

**Nepal Australia Friendship Association Qld (NAFA)**  
**President's Report for 2018**  
**Submitted to the AGM 9 April 2019**

**The Big Picture:** NAFA completed the rebuild or substantial repair of fifty-four earthquake resistant classrooms at eight schools, thirty-five classrooms in four Dhading district schools: Kutal, Ladap, Richet and Tawal and nineteen classrooms in the remote, eastern Nepal villages of Kophu, Patle, Shyama and Dhupisurke. In 2018 NAFA continued to focus on helping remote villages rebuild infrastructure destroyed by the devastating earthquakes of 2015. NAFA allocated \$191,000 towards the second phase of the rebuild in 2018, bringing the total allocated to the earthquake rebuild to \$770,000! This could only be done through the continued generosity of NAFA supporters and our guarantee that 100% of donations to NAFA go directly to Nepal, without any administration expenses taken off.

In 2018 in Dhading District, a total of twenty-one earthquake resistant classrooms were rebuilt with NAFA funds in the remote villages of Tawal, Ladap, Richet and Kutal. NAFA also funded the rebuild of the school toilet block at Ladap and contributed towards the rebuild of the toilet block at Tawal in partnership with Bikas, Belgium and Nepaleducaid, Austria. New water taps were installed at the school in Tawal and ten computers were purchased to re-establish the computer room. Land was purchased and cleared for the new health post which will be built following government registration.

In February 2019, eleven NAFA supporters joined a similar number from Smile Back to Me, Spain and Pratika Shakya from Joy Foundation Nepal to officially hand over or open the four schools. At the official opening of the area school at Tawal, 1,200 local villagers attended the celebratory event that lasted six hours! It was the end of a long and difficult journey since the 2015 earthquake and local villagers were determined to celebrate in style with singing, dancing, a wonderful welcome speech in English by a Grade 10 student, another speech by a Grade 8 student on the importance of managing your time and speeches from eight politicians and bureaucrats!

In the eastern districts, NAFA allocated funds to finalise the rebuild or substantial repair of classrooms in Shyama, Dolakha district and Patle, Okhaldhunga district. NAFA also funded the rebuild of a toilet block at Patle and the construction of desks, chairs, cupboards and shelving for their library and computer room in Kophu in the Solu Khumbu district.

Apart from our earthquake rebuilds, NAFA allocations spanned the priorities of education, health, child care, rural electricity and rural economic (agricultural) development. All NAFA projects are locally managed. NAFA continued to expect the local community to make a contribution towards each rebuilding project, for example by undertaking volunteer labour to build retaining walls, excavating and clearing the building sites, transporting building materials from the road heads to the school sites and breaking down stones to make aggregate for the concrete mix. At the same time, NAFA recognises the economic hardship and emotional stress caused by the earthquakes so continued to be flexible regarding expectations of volunteer contributions to projects.

Deb and I again travelled to Nepal twice in 2018, focussing on the rebuilding phase and to monitor ongoing and one-off NAFA projects. Executive members Ross and Brenda Hazelwood, along with other NAFA supporters, also visited NAFA projects at their own expense to monitor project implementation.

**NAFA project highlights in 2018:**

- **\$191,000** allocated to earthquake rebuild/repair projects in eight remote villages, bringing the total to \$770,000, after nearly \$96,000 was allocated in 2015 as an initial response (e.g. roofing tin and rice).
- **\$17,200** allocated to education sponsorship for 45 school children at VSN Thimi.
- **\$42,173** allocated to Further Education and Training (FEAT) sponsorships for 41 VSN Thimi (22), Tawal (14) and PA Nepal (5) students for college or Bachelor level study.
- **\$27,840** allocated to 6 health projects, including salaries for 3 health workers in a remote health centre, support for a primary hearing care project, a remote oral and general health camp and a support for health clinics primarily targeting families from two carpet factories.
- **\$26,194** allocated to four teacher salaries in two remote villages and operational support for three child care centres for poor families.

## A closer look at ongoing NAFA's programs in Nepal

### Education: Child sponsorship, FEAT and teacher salaries

NAFA has one child sponsorship programs at **Vinayak Shiksha Niketan (VSN) School** in Thimi, with **forty-five (45) children sponsored in 2018** for education to Grade 12. This program is now capped with a sunset clause in the year 2022 due to the administrative responsibilities associated with these programs, the multi-year impact on NAFA's financial commitments and ageing of the NAFA committee.

NAFA's Further Education and Training (**FEAT**) program aims to partner with child sponsors and families to provide opportunities for disadvantaged young people to undertake vocational training or post Grade 10 (college years 11 and 12) and Grade 12 (Bachelor) study to improve their employment chances. Sponsored children from VSN Thimi are from poor families in this pottery/farming town, or from families working and living in a local carpet factory. Sponsored students from Prisoners Assistance (PA) Nepal have parents who are in prison or are orphans. Finally, students from the area school at Tawal are from poor subsistence farming backgrounds. In 2018, a total of **41 students** were supported through the FEAT program, studying **civil engineering, computer engineering, nursing, education, law, rural health, hotel management, business studies, mechanical engineering, media communication and information technology.**

In 2018, NAFA continued to **sponsor three teachers at the school in Tawal, which enables that area school servicing 6 local villages, to operate to Grade 10, as well as a teacher in the village of Gamauli in western Nepal.**

### Child care

NAFA continued its **financial support to two child care centres operated by the Butterfly Foundation in Pokhara.** These centres support families who have moved to Pokhara from villages in search of casual day labour work. NAFA also continues to support the operation of a **child care crèche for carpet factory families in Thimi.** Since the earthquake that crèche was relocated to an abandoned primary school and continues to operate well from that venue.

### Health

Since co-funding (with AusAid) the construction of the health centre in 2000, NAFA continues to **subsidise the salaries of three health workers,** providing primary health care to over 3,000 people living in Tawal and 4 other nearby villages. Unfortunately, the health centre at Tawal was completely destroyed by the earthquake. Since the earthquake, the health centre has moved from a tent to be temporarily housed in emergency accommodation rooms built by the Nepal army in case of future natural disasters. The health centre will have to be rebuilt on land away from the landslide prone area on which it was located. After an exhaustive search, **land suitable for the new health centre has been purchased** and the **site prepared** for construction. Construction will commence after the health centre is formally registered with the new Gangajamuna Rural Municipality, a process that is proving quite daunting.

Since 2010, NAFA has been a proud supporter of **Himalayan Health & Hearing (HH&H),** developed and conducted through the dedicated volunteer work and financial generosity of **Lew and Sue Tuck from Whitsunday Hearing.** Lew and Sue work in partnership with Keshab Dangol from the **Nepalese Association of Hard of Hearing (NAHOH),** which is also supported by NAFA to provide hearing as well as general and specialist health care in outreach camps in the Kathmandu Valley and beyond in remote areas of Nepal.

In April, 2018 NAFA funded the **second of five annual oral and general health camps** for Tamang villages in the Gangajamuna Rural Municipality in the Dhading District. The health camps are being conducted by five female dentists and a Medical Officer with paediatric specialized training from **Kantipur Dental College Teaching Hospital and Research Center.** A total of 226 villagers attended the camp. This year's camp included fluoride treatment and restoration (fillings); and a power point slide presentation by the dentists on: the causes of tooth decay, promotion of a healthy diet and proper tooth brushing techniques. Approximately 200 villagers attended the presentation in the central square at Tawal.

Since its inception, NAFA has supported Tilganga's **eye screening and cataract surgery remote clinics.** In 2018, however, the annual remote eye camp wasn't held until January 2019 so will be included in next year's financial statements and President's Report.

Finally, first aid supplies were purchased for the village of Dhupiserke, Okhaldunga district.

### Other infrastructure and economic development projects

Following a \$10,000 donation in 2017, a second donation of \$5,000 was received and allocated to increase the loan capital of the Pasang Chowk Cooperative Savings Bank. Interest from Cooperative loans will be used to help grow and sustain the Cooperative, helping with operational expenses and infrastructure purchases.

Since 2017 an earmarked donation has supported the salary for a **women's social mobiliser** (Rebika Tamang) to progress women's issues in the Tawal area. Rebika well supported the new tote bag making initiative started by Deborah Setterlund and Wendy Eastwell following a six-month sewing training course funded by Queensford College in Brisbane. In 2018, fifteen local women made approximately **600 lined, washable and reversible general purpose tote bags**, which were sold through the NAFA network. The initiative was a win-win for both the local women who were paid fair trade wages by NAFA for their efforts; and NAFA making a profit on the sale of the bags, which helps us fund other one-off and ongoing projects. Rebika is also supporting NAFA's five year oral and general health program for the Tawal area, through her involvement in the local Hilly Women's Group and organisation of a tooth-brushing program for school children in Nursery to Grade 4 and her support in the lead-up of the oral and general health camp.

In the eastern districts, the power board and earthing for the micro-hydro system at Patle was repaired following a lightning strike. In addition, the electricity system for the village of Mulkarka in the Solu Khumbu district was repaired.

### **Thank you for supporting NAFA**

I would like to make some specific heart-felt thank you's to supporters here in Australia as well as those who have made NAFA achievements in 2018 possible in Nepal. In Australia, I would firstly like to thank members of the Nepalese community for again supporting NAFA so well this past year. This support includes substantial assistance with NAFA's annual fundraising dinner in May, and continued advice on a range of earthquake and bureaucracy related matters in Nepal.

NAFA committee members and regular meeting goers **Nirmala Pandeya, Mohan Sharma and Ujjwal Gautam** provided sound advice and loyal, consistent support during the year both within the committee and outside in connecting with NAFA's Nepalese network in Brisbane. It is also great to welcome **Mana Ranjit** back on deck following his recovery from major surgery. Deb and I would also like to specifically thank Kalpana Kaphle for coming to Tawal with us in November 2018 and co-facilitating a women's nutrition workshop and an oral health awareness raising talks in the school at Tawal.

I would like to offer a special thanks to **Gabe Romaguera** who again professionally performed the complex accounting tasks that are involved in a medium size volunteer-run organisation. Another complex area of NAFA activity is that related to the child sponsorship and FEAT programs. **Jo Bicknell** has handled all challenges inherent in managing those areas, ensuring that the largest ongoing program in NAFA remains sustainable. I would also like to thank **Barry Bicknell** for his advice, ongoing support and invaluable connections to philanthropic donors that have been an integral part of NAFA's success in raising funds since the 2015 earthquake. NAFA has also been lucky to have a very competent Secretary, **Russ Waller**, who has also kept the committee thinking about the important issues of succession-planning and sustainability for NAFA into the future.

I again want to make special mention of **Ross and Brenda Hazelwood's** contribution to NAFA, both in Australia and in Nepal. For Ross, that includes coordinating the annual fundraising dinner roster. For Brenda, it includes managing NAFA's website and Facebook site and contributing to the organisation of NAFA's market stalls. In Nepal, Ross has guided NAFA's earthquake rebuilding efforts in eastern Nepal, while at the same time supporting Jo with tasks associated with the VSN and PA Nepal child sponsorship and FEAT programs. Brenda very competently supports Ross in his rebuilding, child sponsorship and FEAT efforts, and takes the major responsibility for purchasing items for market stalls. Importantly she conducts the long standing and well received craft activities at PA Nepal children's home. **They are a great team and NAFA is indebted to them.**

NAFA market stalls are a reliable fundraiser for NAFA, with over \$14,000 raised in 2018. It is great credit to those involved in purchasing the items, finding new markets, organising and helping at the market stalls. Thanks goes to **Debbie Leigh, Deborah Setterlund, Wendy Eastwell, Brenda Hazelwood, Eloise Cheyne, Brenda Hazelwood, Jo Bicknell, Betty Harris, Gabe Romaguera, Megan Richardson, Margaret Hounslow, Di Seaniger, Cathy Searles, Teresa Buisman, Lisa Whitred and others who help on the stalls and with general fundraising.** A particular thanks to Debbie who coordinates the large, two-day Fair-Trade Christmas market stall for NAFA while other executive officers are in Nepal.

The sale of “**tote bags**” is making a significant contribution to market stall income. Originally an initiative by Wendy and Deborah, the bags are made by women in the hilly region of Dhading district, with the women paid a ‘fair trade’ wage for each bag made. I would like to also thank **Wendy Eastwell** for her partnership with Deb regarding women’s development issues in Tawal, for her longstanding efforts in raising funds for the Butterfly Foundation child care centres, and for her substantive contribution to the committee’s decision-making processes.

The other main fundraising activity of the year was conducted by **Rick Parkes**, a valued NAFA committee member who, at the young age of 74, **raised \$7,400 for NAFA in a crowd funding campaign connected to his 840 km over 38-day Camino walk in Spain.** Good on you Rick.

Other NAFA management committee members help with NAFA’s main fundraising event and with other important management and administrative tasks. I would like to again this year make particular mention of **Peter Brockett and Stewart Jones** for their expertise, advice and good cheer in their support of NAFA efforts in Nepal, as well as undertaking important **tasks associated with NAFA’s main fundraising event, the Nepalese New Year’s fundraising dinner.** Finally, I would like to thank **Betty Harris** for her contribution to NAFA’s management committee processes.

The Committee is blessed to be supported by a **large number of volunteers** who help with these events. These include the distinguished “**Red Shirts**” who again ensured another successful annual NAFA fundraising dinner in May. As has been the case over a number of years, **Backtrack** again provided great support to NAFA during the year, including printing and photocopying as well as selling tickets for the dinner.

In Nepal, our Project Coordinators volunteer their time to help their communities. It was another busy and challenging year for them: **Phurba Sherpa** for the Solu Khumbu/Okhaldunga/Dolakha districts; **Chandra Tamang and Kanchha Tamang** for NAFA supported villages in the Dhading district; **Surendra Prajjapati** in Thimi; and **Govinda Pahari** in Pokhara. Thanks also to **Pratika Shakya** and **Uttam Shrestha** for providing administrative and IT support to NAFA from the Joy office.

**Bijaya and Binu Rajbhandari** took on the volunteer positions of Nepal-based *Project Coordinator* and *Project Champion* in 2017 and continued to make play significant supporting roles in 2018. Along with NAFA supporters **David and Ann Brown**, Bijaya and Binu joined us for the April 2018 visit to Tawal and played an important support role throughout the year, providing advice on a range of issues that arose during the year. Binu also provided much appreciated mentoring support to Tawal FEAT students studying in Kathmandu.

Finally, I would also like to particularly thank **Deborah** for all she does for NAFA, including the support she provides to me in my role as President. Deborah is NAFA’s very competent **Research and Evaluation Officer.** She is particularly passionate about helping remote women have a stronger voice in their communities and improve their health, education and economic well-being. Her vision has led to local women developing their tailoring, animal rearing and agricultural skills, improving their family incomes as a result. This passion is making a real difference to very appreciative women in several villages in the Hilly Region of the Dhading district.

I have been President of NAFA for **twelve years** now. As I indicated previously, I would love for someone to come along and offer to take on a position that has given me so much satisfaction over so many years. I fully support the “succession planning and sustainability” process and will be thrilled to support someone else in the position hopefully in the next few years.

In the meantime, it is time to celebrate the completion of a very ambitious rebuild program made after the 2015 earthquakes. It took a lot of courage and trust to make those commitments and a huge amount of determination, effort and generosity to achieve them. Thank you everyone on behalf of so many very grateful Nepalese villagers who have benefited from our collective efforts and their hard work on the ground.

I look forward to NAFA's **30<sup>th</sup> year of operation in 2019.**

Rod Setterlund OAM  
President