

Nepal Australia Friendship Association Qld (NAFA)
President's Report for 2024
Submitted to the AGM 20 May 2025

The Big Picture:

With continued support from our network of loyal donors, NAFA had another impactful year in 2024, supporting core, annually funded **education, health and disability** programs and one-off projects that make a real difference to disadvantaged individuals, families and communities in Nepal.

Donations totalling over \$170,000 were received from **three** like-minded **philanthropists** and a **network of loyal NAFA supporters**. NAFA donors are undoubtedly attracted by the spread and depth of **NAFA's program/project portfolio**, the **tax deductibility** of donations to NAFA and our **guarantee that 100% of donations go directly to Nepal**. That guarantee can be provided as we have no paid staff or office and executive officers visit Nepal, at their own expense, once or twice a year to assess funding applications, monitor project implementation and evaluate outcomes achieved.

NAFA project highlights in 2024

- **\$89,182** allocated to **six ongoing education and childcare programs** and **seven one-off projects**:
Ongoing programs supported include **teacher salary support** in two villages, **extra tuition** in a rural secondary school in the lead up to national Grade 10 exams; **support for a primary school in western Nepal**; and operational **support for childcare creches** for poor families in **Thimi and Pokhara**.
One-off projects include funding for the second year of a three-year **Model Schools Project**, funds to construct **two classrooms**, installing a **railing** along a school compound wall and **school water taps** at a village primary school.
- **\$3,600** allocated to **education sponsorship** for **6** school children at Vinayak Shiksha Niketan (**VSN**) school in Thimi.
- **\$4,563** allocated to **Further Education and Training (FEAT) sponsorships** for a total of **four students who had completed Grade 10 in Tawal Secondary School and were enrolled in Grades 11 and 12 study**.
- **\$19,923** 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 camp** conducted by Tilganga Eye Centre; and support for **two primary hearing care programs**.
- **\$24,750** allocated to ongoing operational support for a home providing respite care and vocational training for young women with an intellectual disability and their families, and towards the purchase and running costs of an e-van for that service.
- **\$18,403** allocated to the third year of the **Pasang Chowk Agricultural Cooperative Growth and Sustainability project**, and two one-off projects: the purchase of a safe for the Cooperative Savings Bank, and the purchase of 10 coffee pulping machines, 13 small electric motors, and 100 sets of industrial pruning and cutting scissors.
- **\$941** was added to the initial disaster relief package of nearly \$23,000 to support pregnant women, nursing mothers and their families affected by the Jajarkot earthquake in western Nepal.
- **\$4,053** for a Women's Empowerment Project in the Dailekh District, western Nepal.
- **\$7,526** towards the construction of a multi-use community facility in the village of Tawal, Dhading district.
- **\$17,647** towards the first stage in implementing a Community Forest Management Plan for three "Community Forests".

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A closer look at NAFA's ongoing (annually funded) programs and one-off projects

NAFA's program/project portfolio covers the areas of education, childcare, health, disability and agricultural development in both village and urban locations.

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

Teacher training

NAFA continues to recognise that **quality education requires good physical infrastructure**. However, teaching style and resources are just as important. In Nepal, the teaching style has traditionally been teacher-directed, with little input from students. Few resources, including early childhood development (ECD) resources are seen in classrooms due to lack of government funding.

Another structural issue has been the city-rural divide in English proficiency amongst both teachers and students. There are many private schools in the city that use English medium instruction (EMI) in the classroom, teaching all subjects, except Nepali and Social Studies, in English. Students from the rural areas are very disadvantaged when they come to the city from their village for post-secondary school education. This context was the backdrop for NAFA being asked by Tawal area village leaders to partner with an education trainer in Kathmandu to develop and implement the *Gangajamuna Model Schools Project*.

A generous philanthropic donation from the Goldberg Foundation supported the second year of a three-year **Model Schools Project**, benefitting **eight (8) schools** in the Ganga Jamuna Rural Municipality, Dhading district. The Project, which is managed by NAFA through an MOU with the Nepal Government accredited **Rural Education and Environment Development (REED) Centre** has two objectives aimed at transforming the quality of education:

1. Improving the quality of education, with an emphasis on encouraging child-friendly classrooms and teaching styles; and
2. Supporting schools through a transition to English Medium Instruction (EMI), beginning with Grade 1 in Year 1 of the Project and progressing to the next year thereafter.

Child-friendly classroom



Young students write the alphabet and numbers in English



Teachers attending teacher training



Year 2 (2024-25), of the Model Schools Project, which will be the focus of next year's President's Report, will focus on three priorities:

1. Online English language training for approximately 30 teachers
2. School Management/Child Club training
3. English Medium Instruction (EMI) training

Sponsorship of teacher salaries and support for a school in western Nepal

NAFA has gone from sponsoring three teachers to **one teacher at Tawal secondary school** and a **contribution towards a teacher's salary in the primary school at Latab**. This reduction has occurred 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**, has **successfully completed its first year of transitioning to become a "model community school"**.

**Open day at
Sapana Community School**



Gamauli School library



Nutritious lunch at school



Child sponsorship, further education and training (FEAT)

NAFA has had a **child sponsorship program** at **Vinayak Shiksha Niketan (VSN) School** in Thimi since 1995. This program has been capped for a few years now and 2025 will be the final year that allocations will be made to support students attain Grade 12. A total of four students were sponsored in 2024.

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. The program at VSN Thimi has ended and the program that supported four students from the hub school at Tawal in 2024 will end in 2025. A program-end summary evaluation will be undertaken in 2025, which will involve interviewing a good cross-section of students that were supported in both Thimi and Tawal.

Jo and Rod interview former NAFA sponsored FEAT students at VSN
as part of evaluating the outcomes of the FEAT program



Education infrastructure and equipment

In 2024, NAFA allocated funds to one-off projects benefiting several remote village schools. Generous donations from two philanthropic foundations, another like-minded funding partner based in Austria and other NAFA supporters were allocated to **construct two large classrooms in Tawal secondary school, install a safety railing along a compound wall that leads up to Richet primary school, and a set of water taps suitable for different ages of students, and purchase computers for a school in the village of Gamauli, Dailekh district, in western Nepal,**

Four-classroom block at Tawal Secondary school nears completion



Compound wall and railing provides safety at Richet Primary School



New water taps at Richet for students of different ages



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 2024, NAFA again allocated operational funds for salaries and child consumables. It also allocated additional funds to install roofing over the creche's playground equipment to protect children from the sun and rain.

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

Health

Since its inception, NAFA has supported an annual remote eye screening and cataract surgery clinic conducted by the Tilganga Eye Hospital. In February 2024, NAFA co-funded, with Joy Foundation Nepal, **an outreach micro surgical eye clinics in two locations (Khurkot and Philkel)** from 3-4 February and 6-7 February 2024 respectively. A total of 2,321 patients were screened and 152 cataract surgeries performed. Two surgeons participated in the surgery, along with over 8 paramedics and 10 volunteers. The Tilganga report on the two clinics indicated that “before surgery 32% of patients examined were functionally blind and 45% patients were clinically blind. When discharged the day after surgery, 77% patients have normal vision.”

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



Tawal health post

Since co-funding (with AusAid) the construction of the Tawal **health post** 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 post played an important role in supporting the health care of local villagers following the devastating 2015 Gorkha earthquake and during the COVID pandemic. The health post is now registered as a government centre for pregnant mothers and infant immunisations, as well as Vitamin A and de-worming for children.

Himalayan Health & Hearing and the Nepal Association of Hard of Hearing

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 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.

Disability

Sungava Home supporting young women with an intellectual disability

NAFA began supporting **Sungava** in Kathmandu in 2019. At the time, a Nepal Government engineer had just declared the Home unfit for purpose after large cracks appeared in the walls arising from the 2015 earthquake. The Rural Municipality then allocated 150 lakhs (\$176,500) to demolish the old home and begin construction of a new three-story building in 2024.

Sungava provides day care and vocational training to **20 young women with an intellectual disability** and individual and family support, aimed at preventing the young women from being admitted to government-run residential care. The three government-run homes in Nepal reputedly provide a low standard of care. There is no foster care in Nepal.

An **MOU** with Sungava was signed for the **three-year period 2020-2022**. 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. In 2023, NAFA partnered with several Nepalese Canadian charities to raise funds to purchase an e-van in early 2024.

Sungava has begun to pay three qualified teachers the government-set salaries, enabling them to apply to be licensed with “special school” status under the Public Education Trust. Operational funding remains a challenge, with NAFA and a Nepalese-Canadian NGO (SEWA) being their sole source of operational funding at this time.



Women's Enabling Program (WEP)

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 in western Nepal. Activities in the initial phases 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 raising income-earning goats and pigs
purchased with funds from micro-finance loans**

**Villager chopping onion
grown from WEP market garden**

**Agricultural development**

In 2024, the English Family Foundation (EFF) and NAFA co-funded the final year of a three-year *Growth and Sustainability* project aimed at growing the Pasang Chowk Agricultural Cooperative, established in 2013 by local farmers in the area around the village of Tawal. Local farmers have begun to diversify their crops, with coffee now being their best income-earner. In 2024, NAFA and EFF funds were allocated towards the purchase of 10 coffee pulping machines, 13 small electric motors, and 100 sets of industrial pruning and cutting scissors, all aimed at improving productivity in the local coffee industry. NAFA also allocated funds towards the purchase of a three-shelf safe for the Cooperative Savings Bank.

**National Coffee Development Board members
in 'simple nursery' set up by Coop to
propagate coffee plans during their visit**

New coffee pulping machine

Locally roasted coffee



Community forest registration and management

It has taken ten+ years but the registration of three community forests in the Department of Forestry has the potential to be a game-changer for several villages in Wards 1 and 2 in the Gangajamuna Rural Municipality (including Tawal). Villagers from six villages will now be able to legally access forest products and be responsible for forest conservation and reforestation. Benefits also include the possibility of additional, sustained sources of income and reduced landslide risk. However, it will require an attitude change by all villagers and a lot of sustained hard work with reforestation-related activities.

Certificates from the District Forestry Department have been issued, approving the establishment of the three community forests. Committees (15 members in each) have been established and Chairpersons appointed with experience in the conservation of forests above the following villages:

1. Latab/Duchene
2. Tawal
3. Kutal

The first phase of implementation of the Community Forest Management Plan (CFMP) in 2024 has involved demarcation of each of the three Community Forests and community awareness-raising activities. Volunteer farmers will use approximately 200 litres of water-based paint to paint 1.5 feet wide horizontal, white stripes around boundary trees spaced within eye-sight of each other. Villagers are also setting up approximately 500 metres of barbed-wire fences in areas known to be regularly breached by local farmers to graze their animals.

Notice boards are also being put up to promote public awareness of the importance of preserving the forest. Signs with slogans such as: "Don't cut down any trees" "Trees give us oxygen" and "Trees are our life" will be put up along the forest boundaries. In the next phase, the Committees will develop a plan to earn income from their community forest e.g. sale of bamboo to farmers.



In the next phase, visiting officers from the forestry department responsible for implementation of the CMFPs, will survey local forests and record areas where reforestation is needed. Some infrastructure e.g. water ponds will be established to support reforestation and the development of new income sources for farmers in the area.

Thank you for supporting NAFA

I would like to thank all NAFA supporters, management committee members and funded partners in Nepal who collectively helped NAFA achieve positive, practical outcomes for those individuals, families and communities that benefitted from our program/project portfolio in 2024.

Three philanthropists – the **Hare Family**, **Goldburg Foundation** and the **English Family Foundation** again made generous donations to NAFA in 2024. These donations have provided multi-year funding for the **Community Forest Project**, the **Gangajamuna Model Schools Project** and the **Pasang Chowk Agricultural Cooperative Growth and Sustainability Project**.

General Assembly (AGM) Meeting of
the Pasang Chowk Agricultural Cooperative



The continued, loyal financial support from the NAFA donor network have also ensured continuity of funding for NAFA's **twelve ongoing programs and several one-off projects** that that improve the lives of 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 their high level of competence and ongoing commitment in performing the duties of those three critical volunteer positions.

Beyond those three positions is a stable, experienced management committee, comprising members who connect NAFA to like-minded philanthropists and donors, help fundraise for NAFA and provide advice on NAFA's broad-ranging project portfolio. So, thank you to **Nirmala Pandeya, Mohan Sharma, Mana Ranjit, Bijaya and Binu Rajbhandari, Wendy Eastwell, Stewart Jones, Rick Parkes, Betty Harris, Paul Halman, 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.



Whilst there is stability, succession planning and encouragement of new committee members should always be on our action plan. Everyone on our committee had a time when they attended their first meeting and were inspired to continue coming, month and month, year after year. We need new committee members who will add to our collective efforts making a real difference to disadvantaged people in Nepal. If you are currently not on our management committee, but you would like to get involved, I encourage you to get in contact. It could end up being the best decision you have made this year!

In Nepal, our network of change agents and administrators connect NAFA with their respective communities, identifying needs, proposing/negotiating solutions, and coordinating the implementation of NAFA's ongoing programs and one-off projects. 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 a childcare program in Thimi; **Govinda Pahari** for the childcare 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** and **Janie Kaiser** for the school and Women's Empowerment Project in Gamauli. I would also like to thank Pratika Shakya, who comes to Tawal most visits, helping Deborah with translation and rural development advice when interviewing or meeting with local women and other members of the community.

Finally, a continuing big thanks to **Jeena Shrestha** and board members of **Joy Foundation Nepal**, including **Raju Shrestha** and **Babu Kaji Shrestha**, for co-funding a remote **cataract eye surgery camp** each year **conducted by the Tilganga Eye Hospital** and for providing administrative support to NAFA in Kathmandu whenever that is needed.

It is most important that I again thank my wife **Deborah** for her passionate and enduring support for NAFA and its development projects in Nepal. She is NAFA's **Research and Evaluation Officer**, runs **market stalls** with Wendy, and **collects 10 cent bottles and cans**. She remains so patient watching me sit on the computer for hours most days, responding so expertly and diplomatically to my endless comments and questions.

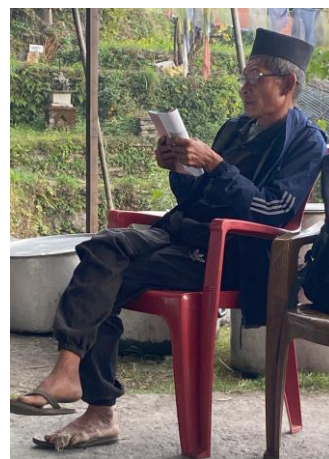
In November 2024, Deborah launched her book "Where the Tiger Lives: A Tamang Oral History". Eleven years previously, elders in Tawal had asked if she would be willing to interview them and record their stories as they feared those stories were going to be lost to future generations. Disruptions caused by the 2015 earthquake and COVID slowed but didn't stop her determination to publish, in both English and Nepali.

Kanchha Tamang MC'd the book launch, with the Mayor of the Ganga Jamuna Rural Municipality, Bhakta Tamang, being the Chief Guest. Other government representatives, eight members of the original Hilly Region Development Club, established in 2000 to coordinate foreign-supported projects, and perhaps 200 villagers attended the joyous event. There was dancing from students in Grades 4, 8 and 10 and four teachers performed a group dance. In the evening, witnessing local villagers, including older members, reading her book confirmed the importance of this contribution from Deb. 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. Good on Deb.

Tawal elders dance the Mane Dori at night



Elder reading "Where the Tiger Lives"



I have had the honour of being President of NAFA for **eighteen years**. Having said that, I would be even more honoured to work alongside someone inspired enough to take over the President's position, ensuring that we continue to make a real difference to the lives of so many children, women, families and communities in Nepal in the future.

Rod Setterlund

Rod Setterlund OAM
President