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TRAS



December 2009

Trans Himalayan Aid Society



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I would like to take this opportunity to extend a huge **thank you** to you – our donors, sponsors and volunteers - for so generously supporting TRAS. It is because of you that TRAS is able to do its work supporting children and youth in the Himalaya. Thank you! ~ Jennifer Hales

TRAS, having recently received some new proposals, is once again looking into helping some of the remotest and poorest villages in the region. (See map, p.2)

In India, in Phathura and Khalar villages in the Almora/ Nainital Districts of Uttarakhand State, children walk up to 10 km each way to school, and health services are non-existent. Some of the Tibetans living in Indian villages in the Tuting region in the far north-eastern corner of Arunachal Pradesh are a week's walk away from the nearest bus, which is itself a three-day journey from the nearest Tibetan settlement. In Sikkim, a Buddhist lama who recognises the value of education has started small schools for village children, the first generation to receive an education. Villagers in Humla, the poorest of Nepal's 75 districts in the far western corner of the country, are fighting to overcome caste prejudice and illiteracy.



The TRAS Board of Directors has so far agreed to raise funds for two of these new projects. We are currently carefully considering requests for assistance from groups and NGOs in the other regions, and hope to be able to support them too. As you may be well aware, it takes time to make sure we are supporting the communities most in need and the projects most likely to succeed.

While we look to supporting new partners, we do not forget, of course, our ongoing work to foster quality education and health care for Tibetan children at Lhasa Yuthok Kindergarten, Dekyiling Crèche in Dehra Dun and Little Flowers Crèche in Dharamsala, for Indian children and youth at Munsel-Ling School in the Spiti valley in Himachal Pradesh, and for Nepali and

Tibetan students at Buddha Academy Boarding School in Kathmandu.

If you wish to make a donation this year, please consider supporting one of our current or new projects in the list inside this newsletter, or consider giving the board of Directors the freedom to use the donation where it is most needed for the new projects we will be undertaking in the near future.

If you would like your donation to be made in the name of a family member or friend, we would be happy to send a Himalayan card to the recipient telling them you have made the donation in their name and thanking them for it. Please call Lise at the office by Wednesday, December 16, to allow time for her to process your donation and send the card: 604-224-5133.

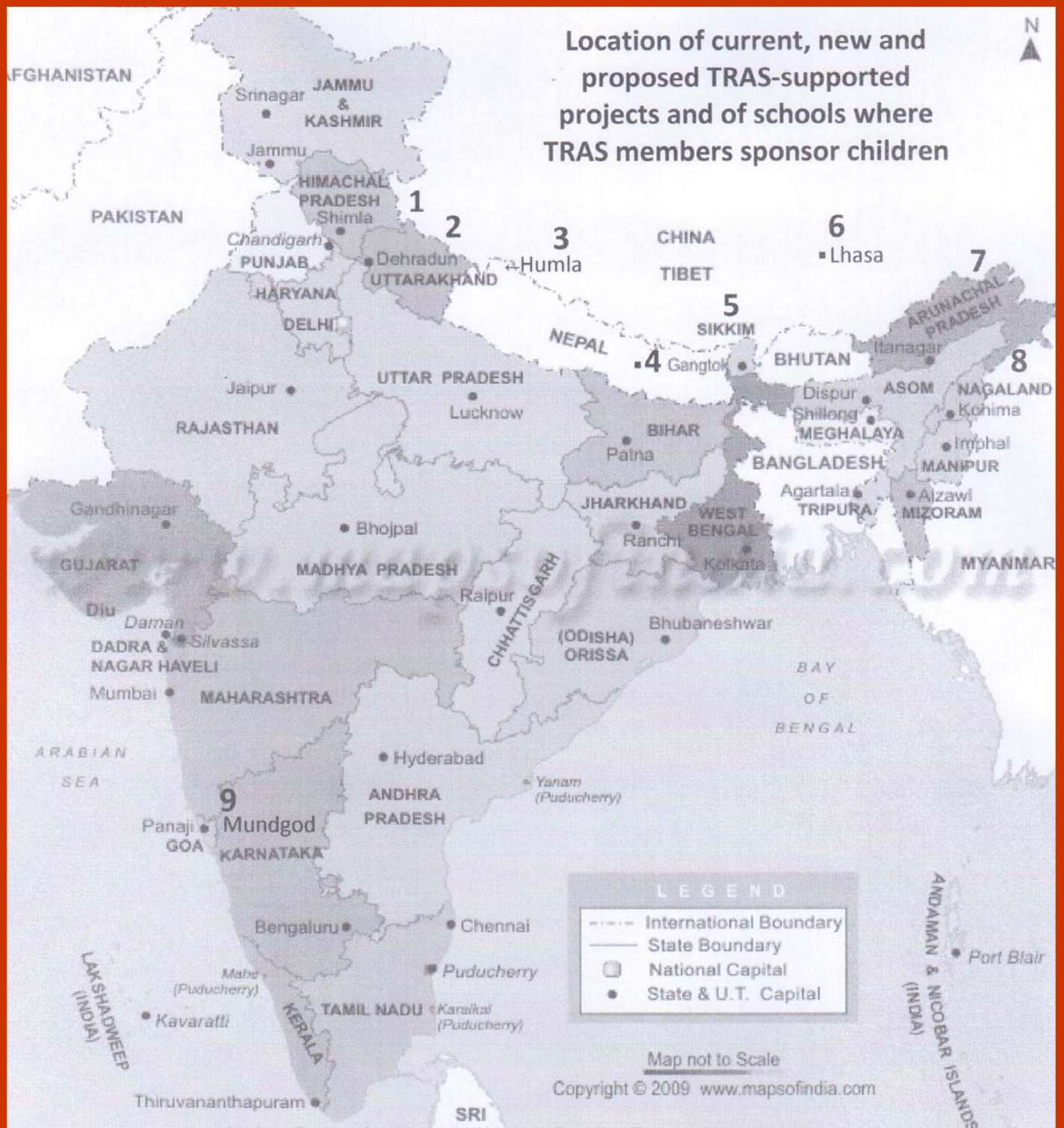
**Thank you so much!**

On behalf of the TRAS Board of Directors, I wish you and your loved ones a wonderful holiday season, and a happy, healthy 2010. ~Jennifer Hales

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Location of current, new and proposed TRAS-supported projects and of schools where TRAS members sponsor children



Map not to Scale  
Copyright © 2009 www.mapsofindia.com

# LOCATIONS OF CURRENT, RECENTLY COMPLETED AND NEW PROJECTS, AND SPONSORSHIPS (see Map on Page 2)

(\* indicates a proposed project that the TRAS Board of Directors is currently reviewing)

## 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)

**Little Flowers Crèche, Dharamsala**

Crèche maintenance for children of Tibetan government workers \$2,750 p.a. **Needs \$2,675**

**Munsel-Ling School, Spiti Valley**

School water tank \$12,150, greenhouses \$8,083, nurses' salaries \$2,350 (fully funded)

Dispensary maintenance \$1,884;  
380 bed deliveries \$29,108  
(recently 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

## 2. UTTARAKHAND, INDIA

**Dekyiling Crèche, Dekyiling Tibetan Handicraft Centre, Dehra Dun**

Crèche maintenance and after-school care for weavers' children \$3,488 p.a. **Needs \$3,488**

Child sponsorships

**Tibetan Homes Foundation, Mussoorie**

Child sponsorships

**Tibetan Women's Centre, Rajpur**

Child sponsorships

**Voice of Children, Almora/Nainital Districts**

Health and education programs for Indian children in 5 villages (new project) \$5,500 **Needs \$5,500**

## 3. HUMLA DISTRICT, NEPAL

\* Villages in Humla District

Education and income generation for low caste and poor children in the most remote and poorest of Nepal's 75 Districts (proposed project under review)

## 4. KATHMANDU, NEPAL

**Buddha Academy Boarding School**

Vocational training, (carpentry, tailoring and electrical) \$11,000 **Needs \$3,535**

Infirmary maintenance \$3,600 (fully funded)

Books for Junior Library (supplied by Nepal Library Foundation)

Child sponsorships

## 5. SIKKIM, INDIA

\* Padhamchen Village in the Himalayan foothills of eastern Sikkim

Support for primary and secondary village schools (proposed project under review)

## 6. LHASA, TIBETAN AUTONOMOUS REGION

**Lhasa Yuthok Kindergarten**

Kindergarten, Grades 1 and 2 maintenance (60 Tibetan children) \$9,090 **Needs \$6,390**

## 7. ARUNACHAL PRADESH, INDIA

**Tezu Tibetan Settlement**

Books for school library \$3,000 (recently completed)

**Tuting Tibetan Adult Literacy Project**

Tibetan literacy training for 208 illiterate Tibetans \$2,926 **Needs \$2,126**

## 8. ARUNACHAL PRADESH, INDIA

**Choepheling Tibetan Settlement, Miao**

Books for school library \$4,000

(recently completed) Child sponsorships

## 9. KARNATAKA, INDIA

**Doeguling Tibetan Settlement, Mundgod**

Tibetan Old People's Support \$3,292 (ongoing project to pay for medical needs of the elderly, still supported by TRAS Victoria Branch and several TRAS members)

Child sponsorships

Child sponsorships

**Tibetan Women's Centre, Mundgod**

Child sponsorships



Altogether, TRAS has committed just under \$100,000 to projects so far in the 2009-10 year.

We have been blessed with wonderful support from our members and from other agencies (Sleeping Children Around the World, Libraries Across Borders and Nepal Library Foundation). But we have a few unmet needs.

Surprisingly, this year, the two crèches and the kindergarten, all for Tibetan children, have received little support. The Buddha Academy vocational training needs a bit more – but Sutherland Secondary School has three events lined up and lots of enthusiasm. Then there are the two new projects (Voice of Children and Tuting Adult Literacy) and the possible new projects in Humla and Sikkim. In both these locations, we hear of remote villages of small stone houses with broken walls and corrugated tin roofs that leak in the harsh wet winter weather, poor agricultural soil, desperately poor villagers – but thanks to a local group in Humla and a Buddhist monk in Sikkim, education is a real possibility for this generation of children.

# SPONSORSHIP REPORT

**Sponsorship works!** Given a chance, children will succeed, become skilled and make a difference in this world. On a recent visit to India, I had the wonderful experience of meeting some of our sponsored children from the Munsel-Ling School in Spiti. Now young adults, they are currently sponsored by TRAS members to enable them to further their education in Delhi. These children of illiterate, subsistence farming families are the first generation to be educated, and are proving that your investment is worthwhile. Now articulate young people, they are excitedly studying to become Nurses, Engineers, Doctors, and Administrators. Recognising the unique opportunity that they have been given, all have a strong commitment to return home to help those who follow behind.

For as little as \$35/month for a school student and \$58-90/month for a college student, education (school fees, books, uniform, and supplies), accommodation, and food are covered. A small investment to change one life will in turn change many others. In this season of giving, please consider a Gift of Sponsorship; we have many children needing your help in both India and Nepal.

~ Marion Tipple

## SPITI COLLEGE STUDENTS



### PEMA

**Pema**, the second child of a family of 6, I first met as a young child in 1996. Her father died when she was young, her elder brother had to leave school to work so that the family could survive. Pema excelled at school and is now in her first year of a BA program in Chandigath with an ambition to become an administrator so that she can return to Spiti to help with social services and community planning. However with difficult financial circumstances it is uncertain whether she will be able to continue with her studies and desperately needs some help.

(\$880/yr)



### TENZIN

is a young woman whose poor farming parents, recognising the importance of an education, have struggled to keep their three children in school. Now in the 1<sup>st</sup> year of a B.Com program in Shimla, living with her elder brother and sister in one room, she struggles to survive and therefore we are seeking a sponsor. (\$680/yr)

## BUDDHA ACADEMY CHILDREN



### ARPAN

belongs to a poor farming family in the Dolpo region of Nepal. Now 6 years old, he was brought to Buddha Academy by the village headman in the hope that he will be given an education. A sponsor is sought to make this possible.

(\$400/yr)



### DOLMA TSERING

arrived at Buddha Academy from Manang with her father, who pleaded for her to be accepted so that she could get an education and not have to suffer like her parents. She was accepted into the nursery class but requires a sponsor to help her. (\$400/yr)



### SANGMO

aged 12 years, is one of 4 children whose mother struggles to provide for them with the little money she earns as a sweeper. They live in one small room. Sangmo is delighted to have been given the opportunity to stay and study at Buddha Academy but needs a sponsor. She would be very grateful for any help.

(\$400/yr)



### RUBIN

13-year-old **Rubin** comes from a poor Sherpa family. He attended a primary school to Class 5 and has been accepted into Buddha Academy to continue his schooling. As his family has little financial means he requires a sponsor to enable him to continue his studies. (\$400/yr)

# TREK for TRAS

## IN THE MOUNT EVEREST REGION OF NEPAL



**An Adventure of a Lifetime**  
**A Way to Give Back**

**October 24, 2010**  
**- November 14, 2010**

Langara College Continuing Studies and Everest Trekking will be leading a unique 14-day trek in Nepal's spectacular Everest/Khumbu region. The Trek will be educational with visits to temples, monasteries and schools, including Buddha Academy Boarding School (supported by TRAS) in Kathmandu.

The \$5995Cdn fee will include a \$700 donation to the Buddha Academy. The maximum elevation will be 15,600 ft (Chukhung). Trek Leaders will be Ken Kissock from North Vancouver and Tashi Sherpa from Nepal. Ken, an expert leader with *Everest Trekking Canada*, is committed to conducting tours and treks which are sensitive to the local culture and environment. Tashi Sherpa, who founded *Everest Trekking* in Nepal in 1982 and has led many treks in the Himalaya, is highly respected for his expertise, experience and local knowledge.

For more information contact: Kathryn Ellis, Langara College Continuing Studies, 604-323-5979, email: [kellis@langara.bc.ca](mailto:kellis@langara.bc.ca) or Ken Kissock, Everest Trekking Canada, 604-984-7773, email: [kkissock@shaw.ca](mailto:kkissock@shaw.ca).

## VOLUNTEER CORNER



### Our littlest volunteers!

Louis and Sylvia, the young children of Russil Wvong, Past President, and Abby Fitch, herself a regular volunteer, have caught the helping bug early! Since they were 6 and 4, they have been diligently sticking stamps on your newsletter envelopes, and this year, they've done the same for the sponsorship renewal letters. They are both in school now, (at 8 and 6) so can't attend our regular volunteer mailing sessions. However, they insist on Abby taking a good number of envelopes home for them to work on! Thank you, Louis and Sylvia!

Our teenaged volunteers are just as dedicated. Sutherland Secondary School raised a fantastic **\$2,500** for the Buddha Academy Vocational



Training project this year, having put on three great events to show how students here can help students in need half a world away.

Last week they offered to put up displays and sell our handicrafts at their Parent-Teacher interview day - and they sold over \$1,200 worth of crafts for TRAS!

Way to go, Sutherland!!

We say adieu to Leslie Ramsay - but not goodbye. Leslie has been an enthusiastic fixture at the newsletter mail-outs, craft sales and Nepali film festivals for the past few years, and did all the research for and purchase of our wonderful, huge, second-hand display panel. We'll miss her cheerful smile and hard work, but it will be Victoria's gain. Leslie is moving to the Island, and will contact the TRAS Victoria Branch as soon as she has settled in. Many thanks, Leslie.



Lesley Ramsay ponders handicraft sales

### JOIN OUR MERRY BAND OF VOLUNTEERS!!

contact the TRAS office at 604-224-5133  
 or e-mail to [tras@portal.ca](mailto:tras@portal.ca)  
 (see page 8 for more information)

# VOICE OF CHILDREN PROJECT

This is a new project. A request was received from two small Indian NGOs, **Aman** based in Almora and **Vimarsh** in Nainital, in Himachal Pradesh.

The proposal sounded excellent: to improve the education and health in 5 scattered villages where these services are not available. TRAS was even more interested when we learned that Kanchan, the founder of Vimarsh, was herself trained by and worked with CHIRAG, an Indian NGO with whom TRAS ran several large projects over many years. It was good to see her able to spread the good work further afield. TRAS members Paul and Donna Bishop were visiting India last spring, and volunteered to meet with the NGOs. Their expertise as doctor and social worker would help them evaluate the work being done.

Their report was most useful. They visited several villages where the NGOs have worked for three years and where tangible, ongoing improvements were obvious. And they visited villages where TRAS has now agreed to support the same kind of work. Here are extracts from their report:



14km trail to nearest village with amenities

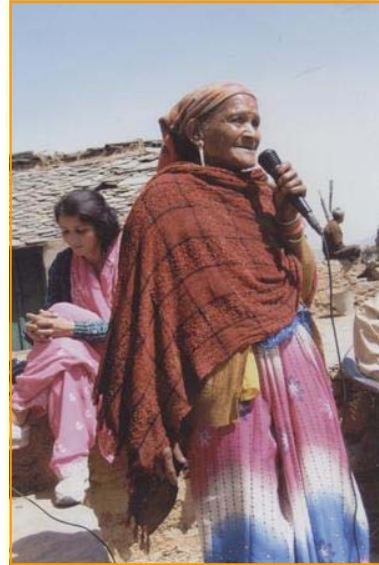
*"We visited Khurpa Tal village with Kanchan and several volunteers to meet with women from 5 or 6 neighbouring villages. Vimarsh had been working with these communities for 3 years and the project is now complete. They have accomplished a great deal, establishing monthly meetings, building toilets, fresh water systems, health and education programs, including immunization for babies. They have done this work largely by teaching the women how to advocate for themselves,*

*bringing the communities together through meetings, cultural events, wellness camps, etc. The rapport is very*



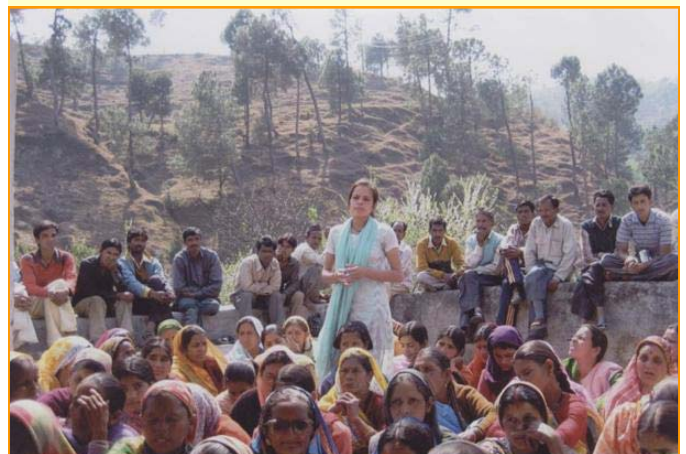
*positive – mutual respect and appreciation are abundant. About 200 women attended this meeting, walking up to 15km one way, to tell us of the accomplishments they have achieved with Vimarsh's help."*

*"Next we attended meetings in the mountain villages near Nainital for a needs assessment. Many women shared their concerns about having no access to health care.*



Oldest woman in village, a healer, tells of tragedies due to lack of health care.

*The oldest woman in the community, a healer, told stories of needless tragedies through lack of health services and supplies. Young women were shy to speak, but told of the need for education for girls. Several said they are not allowed to go to school as they would have to walk over 10km each way. It is not safe, and their mothers expect them to be at home to work. One young woman would like to be a doctor. She is a very*



Girl pleading for help to get to school

*good student, but is discouraged from going to school,*

*and in any case there would be no money for higher education, so she will have to let go of her dream."*

Aman, the other NGO, has done wonders with a goat program, compost projects, sanitation and greenhouses. Paul and Donna point to the fact that, unlike refugees, these villagers are citizens of India, with the right to roads, health care and education for their children. Due to the remoteness, this just doesn't happen. Sometimes the small schools and health centres exist,

# TUTING ADULT LITERACY PROJECT

**T**RAS is delighted to take on this new project – but wait a minute: it is for ADULT literacy – and didn't TRAS decide to concentrate on children and youth? Well, here's the story.

The 208 completely illiterate Tibetan adults (mostly women) in this project want to be able to write letters to their children, read the replies, and read Tibetan newspapers and prayer books. And why do they need to write to their children? Because their kids are well over a thousand difficult miles away!

If you wanted to visit these Tibetans, here is what you would have to do. (If Eric Newby did this trip, he would have called the book, "A Long Walk along the Brahmaputra", rather than "A Short Walk in the Hindu Kush" or "Slowly down the Ganges"!)

First you must apply for a 'restricted area permit', because Tuting is in a sensitive area, close to the disputed border between India and China. If you receive the permit, and if you are adventurous, you take a plane (once a week, on Fridays), train or a bus to Assam, followed by a long bus ride to Yingkiang, the main little town in the Tuting region, in the most northerly bit of Arunachal Pradesh. Finally you take the local bus to the hamlet of Tuting. Now you see before you endless ranges of mountains, green in the foreground, white and towering behind. Rushing along beside you is the mighty Siang River (later called the Brahmaputra), which starts its journey in Tibet. And now, you start walking to the group of villages where the Tibetans live. Three days' walk will get you to some of these 12 villages; the furthest is a week's walk away.

Somehow, the Mothers' Association members in these little villages have communicated, and decided to set up school in the five most central villages. Everyone else will walk to these centres, five days a week, for a year. They are determined to learn to read and write Tibetan. This will be especially difficult for them, because their native tongue is a local dialect, but their children are taught regular Tibetan. And where are the children?

*Voice of Children Project cont'd from page 6*

rarely a teacher. The young people desire more education so that they could return to their communities to help. The situation is so like that which TRAS has met over the years in Manali, Sitla, Spiti, Annapurna – and we know that with the right people involved at the local level, change can be dramatic.

The two NGOs are staffed by a small number of local people, working for minimal pay, but well educated and intensely dedicated. They have many volunteers. Their two offices are spartan, and they think nothing of hiking 15 or 20 km to get their work done. We are excited to take on a one-year project with the NGOs jointly, under the title "**Voice of Children**", to start health and education programs for the children, along with the strengthening of village councils and women's groups. In our spring newsletter, we will bring you actual details of the work in progress.

The Central Tibetan Administration's Department of Education has solved the problem of educating several hundred scattered children by creating a boarding school for them in Chauntra, about a day's drive from Dharamsala. This site was no doubt chosen because it is close to the main Tibetan community in India, and facilities, supplies and teachers are readily available all in one place. If they had built a little day school in Tuting, many of the children would have been unable to attend.

What wrenched our hearts is the fact that the children leave home to go to this school when they are 6, and only visit their parents once every three or four years. Hence the parents' urgent desire to be able to write and read letters. We know this little project will be a blessing to the children too, so we are happy to support it.

**...the children leave home to go to this school when they are 6, and only visit their parents once every three or four years. Hence the parents' urgent desire to be able to write and read letters.**

Rest assured that the kids are happy, healthy and very well cared for in Chauntra. Mati Bernabei, who is giving the TRAS lecture in January, has just spent time in that area and has visited the school several times.

When the Department of Education asked TRAS to support this project, we were told that the Settlement Officer from the Tezu Tibetan Settlement would oversee the project. We have just supplied \$3,000 worth of books to the Tezu day school – so could these 208 adults make any use of the simpler books? Well, no. The Department of Education wrote back to say that the Settlement Officer travels for three days by bus to get to Tuting, and then walks – for hours, three days or a week to visit each village. He is undertaking this journey right now, and will give the Mothers' Association the good news that we will pay for the project, and they can start lessons. Their plan is to study for one hour, five days a week, for a year, in a rented room with a volunteer teacher (who receives a small honorarium), using one blackboard per village and one notebook per participant.



Raghu Tewari (leader of Voice of Children) discussing needs with villagewomen.

# TRAS

Supporting health  
and education for  
children and youth  
in the Himalayas

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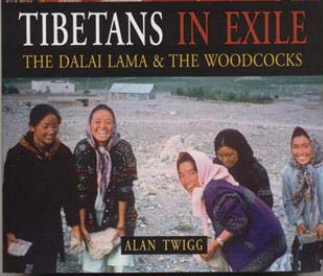
## TRAS welcomes New Director

We are delighted to  
welcome **Megha  
Ratna Shakya**  
to the Board of  
Directors of TRAS.

Megha has extensive experience in the development field in Nepal, not only in forestry and conservation, but also in working to improve the lives of traumatised children, the disabled and the mentally handicapped. Widely travelled, educated at university in Nepal and at Princeton, Megha brings many skills and a great enthusiasm for helping others to TRAS. Megha and his family moved to Vancouver from Nepal a few months ago, unaware, he says, that Vancouver also has monsoons!

## NEED LAST-MINUTE GIFTS?

The gorgeous Tibetan cupboard in the TRAS office is not quite overflowing with goodies, because sales have been incredible this fall, what with the Dalai Lama's visit, Sutherland's terrific efforts and two craft fairs. But we still have cozy angora toques and gloves (\$20), wonderful shawls (\$50 - \$90) and colourful shoulder bags (\$15 - \$25).



For the readers in your family, there is **TIBETANS IN EXILE** (\$20) – Alan Twigg's tribute to Inge Woodcock and the work she and George did for Tibetans in exile and Indian villagers. It is a timely example of how the lives of thousands can be changed by one chance meeting.

This book, appearing in the 50<sup>th</sup> year of the Tibetans' exile, makes good reading for anyone interested in the story of

how the actions of a handful of Canadians led to the formation of two charities which are still going strong. There is a fuller description of the book in the September newsletter and on the TRAS website [www.tras.ca](http://www.tras.ca)

Available in person at the TRAS office (phone Lise at 604-224-5133) or we may be able to deliver books to West and North Vancouver, Burnaby, central Vancouver and White Rock.

## TRAS LECTURE SERIES

It is our pleasure to announce the third lecture in the  
TRAS Lecture Series:

### Education of Tibetans-in-Exile in India and Nepal

by: Mati Bernabei, PhD Candidate, Simon Fraser University

**Date:** Wednesday, January 27, 2010

**Time:** 7:30pm

**Location:** Langara College (100 West 49th Avenue, Vancouver)

**By donation.**

*All proceeds will go to a project supporting the education of Tibetans in India*

**More details to come, Check our website:** [www.tras.ca](http://www.tras.ca)

## HEARTFELT THANKS

TRAS acknowledges with thanks the generosity of TRAS member **Jesse Rod Hyder**, who left a bequest to the Society in his will. Mr. Hyder was a long-time member and sponsor, who most recently sent donations for the Buddha Academy vocational training project. He was a well-loved resident of James Bay in Victoria, highly respected for his community involvement. We do appreciate the fact that Mr. Hyder made sure the children in the Himalayas were not forgotten when he wrote his will.

## A SURPRISE RETIREMENT GIFT

**Lynn and Frank Beck**, long-time TRAS directors, threw a party recently to celebrate their birthdays and their retirement from their medical practice. Having reached the stage in life where more 'stuff' is not needed, they suggested a donation to TRAS in lieu of any gifts. Expecting the equivalent of a few bottles of wine, they have been overwhelmed to hear that over \$800 has come in to the TRAS office in their honour! They have chosen to put the money towards the Tuting Adult Literacy project. Thank you so much, Lynn and Frank, for your generous idea! Worth copying, don't you think?

**VOLUNTEERS FOR TRAS: A variety of interesting jobs awaits you. TRAS needs your help! Right now, we are looking for a new Treasurer to join the Board and take over when Rob Asbeek-Brusse's term ends.**