. These two institutions were opened almost as soon as the first wave of Tibetans limped and struggled over the Himalaya. Mrs Rinchen Taring (still a charming and forceful personality in her 80s), a noblewoman from Tibet, and Mrs. Pema Gyalpo, sister of the Dalai Lama, were the two powerful, far sighted ladies who ran them. They were allowed to take over hill station houses which had stood empty since the end of the British raj, and, installing Tibetan house parents in each to give a Tibetan family atmosphere, they wrought miracles as they brought up hundreds of children orphaned in the great trek from Tibet.



In later years, THF and TCV attracted worldwide support, and we felt that our efforts could be more helpful in other areas. We now have just a handful of students still being sponsored at them, but we take on no new cases. Our attentions turned instead to the newly created Tibetan settlement of Mundgod in South India, where Tibetan nomads were learning the (to them) unknown concept of settled farming. All were poor, many contracted TB and in many families, one parent died, leaving the other to cope with raising a family and working the fields. Here was where we could help, with our Family Sponsorship Project, giving a little monthly support to these particularly needy children while letting them remain with their families.

This Family Sponsorship idea then spread north east to Miao, a

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“forbidden territory” where few may travel, and where we eventually learned of the existence of a large Tibetan settlement which was receiving virtually no support. The majority of our sponsored children are in this settlement, where we hope our monthly payments have made a small but real difference to their lives. TRAS Director Duane Webster hopes to receive permission to visit Miao this fall, while he is in India, and we are looking forward to his firsthand report.

Our first efforts at helping Indian children came when the Society decided in the early 80s that it was only right to offer support to the country which had so generously hosted the Tibetans. Sister Victorine’s convent in South India had taken in Tibetan orphans in the 70s, and when she asked us to start sponsoring needy Indian children, we knew she would be the right person to entrust with this scheme.

## Tras T-shirts



**Adult sizes:** medium, large and extra-large (they are roomy!)

**Colour:** white; b/w leopard; black, red and blue border.

**Price:**

- \$20.00 for the front design
  - \$22.00 for the back desing with a front logo
  - postage \$2.00
- Order them from the office.

Our two newest partners in sponsorship are in Nepal - the *Mustang Highschool Girls' Scholarship* program run by ACAP and the *Buddha Memorial Home* in Kathmandu. Again there is a change in emphasis, to education for girls and to help for street children. (See *Joan Ford's article on Page 3.*)

And the future may bring yet another challenge - helping orphans in Tibet! Our intrepid Director Marion Tipple has made yet another trip to Tibet and was impressed by what she saw in Toelung. Read her article on *Page 4* and let us know what you think. *Does TRAS have enough friends out there willing to help all these children get a good start in life?*

**A BANDAID?** NO, because TRAS chooses partners who can help the children on a long term basis. Also, many of our projects include a daycare component, not only to look after children whose mothers are working, but also because it has been proven that children who receive a good grounding in education at an early age are more likely to continue their schooling. This is particularly true for the girls. At the other end of the scale, TRAS is totally committed to vocational training schemes. Dorothea Leach describes one on *Page 5*, and our forthcoming Newsletters will describe more fully this important part of TRAS' work.

**A SOLUTION?**

YES! Here are the stories o 3 former students of the Tibetan Homes Foundation sponsored by TRAS members. Do write and tell us if you know what your sponsored

child is doing now.

**The Teacher:** (see Dec 1995 Newsletter) Tsetan Chodon went to teacher training college, and became a teacher in the Tibetan settlement of Bylakuppe. Her goal of helping her community was achieved when she arranged to have the broken water system of her village replaced, organized the volunteer labour and oversaw the entire project.

**The Principal:** Dorje Namgyal has become the Principal of the Buddha Memorial School. He is making an all-out effort to make a difference in the lives of the street children of Kathmandu and the orphans and



*Dorje Namgyal & staff at Buddha Memmorial School*

destitute children of Nepal.

**The Mother:** Sonam, an orphan, did a tailoring course, then was married (sight unseen?) to a Tibetan farmer in Bylakuppe. When the sponsor's daughter travelled through India in 1992, she managed to find Sonam and stayed with the family. The couple lives in a decent house, and has raised two healthy, bright children. Sonam looks after her father-in-law, too, so she now has a complete family. A measure of her success is that she had recently employed someone to paint her house!

# Sponsorship Report

## Joan Ford

Things are really humming along in the Sponsorship Program. Two new programs are under way. Firstly, the Mustang girls' school has sent case histories of more girls for our Scholarship Project. I am glad to report that the first group of 30 girls all have sponsors, and now I have more case histories, so please consider taking on one of these girls. *The difference that a basic education can make to girls is enormous. If they can read and do simple math, they can organize the family finances, learn about health and birth control, environmentally friendly farming methods (for those who CAN farm in that arid landscape) and irrigation by reading the excellent material which is already available. They can hope to get jobs. They can take some measure of control over their lives.* We have been asked to sponsor 90 girls. This represents one quarter of the girl population of Mustang — imagine what a difference their education might make to this region! The cost is \$150.00 p.a. This program is run in conjunction with the Annapurna Conservation project, so there is good local accountability.

The other new program is with the Buddha Memorial School in Kathmandu. This school was established in 1989 by the All Nepal Himalaya Buddhist Association on 10 acres of land donated by His Majesty's Government, close to the Bodhnath Stupa. Two years later, the

Buddha Memorial Children's Home was added to accommodate homeless children. There are 155 boarders from all the different cultural communities of Nepal (nor is this help limited to Buddhists). Some are street children, some are orphans sent by village headmen, and a few are brought in by a sick parent whose spouse has died. All are in dire need of love and care. The Principal, Dorje Namgyal, was himself sponsored by a TRAS member. I visited the School in April, and was very impressed with the way the School is being run, and with the care being given to the children. Due to the fall in value of the rupee and the increased cost of living, Dorje was very worried as to how he would meet the costs. He was very keen to start a sponsorship project for some of the most needy children, and we agreed on a rate of \$300.00 p.a.

In May I was interviewed by Keith Morgan of the Vancouver Province. He writes a weekly article "Your Neighbours". I told him about this

project and he was very interested, and wrote an article about the school. He has sponsored a child himself, and thanks to the article, I now have the first 12 children sponsored and 12 more under way! Keith may visit Nepal in the fall, when he is doing some reporting on the work of BC non-governmental organizations active in this area. I still have many children looking for sponsors, so if you would like to help in this way, please contact me via the TRAS office.

*Once again, there is more to this scheme than meets the eye, as our help changes a lifetime pattern of misery. Many of the street children of Kathmandu, often no more than 4 or 5 years old, are "sold" or drift into the child prostitution market on the streets of Bombay. The lucky ones are being picked up first by Directors of the Buddha Memorial Home and, with help from our sponsorship project, start on the road towards a healthier, happier life. Will you help?*



*Dr. Joan Ford  
and school  
children in the  
Solu Khumbu  
region of  
Nepal*

# First Orphanage in Tibet

## Marion Tipple

*Marion clearly remembers that, when she was a child in England, her school collected clothing and money for the Tibetan refugee children at the Pestalozzi Children's Village in Germany. Thus began her lifelong interest in Tibet. Imagine her joy, during her recent trip to Tibet, on meeting one of those Pestalozzi children and discovering that she is now helping orphans in Tibet!*

Tendol Gyalzur was six or maybe eight years old when she left Tibet. She will never know her real age as her parents were killed by the invading Chinese in 1959. Rescued by relatives, she escaped with them, journeying overland across the western desert, over high Himalayan passes to Bhutan and then on to India, where a refugee camp in Mussoorie became their temporary home. From here, she was selected by the Dalai Lama as one of twelve orphans, six girls and six boys, to be sent to a Pestalozzi Children's Village in Stockach, near Lake Constance, Germany. Tendol grew up happily in the Village, housed in a home with a nurturing house mother and father. Links with Tibet were maintained, she grew up speaking both Tibetan and German and studied Buddhism and Tibetan culture. Later she became an operating room technician, married a fellow Tibetan (the brother of the Village Lama), moved to Switzerland and had two sons who are now fully grown.

Despite her good fortune, Tendol could not forget her homeland and

the children, many orphaned like herself. She felt compelled to return, with a dream of building a home for them similar to the one she grew up in. With her husband's blessing, she took all her savings and returned to Tibet. The government gave her the use of some land just east of Lhasa, in the community of Toelung and in 1993, with the help of friends and the community, she built a small house to accommodate 7 children. The home has grown over the past four years and is now complete, housing 31 orphaned or destitute children who are looked after by a Tibetan house mother and father.



*Tendol Gyalzur*

Visiting the home this summer, I was immediately impressed by the happy atmosphere. We drove into the white walled compound, up to a large Tibetan style house, guarded by a Tibetan mastiff. The nearby children rushed up to greet Tendol with big hugs and greeted me with warm smiles. Tendol proudly showed me round. 2 or 3 children share immacu-

late bedrooms. Each bed had a well loved stuffed animal or doll in residence and photographs and letters from the child's sponsor (known to them as godparents) decorated the walls. There is a large dining room with an adjacent kitchen, a room for homework, a reception room for guests and a shrine room, essential in every Tibetan household. Aged between 4 and 14 years, the children live as one large family. The older ones help with the chores, look out for the younger ones and attend the local community school. At 15, in order to attend a good middle school, the children have to go to Beijing, Shanghai or Chengdu. Access to good schools in Tibet is a privilege of the Chinese. Support from the Charity continues until the children have completed their education and are able to be self-supporting.

Tendol's most difficult task was to choose the children to live in the home from the many in desperate need. A second home for 30 children in Gyelthang, formerly part of Kham, now in China's Yunnan province, is being built and she hopes to expand to other areas. Not wealthy but with a great dream, lots of energy and a huge heart, Tendol spends her time between Tibet and Switzerland where her family works hard fund-raising to support her efforts. Love, she says, can accomplish miracles. As I left listening to the children singing, I believe it has.

Tendol's charity is based and registered in Switzerland, and all money for the charity goes through its European bank accounts.



# SPOTLIGHT ON SPITI

## Dorothea Leach

### *WORK AND FUN DURING THE WINTER HOLIDAYS IN SPITI.*

Spiti lies in a very isolated area of Himachel Pradesh in the far north-west corner of India. In the application from the Rinchen Zangpo Society for a grant to train five girls to become junior school teachers, they informed us that "Spiti is very cold and barren. Outside teachers are very reluctant to stay here and they are not familiar with our language and culture". The Venerable Tashi Namgyal, General Secretary, added in a letter that "teachers from our own community are desperately needed to improve the low educational standards in our valley..."

TRAS Directors decided to sponsor these five girls who started their training in January 1996. Since then, we have received detailed reports on the progress of the girls - all doing very well - along with wonderful photos of the students, the new school and the visit of His Holiness the Dalai Lama last year. (For a description, see Marion Tipple's article on the Spiti School, in the April 1997 Newsletter)

The latest news we had was that Ms. Guusje de Schot, B.Sc., Dip. Tchg., T.T.C. of New Zealand had joined the staff for one year. She held a Private Teacher Training Course for the students in the winter holidays (which are the long holidays in the mountains, when it is often too cold for children to go to school). The

aim was to learn to plan and implement a holiday activity programme; to learn basic skills required by teachers to plan, teach and evaluate a class; and to enthuse the students with the idea of teaching.



*Ms. de Schot with TRAS sponsored  
Teachers in Training*

Apart from sessions on subjects such as The Ideal Teacher - Self as Learner; Classroom Management; How Children Learn, etc, practical lessons were held in embroidery, sewing, painting, papier mache, kite making, badminton and other recreational activities. Judging by the enclosed photographs it was not only a learning experience for the students and children, but obviously a lot of fun and all felt that they had received great benefit.

Without doubt it is very fortunate for the students to have Ms. de Schot as their teacher for a whole year. Not only will she bring her experience to her task but also new ideas which will be of great value to the girls.

The five students sponsored by TRAS have all been assured of employment after completing their three year training course, again underlining the importance and usefulness of

our Vocational Training Fund so generously donated by Mr. Eric Brett many years ago.

## NEWS FROM ABROAD

Each month we receive several interesting magazines from various Tibetan institutions in India and from groups doing similar (but not the same!) work as TRAS. I hate to throw them all in the recycling bin after I have read them, so if you are interested in receiving any of them, let me know, and we'll send them on to you. Then please pass them on to others, or to your local library.

- Metok* - Tibetan Children's Village  
Tibetan Homes Foundation  
Newsletter
- Sherig News* - Department of  
Education
- Tibetan Women's Association*
- Tibetan Nuns Project*
- Adarsha* - Tibetan Nyingma  
Buddhist Review
- Tibetan Review* - monthly magazine  
on Tibetan issues
- Tibetan Environment and  
Development News* -  
International Campaign for  
Tibet
- Green Tibet* - annually, Department  
of the Environment
- Tibetan Health* - Department of  
Health
- Delek* - Delek Hospital
- Men-Tsee-Khang* - Tibetan Medical  
and Astrological Institute

We also receive several western newsletters on refugee issues.

## 2nd ENVIRONMENTAL WORKSHOP A SUCCESS!

In our last Newsletter we published some of the delightful letters we had received from the teachers who took part in the first environmental education workshop. The results were so obviously worthwhile, TRAS sponsored a second workshop for a new group of teachers. We have just received an excellent report from the organizers, along with the evaluations from the teachers. They make interesting reading.

It was an extremely well run workshop, conducted by the Environment and Development Desk, headed by Mr. Tsultrim Palden, in cooperation with the Teacher Training Centre of the Tibetan Children's Village and the World Wide Fund for Nature, who sent a team from New Delhi. The work-shop took place at the TTC, and by running two 3-day workshops back to back, the organizers were able to train 47 teachers instead of 25, and make the most of the resource team from WWF.

The objectives of the workshop include:

- ◆ to increase awareness of school teachers on the environment;
- ◆ to teach about the values of environment protection through Buddhist perspective;
- ◆ to use teachers as environmental educators in various schools and in their respective communities;
- ◆ to inspire teachers to take eco-friendly actions in their school;
- ◆ to teach teachers some sets of environment education skills to use in their schools;
- ◆ to inculcate environment education in school curriculum, especially in various school subjects;
- ◆ to set up Nature Clubs in different schools with the initiative of environmentally educated teachers.

The resource people were well prepared and their sessions were timely and interesting. It is clear from the evaluations that the majority of participants found the active and

practical sessions more inspiring than the lectures! With resource people speaking Hindi, Tibetan, English and Dutch, the common language was - you guessed it - English! Although from reading the evaluations, the participants have an astonishingly good grasp of English, some found the speakers too quick, or difficult to understand. They would have preferred sessions in Tibetan. They will be teaching in Tibetan - but the well respected Mr. Santhosh Babu from WWF obviously doesn't speak it. Still, they all were grateful for the workshop and learned lots, so maybe actions spoke louder than words!.

The participants came from many different elementary schools, many of them TCV schools in various parts of northern India and Ladhak. The report states "Above all, out of 47 participants, 40 women's presence made the workshop more lively and spirited".

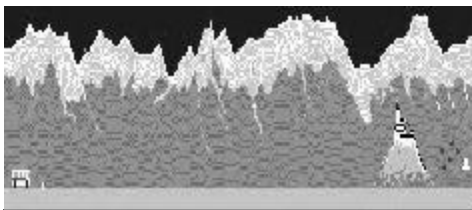
The sessions ranged from the Buddhist view of the environment to endangered species in Tibet (both very popular), from how to incorporate the environment in various school subjects to active outdoor games to play (both even more popular), from disposal of solid waste to other international issues (BORING was the most common evaluation!), from how to recycle to conducting clean ups, paper making and skits (all new concepts to most, and eagerly absorbed).

*(continued on page 7)*

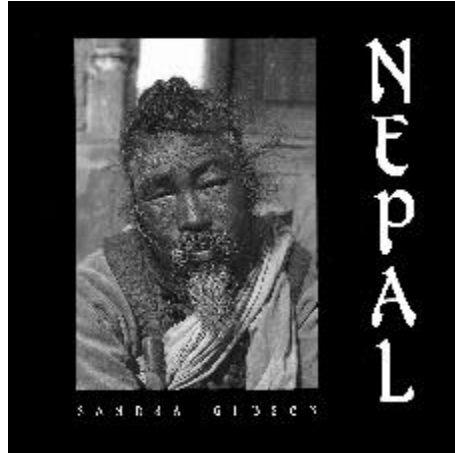


Their comments: "I got ideas about activities which will help children to understand and at the same time they will enjoy". "Methods of effective teaching by Mr. Santhosh is excellent". "Students learn better when they act it". "Being a future teacher in our Tibetan community, we'll be able to pass on this information to our children". "The games we played gave us many new ideas for how we can teach". "I learned how to relate other subjects to the environment". "The best part that I liked most is the skit, because where we DO some practical thing, we know more than theory says". "We made a skit in a very short time. I had never thought of doing such a thing". "Many different resource persons and mixture of three races - it is good to share ideas among us". "Excellent. Resource persons were well skilled in their fields. A balanced group, each with something valuable to offer". "I feel all teachers in training would benefit from this. I'd like to see environmental education in all local schools to truly alleviate local problems". "It was all important, and the workshop was excellent. Perhaps you could do a follow-up workshop with more time spent on innovative ways to teach these topics". And last but certainly not least "The food was delicious"!

The Environment Desk plans to follow up by helping interested teachers set up Nature Clubs in their schools. Congratulations to Mr. Tsultrim Palden and his team!



## SANDRA GIBSON - Fairy godmother!



You never know who might phone you after your story hits the newspaper - and Joan Ford was pleasantly surprised when the caller turned out to be a woman who has not only lived in Nepal for many months, but who has published a beautiful book of photographs about life in Nepal.

But Sandra Gibson wasn't phoning to pass the time of day - she very kindly offered to give TRAS several copies of her book to sell, with the proceeds to go to TRAS work. This is a fascinating book for anyone with an interest in Nepal. and would make a wonderful Christmas present! Cost is \$40.00.

Call the TRAS office for your copy!

AND

Sandra has offered to give a slide presentation about "DAILY LIFE IN NEPAL" as a fundraiser for TRAS!



Watch for further details about AN EVENING WITH TRAS coming up in November!



## AN EVENING WITH TRAS

"DAILY LIFE IN NEPAL" - a personal account and slide presentation by *Sandra Gibson*, the creator of the book

"SHE MAKES MOUNTAIN CALLS"- the video about *Joan Ford's* life and the time she spent as a doctor at one of Sir Edmund Hillary's hospitals in Nepal.

TIBETAN CHRISTMAS CRAFT SALE - Sandra's books, TRAS t-shirts and lovely Tibetan crafts for gifts and stocking stuffers will be on sale, along with a variety of goodies from other agencies which help Tibetans - CTC, WWW and the Tibetan Cultural Society. An exciting items will be framed *Brian Harris* Tibetan prints and his 1998 calendars..

SEE YOU THERE!

## TRAS EXECUTIVE

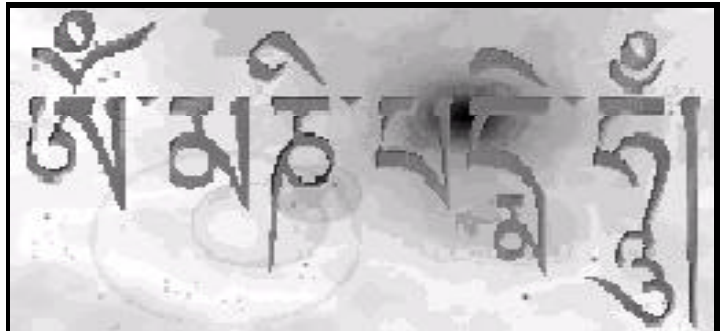
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**Om Mani Padme Hum**  
*Hail to the Jewel in the Lotus*



Yearly Membership donation (\$20) ----- \$ 20

*Possible Additional Donations:*

Monthly Donation of \$25 for the “Child Development and Education  
 Project” at a residential school -----

Monthly Donation of \$10 for a child in a “Family and Community  
 Development Project” -----

Donation to the Old People’s Fund, which supports a “Self-Help Project”  
 for the elderly and infirm -----

Donation to the general fund or other specific area of your choice -----

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