

“Nine Million Stars” Music Video Celebrates Nepali Carpet Weaving as Sustainable Alternative to Migrant Labour



Photo: Dimo Feldmann

Kathmandu, Nepal – June 1, 2017: At a press conference held today, fair trade organization Label STEP and Jan Kath, renowned designer of hand-knotted carpets, launched a campaign to promote the benefits of carpet production as a key industry in Nepal and a critically important employer for the developing country’s people. The campaign centres on an eye-opening yet inspiring music video entitled “Nine Million Stars” – the number of stars in the sky according to Nepali folklore.

“Label STEP and Jan Kath call on Nepal’s industries and government to increase their efforts to present a more sustainable future for the country’s economy and more attractive prospects for Nepal’s workers,” said Reto Aschwanden, Managing Director of Label STEP, an NGO that has been working to ensure fair trade practices in the carpet industry since 1995. “We hope that our campaign will also encourage Nepali workers to build their careers and their lives at home rather than choosing to work at often dangerous and disruptive jobs abroad.”

Currently 10 percent of Nepal's 28 million population work abroad. While remittances from migrant workers contribute significantly to Nepal's annual revenues, an alarming number of these hardworking individuals do not return home alive to their families (one in 500). Last year alone 500,000 workers (95% men) left the country for work abroad, mainly to Malaysia, Qatar and Saudi Arabia. In addition to the direst consequences of labour migration, workers and the families they leave behind face countless other challenges and hardships.

About the Handmade Carpet Industry in Nepal

Nepal is a leading manufacturer of handmade carpets for contemporary interior design markets worldwide. Handmade carpets represent the country's most important export product with more than 600,000 square metres sold annually (around \$75 million USD). Handmade Nepali carpets, known for their creativity and high-quality, have become synonymous with high-end contemporary design globally.

Even more important for the small country, which is still recovering from a devastating earthquake in 2015, the industry employs tens of thousands of people, primarily as weavers, but also as wool spinners, dyers, designers, washers, office workers, quality controllers and other related positions.

About the Music Video

"Nine Million Stars," starring Nepali blockbuster actor Reecha Sharma and renowned theatre actor Tika Bhakta Jirel, was directed by Nepal's award-winning Tsering Rhitar Sherpa. The video opens with the shot of a plain wooden coffin – sadly, an all-too-familiar scene for people in Nepal (every day the dead bodies of several migrant workers arrive at Kathmandu airport). Set to music and lyrics by Ankit Babu Adhikari (who also sings together with Sujata Verma), arranged by Rikesh Gurung, the video not only touches on the negative consequences of labour migration but beautifully depicts the strength, skill and creativity of the men and women working in a thriving Nepali carpet industry. When the weavers dance the work of choreographer Prashant Tamang, it is an unexpected highlight.

"Nine Million Stars" was produced by Mila Productions and executive produced by Label STEP and Jan Kath. It will be distributed via social media and on Nepali TV, and can be previewed at:

YouTube: <https://youtu.be/b5XVE-C7AN4>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/LabelSTEP/videos/10155318365774544/>

About Label STEP

Label STEP is the international non-profit fair trade organization committed to improving the wellbeing of weavers and workers in the handmade carpet industry. By campaigning for good working and living conditions, fair wages, eco-friendly production, and the prohibition of child labour, Label STEP enables the continued development of a sustainable carpet industry. The label distinguishes companies who commit to independent inspection and verification of STEP's fair trade standards throughout their entire supply chain. STEP was founded in Switzerland in 1995 and is the only organization working in all major rug and carpet producing countries. www.label-step.org

About Jan Kath

Jan Kath is one of the world's most in-demand designers of hand-knotted carpets. He purposely breaks with conventional styles and throws strict design rules overboard. The man from Bochum, Germany doesn't shy away from combining classic elements from the oriental carpet with contemporary, minimalist design. Another major theme of his current work involves the interpretation of photorealistic motifs in textile art, which Kath perfects together with the carpet weavers he employs in workshops in Kathmandu. Jan Kath is represented worldwide by select dealers and he owns and operates Jan Kath stores in Bochum, Berlin, Hamburg, Cologne, New York, Munich, Vancouver and Stuttgart.

www.jan-kath.de

About Mila Productions

Mila Productions is a team of experienced and dedicated film and video professionals who have been working in the field for about two decades. Through their local knowledge and filming experience, they provide a full range of high-quality film and video production services in Nepal, India and Bhutan. Mila Productions offers filming services, film and video production services, location support and services, post production services – including editing, transcription and translation services.

www.milaproductions.com

"Nine Million Stars" Video Credits

Direction:
Tsering Rhitar Sherpa

Produced by:
Jan Kath
Label STEP

Post Production:
Mila Productions Pvt. Ltd.

Actors:
Reecha Sharma
Tika Bhakta Jirel

Camera:
Babu Shrestha

Choreography:
Prashant Tamang,
United Multi Arts

Lyrics / Composition:
Ankit Babu Adhikari

Vocals:
Ankit Babu Adhikari
Sujata Verma

Chorus:
Kriti Nepali
Kiran Chamling

Music Arrangement:
Rikesh Gurung

Still Photography:
Dimo Feldmann

Special Thanks: Kaju Art Rugs, Central Carpet Industry Association Nepal

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For more information and high-res images, please contact:

Label STEP International: Reto Aschwanden | reto@label-step.org | +41(0)61 273 41 93

Label STEP North America: Alison Hope | alison@hopecommunications.ca | +1(416) 762 2313

Jan Kath: Gaby Herzog | gabyherzog@jan-kath.de | +49 (0) 163 776 70 53