

Voluntary and Non-Governmental Organizations Save Lives, Feed, and Support Survivors in U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico

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WASHINGTON – FEMA and the entire federal family is engaging in a unified effort to sustain lives and restore routine in the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico.

A crucial component has been and remains the collaboration between government, the private sector, and non-governmental volunteer and humanitarian organizations that are essential to securing vital economic services in the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria. Many organizations are fully engaged in supporting survivors in the Caribbean. Volunteers were positioned throughout the islands since even before the storm made landfall to rush aid to areas that needed it most.

These organizations, funded mainly on the generosity of their members, are providing services and gathering and shipping non-perishable food, water, clean up kits and supplies to disaster survivors. Here are some examples of just a few organizations engaged in supporting ongoing relief efforts:

- [All Hands Volunteers](#) sent an Immediate Response Team to St. Thomas. This week, they began cleanup for a middle school for 700 low-income children, mucking, gutting and removing debris. They have been gutting the basement of a local church that originally offered to host them, then sustained significant flooding with Hurricane Maria. All Hands Volunteers continues to make assessments throughout the island, working to identify the greatest needs and most vulnerable populations. Volunteers will also be working to clear paths to several natural springs so people without their own water source can flush and shower.
- The [American Red Cross](#) has nearly 700 trained disaster workers supporting relief efforts in the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico. Additionally, more than



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100 more workers are on the way. Along with partners, the American Red Cross served more than 594,000 meals and snacks, distributed more than 324,000 relief items, and provided more than 10,400 mental health and health services to survivors.

- [Americares](#) response team in Puerto Rico hand-carried \$60,000 worth of antibiotics and medical supplies, some of which were delivered to a children's hospital. The team is working with the Department of Health in Puerto Rico and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to facilitate and manage supply shipments and conduct damage assessments on health facilities. Also, they will be doing air and cargo shipments of medicines and medical supplies for the recovery.
- The [Church of the Latter-Day Saints](#) is mobilizing non-perishable food, water, and other commodities to Puerto Rico and the islands. They are working with the American Red Cross and other relief agencies to help shelter displaced residents, distribute food, and provide home repair materials. In addition, arrangements have been made with a few large grocery store chains on the island to purchase bulk items to support members of the community. Building supplies such as plywood, roofing materials, nails, tools, and tarps are being shipped from the U.S. mainland.
- The [Church World Service](#) shipped 22,500 hygiene kits and 500 tarps to Puerto Rico. More than 100,000 hygiene kits and emergency cleanup buckets have already been mobilized.
- The [Salvation Army](#) is in the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico. In Puerto Rico, they are preparing meals at all 13 fixed feeding sites and using nine mobile feeding units to deliver meals to the general public, people who are confined to their homes, nursing homes, and shelters. They distributed 26,000 Meals Ready to Eat (MRE) and shelf stable meals to communities in addition to dropping off pallets of food boxes and water. Also, they are working with partners to send containers of water, food and vital supplies to St. Thomas, St. Croix, and St. John.
- Also, the Department of Homeland Security's Center for Faith-Based & Neighborhood Partnerships and FEMA continue to coordinate with faith-based and community partners including, [T.D. Jakes MegaCARE](#), [National Latino Evangelical Coalition](#), [World Vision](#), [Duncan USVI Relief](#), the [African Methodist Episcopal Church Health Commission](#), [Howard University](#), [Wheaton College Humanitarian Disaster Institute](#), the [National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc.](#), All Healers Mental Health Alliance and others serving to meet the immediate and



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long term needs of survivors.

For those who want to help but don't know how, the National Voluntary Agencies Active in Disaster (NVOAD) offers ways to help at www.nvoad.org.

FEMA does not transport donations collected by local, tribal, territorial or state governments, or collected by private sector, non-governmental organizations, or voluntary organizations from point-of-collection to impacted areas.

NVOAD is coordinating closely with governors' offices on offers of assistance. For more information on how to directly assist the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, visit www.unitedforpuertorico.com. For more information on how to directly assist the U.S. Virgin Islands, visit www.usvirecovery.org.

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