



Dartmouth Films, Mayfly TV and Picture on the Wall Productions are proud to announce the theatrical release of **Children of the Snow Land** in UK cinemas from March 2019.

**Children of the Snow Land** tells the story of a group of children born in the High Himalayas of Nepal - a remote area of great natural beauty but where life is extremely tough. From just four years old, some children are sent by their parents to the capital city, Kathmandu, to a school run by a Buddhist monk in the hope that education will give them a better chance in life. For ten years or more they do not see or speak to their parents, due to the remoteness of their villages.

Upon graduation, aged 16, the children are making the trek home; an arduous trek across mountains that takes them to the highest inhabited place on the planet; a faraway, off-grid land where the way of life has not changed for thousands of years, and where their parents are waiting to see children brought up in a world of mobile phones, social media and most modern conveniences. Then Nepal's largest recorded earthquake strikes. **Children of the Snow Land** documents their scary, moving, funny and humbling stories.

#### Reactions:

**Bear Grylls** *"An incredibly inspiring story from the roof of the world."*

**Joanna Lumley** *"Imagine not seeing your parents and home for 12 years! This is a stunning film."*

**Kate Humble** *"An extraordinary story from the very roof of the world, told with great sensitivity and skill. Both heartbreaking and uplifting, this is a film full of insight and wonder. I urge you to see it."*

**Levison Wood** *"A journey like this is no mean feat even for the most experienced trekkers."*

**Sir Chris Bonington** *"Wonderful film."*

**Children of the Snow Land** is Directed by Zara Balfour & Marcus Stephenson, Executive Produced by Christopher Hird, MD of Dartmouth Films, and partly filmed by the Nepali children featured in the film, whom the directors trained in film making.

The children offer a view of a remote, ancient place, with insight into Nepali culture and into the hearts and minds of children who grew up wondering why their parents sent them away.

The mountain villages of the North-West Himalaya are the most remote, highest inhabited place on the planet. **Children of the Snow Land** features **the world's longest walk home from school**, and gives the viewer the experience of being transported back to ways of life that have remained unchanged for the past 2,000 years, whilst exploring the universal question of what creates a family and the human spirit's extraordinary capacity to survive and thrive in difficult circumstances and with meagre resources.

Directors **Zara Balfour & Marcus Stephenson** say: *"When we found out that many Himalayan children don't get to see their parents for 10 - 12 years whilst at school in the city we were compelled to bring their story to the screen. We trained the students in film making so that they could tell their story directly and intimately. We then travelled and filmed with them as they returned home.*

*Imagine the heartbreaking choice to send a child away so that they can have a better life, and the pain experienced by these children growing up away from home thinking that their parents didn't love them enough to keep them.*

*The journey was emotionally charged and physically tough, involving over 300 miles of trekking on foot through the high Himalayas - the only way to reach these remote mountain villages. Returning to their homeland and parents offered the children tremendous healing, understanding - and wisdom beyond what most of us would have at that age.*

*We hope that the film can help in a practical way by driving awareness and support so that many more children get the chance to return home."*

Executive Producer **Christopher Hird** says *"This is a film which will have you on the edge of your seat and move you to tears. How will a group of teenagers brought up with mobile phones, the internet and modern amenities cope when they leave all this behind and face the dangers of the remotest area of the Himalayas? And the impact on them is a moving tribute to the transformative and positive effect of education in increasing understanding and motivating people to see a world beyond themselves."*

Featured character **Nima Gurung** says: *"Children like me have a hard life in the high Himalayas. They are not getting their child's right to an education. We came to Kathmandu for study but we are not able to go back home for a long time because of economic hardship, the distance and the high mountain passes. So overall it's not just a story about us, but about all children of high Himalayan communities. "*

Featured character **Tsering Deki Lama** says: *"I experienced fear and complications on the way to my Himalayan home. It is struggle and hardship for all the people of snow capped Himalayan region. Somehow, it was a fantastic adventure to reach home but there were too many obstacles. I was scared for my life on my journey, but enjoyed seeing my parents."*

Featured character **Jeewan Mahatara** says: *“I came to know that our parents send us to school for study to make us able to stand on our own feet, not because they don’t care about us.”*

**Outreach and Impact:**

For many people the idea of total separation from family for twelve years for education would be unthinkable, but Nima, Tsering Deki and Jeewan's stories in the film are not unusual in Nepal and beyond: There are 25 similar schools in Kathmandu alone and in every one of those there are children who are bravely attending city school while their families are out of all contact in the mountains. Similar situations exist in the Indian Himalayas. Globally an estimated 6 million children live away from family in schools and institutions, despite having a living parent. (Source: *Unicef & Lumos*). Nepal is the sixth poorest country in the world.

The aim of **Children of the Snow Land** is:

- To show a global audience what some young people have to do for an education - and allow the Children of the Snow Land to inspire people around the world with their tenacity, grace, courage and wisdom.
- To increase awareness and help improve the lives of Himalayan children attending school far from home by helping them to stay connected with their families, and to ensure they make full use of the education for which they have made such a sacrifice. The film has already inspired donations of over \$30,000 to directly help the children.

**Children of the Snow Land** is in UK cinemas from March 2019 [www.childrenofthesnowland.com](http://www.childrenofthesnowland.com)

**Website and Social Media:**

[www.childrenofthesnowland.com](http://www.childrenofthesnowland.com)

<http://www.facebook.com/ChildrenoftheSnowLand>

[http://www.instagram.com/Snowland\\_Film](http://www.instagram.com/Snowland_Film)

[https://twitter.com/Snowland\\_Film](https://twitter.com/Snowland_Film)

**Original Score Soundtrack Album** “Children of the Snow Land” is available on [iTunes](#) and [Spotify](#).

**For all press queries, interviews and assets please contact:**

[matt@dartmouthfilms.com](mailto:matt@dartmouthfilms.com) or [wayne@dartmouthfilms.com](mailto:wayne@dartmouthfilms.com)

**Film Festival Premieres and Awards:**

World Premiere - Kathmandu International Mountain Film Festival - Official Selection

UK Premiere - London Independent Film Festival - Winner Best Documentary Feature

International Premiere - Valletta Film Festival - Winner of 2 awards: Teen Choice Award & Audience Award

North American Premiere - Banff - Official Selection

American Premiere - DOC LA - Winner Best international Documentary

Swiss Mountain Film Festival 2018 - Winner Best Film

Festival de Montagne Autrans - Winner Prix Ina for Best First Film

Nepal Human Rights International Film Festival - Winner Best Film

I Will Tell Film Festival - Winner Best Feature Documentary

## **NOTES TO THE EDITOR : BIOGRAPHIES**

### **Zara Balfour - Director / Producer**

Zara is a director and producer with 18 years experience in all forms of documentary and content production, specialising in films about the world we live in and people and cultures worldwide. She has filmed in over 20 countries, often documenting community projects in developing countries.

She began her career as an actress and moved behind the camera as producer and director. Zara set up Picture on the Wall Productions and has won awards at film festivals including Berlin (Prix UIP, Best European Short Film), London as well as the European Film Awards and Creative Review. Zara worked closely with director Sophie Fiennes on production for the BBC's Storyville strand, then moved on to producing and/or directing branded content, short documentary films and TV commercials. She recently produced branded documentary films for the BRIT Awards with Mark Ronson (Webby Award winner), Ellie Goulding, Robbie Williams and the James Bond composer David Arnold. *Children of the Snow Land* is Zara's first feature documentary film. She is currently in development with two more feature documentaries.

<http://www.pictureonthewall.co.uk>

### **Marcus Stephenson - Director / Producer**

Marcus is a director and producer with 20 years experience in broadcast television and digital communication. Owner and Director of Mayfly Television, formed in May 2015 and which has won two major commissions from Channel 4 television to date, most recently *Stately Homemaking* presented by Phil Spencer.

Marcus has a Royal Television Society nomination, won an MTV and a Grammy Award, and has devised three major TV series. *Children of the Snow Land* is Marcus's first feature documentary film. He is currently in development with several new TV Series.

<http://www.mayflytv.com>

### **Christopher Hird - Executive Producer**

Christopher Hird is a leading figure in UK independent documentary making. He is the founder and managing director of Dartmouth Films, which has pioneered new ways of funding, producing and distributing documentaries in the UK, as well as promoting the work of new and emerging filmmakers.

Among the films which Christo has executive produced: *Black Gold*, *The End of the Line*, *The Flaw*, *Fire in the Blood*, *McCullin*, *Still the Enemy Within*, *Death of a Gentleman*, *The Divide* and John Pilger's films *The War You Don't See* and *Utopia*.

He is a former chair of the [Sheffield International Documentary Festival](#) and was the founding chair of the [Channel Four Britdoc Foundation](#). He is currently a trustee of the [Wincott Foundation](#), and [One World Media](#) and is a director of the Bureau of Investigative Journalism. He is a patron of the [Grierson Trust](#) and an honorary life member of [The London Film School](#).

<http://www.dartmouthfilms.com>