**Bucharest, May 19, 2017**

**PRESS RELEASE**

**The "Joy for Nepal" campaign: Construction of the first two schools was completed. From the funds donated by the Romanians in 2015, the construction of a third school began.**

**Two years after the start of the "Joy for Nepal" campaign** [**(1)**](%281%29%09http%3A/alexgavan.ro/nepal/ro/2015/05/29/repornim-vieti-recladim-bucuria-printr-o-donatie-oricat-de-mica-pentru-nepal/)**, in which more than 36,000 people responded to the appeal of the Romanian Himalayan climber Alex Găvan, the construction of the two schools was completed and more that 150 Nepalese children started their classes. Moreover, due to the responsible manner in which the funds were managed, the construction of a third unit, financed by the funds donated by the Romanians, was also started.**

106,576 EUR was the amount donated under the humanitarian campaign "Joy for Nepal". Construction work was carried out through Karuna-Shechen, a humanitarian organization founded by Matthieu Ricard. The two schools have been built in isolated and disadvantaged communities, replacing those totally destroyed by the earthquake.

*“After surviving the earthquake and then the Everest avalanche, two years ago, on my birthday, I had a great dream: to rebuild the hope and bring back the joy to the children of Nepal. Today, exactly two years later, the circle is closed. Three schools built from scratch and a new chance for hundreds of children. I take a bow to you!” - Alex Găvan*

The schools are built from environmental-friendly materials, classes are soundproofed and quality-enhancing, encouraging students to continue their studies. Furthermore, the buildings comply with safety standards and are earthquake proof. Each school has eight classes and is built according to a standard project approved by the Nepalese Government.

The first school is located 135 km from the capital of Kathmandu, in Satdobato village, Gorkha district. It lies close to the earthquake epicenter, in Manaslu - 8156 m area, a summit which Alex Găvan climbed back in 2011. Forty-one children are studying here, most of them Dalits, the cast of the untouchables. Karuna Schechen estimates the number of students will increase by the end of the year. Total construction cost: 33,663.73 Euro.

*“Visiting the construction site of the Satdobato School and meeting the children and their parents was one of the most meaningful moments of my life. All the effort, energy, time and huge challenges turned into pure joy. Manaslu - 8156m, one of the peaks it took the most tremendous effort for me to climb. Manaslu, the area at the epicenter of the earthquake. Manaslu, a place of many Dalits - the untouchables - the people hardest hit by the earthquake and by our own prejudices. This is where we chose to have the first school built.”- Alex Găvan*

The second school is 190 km far from Kathmandu, in the village of Tekanpur, Okhaldunga district. Here, 111 children come to study every day. Most of them are ethnic Rai, Tamang and Sherpa. Total construction cost: 34,206.61 Euro.

The estimated initial cost per school amounted to 51,000 Euro. Due to exchange rate fluctuation between Euro, US Dollar and the Nepalese Rupee and the way the works were handled, the costs were lower and money was saved, with a remaining balance of 34,325.72 Euro. Thus, the construction of a new school in the area of the holly mountain of Gaurishankar (7.181 m) was started. It lies in the village of Lakaiguan, Dolakha district, 170 km far from Kathmandu. The school is now 70% completed and it will accommodate over 100 children aged 6 to 14.

*"Dear friends from Romania, I am extremely happy to let you know that thanks to the wonderful generosity of the Romanian citizens inspired by my dear friend Alex Găvan, I can tell you that due to the good management of the funds, a third school is already being built in the villages destroyed by the 2015 earthquake. Despite all the difficulties that have arisen - construction in isolated areas, six months of economic blockade at the Indian border, floods and many more - not only have we been able to build the two promised schools and the children are already learning here, but we have saved enough money to start construction of a third one. This is wonderful, especially since the Nepalese government did not get involved so much. Now, thanks to the generous people in Romania, the Nepalese children will have three new schools. Karuna will continue its good work for the sake of everyone. Thank you from the heart!", Matthieu Ricard, president of Karuna-Shechen.*

School dropout is one of the most serious problems Nepal is facing, the main causes being poverty, poor conditions in schools, difficult access to those schools and low levels of adult education. Moreover, the magnitude earthquake of 7.9 on the Richter scale destroyed over 5,000 schools, making it impossible for almost one million children to continue their education. Half of the female population and a quarter of the male population over 15 suffer from illiteracy.

In 2015, Karuna-Schechen had a budget of one million Euro for humanitarian interventions post earthquake. More than 10 percent of the donated money came from Romania due to the "Joy for Nepal" campaign. And regarding the 2015 education budget for Nepal and India, the contribution of donations coming from Romania was 41%. [(2)](https://issuu.com/karuna-shechen/docs/karuna-shechen_2015_annual_report_e)

"Joy for Nepal" was launched on May 19, 2015, on Alex's birthday, after the tragedy of the April 25th earthquake. Nearly 9,000 people lost their lives and over 22,000 were injured. The avalanche following the earthquake caught Alex Găvan in the Everest Base Camp. Surviving, he participated in the search and rescue operations [(3)](http://time.com/3840142/climber-everest-avalanche/). In the end, 22 climbers died.

Most of the donations came from private individuals who responded to the call by sending two Euro worth of SMS. Donations were also made through sponsorships, bank transfers or card payments on [www.alexgavan.com/nepal](http://www.alexgavan.com/nepal).

The amount of 106,576.68 Euro was integrally transferred to Karuna-Shechen. The donation money has not funded any administrative costs, as the fundraising campaign was pro-bono run by Alex Găvan and his team, as well as the partners who joined the project. Karuna-Shechen has all the operational costs covered by its own.

**Restarting lives. Rebuilding joy in Nepal.**

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**About Alex Găvan:**

A leading Romanian high altitude climber, Alex Găvan (35) reached six 8.000m summits in the Himalayas by fair means, meaning without supplemental oxygen and high-altitude porters. To Alex, “climbing mountains outside is climbing mountains inside“. After surviving the earthquake and the Everest avalanche on April 25th, together with his team, he initiated “#Joy4Nepal”, a humanitarian campaign to rebuild schools in remote Himalayan communities. He is also deeply involved in many environmental causes.

**About Karuna-Shechen:**

Karuna-Shechen [(4)](http://karuna-shechen.org/) was founded by Matthieu Ricard in 2000. Its mission is to provide quality healthcare, education and social services to individuals and families in the poorest and most disadvantaged communities in Nepal, India and Tibet. Following the earthquake, the organization provided emergency response to 215.511 people in 622 villages in Nepal's most affected areas.

**About Matthieu Ricard:**

Born in France in 1946, as the son of French philosopher Jean-François Revel and artist Yahne Le Toumelin, Matthieu Ricard [(5)](http://www.matthieuricard.org/en/) is a Buddhist monk, author, translator, and photographer – regarded as “the happiest man in the world”. After completing his PhD in cell genetics in 1972, at Pasteur Institute, under the guidance of French Nobel Laureate François Jacob, he moved in the Himalayas, where he has been living for the past 40 years.Matthieu Ricard is a board member of the Mind and Life Institute, an organization dedicated to broadening the understanding of how the human mind works. He contributes to the research on the effect of meditation on the brain, at various American and European universities, and is the co-author of several scientific publications. He also contributed to the book “Destructive Emotions”, edited by Daniel Goleman.He received the French National Order of Merit for his humanitarian work and is the French-language interpreter for the Dalai Lama.

### “Joy for Nepal” was supported by:

* **Friends:**Ivan Patzaichin, Sprint Canoe Olympic Champion; Oana Pellea, Actress; Eugen Voicu, Founder CERTINVEST; Cătălin Tolontan, Journalist; Liviu Drăgan, CEO TotalSoft; Cristian Lascu, Speleologist; Vlad Mixich, Journalist; Adelin Petrișor, Journalist.
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Auto Motor Sport, Casa și Grădina, Femeia Azi, Dilema Veche, Historia, Beau Monde, Marie Claire, UPC, eMunte.ro, ExpoTV, Grand Cinema & More.

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**Notes:**

1. <http://alexgavan.ro/nepal/ro/2015/05/29/repornim-vieti-recladim-bucuria-printr-o-donatie-oricat-de-mica-pentru-nepal/>

(2)<https://issuu.com/karuna-shechen/docs/karuna-shechen_2015_annual_report_e>

(3)<http://time.com/3840142/climber-everest-avalanche/>

(4)<http://karuna-shechen.org/>

(5)<http://www.matthieuricard.org/en/>