

Higher Purpose

## Bountiful Return to Nepal After Unthinkable Disaster

Taking the kindness of KPMG contributors to the world's tallest mountain.

7:57 AM ET, October 27, 2014



Recommended 10 times

Months after the worst avalanche in Everest history claimed 17 of his neighbors, **Jigme Sherpa** brought hope and monetary support to the victims' families – thanks to his KPMG colleagues.

The New York Audit associate returned to his native Nepal over the summer, bearing funds contributed by his coworkers in the wake of the April disaster. Collected by the US Nepal Climbers Association, the KPMG contributions began pouring in immediately after the accident and amounted to 32,000 Nepalese rupees per family, or about \$330.

Sherpa was able to gather surviving relatives at a Kathmandu restaurant to distribute the bounty at a reunion that combined celebration, camaraderie, and commiseration.

"We feel a real obligation to look out for each other. We've all been in similar situations where the mountain took something precious from us, so we really understand the loss. Everyone feels connected by the mountain," says Sherpa.

### Perilous work

The men who perished last April served as porters for foreign climbers en route to the world's tallest summit. Their treacherous profession is virtually the only employment available to young men raised on the mountainside, where travel is dangerous, education is spotty, and the mere act of shipping for essentials requires enormous effort. In this hardscrabble world, the donations - each, equivalent of 329 American dollars per climbing family – goes a long way.

"The families will be able to use this money to buy up to five bags of rice to feed themselves and help provide for their families during the coming winter," explains Sherpa, who hails from the rural community of Pangboche.

Now living in Queens, New York, Sherpa spent his childhood among those who sought blessings from his father, a respected Buddhist monk, before beginning their ascent. The young accountant shares his family name with the porters who make their living hauling gear during the long climb. Thanks to an American sponsor who befriended his father, Sherpa was able to receive the Western education that allowed him to avoid the perilous work his father deeply feared.

"In my own family, we were not allowed to work on the mountain," he recalls.

### Ongoing need

Sherpa, moved by the kindness of the KPMG employees and partners who earmarked close to 4,000 US dollars for the victims' families, is now considering whether to create an ongoing fund to support the men who toil in the shadow of Everest.

As Sherpa knows all too well, "When a family loses its only breadwinner, the effects don't end after a season or even a decade. They last a lifetime."

Written by Sue Trieman

Approved By Bruce Pfau



Left: Jigme with Pasi Sherpa and her young son in Kathmandu. Pasi's late husband, Tenzing Chottar Sherpa, was never found after the avalanche.

Right: Jigme comforts the mother of an avalanche victim.

