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Theosophical Order of Service International Newsletter

Issue19 - December 2011 - Annual Report [to TOS website]



THE
THEOSOPHICAL
SOCIETY
AND THE
UNITED NATIONS

A History of Support

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In this leaflet published by the Theosophical Order of Service, the history of the Theosophical Society's support for the UN is outlined and some suggestions made for practical action in continuing this support. Since the TS is strictly neutral in political matters, activities focus on support for the UN's aspirations in the realm of world peace, unity and relief of suffering.

Welcome to all our regular – and new – readers of TOS in-touch.online. This two- monthly electronic newsletter reports on the richly varied service work of Theosophists around the world, notably in association with the Theosophical Order of Service, which was started by Annie Besant shortly after she became President of the Theosophical Society in 1907. It offers ideas that we hope may inspire and energise you in your own personal or group service initiatives.

The format of the newsletter varies. If you haven't had time to read much of it over the past while, this is an ideal opportunity to catch up because in this issue the International Secretary, Diana Dunningham Chapotin, summarises our doings over the past year.

You'll find a wealth of new material in this month's update to the **International TOS website**. We've started a new topic in the **For Members** section to provide a collection of theosophically oriented funeral and memorial services. We've just started the collection and would welcome contributions of services and readings. Also in the **For Members** section, we've added another fundraising idea – holding a cinema event. This update's **Latest News** provides information about the first brochure produced by the International TOS United Nations Committee to document the history of TS/TOS support for the United Nations. The **Featured Project** brings you an update on the Famine Relief Project in East Africa with a report by the Convenor of the TOS in Nairobi, Kenya, Usha Shah, on the second food distribution. *The Theosophy of Service* is the **Featured Article**. It is an excerpt from a talk by Dorothy Bell for the TOS session at the International Convention of the TS in Adyar in December 2010.

Minor correction to the minor correction in EN17 -

In our last issue, we stated that John Kern's father, who founded the Kern Foundation, was named Henry. In fact, Henry was a very distant connection to the family. John's father was Herbert Arthur Kern. We apologise for our continued error and trust that with the recent information from John, we have eventually 'got it right'.

Diana looks back over 2011

Reading an annual report can be quite soporific but those of you who manage to wade through this year's TOS report may end up surprised at all that is being accomplished. You may even end up 'fired up' to try out in your own country something you've discovered. Happy reading!

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Remember that the newsletter is designed to be read while you are connected to the internet.

With best wishes,
Carolyn, Diana and Geoffrey



(L. to R.)
Carolyn Harrod is the National Coordinator of the TOS in Australia,
Geoffrey Harrod is the International TOS Webmaster, and
Diana Dunningham Chapotin is the International Secretary of the TOS.

Harmony is unity in diversity.

–N. Sri Ram

Would you like to receive this on-line newsletter automatically?

1. To sign up, you only have to send a message telling us which country you live in to tos.intouch@gmail.com with "Subscribe TOS e-newsletter" in the subject line. Please do not do this if you are already subscribed.
2. If you do not want to receive future newsletters you can easily unsubscribe. All that is needed is a blank message to tos.intouch@gmail.com with "Unsubscribe TOS e-newsletter" in the subject line.



Diana looks back over 2011 - page 1

Navigating the pages

Each page of this report is numbered and on each page there is a navigation bar at top and bottom, where you can click on **Next** or **Previous** or on any page number, like **p4**, to go to that page. The impossible choices, because that's the page you are already on, are greyed.



Reading an annual report can be quite soporific but those of you who manage to wade through this year's TOS report may end up surprised at all that is being accomplished. You may even end up 'fired up' to try out in your own country something you've discovered.

Actually only a small proportion of the members' work is mentioned in the report. Whole countries – eighteen to be precise – have not even been referred to! Having to select amongst the many fine projects undertaken by TOS members around the world is positively agonising for the reporter, so if you are pitying yourself at the reading ahead of you, please have a kind thought for the reporter and an even kinder one for the organisers of the major projects that have gone un-discussed.

Introduction

The main purpose of the TOS is to encourage people to take up the path of service for humanity and the planet. Its mission is to offer:

- a framework in which individuals may work in self-selected lines of service for the relief of suffering and the uplifting of society;
- a framework in which the practical application of theosophical principles to issues of contemporary concern may be explored;
- a framework in which social action and advocacy as spiritual practice are actively supported.

Animal protection, the preservation of the environment and meditation for world peace are amongst the most widespread activities engaged in by TOS members. The TOS's healing ritual is also extensively performed. Over forty healing groups meet regularly in the USA, for example and many dozens within India. Social welfare, medical and educational work amongst the underprivileged remains the priority of many TOS groups around the world. For example, members run numerous schools, literacy centres, free nutrition services and medical programmes.



International Projects

Last year TOS and TS groups responded widely to the TS in America's kind offer to channel donations to help the TS in Chile repair its building in Santiago after the earthquake of February 2010. We are happy to report that all donations have been transmitted, the building is well on the way to being repaired and meetings have even resumed. The members in Chile have covered a significant part of the restoration expenses themselves, which is a fine achievement. They have been touched and encouraged by the concern of their fellow Theosophists around the world.

For a fuller report from the TS in America, including 'before' and 'after' photos, click here:

<http://www.theosophical.org/news>



The TOS's largest collaborative effort this year has been in emergency relief to the Horn of Africa. The TOS in Kenya identified a starving population in the town of Kitui, 130 km east of Nairobi, and 55 families are being fed for six months, with help from the Nairobi TOS team, from TOS and TS members in Australia, England, France, Germany, Italy, New Zealand, Spain and the USA. The feasibility of putting down a bore hole so that the villagers have not only drinking water but also water for the planting of high quality seeds is being looked into seriously and could well be accomplished before the food distribution project ends. Plans are also under consideration to provide the Kitui villagers with fruit-bearing trees such as mangoes and pawpaw.

A photographic report on the first distribution of food was posted on our website in October. [Here's a link to the report](#) if you missed it.

You 'll find a full report on the [second food distribution](#) in the Featured Project on the website. Don't miss it!

The TOS United Nations Committee chaired by Lorraine Christensen of Canada has produced its first brochure inviting Theosophists to engage in activities in support of UN aspirations in the realm of world peace, unity and the relief of suffering. The TOS thanks Pedro Oliveira and Ananya Rajan in particular for their help in researching the TS's extensive history of support for the UN and for its predecessor, the League of Nations.

The brochure is posted in the *UN section of For Members* on the TOS website. Members of both the TS and TOS are warmly invited to print out this [brochure](#) for distribution.

THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY AND THE UNITED NATIONS

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Spanish language co-ordinator, Fernando Pérez Martin, has produced several more issues of an electronic newsletter presenting ideas to our many Hispanic members for supporting the work of the UN.

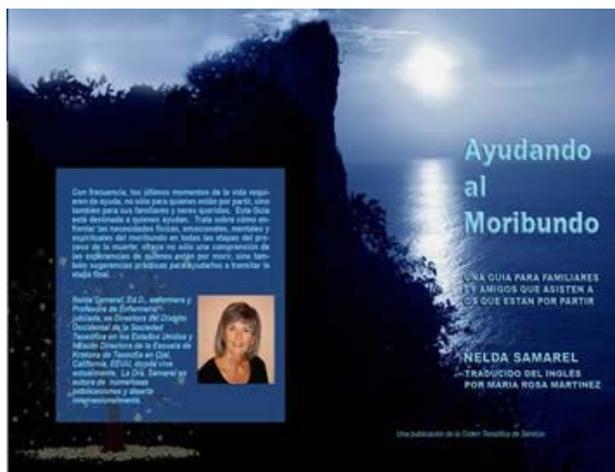


Fernando has produced 23 issues of the UN newsletter since December

NOTICIAS ONU Nº 23
Espania
www.otshispania.org

NOTICIAS ONU Nº 22
Espania
www.otshispania.org

2008.



A Spanish edition of Nelda Samarel's booklet, *Helping the Dying*, has been published by the TOS in the Philippines and has been distributed in Spain, Central America and the Caribbean. The director of the TOS in Argentina, Norberto Cicirelli, has completed a further print run for distribution throughout the rest of Latin America.

[Download the electronic copy of the Spanish edition here.](#)

A Portuguese translation is also in progress.

The Kern Foundation of the USA, under the impulse of its Advising Trustee, John Kern, has once again provided a matching grant to support the Golden Link College in the Philippines. We are grateful to the Foundation and to John, and also to the TOS in America for processing donations to meet the grant target each year. The college continues to attract considerable interest among Theosophists because of its attempts to integrate theosophical ideas and inner transformation work into the daily life of the students. An article by Vicente Hao Chin, Jr outlining the theosophical content and practice in the curricula from kindergarten to tertiary level is now available at <http://international.theoservice.org/articles.html>.

TOS members in Australia, Singapore and New Zealand in particular, have sent thousands more books to the Philippines this year. Well over 50,000 books have been sent in the past three years, not only to enrich the library of the Golden Link College but to help build the libraries of other public and private schools as well. Unloading and sorting these books requires considerable work in which the students of the Golden Link College participate enthusiastically.





TOS Theosophical Order of Service International DECEMBER 2011

About TOS News Projects Articles Photos Inspiration For Members

Are you interested in making a difference?

The TOS works locally and internationally in such areas as -

- education
- social welfare & justice
- healing
- peace
- animal concerns
- the environment
- emergency relief

Would you like to join us in our work? You will find more information and ways of getting involved on this website.

Donating computers to children on a Navajo Indian Reservation in the USA

The TOS was founded to provide a framework in which people can engage in creative, practical and humanitarian action in a theosophical spirit. It offers opportunities for participation in activities promoting the First Object of the Theosophical Society - To form a nucleus of a universal Brotherhood of humanity without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or colour.

It also acts as a forum in which people may air their views on global affairs in the light of spiritual principles and the ideas of the theosophical philosophy - one source of unity beyond outward differences; the interrelatedness and interdependence of all forms of life; the ordered unfoldment of the cosmos in accordance with natural law.

Helping the Dying TOS book by Heidi Samarel. [More...](#)

Act as if what you do makes a difference. It does.

William James

FEATURED PROJECT

Second distribution of TOS emergency aid in East Africa

In October we reported on a new project initiated by the TOS in Kenya to provide emergency aid to families suffering current acute food shortage in a village to the east of Nairobi. The second distribution of food to the 55 families being helped by the TOS has recently been accomplished. [\(more...\)](#)

FEATURED ARTICLE

The Theosophy of Service - by Dorothy Bell

Across this planet, in the name of the Theosophical Order of Service, many different activities are taking place. These acts of kindness are not random but reflect a general attitude - an attitude generated by that original impulse upon which the Theosophical Society was built to stand for Life and Light for Unity and Harmony and for Sister-Brotherhood. [\(more...\)](#)

LATEST NEWS

TS support for UN

The TOS UN Committee has now published its first brochure, documenting the history of support that the TS has given to the United Nations. The brochure describes how the TS's history

NATIONAL BRANCHES

- Argentina
- Australia
- Bangladesh
- Bolivia
- Brazil
- Canada
- Chile
- Colombia
- Costa Rica
- England
- Finland
- France
- Hungary
- India
- Italy
- Kenya
- Mexico
- New Zealand
- Pakistan
- Peru
- Philippines
- Porto Rico
- Singapore
- Slovenia
- Spain
- Sweden
- Tanzania
- Uruguay
- USA
- Wales
- Zambia

Updated DEC 2011

The two-monthly international electronic newsletter called *TOS in-touch.online*, produced by Geoffrey and Carolyn Harrod, remains the TOS's main organ of communication. Its distribution list is growing. In every issue of the newsletter, the new material added to the TOS's website is announced. For example, models of theosophically-oriented funeral services are being posted by Carolyn to help Theosophists farewell their loved ones: [Funeral services](#)

She has also added a long (and growing) list of fund-raising ideas: <http://international.theoservice.org/members/fundraising/fr-ideas.html>

Members are warmly invited to use any of the website's resource material in their national and local TOS or TS publications and activities.

A great deal of humanitarian service work goes on at our international TS headquarters in Adyar, Chennai, India, principally under the aegis of the Olcott Education Society. This year we have run a series of photographic reports by George and Gailene Wester of Australia on three of the four activities operating under its umbrella: the Olcott School, the Blavatsky Hostel, the Social Welfare Centre and the Annie Besant Memorial Animal Dispensary. TOS groups are enthusiastic and faithful supporters of these four fine projects that the International President of the TS has actively cared for over many decades.



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National and Local Projects

A notable feature of TOS work around the world is how greatly it varies in nature and extent from country to country.

Through more than 100 active groups spread over 20 regions, the **TOS in India** touches tens of thousands of lives each year. It runs schools, coaching classes, pre-primary learning centres, adult literacy classes, boarding establishments for the blind, for orphans and the aged, vocational training centres for women, free medical dispensaries and eye treatment as well as naturopathy, acupressure, ayurvedic treatment and yoga therapy centres. Supervising, supporting and stimulating this work is more or less a full-time job for National Director, Birendra L. Bhattacharyya, who spends many months a year on the road inaugurating projects, schools and groups, presiding at zonal conferences, presenting materials to the needy, meeting workers and so on. He reports that the TOS in India is in a healthy state and mentions a fine rural and animal welfare programme in Assam, the 'Seeing Eyes for Everyone' project in Chennai, Delhi Region's free dental service and vocational training centres for rural women, Bihar's work lodging the blind, the 500 educational sponsorships organised by Mumbai Region, the thalassaemic children project of Bhubaneswar and village welfare initiatives in Karnataka and Gujarat. Interestingly, he says that TS branches sometimes spring up as a result of contacts made in the course of TOS work. This was the case in Sundarban (West Bengal) this year after emergency relief operations there.

Each region of the TOS in India holds an annual gathering at which donations are made to the needy. Dr T.K. Nair, National Secretary of the TOS in India, sent these photos of the **North Zone Conference held in Raipur** in September. A report appeared in the local Telugu newspaper.



Book shelves were donated to the public library.



Five people received artificial limbs.



Thirty students were provided with school uniforms.

At exactly the same time that the workers in the South Zone were busy at their Conference, the North Zone workers were holding theirs. Mahendra P. Singhal reported a very interesting programme during which the problems of working women in India were discussed with a qualified guest speaker and more than a dozen awards made to children for proficiency in their studies, essay writing and other skills.



The awards were given to the poorest of the poor. Over half the population of the state of Chhattisgarh is Adivasi. The awards are to encourage education among such tribal people.



Blood group tests were carried out on more than 200 college students and teachers. The line-up of TOS workers behind those engaged in the tests is an interesting one. In addition to the Secretary of the TOS in Raipur, Mr Janaswamy, and fellow local members, we see three 'oak trees' of the TOS in India: J.N. Patowary, P.S. Mittal and M.P. Singhal. The peripatetic, tireless National Director, Mr B.L. Bhattacharyya, is absent only because he is at the South Zone Conference.

The **TOS in Australia** provides an example of a different range of projects. This year members contributed time and raised funds for activities in their local communities such as tutoring refugees in English, knitting knee rugs for nursing homes, supporting a refuge for homeless women, working in 'soup kitchens' for the homeless, putting together packs of clothes and toys for babies and children going into care, helping in animal shelters, collecting for relief appeals and volunteering in aged-care centres and cancer support groups. Through conducting seminars, talks and petitions they raised awareness about social and animal welfare issues.



The TOS in Australia also reaches out to support TOS groups and projects overseas. This year, for example, it set up a custodial account for international donations to the educational work of the TOS in Pakistan.

Fareeda and Aman Amir continue to do outstanding work in keeping the **TOS's work in Pakistan** going at a time when, for security reasons, the TS has had to suspend almost all its activities. In fact the TOS's extensive service in the community has helped protect the TS's interests. The education sponsorship programme, the literacy home schools and the Jamshed Montessori School are functioning well, thanks to the courage of the teachers and administrative staff. No one will ever forget the murder, four years ago, of Fareeda's brother Dara Mirza, the TS's Presidential Agent, who was targeted because of his involvement in the work of the TS. This year, Iffat Jehan, one of the home school teachers, caught a stray bullet in the leg. She has completely recovered and continues her service to the children and women in her community.



Dara Mirza – fourth generation Theosophist



Ms Iffat Jehan with her pupils



Our sisters and brothers of the TOS in Karachi need and deserve our interest, care and moral support.

Formed last year in **Hungary**, the **youngest TOS group** in the world has already acquired official registration as a non-profit service organisation. This was necessary not to put distance between itself and the TS but in order to engage in certain forms of service permitted only to registered organisations in that country. The group's first major undertaking has been to 'adopt' a flood-affected town in the north. While its first gesture has been to offer emergency relief, its long term goal is to help the villagers build their own active self-help community. An interesting facet of the TOS's work is the self-training its members engage in to develop the skills needed for service work. For every four or five newcomers, a special orientation programme is planned in which the whole group participates. The members wish to ensure that their service work is thoroughly grounded in what they refer to as 'theosophical spirituality'. A fresh report and photos will appear in our newsletter of Feb 2012.

The TOS International Secretary attended the Summer School of the TS in England in August and gave a PowerPoint presentation on the work of the TOS around the world. She was happy to see the **TOS team in England** operating in its own particular gentle and harmonious way.



The international TOS thanks Aman (far left) and Fareeda (second from right) for their many years of skilled work in maintaining the TOS's operations in Karachi. Their fortitude and quiet determination are admirable. We see them here with Renée Sell, the Coordinator of the TOS in New Zealand, and Graham Eden, the Treasurer of the TS in New Zealand, who volunteers his time in helping the TOS with financial matters.



The Annual General Meeting of the English TOS takes place at the TS's Summer School each year. Decisions are taken and plans made with lots of humour yet efficiently.



Prices are not affixed to the items on the sale table at the Summer School. Members help themselves to whatever they want and give whatever sum they can afford. A surprisingly effective sign says, "Please take a gift from the TOS. Please make a gift to the TOS. Bowl on table." This honesty system pays – members are reportedly more generous!

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2011 report - page 3

Changes of Officer

This year four fine workers finished terms coordinating the TOS work within their countries: Tim Boyd in the USA, Narendra Shah in Nairobi, Kenya, Luigi Marsi in Italy and Regina Celi Medina Alves Silva in Brazil. We thank them all. Their successors have started out with energy and creativity.

The new president of the **TOS in America**, Nancy Secrest, has invited anyone in sympathy with the TOS to grow their hair and then have it cut (unless this is discouraged by their culture or religion) for donation to Locks of Love, an organisation that makes wigs for cancer patients and others. Nancy is setting an example by growing her own hair. She feels that this is a very simple act of service in which most people can participate. In her first annual report, she highlights the TOS's projects in support of Native Americans: continuing assistance for the Rosebud Reservation of the Lakota Sioux Indians in South Dakota and for the Navajo Indian Reservation in New Mexico in the form of clothing and blankets, school supplies, computers and Christmas gifts. This year a significant scholarship was granted to a nursing student at Oglala Lakota College School of Nursing.



Tim Boyd, outgoing President of the TOS in America and Nancy Secrest, incoming President.



Pineridge children on horseback



Rosebud Sioux Tribe

The new convenor of the **TOS in Kenya**, Usha Shah, has initiated three projects this year in addition to spearheading the famine relief work already mentioned: the distribution of teddy bears knitted by TOS members in Italy for children affected by tragedy, a tree-planting project with primary school children, and the teaching of skills enabling needy women to increase their family income. These new projects come in addition to the significant service programme carried out for many years by the TOS team in Nairobi.



Narendra Shah, who has handed over the work of Convenor of the TOS in Nairobi this year but who continues to handle the TOS's accounts.



Usha Shah, who has 'hit the ground running' as the new TOS Convenor, with the help of the solid Nairobi team.

The **TOS in Kenya** started a project this year to give skills to women enabling them to add to the family income. Ten ladies from 25 to 70 years of age came to the premises of the TS in Nairobi and were shown how to make cow dung cakes to use as fuel, instead of coal. The ladies were also taught to make dairy products. Here we see the ladies' second day: we see them learn how to make samosas, as well as chapattis, plain and stuffed.



Rosella Milani Fanzio has started out her role as new director of the **TOS in Italy** by launching a "one euro for our Pakistan home schools" appeal to which members were invited to donate when they renewed their TS membership dues this year. This simple idea was remarkably successful: the members responded in a characteristically generous fashion. A heart-warming trait of the Italian TOS is that when a major disaster takes place in the

world, its representatives contact the International Secretary saying, "How can we help the TOS respond?" This spontaneity is refreshing.



Luigi Marsi acted as National Director of the TOS in Italy for 21 years. We salute him!



We welcome Rosella as the new TOS National Director in Italy.

As the new coordinator of the **TOS in Brazil**, Andréa Dias de Mendonça Resende and her team have developed an engaging service activity. They give everyone at the TS's Summer School in January and at its National Meeting mid-year an opportunity to contribute to the activity in some way: helping to set up and run a sale table, making, donating or buying sale items, identifying suitable local beneficiaries for the money raised, and buying and personally delivering the donated articles. This activity is done with joy and goodwill during the summer school itself and is a constructive form of community outreach.



Regina Celi Medina Alves Silva, who is now coordinator of the TS Lodges in Rio de Janeiro.



Andréa Dias de Mendonça Resende, our new Correspondent for the TOS in Brazil.

Conclusion

In spite of all the positive news reported above, the fact remains that the TOS still operates in only half the countries where the TS is present. Continuing attention needs to be given to helping members wishing to start groups. The TOS's long term goal is to be of help to the TS in making Theosophy of transformative value in as many countries as possible.