

Nepal Australia Friendship Association Qld (NAFA)
President's Report for 2019
Submitted to the AGM 8 September 2020

The Big Picture:

NAFA celebrated its 30th anniversary at its annual fundraising dinner in on 25 May 2019. A "30 highlights in 30 years" newsletter was circulated to members and supporters to mark the milestone. Since inception, NAFA has allocated **over \$2.4 million to non-earthquake related projects in fourteen districts**. Projects include water infrastructure, education, health, childcare, disability, micro-hydroelectricity, improved cooking stoves, women's skill development, agricultural and economic development.

NAFA's response to the **devastating earthquakes in 2015** was also significant. Our initial allocations totalling **\$95,590** provided medical supplies, roofing tin, rice and tents for earthquake victims. Since that initial response NAFA has allocated over **\$820,000 towards earthquake resistant construction training** for local community builders, the **rebuild of 8 remote village schools** (including toilets where required) in five districts of Nepal. In 2019 NAFA rebuilt **a remote health centre**. This was all made possible by the continued generosity of NAFA supporters and our guarantee that 100% of donations go directly to Nepal.

Apart from our earthquake rebuilds, NAFA allocations in 2019 spanned the priorities of **education, health, childcare and rural economic (agricultural) development**. We have **added disability as a priority area** in our ongoing program portfolio through the funding of **Sungava Home that supports young women with an intellectual disability**. Another "big picture" project was the funding of a **three-year Growth and Sustainability project for the Pasang Chowk Agricultural Cooperative**. All NAFA projects are locally managed and senior executive officers travel to Nepal each year at their own expense to ensure funds are used in accordance with their intended purpose.

NAFA project highlights in 2019:

- **\$61,627** allocated to earthquake rebuild/repair projects in two remote villages, bringing the total to nearly \$820,000, after \$95,900 was allocated in 2015 as an initial response (e.g. roofing tin and rice).
- **\$18,400** allocated to education sponsorship for 38 school children at VSN Thimi.
- **\$36,420** allocated to Further Education and Training (FEAT) sponsorships for a total of 34 students: VSN Thimi (19), Tawal (11) and PA Nepal (4) students for college or Bachelor level study.
- **\$25,285** allocated to 5 ongoing and one-off health projects, including salaries for two health workers in a remote health centre, support for two primary hearing care programs, funding for a remote screening and cataract eye clinic and funding for a remote dental camp.
- **\$4,440** allocated to a newly funded home for young women with an intellectual disability.
- **\$57,438** allocated to ongoing and one-off education and child care projects, including: four teacher salaries in two remote villages; funds to undertake the assessment of needs for a teacher training program for six remote villages; establishment of libraries in four remote village schools; a gabion and boundary wall for two remote village schools; and operational support for three child care centres for poor families.
- **\$12,667** allocated to a remote village agricultural cooperative *Growth and Sustainability* project; and
- **\$17,600** allocated to two initiatives supporting women and lower caste families in a remote village.

A closer look at NAFA's ongoing programs in Nepal

Education: Child sponsorship, FEAT and teacher salaries

NAFA has one child sponsorship program at **Vinayak Shiksha Niketan (VSN) School** in Thimi, with **thirty-eight (38) children sponsored in 2019** for education to Grade 12. This program is now capped with a sunset clause in the year 2022 due to the administrative load, the multi-year impact on NAFA's financial commitments and ageing of NAFA committee members.

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 Bachelor level 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.

A total of **34 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**.

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.

NAFA also funded several one-off education projects. **Libraries** were established or re-established in four Dhading district schools located in the remote villages of **Kutal, Ladap, Tawal and Richet**. A **gabion wall** was constructed at a school in the remote village of **Kichet** in the Dhading district to protect classrooms rebuilt after the 2015 earthquake. A **boundary wall** was also constructed in the remote village school at **Koplu** in the Solo Khumbu district. The **assessment stage of a teacher training program** was **undertaken in six schools** located in the Dhading district: Kutal, Tawal, Tawal Besi, Dusheni, Ladap and Richet. Finally, NAFA funded the **repair of a roof** damaged by high winds in the village school at **Patle** in the Okhaldhunga district.

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 2015 earthquake that crèche was relocated to an abandoned primary school and continues to operate well from that location.

Health

Since co-funding (with AusAid) the construction of the **health centre** in 2000, NAFA continues to subsidise the salaries of **two 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. In 2019 the **health centre was rebuilt** on land away from the landslide prone area where it was previously located.

Since 2010, NAFA has been a proud supporter of **Himalayan Health & Hearing (HH&H)**, which continues to be managed by the dedicated volunteer work and financial generosity of **Lew Tuck**. Lew works 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 February 2019 NAFA funded the **third 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 from **Kantipur Dental College Teaching Hospital and Research Center**. A total of **265 villagers attended the camp**. Apart from the dental check-up and treatment, an oral hygiene instruction and awareness program was carried out among the villagers and students of Grades 1 - 4. Audio-visual aids like PowerPoint presentations, models and charts were used. A survey of children provided evidence that the school tooth-brushing program is achieving its aims. 60% of the children surveyed had knowledge on sugar causing tooth decay and 97% of the children brushed their teeth either twice (43%) or once (54%) a day. General health problems presented to the General Practitioner who accompanied the dentists at the camp included headache, fever, abdominal discomforts, skin rashes, joint pain and ear infections.

Since its inception, NAFA has supported Tilganga's **eye screening and cataract surgery remote clinics**. In January 2019, NAFA and Joy Foundation Nepal co-sponsored an eye clinic in the Gorkha district. At the clinic **116 cataract surgeries** were successfully performed.

Disability

Following a visit to **Sungava Home** in Kathmandu, NAFA provided funding for some educational materials and transport costs for the home that provides day care and vocational training to twenty-two **young women with an intellectual disability**. An **MOU** with Sungava was subsequently signed for the **three-year period 2020-2022**. A second allocation was then made in June 2019 to enable the home to pay the salaries of two carers and a cleaner/helper.

Agricultural development

Following support to re-establish the Pasang Chowk **Agricultural Cooperative** following the Gorkha earthquake in 2015, the Cooperative **commenced a three-year Growth and Sustainability project** on 1 May 2019. Funding for this important initiative for farmers in four villages was provided by the English Family Foundation and NAFA. The project is being led by Kanchha Tamang, who is taking time off his position at the school as Social Studies teacher. Kanchha has identified the following aims of the proposed three years project:

1. Maximise number of families in the Co-operative.
2. Increase the amount of collective savings in the Co-operative Savings Bank.
3. Identify new markets for products from the area and coordinate sale market goods outside the community to maximise the selling price and reduce or eliminate the cost of brokers/agents.
4. Identify and arrange other areas of training that would be most useful for Co-operative members to increase market opportunities or improve productivity.
5. Prepare a longer-term plan to ensure sustainability of the Co-operative for the next generation.

Buffalo Milk Project

Kanchha's first income-producing idea for **ten women** members of the Cooperative was to **establish a small buffalo milk industry**, starting with ten "developed" buffalos + one "he" buffalo. Following funding from the Goldberg Foundation, buffalos considered suitable for the local altitude and climatic conditions will be purchased from outside the area. As the buffalo herd grows it is expected that the dairy project will become self-sustaining as some buffalos are sold for meat while others are kept for milking. In time, as milk quantities increased, a machine could be purchased to make different milk products such as Paneer and Ghee. Under agreements with the Cooperative, the women selected by the Board to receive the buffalos will pay 50% of the cost of the buffalo via a loan from the Cooperative Savings Bank. Farmers would also be responsible for providing the buffalo shed.

Dalit Dynamo and Pig Project

The **dynamo and pig project will benefit twenty Dalit families** living in the village of Tawal. Dalit families are amongst the most disadvantaged in Nepal, traditionally experiencing significant discrimination. Dalit families moved into the Tawal area several generations ago to provide metal work services for villages in the area.

The initiative arose following meetings with the Dalit men and women. The project, funded with help from the Bangalow branch of the Country Women's Association, has two components:

- purchase of up to five labour-saving dynamos used by the Dalit work teams to heat iron to make cooking pots & tools to cut grass, dig holes etc.
- construction of up to twenty concrete-floored pig pens and purchase of up to twenty young "Sunggur" (black meat) or "Bungurr" (white meat) pigs for raising and selling of meat to local villagers. The families will contribute stone, aggregate and other local materials for the pig pens. An MOU will be written and signed by each Dalit family. The MOU will say that the project is self-sustaining, with the pig pen always having at least one baby pig in it so that no further support is required from outside donors.

Thank you for supporting NAFA

I would like to thank all NAFA supporters here in Australia as well as our partner beneficiaries in Nepal who have made NAFA achievements in 2019 possible.

In Australia, funding partners such as the English Family Foundation, the Goldberg Foundation and the Bangalow branch of the Country Women's Association have made generous donations to NAFA that has enabled important initiatives to be approved and implemented. The loyal financial support from the NAFA network have also ensured continuity of funding for NAFA's ten ongoing programs and those one-off projects that make a big difference to remote communities in Nepal. I would also like to thank members of the Nepalese community for again supporting NAFA so well this past year. This support included 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 **Nirmala Pandeya, Mohan Sharma and Mana Ranjit** 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. I would like to offer a special thanks to **Gabe Romaguera** who again professionally and cheerfully 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. NAFA is also fortunate to have a very competent Secretary, **Russ Waller**, who guided the Association in a review of our constitution in 2019.

Peter Brockett again played an important role in the position of Events Coordinator in the lead up to NAFA's annual fundraising dinner in May, as well as providing encouragement and light relief through his witticisms throughout the year. I would also like to acknowledge and express appreciation to **Paul Halman**, a newer committee member, for the contribution he made in the development of a risk management policy and matrix for NAFA when assessing applications for funding.

NAFA has a stable committee with members and regular meeting goers turning up monthly to offer their ideas and views as we get through busy agendas. In between meetings, several of them link us with potential donors, or raise funds themselves for NAFA projects. Individually and collectively they are a professional, supportive group with a great sense of fun. I would also like to thank each one of those committee members and regular meeting goers for making that effort: **Wendy Eastwell, Stewart Jones, Barry Bicknell, Debbie Leigh, Rick Parkes, Betty Harris, Annette Blackwell, and Karlheinz Meng.**

Bijaya Rajbhandari, Binu Rajbhandari and **David Brown** took on the volunteer positions of Nepal-based *Project Coordinator* and *Project Champions* in 2017 and have continued to play significant supporting roles since. Their interest, advice and support to NAFA is valued and appreciated.

NAFA market stalls are a reliable fundraiser for NAFA, with approximately \$4,000 raised in 2019. The sale of **"tote bags"** makes a significant contribution to market stall income, raising nearly \$3,000 in 2019. 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.

The success of the market stalls is a great credit to all 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, Megan Richardson, Gabe Romaguera, Margaret Hounslow and others who help on the stalls and with general fundraising.**

NAFA has had several supporters over the years who have stepped up and found innovative ways of raising funds. In 2019, this included participation in the **Brisbane Marathon**. I would like to thank **Gabe Romaguera, Rick Parkes and Rob Hoffman** for joining me on the run and helping NAFA **raise \$6,700** through sponsorships for the event. It also included the **sale of donated decorative items by John Elder and Gabe Romaguera**, raising approximately **\$2,500** for NAFA projects in the process.

The Committee is also blessed to be supported by many **volunteers** who help with our **annual fundraising dinner**. It is quite a logistical challenge on the night and the role of these volunteers in making the night a success is greatly appreciated.

In Nepal, our Project Coordinators volunteer their time to help their communities. It was another busy and challenging year for them: **Chandra Tamang and Kanchha Tamang** for NAFA supported villages in the Dhading district; **Surendra Prajjapati** in Thimi; and **Govinda Pahari** in Pokhara and **Phurba Sherpa** for the Solu Khumbu/Okhaldunga/Dolakha districts in eastern Nepal. Thanks also to **Ross and Brenda Hazelwood** for the support they provided in Nepal in 2019, particularly in relation to the child sponsorship and FEAT programs and to the purchase of goods for NAFA market stalls. Finally, in Nepal, a big thanks to **Pratika Shakya** for providing administrative support to NAFA from the Joy Foundation Nepal office in Kathmandu.

Finally, I would also like to again thank my wife **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 **thirteen years**. As I indicated previously, I would like to again reach out to encourage someone to come along and be part of a succession plan to take on the position that has given me so much satisfaction over these years. In the meantime, I look forward to continued involvement in a wonderful Association that has made a real difference to the lives of so many women, children, families and communities in Nepal.

Rod Setterlund

Rod Setterlund OAM
President