

Voluntary Organizations Work to Repair, Furnish Homes

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MAUNABO, Puerto Rico – Throughout Puerto Rico, voluntary organizations are addressing the disaster-related unmet needs of survivors of Hurricanes Irma and Maria.

More than 100 local and national voluntary organizations are helping Hurricane María survivors by cleaning and repairing damaged homes so they are safe and sanitary, and providing additional services to storm survivors to assist with their recovery.

Through the FEMA Voluntary Agencies Leading and Organizing Repair program, volunteers affiliated with over 50 voluntary organizations have completed minor repairs to more than 1,400 homes, and the repairs continue. Under this collaborative program, FEMA supplies construction materials and supplies and volunteers provide the labor.

“Volunteers are vital in helping survivors recover from disasters,” said Federal Coordinating Officer Mike Byrne, who is leading federal recovery efforts in Puerto Rico.

For instance, the Salvation Army’s Houses to Homes project supplies furniture, appliances and household goods including medical durable goods to disaster survivors when structural repairs or home remodeling is completed.



In all, the Salvation Army has provided more than 3.5 million hours of volunteer and employee services in response to the 2017 Atlantic hurricane season. That assistance extends beyond Puerto Rico's main island to its offshore municipalities of Vieques and Culebra as well as the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Survivors who live in a house in good structural condition with a permanent roof and those who have lost furnishings and appliances can apply for Houses to Homes assistance at recovery centers that the Government of Puerto Rico and FEMA operate throughout the island.

Eligible survivors may receive items they qualify for in as little as 30 days. Survivors may find their closest center at [FEMA.gov/DRC](https://www.fema.gov/DRC) or by calling the FEMA Helpline at 800-621-FEMA (3362).

Houses to Homes helped Eleobadis and Luz Delgado after their home of 30 years was swept away. They live in the southeastern municipality of Maunabo, not far from where María made landfall in Yabucoa.

FEMA disaster assistance and a low-interest disaster loan from the U.S. Small Business Administration helped them move to a new house in June. But the house became a home for the Delgados when a truck delivered bedroom furniture, a dining room set, a pair of mattresses and frames, a microwave and a washer.

"I feel good. I have peace in my sleep. I feel liberated, lighter. I have shaken off a lot of worries,"
Eleobadis said as he settled into his new home.

Nicky Roy, a project coordinator for the Salvation Army's long-term disaster services, has witnessed first hand the destruction left by Maria and the challenges as people put their lives back together.



“We kept going into people’s houses who were sitting on cinder blocks because they lost everything,” she said. “For us, this was the best unmet need we could fill and be efficient.”

For more information on how to directly assist Puerto Rico, visit www.unitedforpuertorico.com.

For more information on the Salvation Army, visit prvi.salvationarmy.org.

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Disaster recovery assistance is available without regard to race, color, religion, nationality, sex, age, disability, English proficiency or economic status. If you or someone you know has been discriminated against, call FEMA toll-free at 800-621-FEMA (3362) 711/VRS - Video Relay Service). Multilingual operators are available. (Press 2 for Spanish). TTY call [800-462-7585](tel:800-462-7585).

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Page 3 of 4

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Page 4 of 4