

**Nepal Australia Friendship Association Qld (NAFA)
President's Report for 2020
Submitted to the AGM 13 April 2021**

The Big Picture:

After celebrating our 30th anniversary at our annual fundraising dinner in May 2019, little did we know what lie ahead in 2020 – a year like no other, due to Covid-19: no annual fundraising dinner - only a couple of market stalls and except for a short visit by myself in late January, no visits to Nepal by NAFA executive officers. However, we survived and weren't impacted too much for four main reasons:

1. We were fortunate to have had already met 99% of our earthquake rebuilding commitments.
2. NAFA's loyal support base helped us meet our ongoing (annually funded) program commitments.
3. Our support base also responded to an appeal to help us meet the cost of providing Covid-19 related personal protective equipment to NAFA's funded partners in Nepal.
4. Donations from philanthropists again made all the difference in being able to fund some exciting new one-off initiatives.

Our priorities in 2020 included the provision of **personal protective equipment and supplies** such as infrared thermometers, hand sanitiser, protective clothing (including face masks, protective clothing, shields and disposable gloves), as well as additional allocations to Surendra in Thimi and Govinda in Pokhara to support their efforts to provide **additional Covid-19 related assistance** to the most disadvantaged in their respective communities. Another priority was to ensure we met our **ongoing education, childcare and health program commitments**. We were able to achieve both these priorities through the continued generosity of NAFA supporters and our guarantee that **100% of donations go directly to Nepal**.

In addition, **donations from three generous philanthropists, English Family Foundation, Goldberg Foundation and the Tucker Foundation**, enabled NAFA to support one of our ongoing programs, as well as to fund some exciting new one-off initiatives, including a permanent marketplace that will support economic development for farmers living in several remote villages still recovering from the devastating 2015 Gorkha earthquake.

NAFA project highlights in 2020:

- **\$13,092** allocated to purchase Covid-19 personal protective equipment, supplies and provide other support e.g. food packages for 6 NAFA funded partners, a school and local community in Thimi, people with a disability in Pokhara and an organisation supporting front-line health workers.
- **\$10,309** allocated to rebuild the toilet block for a remote village health post, bringing the total of NAFA's allocations to the rebuild response to the 2015 earthquakes to over \$830,000, after \$96,000 was allocated in 2015 as an initial response e.g. roofing tin and rice.
- **\$15,250** allocated to education sponsorship for 30 school children at VSN Thimi.
- **\$16,710** allocated to Further Education and Training (FEAT) sponsorships for a total of 20 students: VSN Thimi (11), Tawal (7) and PA Nepal (2) students for college or Bachelor level study.
- **\$23,899** allocated to 5 ongoing education and childcare programs and 1 one-off project, including: two teacher salaries in a remote village; support for another school in eastern Nepal; and operational support for three childcare centres for poor families; and wooden window shutters for a school in a remote village.
- **\$24,513** allocated to 4 ongoing and 2 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, funding for a remote dental camp and funding to repair water infrastructure in a remote village.
- **\$8,241** allocated to support the operation of a home for young women with an intellectual disability.
- **\$10,000** allocated to the second year of a three-year remote village agricultural cooperative *Growth and Sustainability* project.
- **\$40,771** to purchase land and build infrastructure for a permanent marketplace to service several remote villages.
- **\$10,279** allocated to an income earning initiative supporting women in a remote village.

A closer look at NAFA's ongoing (annually funded) programs

I have always been proud of the spread and depth of NAFA's ongoing programs. They cover the areas of education, childcare and health in both remote village and urban locations. This was particularly important in the Covid-19 affected year, as NAFA executive officers were not able to travel to Nepal to assess new one-off project proposals.

Education: child sponsorship, further education and training (FEAT) and teacher salaries

NAFA has had a child sponsorship program at **Vinayak Shiksha Niketan (VSN) School** in Thimi since 1995, with **30 children sponsored in 2020** for education to Grade 12. This program has been capped for a few years now, with no further students to be added and a sunset clause in the year 2025 to continue sponsorship of currently sponsored students to Grade 12. This sunset clause was introduced 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, which has been operating successfully since 2008, aims to partner with child sponsors and families to provide opportunities for disadvantaged young people to undertake vocational training, post Grade 10 (college years 11 and 12) education 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 have been in prison. Finally, students from the area school at Tawal are from poor subsistence farming backgrounds. A total of **20 students** were supported through the **FEAT program, studying architectural engineering, nursing, education, law, business studies, chartered accountancy and mechanics.**

NAFA has **reduced the number of sponsored teachers** at the school in **the remote village of Tawal** from **three to two** after the local community successfully lobbied the Nepal Government to secure an additional teacher quota in the area school that provides secondary school education to Grade 10 for students from 6 local villages. **NAFA also supports a school and after-school program in the remote village of Gamauli** in western Nepal. Funding supports the purchase of sports equipment, library books, other school materials and food purchased from the community and cooked by teachers, students and sometimes parents eaten at the after-school program on Fridays.

Childcare

NAFA continued its financial support to **two childcare centres** operated by the **Butterfly Foundation in Pokhara**. These centres support families who have moved from villages in search of casual day labour work, as well as other poor families in Pokhara. In the year that was Covid-19 affected, Butterfly Foundation provided general awareness raising of Covid-19 as well as practical assistance, including food aid packages, PPE, sanitizer, mask etc to the staff and children of Butterfly Foundation Nepal, as well as to the wider community with a focus on supporting people with a disability.

NAFA also continues to support the operation of a **childcare 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 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 both 2019 and 2020 NAFA has allocated funds to rebuild the **health centre** on land away from the landslide prone area where it was previously located. The rebuild has now been completed thanks to the generosity of so many NAFA supporters and a grant from the Goldberg Foundation.

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, an Otologist** with the **Nepalese Association of Hard of Hearing (NAHOH)**, which is also supported by NAFA to provide hearing care in outreach camps in the Kathmandu Valley and beyond in remote areas of Nepal.

In 2020, although Covid-19 restricted the activities that NAHOH could provide to the community, Keshab played an invaluable support role to NAFA sourcing and arranging the delivery of Covid-19 related personal protective equipment and supplies to NAHOH and other NAFA funded partners in Kathmandu, Thimi, Pokhara and the remote village of Tawal.

In February 2020, just before Covid-19 infections started to rise in Nepal, Keshab accompanied a dental team from Kantipur Dental Hospital to conduct a **four-day ear care camp**. Highlights included: **366 patients examined; 18 hearing aids fitted; 66 patients had compounded wax removed from their ear; and 6 had foreign bodies e.g. hay seeds, straw, stick, insects extracted from their ears**. Of the patients examined, 13 had perforated ear drums; 13 were experiencing age related hearing loss, 6 sensory neural hearing loss and 2 were experiencing eustachian tube dysfunction.

The dental camp was the fourth of **five annual oral and general health camps** for Tamang villages in the Ganga Jamuna Rural Municipality in the Dhading District. The camps were conducted by **four Dentists and two Dental Hygienists from Kantipur Dental College Teaching Hospital and Research Center**. **A total of 248 villagers were examined from four local villages**, including 54 children brought to the dental camp from the school at Ladap, 50 children from the school at Kutal and 101 children from the school at Dhuseni. 43 adults also attended the dental camp. Of those examined who needed treatment, **84 had extractions, 82 fillings and 70 scalings**. Oral health awareness demonstrations were provided to all those who attended.

Since its inception, NAFA has supported annual **Tilganga's eye screening and cataract surgery remote clinics**. In late January 2020 NAFA and Joy Foundation Nepal co-sponsored an eye clinic in the Hariharpurgahi rural municipality. 2,500 people attended the camp. **172 cataract surgeries** were successfully performed. **100 were given glasses**.

Finally, in the health area, NAFA funded the **repair of a concrete water tank servicing the village of Tawal Besi**, damaged by a landslide. The Nepalese consulate in Brisbane kindly provided a \$500 grant towards this project.

Disability

NAFA began supporting **Sungava Home** in Kathmandu in 2019. The home provides day care and vocational training to **22 young women with an intellectual disability**. An **MOU** with Sungava was signed for the **three-year period 2020-2022** and NAFA funds allocated in 2020 contributed towards the costs of staff (two carers and one cleaner/helper), transportation (two permanently booked taxis to bring clients to and from the home) and communication (internet and telephone). In Covid 2020 the home continued to support the young women by providing online classes and risking personal safety by visiting and providing support to the young women in their homes.

One-off projects focus on rural agricultural and economic development

The literature on community recovery after natural disasters emphasise the importance of local economic recovery. Two initiatives, funded by three philanthropic foundations (English Family Foundation, Goldberg Foundation and the Tucker Foundation) and generous NAFA donors, included the **establishment of a permanent marketplace** for a group of Tamang villages in the Dhading district and a **noodle-making initiative** targeting women who are members of the local agricultural cooperative. These infrastructure and income-earning projects arose out of a three-year Growth and Sustainability project co-funded by NAFA and the English Family Foundation. Its aim is to grow the Pasang Chowk Agricultural Cooperative established by local farmers in an area around the village of Tawal.

The **permanent marketplace proposal** included the **purchase of land**, flattening and installation of gabion boxes to strengthen foundation for structures to be built on the land, the **construction of shelters** for an estimated 25 stallholders to sell their produce, **construction of a male and female toilet and installation of a water tap**. Funds were also allocated to **construct a storeroom, office and small shop for the Cooperative**. The Cooperative will own and maintain the land and be responsible for managing the marketplace. Markets will be held every Saturday, providing an opportunity for local farmers and shops to barter or sell whatever surplus produce they have, for example, different fruits, vegetables (including potatoes from farmers in Ladap), fish from the river below the site and local chicken to other local farmers. Stall holders will pay rent to the Cooperative for the space they will hire. Produce will also be sold every day of the week from the Cooperative shop. The permanent marketplace provides invaluable infrastructure that supports the aims of growth and sustainability of the Cooperative.

The noodle-making initiative for women in the Cooperative, co-funded by NAFA and the Tucker Foundation, is also consistent with the aims of the Growth and Sustainability project. Women in the Cooperative have estimated that approximately 50% of families eat noodles, which are currently being purchased in packets from the outside market. **A noodle-making machine will be purchased and housed on land owned by the Cooperative for the permanent marketplace.** Women participating in the initiative will **make both wet and dry noodles locally.** Villagers will benefit by being able to access freshly made noodles (fresh and dry) at a lower price than they currently pay in the shop. Families would benefit as the noodles would be **made from wheat flour, without preservatives added,** including salt. The noodles will be **healthier than the packet noodles,** especially when eaten with egg and seasonal vegetables. **Fresh noodles will be sold daily** from the Cooperative shop to local villagers and to villagers in other villages in the area, especially on market day (Saturday).

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 2020 possible.

In Australia, funding partners such as the **English Family Foundation,** the **Goldburg Foundation** and the **Tucker Foundation** have made generous donations to NAFA that have 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 and other disadvantaged families and communities in Nepal.

2020 was a year like no other, with NAFA committee meetings having to be conducted by Zoom. I would like to thank all committee members and regular meeting attendees for their patience with the Zoom technology and the constraints of not having face to face monthly meetings. Although NAFA activities were affected by Covid-19 it was still a busy year for the **Treasurer, Secretary** and **Education Sponsorship** positions and I would like to especially thank **Gabe Romaguera, Russ Waller** and **Jo Bicknell** for your high degree of competence and ongoing commitment in performing the duties of those three positions wonderfully over the entire year.

But everyone plays a role on the committee, providing advice and raising funds, so thank you to **Nirmala Pandeya, Mohan Sharma, Mana Ranjit, Peter Brockett, Wendy Eastwell, Stewart Jones, Barry Bicknell, Debbie Leigh, Rick Parkes, Betty Harris, Annette Blackwell, Paul Halman, Bijaya and Binu Rajbhandari, David Brown** and **Karlheinz Meng** for your collective professionalism, support and good humour that keeps the management of NAFA activities ticking over and fine-tuned.

NAFA market stalls and the sale of "tote bags" are a reliable fundraiser for NAFA, with approximately \$3,600 raised in what was a very constraining covid year. Thank you to **Wendy Eastwell, Deborah Setterlund, Megan Richardson, Gabe Romaguera** and younger NAFA volunteers **Aisling Murphy** and **Heidi Setterlund** for continuing that important income stream in 2020.

In Nepal, our Project Coordinators volunteer their time to help their communities. It was an exceedingly difficult year for them, with rising infection rates, lost income from tourism and lockdowns that have affected the operation of services they provide to the community. **Chandra Tamang and Kanchha Tamang** for NAFA supported villages in the Dhading district; **Surendra Prajapati** in Thimi; and **Govinda Pahari** in Pokhara. I would like to **particularly thank Keshab Dangol** from the Nepalese Association of Hard of Hearing for the invaluable role he played in sourcing and arranging the delivery of Covid-19 related personal protective equipment and supplies for NAFA's funded partners in Nepal. Finally, in Nepal, a big thanks to **Razni Karki** for providing administrative support to NAFA from the Joy Foundation Nepal office in Kathmandu.

Finally, a big thank you to my wife **Deborah** for the role she plays as **Research and Evaluation Officer** on the Committee and for her passionate support for women and the local Tamang community in the Tawal area. In 2020, she continued to write an oral history of the area, as requested by community elders, for three publications – targeting adults, teenagers and children. She has also been collecting cans and bottles with the aim of helping to partner with the Nepal Government, local Buddhist families in the area and with like-minded friends to rebuild the local monastery/community centre at Tawal irreparably damaged by the 2015 Gorkha earthquake. Deb and I have put approximately 40,000 (\$4,000) cans and bottles down the conveyor belts at the recycle depot thus far and we can only hope that the Nepal Government fulfills its commitment to contribute 70% of the rebuild from funds donated to it after the earthquake.

I have been President of NAFA for **fourteen years** and look forward to continued involvement in a wonderful Association that continues to make a real difference to the lives of so many women, children, families and communities in Nepal.

Rod Setterlund

Rod Setterlund OAM
President