



2017 HURRICANES

FIVE YEARS LATER

In 2017, a series of major hurricanes devastated the Caribbean and southern United States. Hurricane Harvey came first, in August. Hurricane Irma and Hurricane Maria arrived in September. **Lutheran Disaster Response raised over \$15 million from generous donors, allowing an immediate, robust response from Texas to the U.S. Virgin Islands.**

Five years later, the impact of your gifts continues. Long-term recovery, especially in Puerto Rico, is ongoing, and together, we have accompanied our partners the entire time. LDR is known for staying after the headlines change, and your support makes this possible. **Thank you!**



Lutheran
Disaster Response

Hurricane Harvey — Aug. 25, 2017

Hurricane Harvey made landfall in Texas and Louisiana as a Category 4 hurricane. In Texas, over 48,000 homes were damaged. Hurricane Harvey was the wettest tropical storm on record in the United States — in the Houston metropolitan area, most locations experienced over 30 inches of rain. The rain caused severe flooding and breached levees. About 25% of Harris County, where Houston sits, was submerged.

A grant from Lutheran Disaster Response helped a community partner develop a holistic case management program. The biggest needs of survivors were home repairs and securing furniture and appliances, though case managers also helped clients identify resources for legal assistance, emergency utility assistance, and emotional and spiritual care.

Among the many accompanied were Burmese and Cambodian communities. These families are often underserved after disasters because recovery systems are ill-designed to serve them effectively. Many government agencies lack the language resources or connections to the community needed to provide critical support.

A neighborhood of renewal

Chris* was recently discharged from the Army and had finally reunited with his wife and three children in Victoria County, Texas, when Hurricane Harvey arrived. Evacuated from their home, they stayed with family in San Antonio for more than two weeks. Upon their return, they found the roof of their mobile home caved in and almost everything inside ruined.

Chris received some Federal Emergency Management Agency assistance for repairs but not enough to address the extensive damage. Without a roof over their heads, the family was forced to move from place to place — various apartments, an RV, homes of family members — without any permanent solution.

Then a case manager funded by LDR accompanied Chris and his family through the recovery process. With the case manager's help, Chris applied for a house in Hope Meadows, a neighborhood of new homes for survivors who had lost theirs in the hurricane. This allowed the family to stay in Victoria County. They closed on their home in June 2020. The grant from LDR also helped the family meet utility expenses, pay back taxes and obtain appliances for the new house.

Navigating the journey of renewal can be daunting. Disaster case managers are an invaluable resource for clients such as Chris, providing guidance, resources and accompaniment. Like them, LDR walks alongside survivors through the recovery and renewal process, no matter how many years it takes.

**Name changed for privacy.*

Your gifts

- Served **805** households.
- Served **2,253** people.
- Impacted **10** counties.



Chris and his wife closed on their new home in June 2020.

Hurricane Maria — Sept. 20, 2017

Hurricane Maria, a devastating Category 5 hurricane, ravaged the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico, both of which were still reeling from Hurricane Irma two weeks earlier. Puerto Rico experienced winds over 100 mph, flash flooding and an electrical blackout that lasted for months.

From the onset, your generosity made it possible for Lutheran Disaster Response to work with local Lutheran social service organizations, among other partners, to provide immediate relief to communities in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.

Through the Caribbean Synod, 21 churches in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands received funds to rebuild and repair their buildings. These churches faced challenges, such as finding contractors after the hurricane, yet all necessary repairs have been finished over the past five years.

Your gifts helped fund efforts to provide emotional and spiritual care to survivors, promote disaster-risk reduction to build community resilience and address the unmet needs of survivors through case management and long-term recovery efforts. LDR partners also coordinated volunteer groups housed at Eduardo Roig Lutheran Camp in Dorado. Volunteers from the mainland U.S. arrived in droves, ranging in age and skill level, to help rebuild homes and churches.

Your gifts

- Served **2,935** households.
- Served **6,425** people.
- Repaired **700** houses.
- Hosted **1,137** volunteers.
- Impacted **21** municipalities.

The journey to a new home

Over 25 years ago, Mayra began building her wooden home in Dorado, Puerto Rico. She added onto it over the years, room by room, as her family saved and took out loans for construction. The house had withstood many hurricanes since Mayra started building it, but the wooden house was no match for the 100 mph winds of Hurricane Maria.

“In all this time and all the hurricanes that have passed, we have felt them here,” Mayra said. “But Maria was something else. When we started to feel the winds or how things banged against the house, we knew the storm was hitting us hard.”

Before the hurricane even made landfall, officials were warning those with wooden homes to take shelter elsewhere. Like thousands of houses in Puerto Rico, Mayra’s home was completely destroyed — everything was gone except the floor.

“It was very hard,” she said. “You’re left with nothing.”

Now, five years after Hurricane Maria, Mayra is almost ready to move into her new home, thanks to the generosity of her family, her friends, her church and nonprofit organizations including Lutheran

Disaster Response. Between securing land, finding construction materials and waiting on contractors, this has been a slow process, and Mayra is thankful to have been able to stay with her mother during it. Mayra’s new home is concrete, as are most new buildings in Puerto Rico. It will fare much better against future storms.

Mayra’s house is a testament to the community collaboration required to rebuild after a disaster. The money for the doors and windows came from a Lutheran church in Pennsylvania. Lutheran Disaster Response helped supply new furniture and appliances as well as the building materials, such as concrete and plaster, that will fortify the house against future hurricanes. Much of the construction was performed by contractors and volunteers of the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Mayra’s cousin is an electrician, and as soon as he finishes wiring the house, Mayra will finally move in.

Mayra’s journey shows the resilience of disaster survivors — neighbors supported by your gifts to Lutheran Disaster Response. Through these five years she has stayed positive, grateful and faithful.

“But [Hurricane] Maria was something else. When we started to feel the winds or how things banged against the house, we knew the storm was hitting us hard.”

Mayra outside her new home.



Powerful partnerships

Lutheran Disaster Response works in partnership with congregations, synods, Lutheran social ministry organizations and other partners in the United States and around the world. With their deep knowledge of local needs and how to address them, these partners help us work in ways that are relevant and effective for each community. Through these partnerships, we accompany survivors from the time a disaster strikes until communities are rebuilt.

This work is made possible by the Lutheran Disaster Response network. We are particularly grateful to:

- The Caribbean Synod
- The Southwestern Texas Synod
- The Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod
- The Florida-Bahamas Synod
- Lutheran Social Services of Puerto Rico
- Lutheran Social Services of the Virgin Islands
- Upbring/Lutheran Social Services Disaster Response
- Lutheran Services Florida
- Inspiritus
- Liberty Lutheran/Lutheran Congregational Services

FIVE YEARS LATER

*Thank
you!*

*Eduardo Roig Lutheran Camp in Dorado, Puerto Rico,
where volunteers stayed after Hurricane Maria.*

*Ways to support
Lutheran Disaster
Response*

ONLINE

ELCA.org/disaster

BY MAIL

Write a check to Lutheran Disaster Response and send to: Evangelical
Lutheran Church in America
ELCA Gift Processing Center
P.O. Box 1809
Merrifield, VA 22116-8009

BY PHONE

Call 800-638-3522 to make a donation with a credit card. Operators are
ready to assist you Monday through Friday, 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Central time.



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