

**Nepal Australia Friendship Association Qld (NAFA)**  
**President's Report for 2023**  
**Submitted to the AGM 7 May 2024**

**The Big Picture:**

While NAFA is no longer being directly affected by COVID, our new normal is not the same as it used to be - again, no annual fundraising dinner and few market stalls. At least I was able to visit our projects in March. As was the case in the COVID years, NAFA continued to support our **core, annually funded programs** and allocate funds for a range of significant and impactful **one-off projects**. We were able to achieve this through the generosity of our **network of loyal supporters and like-minded philanthropists, including the Hare Family, the Goldberg Foundation, and the English Family Foundation**. In doing so, NAFA continues to make good on our guarantee that **100% of donations go directly to Nepal**.

**NAFA project highlights in 2023**

- **\$108,516** allocated to **five ongoing education and childcare programs** and **six one-off projects**: Ongoing program support included a teacher salary in Tawal; support for a primary school in the village of Gamauli in western Nepal; and operational support for childcare centres for poor families in Thimi and Pokhara. Allocations for one-off projects included funding for the first six months of a three-year Model Schools Program aimed at transforming educational outcomes in eight remote schools in the Ganga Jamuna Rural Municipality (Dhading district), construction of two classrooms, repair/replacement of computers and replacement of school desks for student attending Grades 6-10 in Tawal, a compound wall to protect the safety of children attending Richet primary school, and construction of a storeroom/kitchen in the primary school in Latab.
- **\$5,400** allocated to education sponsorship for **9** school children at Vinayak Shiksha Niketan (VSN) school in Thimi.
- **\$9,284** allocated to Further Education and Training (FEAT) sponsorships for a total of **eight students**: VSN Thimi (2) and Tawal (6) for vocational (Montessori training), college or Bachelor level study.
- **\$17,368** allocated to four ongoing health programs: salaries for two health workers in a remote health centre; support for a remote eye screening and cataract surgery eye clinic; and support for two primary hearing care programs.
- **\$7,346** allocated to ongoing operational support for a home providing respite care and vocational training for young women with an intellectual disability and their families.
- **\$18,071** allocated to the second year of a three-year remote village agricultural cooperative *Growth and Sustainability* project, and three one-off projects: a coffee bean moisture and soil testing equipment, two diesel-driven mini-tractors/ploughs and the purchase of 4,000 avocado plants to kick-start the avocado industry for 200+ members of an agricultural cooperative.
- **\$22,748** was allocated in response to the Jajarkot Earthquake in western Nepal to provide an initial disaster relief package of support to 450 pregnant women, nursing mothers and their families affected by the earthquake.
- **\$4,327** for a Women's Empowerment Program in the Dailekh District, western Nepal.
- **\$4,321** allocated to install safety railings around a multi-use community facility and to support a range of education, health and other community activities organised by a team of business students from Kathmandu University on student placement.



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

I continue to be proud of the spread and depth of NAFA's ongoing programs. They cover the areas of education, childcare, health and disability in both remote village and urban locations.

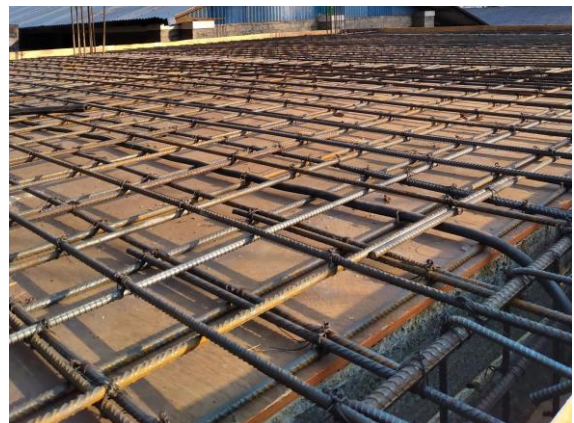
#### Education: child sponsorship, further education and training (FEAT) and teacher salaries

In 2023, NAFA allocated funds to one-off projects benefiting several remote village schools. NAFA continues to recognise that **quality education requires good physical structures** (classrooms), school resources such as computers, library books and science equipment and highly motivated, qualified, and trained teachers. Generous philanthropic donations from these two foundations were used to **construct a compound wall** in front of one school, **three new classrooms in two schools, repair or purchase of 20 laptops/desktop computers and 200 student-friendly desks** for older students to increase the physical infrastructure needed to provide quality education.

#### **Welding iron fence on top of compound wall at Richet primary school**



#### **Constructing and ready to lay slab on roof of two new classrooms for Tawal secondary school**



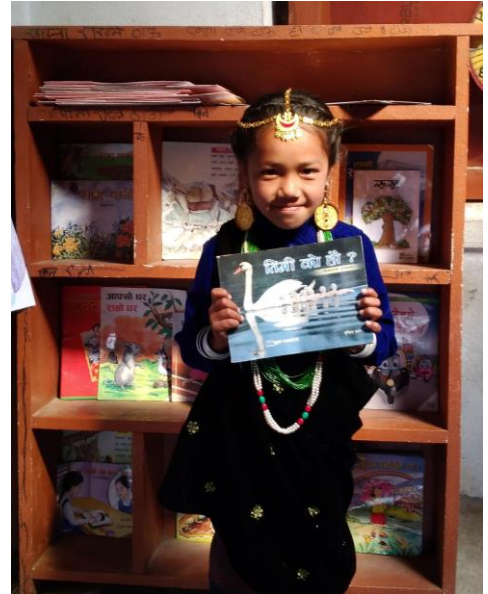
NAFA signed an MOU with Nepal Government accredited **Rural Education and Environment Development (REED) Centre** and allocated funds towards the first six months of a three-year **Model Schools Program** in eight targeted schools in the Ganga Jamuna Rural Municipality, Dhading district. (Tawal, Tawal Besi, Latab, Duchene, Kutal, Salleri, Richet and Kichet). The program has two objectives aimed at transforming the quality of education in the eight schools:

1. Improving the quality of education in 8 local schools, with an emphasis on encouraging more child-friendly classrooms and teaching styles; and
2. Supporting schools through a transition to English Medium Instruction (EMI), beginning with Grade 1 when the new school year starts in May 2024.

**Child-friendly classroom in Tawal Besi primary school**



**Student in traditional dress in front of classroom library shelving at Latab**



**Nursery students writing exams in Tawal**



**A student happy to be distracted from his exam**



NAFA has had a child sponsorship program at **Vinayak Shiksha Niketan (VSN) School** in Thimi since 1995, with **9 children sponsored in 2023** for education to Grade 12. This program has been capped for a few years now. 2025 will be the final year allocations will be made for this program.



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. Students from the hub school at Tawal are from poor subsistence farming backgrounds. **Six students (two ex-VSN students, two ex-Tawal students and two Nursery grade teachers in the villages of Latab and Richet undertaking Montessori training)** were supported through the **FEAT program in 2023, with this program also affected by the 2025 sunset clause.**

NAFA has gone from sponsoring three teachers to **one teacher** at Tawal secondary school after the Nepal government allocated additional teacher quotas to the school, following continued advocacy by local leaders and good student numbers and outcomes. **NAFA also supports a school in the remote village of Gamauli** in an area of high disadvantage in western Nepal. The school, **with the support of Education Support Centre (ECC) in Kathmandu, is in its first year of transitioning to become a "model school".**

#### Childcare

NAFA continued its financial support to a **childcare crèche for carpet factory and other low-income families in Thimi**. Since the 2015 earthquake that crèche was relocated to an abandoned primary school and continues to operate well from that location. In 2023, NAFA again allocated operational funds for salaries and child consumables etc. It also allocated additional funds to repair the ceiling in the creche and install two cooling fans.

NAFA also provides operational support to the **Butterfly childcare centre in Pokhara**, which now primarily supports low-caste (Hindu) Dalit families.

#### **Learning English through song**



## Health

Since its inception, NAFA has supported an annual remote eye screening and cataract surgery clinic conducted by the Tilganga Eye Hospital. In February 2023, NAFA co-funded, with Joy Foundation Nepal, an Outreach Micro Surgical Eye Clinic held in the village of Khurkot, Golanjor Rural Municipality, Sindhuli district in western Nepal. **A team of 15 dedicated doctors, paramedics and volunteers screened 757 patients and performed 110 surgeries.** One senior surgeon participated in the procedure alongside more than six paramedics, including biomedical personnel from Tilganga, the municipality's health worker and six volunteers from Sunkoshi Community Hospital.

Annual,  
NAFA/Joy co-  
funded cataract  
surgery eye  
camps  
conducted by  
Tilganga Eye



Since co-funding (with AusAid) the construction of the Tawal **health clinic** 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**. The health clinic played an important role in supporting the health care of local villagers during the COVID pandemic. The health clinic is now registered as a government centre for baby immunisations, with a doctor and registered government nurse coming a day a month to the health clinic from the government health post. Pregnant mothers also have their vaccinations at the health clinic, as well as Vitamin A and de-worming for children.

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### Monthly vaccination clinic at Tawal health centre



Since 2010, NAFA has been a proud supporter of **Himalayan Health & Hearing (HH&H)**, which continues to be financed, led and supported by a dedicated Australian volunteer work of a team comprising Lew Tuck, Sue Flanagan and Jodie Stewart. The team works in partnership with **Keshab Dangol, an Otologist** with the **Nepalese Association of Hard of Hearing (NAHOH)**. NAHOH is also supported separately by NAFA to provide hearing care out of an office in Kirtipur, and in outreach camps in the Kathmandu Valley and in remote areas of Nepal.

### Keshab testing hearing of a child at a deaf school



### And at a childcare centre



### Disability

NAFA began supporting **Sungava Home** in Kathmandu in 2019, The home provides day care and vocational training to **20 young women with an intellectual disability**. An **MOU** with Sungava was signed for the **three-year period 2020-2022** and NAFA extended the MOU in November 2022 for another three years. Funds allocated by NAFA contribute towards the costs of staff (carers and vocational trainers) and taxi transportation, though during 2023, NAFA partnered with several Nepalese Canadian charities to raise funds to purchase an e-van in early 2024.

### Sungava thanks e-van donors through art



### Rod cuts ribbon at e-van handover ceremony



Government engineers declared Sungava Home unfit for purpose after large cracks appeared in the walls arising from the 2015 earthquake. The Rural Municipality then allocated funds to demolish the old home and begin the construction of a replacement home in 2024.

**Agricultural development**

In 2023, the English Family Foundation and NAFA co-funded the second year of a three-year extension of a *Growth and Sustainability* project aimed at growing the Pasang Chowk Agricultural Cooperative established by local farmers in an area around the village of Tawal. Local farmers have begun to diversify their crops, with coffee now being their best income-earner. In 2023, NAFA funds were used to purchase coffee bean moisture and soil testing equipment for the Cooperative.

Avocado plants grown amongst coffee plants provides much needed shade and a second cash crop. In 2023 NAFA funds were allocated to kick-start local avocado production in the Cooperative's catchment area. Funds were also used to trial diesel-driven ploughs that provides significant productivity advantages over traditional buffalo-driven wooden ploughs, ploughing farmer terraces in half the time.

**Coffee harvesting**



**Balsing's roasted coffee**



**Turmeric sold at Coop shop**



**Diesel-driven mini-tractor/plough double the productivity of traditional buffalo-driven wooden ploughs**



Disaster-relief response to the Jajarkot earthquake

On 3 November 2024, a 6.4 magnitude earthquake struck the Jajarkot district, killing over 150 villagers and destroying homes and other community infrastructure across 45 districts in western Nepal. With generous support from the loyal NAFA donor network, NAFA responded to an application from Chay Ya, Nepal via a connection with UNICEF. Two funding allocations provided relief support e.g. warm shawls, nutritious food, pressure cooker, mattress and a thermos bottle for pregnant women and mothers with newborn babies residing in areas affected by Jajarkot earthquake.

**Distribution of 495 disaster relief packages to pregnant women and mothers with new born babies**



Women's Enabling Program

In April 2023, NAFA approved a three-year Women's Enabling Program, auspiced by the Education Concern Centre (ECC) in Kathmandu and supporting mainly women from the Dalit caste and Thakuri ethnic group in Satkhamba and Ratamate villages, Dailekh district of western Nepal. Proposed activities in the first phase of the Program include: income generation e.g. sewing, herb/spice production (turmeric powder, garlic, potato) and market gardening; women's awareness about health, sanitation, nutrition, legal provision, citizenship etc; and basic literacy and technology skills.

**Women participating in Womens Enabling Program**



**Women learning to sew**





### Shirts and pants sewn by local women



#### Thank you for supporting NAFA

I would like to thank all NAFA supporters, as well as our funded beneficiaries in Nepal who have made NAFA achievements in 2023 possible.

Three philanthropists – the **Hare Family, Goldberg Foundation and the English Family Foundation** again made generous donations to NAFA in 2023. NAFA also encourages co-funding partnerships and in 2023, **Nepaleducaid, Austria and Smile Back to Me, Spain** again partnered with NAFA as they have done for many years now. These philanthropic donations and co-funding partnerships were used to fund a number of education, health and agricultural development projects such as the construction of school classrooms, a transformative model schools project benefiting eight village schools, contributing towards the purchase of an e-van for a home supporting young women with an intellectual disability, and a project aimed at accelerating the growth and sustainability of an agricultural cooperative.

The loyal financial support from the NAFA network have also ensured continuity of funding for NAFA's **ten ongoing programs and several one-off projects** that make a big difference to remote and other disadvantaged families and communities in Nepal.

Although NAFA fundraising activities were again restricted as our committee ages, it was still a busy year for the **Treasurer, Secretary and Education Sponsorship** positions and I would like to again thank Gabe Romaguera, Russ Waller and Jo Bicknell for your high level of competence and ongoing commitment in performing the duties of those three critical positions. Russ has advised that he will be away from Brisbane for extended times in the second half of 2024, so needs help with the Secretarial duties that includes managing our membership database and our website. **Russ has been a fantastic Secretary since 2017** and we hope someone will come forward and share the position this coming year so that he can enjoy his travel, yet stay involved in NAFA as Secretary when back in Brisbane.

However, everyone plays a role on the committee, providing advice and raising funds, so thank you to **Nirmala Pandeya, Mohan Sharma, Mana Ranjit, Wendy Eastwell, Stewart Jones, Rick Parkes, Betty Harris, Paul Halman, Bijaya and Binu Rajbhandari and David Brown** for your collective professionalism, wisdom, support and good humour that keeps the management of NAFA activities ticking over and fine-tuned. Thanks also to Karlheinz Meng, Barry Bicknell and Peter Brockett, who regularly join our monthly zoom meetings, providing ongoing advice and support to the NAFA committee.

In Nepal, our network of change agents and administrators connect NAFA with their respective communities, provide advice, identify needs, propose/negotiate solutions, and coordinate implementation of NAFA's ongoing programs and one-off projects. It has been a difficult time in recent years, with COVID, lost income from tourism, personal and family health concerns affecting their lives.

NAFA is honoured to work alongside these partners in development, including **Kanchha Tamang** for projects in the Tawal area; **Surendra Prajapati** for the child sponsorship, FEAT and child care programs in Thimi; **Govinda Pahari** for the child care centre in Pokhara; **Keshab Dangol** for the hearing assessment and treatment clinic in Kirtipur, **Shovana Rai** for Sungava Home in Swayambhu (Kathmandu), and **Min Shahi** for the school and Women's Empowerment Project in Gamauli. Finally, a continuing big thanks to **Rasmita Tandukar** for providing administrative support to NAFA from the Joy Foundation Nepal office in Kathmandu.

It is most important that I again thank my wife **Deborah** for her passionate and enduring support for NAFA and all it does, including being **Research and Evaluation Officer**, running **market stalls** with Wendy, and **collecting 10 cent bottles and cans**. She remains so patient watching me sit on the computer, prepare for our visits to Nepal and then write one report after another to our committee and NAFA donors.

This past year has been a frustrating one for Deb. After being asked several years ago by elders in Tawal to write a book on their oral history, she has painstakingly did everything over several years of interviewing, researching, and writing to ensure it met the academic and community standards that she sets for herself on such tasks. Deb knew that "**Where the Tiger Lives**" needed to be translated into Nepali so it could be easily read by local villagers and others interested in the history of one of the largest ethnic groups in Nepal. Securing a high standard of translation has proven very challenging in Nepal. However, help from Keshab Sharma in Brisbane has given us renewed confidence that the book will be launched in late 2024 when Deb and I next visit Nepal. With three elected Mayors of Rural Municipalities in the Dhading district endorsing the book, I am sure "Where the Tiger Lives" will make a significant contribution to the literature available on what had to date been only an oral history of the Tamang people in the Tawal area.

I have been President of NAFA for **seventeen years and remain hopeful that someone will come along and offer to take** the President's baton from me and lead what really is such a wonderful management committee and development aid organisation. In the meantime, I will continue to contribute as best I can to an 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

