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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Team Rubicon supports earthquake-damaged community in Nepal

Team Rubicon has completed a two-week operation assisting a local community in a remote part of Nepal, whose village was destroyed by the devastating earthquake in April 2015. The main purpose of the project was to help the community with the ongoing temporary rebuild of their school, so the children will have adequate education facilities as they approach the monsoon season.

Prince Harry joined Team Rubicon volunteers for part of Operation: Nirman (meaning “build’ in Nepali) following his official tour to the country last month.

Volunteers for the charity, which uses the skills and experiences of military veterans in the aftermath of natural disasters, worked with the villagers of Lapubesi in the Gorkha region to help with the ongoing rebuild of their school and repair of a hydro-electric turbine that had previously provided energy to around 300 homes in the village before it was destroyed. The veterans also helped install a new solar farm to provide sustainable electricity for the school and surrounding homes.

The village of Lupabesi is close to the epicentre of the April 2015 earthquake, which completely devastated the local community, like so many others in Nepal. It has a population of 3,000 people and 95% of their homes were destroyed by the earthquake. 16 people in the community lost their lives and over 150 were injured. When the school was destroyed, the 250 children aged between 3 and 18 were forced into a basic structure of tarpaulins and tin. These conditions saw a drop in attendance of children taking classes. The villagers, who live in a remote and often inhospitable environment, formed a community committee which has been working on plans to construct a semi-permanent structure on the land where the school had stood, before the monsoon seasons begins in a couple of months.

In their short time volunteering in the village, the Team Rubicon volunteers have made a huge impact on the community by assisting them with their project. They have restored basic facilities and, perhaps most importantly, restored hope by empowering a community to help themselves.

Working in the remote region was incredibly challenging and highlighted the extent of the recovery operation that the local community has faced over the last year. Lapubesi is a 7-hour off-road drive from Kathmandu, followed by a further 2.5-hour trek on foot along the ridgeline of the hills.

The primary role for the Team Rubicon volunteers was to help the community lay a concrete base for one of the larger school classrooms. With no machinery available and using only local tools and methods, it was clear just how much work is required to construct even a small building, such as a basic home, let alone replace an entire school. To lay the foundations for the school classroom, rocks had to be broken down to size by hand, and cement - carried from the nearest town 2.5 hours away - mixed and applied manually.

The team of veterans were also instrumental in helping the local community restore a much needed power supply. Since the hydro-electric turbine was significantly damaged by the earthquake, the only power in the village has been through individual solar charging units. To improve this, Team Rubicon helped create a solar farm, clearing a platform for the panels, before helping safely wire and install them.

The final challenge saw the team carry out as much groundwork as they could to help the village work towards repairing the infrastructure of the hydro-electric turbine. Working on the edge of a waterfall on steep terrain, the team cleared piles of rocks and boulders from water channels, and cleared and repaired the pump house containing the turbine and control systems. The villagers hope to clear the final landslide over the coming month that will allow the turbine to run again.

David Wiseman, a Team Rubicon UK volunteer said “It was a strange feeling to return to Nepal after being there last year in the immediate aftermath of the quake - we passed through towns and villages that I had seen devastated, literally leveled. It was even stranger when speaking to people this year that I had met previously, just days after their homes had been devastated. However it was heart warming to see and hear that they were rebuilding their lives and communities and it was humbling that we could be a small part of that rebuilding process. The work was physically demanding but it was great to be working together with other veterans in a tight knit team and this was a fantastic opportunity for us to work alongside the people of Lapubesi. I hope the school we have helped to build will serve this community for years to come.”

But Team Rubicon is not just about helping people get back on their feet following natural disasters. It is also about giving veterans a sense of purpose, an opportunity to serve again and in some cases a way to adjust to the challenges of civilian life. The team was made up of veterans from a number nationalities and backgrounds, including those who have been injured in service or suffered post traumatic stress following their time in the military.

Volunteer Manny Penuel, a former medic with the British Army, said: “PTSD has to do with guilt and you feel you are not wanted. You feel bad about yourself. So you join this team and come here. You are in a group of people who are always bringing up jokes so there’s something to laugh about all the time. They make you feel wanted. It’s amazing how all of a sudden you become the centre of something, someone is talking about you. It has helped me a lot. I am fit, I am controlling my PTSD and I have great friends now all over the world.”

Notes to Editors

Photographs and footage taken during Team Rubicon’s Operation: Nirman can be downloaded for news and editorial purposes here: <https://teamrubiconuk.box.com/s/kqc57spee5ccjhbnler6x1h8g5njmlu9>

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About Team Rubicon UK Team Rubicon unites the skills and experiences of military veterans with first responders to rapidly deploy emergency response teams to disasters in the UK and worldwide. The charity offers veterans the opportunity to continue their service by helping those affected by disasters while regaining a sense of purpose, community and identity.

For more about Team Rubicon in the UK, visit <http://www.teamrubiconuk.org>. Also see us on [Facebook](#) and follow us on [Twitter](#).