

NAMASTE!

Dear Supporters,

Welcome to our Porters Progress UK Newsletter. This year is the 10th birthday of Porter Progress UK; established in 2005 the charity aims are to advance the education and welfare of porters in their communities. In the aftermath of the devastating earthquake on the 25th April 2015 in Nepal, our work has never felt more vital.

Fundraising has been an urgent priority in 2015. You have given generously at our events and we thank you for your contributions that have made possible the work you will read about in this Newsletter. Our supporters have also been taking on sponsored events – read about Dina's climb of Kilimanjaro to build a school in Nepal, and don't forget to save the date for our annual **Best of Kendal Mountain Film Festival – March 17th 2016**. It is a super evening with a real buzz of excitement. The proceeds from all our activities go directly to Porters and their families.

Time to rebuild

The Nepalese earthquake, destroyed lives, homes, schools, hospitals, roads and communications. It is now estimated that:

- 8,881 people were killed
- 23,718 were injured
- 80,000 people relocated because of landslides
- 473,124 homes and buildings were damaged
- 2.3 million people lost their homes
- 32,145 classrooms were destroyed
- around one million children are still without schools

The challenge over the summer months has been to build temporary shelters against the summer monsoon and the winter cold. With your support we have funded a temporary housing project close to our clothing bank in Lukla, and the building of two temporary school buildings in collaboration with the charity The Small World (more on this later).

PPUK and our partners aim to provide support to quake-affected families that will enable income generation opportunities. So many in Nepal depend on the Trekking Industry and without direct support many will suffer. PPUK continues to fund to the Himalayan Club to support our Clothing Bank in Lukla. However, the earthquake drastically shortened the spring trekking, and

trekking remains at 20% of that in previous years.

Stronger together

The events of April 2015 have strengthened the links between PPUK and IPPG. We are delighted to report that IPPG ran a very successful Best of Kendal Film Evening in Cardiff earlier this year, with all proceed going to the Machermo and Gokyo Porter Shelters and Rescue Posts, which PPUK supported have previously donated towards. However both Machermo and Gokyo were sadly damaged in the earthquakes.

Our strong collaboration with CAN has also continued in 2015 and is facilitated by many of the PPUK Trustees. These activities have been hugely successful, enabling the rebuilding of many of the severely damaged CAN projects, including the health posts in North Gorkha, which PPUK have previously supported. You can read more about our links with CAN below.

The collaboration between PPUK and Khurpa Care continued in 2015. Khurpa (Porter) Care Pakistan is a Skardu based NGO working for the welfare of porters, tourism promotion and tourism related conflict resolution in the region of Gilgit-Baltistan. A fuller report follows within this newsletter.

All this work, would not be possible without your support. PPUK is run by the trustees and volunteers; with the support and co-operation of other charities. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you, and all these individuals and groups for their commitment and contributions to PPUK.

Patron: Kenton Cool. **Trustees:** Gaby Dean, Denise Prior, Venetia Simonds, Nic Steele, Peter Thomson, Luke Walker and Tom Buttle.

Volunteers: Emma Swinnerton, Dina Stylianou, Robin Stafford, Laura Onea and Pete Smith

Partners Organisations: dZi Foundation, Community Action Nepal, Independent Porter Protection Group, Khurpa Care, KEEP, Medex and Medical Expeditions, Mount Everest Foundation, The Small World

Namaste, Mary

**Mary Morrell,
Chair Porters Progress UK**



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PPUK NEWS

First Hand Account

Experiencing an Earthquake

It's now six months since the first big earthquake in central Nepal. This 7.8 Richter Scale quake was the worst natural disaster to hit Nepal since 1934. Many people are still homeless, living in temporary shelters or tents and facing brutal winter conditions. Many historic and sacred monuments and buildings have been destroyed alongside private houses and public buildings. Things have changed forever and many people affected are still traumatised by the loss of family and friends, their homes and work and surviving for months and months in terrible conditions.

The 25th April 2015 was an unforgettable day for me. I was back in Kathmandu along with team mates from Medex's Medical Expedition to Manasalu. We had just returned from a five week trip around that beautiful circuit, where PPUK was undertaking data collection on porter health and welfare as part of a research project.

Shortly before midday I had returned to our hotel from a sightseeing trip to Kathmandu's Durbar Square. We were due to fly out that evening and were packing. Suddenly the room started to roll violently, accompanied by a great roaring and the terrible sound of humans screaming and traffic crashing outside in the street.

The Reality of an Earthquake

I realised immediately what this meant. I'd spent almost two years living above the San Andreas Fault in California - but this was a very different matter. Our hotel was constructed using reinforced concrete slabs, which were pulled apart and thrown like toys onto our beds. Miraculously, we came out unscathed, and following a rather nerve-wracking couple of days, our team managed to fly out of the country. We felt both relief and terrible guilt, having had to abandon friends, old and new, who remained in Nepal.

Months of energetic fundraising have followed - aiming to rebuild or repair PPUK's projects, and to help those who have been surviving for months in terrible conditions. It's becoming a cliché to say the Nepalese are resourceful and resilient, but it's true. People are already rebuilding their homes and trying to get back to a state of business as usual. We must help them do this - by getting out there trekking and climbing, restoring confidence and providing the work our Nepalese friends need to rebuild their lives.

Denise Prior
PPUK Trustee

Warm Clothing & a Safe Roof

Following the devastating earthquakes in the Spring, Porters' Progress, although not primarily a first response charity, was keen to do something to support the communities we work with in the Khumbu. Keeping with our philosophy of empowering the local communities, we contacted Ang Perba Sherpa who oversees the Everest Clothing Bank in Lukla. The clothing bank provided a very important role in the early rescue efforts, as having a ready stock of sleeping bags in Lukla meant all the injured evacuees from Everest could be kept warm for the transit down to Kathmandu for medical treatment. In all 61 sleeping bags were put to this very good use.

As well as his role overseeing the clothing bank, Ang Phurba is also the local representative for the porter communities. He spent much of the first few weeks after the Earthquake on rescue and recovery duties, and coordinating the temporary housing needs of the many hundreds of families left without homes. He identified 163 damaged houses in and around Lukla, with 93 houses suffering a total collapse. The Clothing Bank itself suffered a partial collapse of the ceiling, resulting in much of the gear becoming buried under rubble. Fortunately most of the rest of the kit was salvageable and just needed cleaning and repacking, and the damage to the building repairable. However it was another piece of work required in an already challenging puzzle.

Giving Porters and their Families a Home

In keeping with his role at the heart of the community, Ang Purba had already drawn up designs for a temporary house, that would be quick to assemble and would give immediate relief to local families left homeless after the earthquakes. When we connected with him, construction had already begun on the first five of these new homes - funded by the Himalayan Trust of New Zealand. Porters Progress UK assigned funds to construct a further five to double the number of families kept safe from the onset of the monsoon.

The houses were completed in just a few weeks and are fully insulated, keeping families warm and dry through the monsoon and on into the winter. Built from corrugated steel on steel frames we will see the buildings providing use for several years. It is our hope that as the situation improves and more permanent buildings can be constructed, these structures may be able to provide temporary accommodation for porters staying in and around Lukla between treks.

Going forward, PPUK have been asked by the Himalayan Club to expand our training and education programmes in Lukla. This will see us provide First Aid and Rescue courses to the local Porter communities of the Khumbu, which is something we are keen to explore with Ang Phurba in the coming months. A healthy, skilled team of porters will help to re-establish the vital tourist trekking economy of the region - and this is something we are keen to encourage and support.

Luke Walker,
PPUK Trustee

Climbing for Nepal



Exhilarating, exhausting, spectacular, freezing, joyful, tearful... just some of the words I would use to describe my journey to the summit of Kilimanjaro. Reaching the summit of Africa's highest peak was a wonderful experience - made even more so by the porters who worked tirelessly to make us feel as comfortable as possible.

Having attended a PPUK event at the Royal Geographical Society in London, I found myself compelled not only to volunteer for the charity, but also to find a means to support its fundraising. So it was then I had the idea of raising enough money to build a temporary school in the Solukhumbu district in Northern Nepal, an area rich in porter culture. With a newly developed passion for trekking and a lifelong passion for education and learning I was thrilled to be able to do something I have come to love doing, and at the same time contribute to the effort to rebuild Nepal.

Why PPUK?

My recent experience with PPUK made me acutely aware of the role a porter plays in the mountains. On Kili, our porters were rarely without a beaming smile on their face - despite the heavy loads that they would carry each day to the next camp. It's the little things that they do... Coffee, milky with sugar, delivered to my tent each morning was the perfect way to wake up on the mountain, and helped me to prepare for another emotionally and physically challenging day on my journey to the summit.

And so when I think about what has happened to the people of Nepal this year, it makes our work seem all the more important. The task of rebuilding the country is huge and complex, and will continue for many years, so I'd encourage anyone else to consider fundraising. I am so pleased that I have been able to contribute a small part to the recovery of Nepal, home to the highest mountain in the world!

I'd like to end by offering some additional thanks: I'd never have made the summit without the support of our mountain leaders, Jamie and Sam of Exped Adventure, our small group (Geoff, Colin, and Martin) and the in-country guides who supported our every step. So thanks to them for helping make the trip such a success.

Dina Stylianou
PPUK Volunteer

A Safer Life for Porters in Pakistan

During 2015 Porters' Progress has been really pleased to continue our support of porter training in the Gilgit-Baltistan region of Pakistan. This is home to the world's highest concentration of major mountain peaks and attracts thousands of climbers and trekkers each year. Over 4,000 Balti men, mostly subsistence farmers, work on the trails of the central Karakorum Mountains carrying loads for mountaineering and trekking groups.

For many of these local households, earnings from the 3-month summer climbing/trekking season constitute a major portion of their annual disposable household income. This mountain tourism industry offers some otherwise extremely poor families with livelihood in Baltistan and the potential for regular, sustainable economic opportunities. However, many who work as porters have little idea of the health risks they may experience or what their rights are when working as porters. The training they receive is essential for their safety, but it also increases their knowledge base and offers improved skills that can benefit them in the future.

A Real Difference in Pakistan

Khurpa Care Pakistan (KCP) is a Skardu based nongovernmental organization working for the welfare of porters, tourism promotion and tourism related conflict resolution in the Gilgit-Baltistan region since 2006. KCP provides the training, education and advocacy to contribute to the social and environmental sustainability of tourism in the mountains of northern Pakistan. KCP also arranges seminars, workshops for awareness about ECO tourism, training for basic climbing & rescue, first aid, health & hygiene, environmental, save the glaciers, clean up campaign and expeditions.

Over the past year, the project has registered 345 new porters onto their training courses (in addition to those already signed up in previous years). In total 750 porters took part in the first aid and self rescue training, and 2000 porters attended the conflict management and awareness lectures. In total they spent 72 days on the Baltoro Glacier Paiyu Camp running the training programmes.

PPUK has a long history in support porter communities in Nepal, but our remit is much broader today, and the successes that KCP is enjoying with our support are a cause of much pride!

Venetia Simonds
PPUK Trustee

SAVE THE DATE

Thursday 17th March 2016
BEST OF KENDAL FESTIVAL
7.00 – 10.00 pm

Screenings of the best mountain films from one of the most prestigious mountain festivals in the world.

Tickets: £15.00 available from www.portersprogressuk.org/events from January 2016

Educating the Next Generation in Rural Nepal

As Mary revealed in her introduction, PPUK partners with a number of charities, and has enjoyed supporting a very significant project with The Small World. Together we've been able to take a real step forward in two villages in the heartland of Nepal's porter community. Through a project funded by PPUK, and implemented by The Small World, we have been able to construct two temporary school buildings - or 'temporary learning centres' (TLCs).

In the village of Rampur the Lower Secondary School in Kanku, which serves 184 children, was all but ruined by the earthquake. Before construction of the TLC, students were taking classes under tarps and their education would be affected by the rainfall. It was a similar story with the Shree Birendradoya Higher Secondary School at Mukli. A total of 272 students attend the school, but many of the classes couldn't continue due to the extensive damage suffered to the buildings.

Rebuilding local communities

Today things are very different. Together PPUK and The Small World have created two safe learning centres, with classrooms built with bamboo and tin roofing. Each gives a place that allows parents to feel safe in sending their children to school, and give young people a sense of investment in daily learning. The TLCs are helping Nepal's children to continue their education, while the world around them is slowly rebuilt.

Many local people have supported the construction of the TLCs, and this has helped bring them together with a shared purpose for the next generation. It has also provided employment for some whose portering roles have been lost - another piece of normality in a disrupted community. In difficult times, these things matter.

We hope to continue working with The Small World to create more of these glimmers of hope. Please help us do so by attending our events, fundraising or even offering your time to support PPUK. Thank you.

Tom Buttle
PPUK Trustee



Our clothing bank in Lukla in the aftermath of the earthquake



One of the temporary houses your donations has helped to build.



One of the fantastic schools your donations has helped to build.

Thank you for your continued support. Everyone at PPUK, but more importantly the porter communities across the regions in which we work, are truly grateful.

Keep in touch!



PortersProgressUK



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