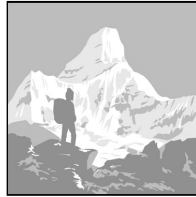


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# HIMALAYAN EXPLORERS CONNECTION

## Press Release

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### ***“Carrying the Burden” Uncovers Hardships of Nepalese Porters: Features New Project Aimed at Empowering Porters***

**Boulder, Colorado, January 28, 2002:** *Carrying the Burden*, a BBC documentary produced and directed by Sangita Manandhar, and a **Banff Mountain Film Festival** finalist uncovers the horrors that porters face to support their lowland subsistence farmer income. For the 100,000 Nepalese porters, who carry the burden for over 125,000 Western trekkers annually, it's a dangerous and often life-threatening occupation. The film features discussions with porters who have suffered horrendous frostbite, hypothermia and high altitude sickness. Not all porters are the legendary Sherpas who back up glamorous mountain expeditions. Ex-porter Kul Bahadur Rai had to have portions of both feet amputated after a life-threatening trek. He is now separated from his wife and young family as his wounds remain unhealed and is unable to walk the nine day journey home.

In response, the Himalayan Explorers Connection (HEC) has established the HEC Porter Assistance Project. Working in partnership with the International Porter Protection Group (IPPG) and Porters' Progress (an initiative of the HEC and Nepalese NGO) the project seeks to:

- Provide independent trekkers and small trekking companies with a convenient and inexpensive means of equipping their porters.
- Educate the tourist population about acceptable standards of porter treatment.
- Motivate and empower porters to determine their own means of assistance through offering English language, first aid, and empowerment classes.

The project supports Porter Assistance Centers that stockpile water- and wind-resistant jackets and pants, quick-drying synthetic "base" layers, gloves, socks, hats, sunglasses and footwear. The equipment donated is available for trekkers in Nepal and small trekking companies to take out for their porters. In the first two seasons alone (fall 2000 and spring 2001) over 2,500 pounds of equipment was donated to the program and over 400 porters were outfitted. The project, with centers in Kathmandu and the mountain village of Lukla (near Mt. Everest), currently has enough equipment to outfit 300 porters at a time.



"There is this fallacy that porters are superhuman, and they don't need the same type of equipment that Westerners need," said Scott Dimetrosky, the Executive Director of the Himalayan Explorers Connection. "This is an innovative program that lends clothing to porters, thus allowing them to be adequately equipped for the harsh Himalayan environment." The organizers hope the program will help to reduce deaths and injuries related to such problems as hypothermia, snow blindness, altitude sickness and frostbite.

*Continued*

The project also serves as a resource center for porters, who are offered free courses on conversational English, first aid, altitude awareness, waste management, and environmental awareness. Ben Ayers reported over 700 porter visits in the first year of the program. Ben is also the founder of Porters' Progress.

Mountain Sports, host of the Banff Mountain Film Festival on February 25 and 26, 2002 in Boulder, Colorado, encourages support of the HEC Porter Assistance Project. ***Carrying the Burden*** will be featured at the show on Monday, February 25, where Mountain Sports will sell \$5.00 donation vouchers that will go towards sock purchases for Nepalese porters. For each \$5.00 voucher purchased by the public, Mountain Sports will match it with \$5.00. Please support this cause.

The Banff Mountain Film Festival's Web site lists the full schedule and local sponsors for the World Tour. [http://www.banffcentre.ca/cmc/film\\_tourall.html](http://www.banffcentre.ca/cmc/film_tourall.html). Contact your local sponsor to request ***Carrying the Burden*** to be included in the local showing of the films from the Banff Mountain Film Festival. Some upcoming shows that will most likely show the film include (dates may overlap as there are two sets of film on tour):

February 18: Portland, ME  
February 25-26: Boulder, CO  
February 28: Aspen, CO  
March 6-7: New York, NY  
March 7: Ft. Collins, CO  
March 8-9: Denver, CO  
March 8-9: Philadelphia, PA  
March 12-13: Salt Lake City, UT  
April 15: Champaign, IL  
April 20: Eugene, OR  
April 22-23: Bend, OR  
April 24-25: Portland, OR  
April 26-28: Hood River, OR

For more information please contact the Himalayan Explorers Connection.

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For information about the Porters' fundraiser contact Mountain Sports.

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