Rebuild Puerto Rico

Hurricane Maria, a devastating Category 4 hurricane, caused billions of dollars in damages to Puerto Rico and left 3.4 million island residents without power, potable water, and telecommunications. Recovery is estimated to take years. Centro has launched Rebuild Puerto Rico, an online information clearinghouse for the stateside Puerto Rican community and other allies to support disaster relief and recovery efforts. A Puerto Rico Recovery & Reconstruction newsletter highlighting new content on the online platform will be issued weekly and as needed.

Hurricane Maria devastated Puerto Rico at a time of great financial difficulty for the island and its residents, leaving behind widespread destruction and a humanitarian crisis. Stay up to date with recent events related to recovery and reconstruction efforts in Puerto Rico.

Puerto Rican community leaders and elected officials in the diaspora are calling for a renewed effort to assist Puerto Rico with disaster relief and recovery. Many have responded to this call to action and have planned events in support of relief efforts.

You can help by donating directly to charities in Puerto Rico that are leading the effort to mitigate the humanitarian crisis. The website contains a list of charities and local initiatives with direct access to the victims of these hurricanes.

This natural disaster will undoubtedly dictate the upcoming policy agenda for the island. It is imperative that we maintain public awareness for disaster relief efforts and engagement, not just in the emergency phase but also during recovery and reconstruction.

Several federal, state, local, and private sector programs are available for those affected by a natural disaster. This page contains a collection of important resources and agencies that can help you during this difficult time.

Connect with people and organizations that provide a service or work with the Puerto Rican community stateside and in Puerto Rico.

Through two interactive maps find information related to pre- and post-Maria conditions in Puerto Rico and the Puerto Rican solidarity movement in the United States.

Find information about collaboration opportunities or request for support from organizations that are working on the rebuilding of Puerto Rico.

News
Donate
Volunteer
Policy
Need Help?
Directory
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Introduction

The Center for Puerto Rican Studies’ (Centro) Puerto Rico Initiative began in 2015, shortly after three major credit agencies downgraded several bonds issued by Puerto Rico to “junk status,” thus ushering the Puerto Rican government-debt crisis. Centro’s main concern at that time was to brainstorm ways to ameliorate the fiscal crisis by convening experts and the general public from both the island and the US and come up with innovative policy strategies. Two years later, with the disastrous onslaught of Hurricane Maria, the Puerto Rico Initiative at Centro found itself navigating new terrain, reconfiguring the initial agenda to incorporate the unforeseeable social, infrastructural, environmental, and economic damages brought on by this natural disaster.

Suffice it to say that hurricane Maria was a major turning point for Puerto Rico, its diaspora solidarity movement, and for Centro. Because of the emigration from the island in the wake of the recessionary economic crisis and the devastating blow by hurricane Maria, Centro has redoubled its efforts to support a public understanding of the situation on the island and link it to developments in the United States. Thus, it is Centro’s main role to provide information and analysis to community leadership and to the general public regarding this crucial juncture affecting nearly nine million Puerto Ricans, both on the island and in the United States.

In this report, we follow Centro’s initiative to support long-term economic recovery in Puerto Rico and the assist with the rebuilding efforts post-hurricane Maria. This includes the following programmatic components:

1. Provide research, policy analysis, and recommendations for economic recovery and reconstruction.
2. Continue to serve as a neutral forum for the discussion of issues affecting Puerto Ricans and stateside Puerto Ricans, developing a stronger informational hub, particularly with regards to the dissemination of research about reconstruction efforts.
3. Engage with the civic sector in Puerto Rico and the U.S. to build bridges between communities, to support capacity building, and to produce reconstruction-related research and programmatic evaluation.

As part of the ongoing conference series, Puerto Rico, Puerto Ricans, we organized dozens of thematic panels led by stateside and Puerto Rico-based community leaders. After Hurricane Maria and as a follow up to the recommendations from conference participants, we organized a meeting with nearly thirty academic and civic leaders from Puerto Rico. The core question for discussion was: “How can Centro support the civic sector’s reconstruction and economic recovery efforts?” The response was to continue and expand on pertinent research; continue facilitating convening opportunities; and continue disseminating basic data useful for practitioners and policy makers alike. These discussions led us to expand our stateside work and a diaspora-led engagement strategy in order to support civic sector organizations in Puerto Rico.

For discussion purposes, we divide Centro’s initiative into three inter-related and mutually reinforcing areas:

- Academics, which include research, teaching and publications;
- Diaspora engagement, which includes the sponsoring of public forums and education that fosters a broad understanding of the situation in Puerto Rico and its impact on stateside communities; and,
- Civic sector support in Puerto Rico, which includes a strategic alliance with the incipient Instituto for Social Entrepreneurship and Community Action (Instituto de Desarrollo Empresarial y Acción Comunitaria, or, IDEAComún) and other Puerto Rico civic organizations, as well as the Centro-sponsored RebuildPR digital platform.
As an academic research institute, Centro’s core mission is to promote the understanding of the historical and socio-economic situation of the stateside Puerto Rican people. However, now more than ever, stateside communities are affected and experiencing change due to developments on the island. These changes include the economic crisis, the exodus to the United States, and the devastation caused by Hurricane Maria, all exacerbating both the economic crisis and the depopulation of the island.

Hurricane Maria, a devastating Category 4 hurricane, caused billions of dollars in damages to Puerto Rico and left 3.4 million island residents without electric power, potable water, and telecommunications. Recovery is estimated to take years. In response to these disastrous events, Centro incorporated Maria’s consequences into its Puerto Rico Initiative. Centro’s research, publications, and the RebuildPR digital platform are key pillars for the Puerto Rico Initiative, and thus reflect this thematic pivot.

In October 2017, just a few weeks after Hurricane Maria devastated the island, in partnership with the Puerto Rican Studies Association, Centro organized the conference, Puerto Rico, Puerto Ricans: Critical Perspectives on Puerto Rico. The proceedings from this conference formed the foundation for the publication of a special issue of the CENTRO Journal: Puerto Rico Post-Hurricane Maria: Origins and Consequences of a Crisis (30:3, Fall 2018). This volume addresses topics related to the economic, fiscal and humanitarian crisis in Puerto Rico following the catastrophic impact of Hurricanes Irma and Maria and the impact of the crisis on stateside Puerto Ricans. Authors present multidisciplinary perspectives on interrelated aspects of the crisis and prospects for the future.

Furthermore, the RebuildPR Research Group is an interdisciplinary, voluntary group of researchers that actively examine different areas of recovery in Puerto Rico post-Hurricane María. Over forty stateside and island-based researchers have joined efforts to conduct socio-economic impact analysis using the RebuildPR digital platform developed by Centro. This online research and community planning tool is based on ArcGis and provides the most comprehensive collection of GIS layers for Puerto Rico available to the public in a single repository form anywhere.

Centro’s Round Table on Puerto Rico is an advisory group of volunteers that serves as a sounding board for policy analysis and priority setting for policy research. This group has been instrumental in monitoring the implementation of PROMESA and its impact on the fiscal and economic crisis in Puerto Rico. The Round Table is comprised of legal, economic, and financial experts, as well as academics and community leaders from the United States and Puerto Rico. The audiences for the Round Table are (a) federal, state and local policy makers, and (b) the general public in need of nonpartisan, independent counsel on key aspects of economic growth in Puerto Rico and the PROMESA implementation process. Centro has sponsored private briefings targeting policy and opinion makers, and conferences and other events engaging the general public. As a result of the group discussions and recommendations, Centro has published several policy briefs on PROMESA and its impact on the island and its people (e.g. economic development, and other related topics, listed below as part of Publications).

In October of 2016, the Round Table submitted two briefs to the Congressional Task Force on Economic Growth in Puerto Rico: one on Federal Corporate Tax Incentives to Support Puerto Rico’s Socio-Economic Development; the other, on Energy Policy for Puerto Rico.

Research

In addition to the aforementioned research and publications, Centro is partnering with researchers in other universities throughout the country and in Puerto Rico to address changing social conditions and policy and programmatic responses in both Puerto Rico and stateside. Findings from completed research projects, often conducted with the financial support of local foundations, government agencies or community organizations, have received broad media coverage and impacted local policy making.

STORM SURGE: Report on the Findings from the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving Survey on Impact of PostMaria Displacement of Puerto Ricans and U.S. Virgin Islanders on Households in the Greater Hartford Region, February - May 2018

1 Purchase your individual copy of this issue for $20.00 at Centro Store: https://bit.ly/2O6A0Sh. Or, download a free summary pamphlet from our website at https://centropr.hunter.cuny.edu/sites/default/files/PDF_Publications/CENTROJournal_Fall2018_Brochure.indd.pdf.
Néstor Ríos, Principal Investigator
Response to Climate Emergencies (In progress)

Enlace de Familias: A Case Study on Community
Centro Research Associate, Principal Investigators
Puerto Ricans in Connecticut are already feeling the aftermath of hurricanes Irma and Maria. Fully one quarter of Puerto Rican respondents in the Greater Hartford Region are harboring people displaced by the cyclones. The overwhelming majority of these displaced arrivals in Connecticut have been staying with friends or relatives for several months. Moreover, their likelihood to stay in Connecticut appears indefinite, with one third unsure of how long they will remain in the state and nearly another third expecting to remain for several years. In addition, the majority of survey respondents expect more relatives or friends to travel to and remain in Connecticut for months or years. A free copy of this report can be downloaded from our website https://centropr.hunter.cuny.edu/.

Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Program in Holyoke, MA: An Assessment of the Post Hurricane Maria Impact (In progress)

Dr. Charles Venator-Santiago, Associate Professor of Political Science at UConn, and Carlos Vargas-Ramos, Centro Research Associate, Principal Investigators
In response to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts’ Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness program, this study elicits information for preparedness planning purposes stemming from contact with individuals who had to migrate as a direct result of catastrophic climate events such as Puerto Ricans displaced by hurricane Maria in 2017. In addition, we interview families and households in the city of Holyoke that opened their homes to those displaced by catastrophic climate events, the organizations and agencies that assisted both the displaced as well as those who welcomed them in their homes in the process of arriving and settling in Holyoke as well as the governmental entities and personnel who oversaw and coordinated or managed this process. Hurricane Maria revealed a vulnerability for Holyoke the municipality was not previously aware of, both in how the government of Puerto Rico and its municipalities responded to the crisis as well as the effect of the influx into Holyoke of people displaced by the storm in Puerto Rico. The demand for services and resources to serve these displaced storm survivors were not anticipated, and it has revealed the need to prepare for such future events.

Enlace de Familias: A Case Study on Community Response to Climate Emergencies (In progress)
Néstor Ríos, Principal Investigator
This case study examines how Enlace de Familias, a local non-for-profit social service organization, has helped implement the response to service needs experienced by Hurricane Maria migrants to the City of Holyoke. Specifically, the case study focuses on the nonprofit organizations service response, how Enlace spearheaded the development, organization and implementation of Holyoke’s Hurricane Maria migrant services response, and the follow up services after the initiation of the service response, the length of which will be contingent on the advice of the key informant. The case study will offer recommendations for community preparedness for climate emergencies.

In collaboration with researchers from the University of Puerto Rico, the University of Utah, and Clark University, and with IDEAComun and the Sociedad Puertorriqueña de Planificación. Centro is conducting research on the impact of Hurricanes Irma and Maria on the civic sector in Puerto Rico, and their capacity to engage in economic recovery initiatives.

Characteristics of community organizations and networks to promote disaster recovery in Puerto Rico (In progress)
Dr. Ivis García, Principal Investigator, University of Utah
This study has several objectives: to understand the characteristics of organizations (e.g., mission, type of services, funds, etc.), how the impact of the hurricanes Irma and Maria affected programs and services, and to understand how community networks had or could help organizations engaged in economic reconstruction.

Social Entrepreneurship Project: Learning & Training Case Studies
Dr. Ramón Borges-Méndez, Principal Investigator, Clark University
The study seeks to develop a series of social entrepreneurship case studies to support the organizational growth and capacity-building efforts of communities, municipalities, and social groups in Puerto Rico Post-Maria. In Puerto Rico, the devastating impact of Hurricane María (and Irma) in September 2017 unleashed a wide array of community-based and institutional efforts, public and private, now in need of models and tools with which to pursue resources, and to deliver goods and services to communities and citizens. These cases intend to serve as the teaching and learning medium of cross-fertilization among organizations involved in civil society-driven reconstruction.

Survey on professional competencies to promote post-disaster economic recovery in Puerto Rico
Dr. Edwin Meléndez, Principal Investigator, Hunter College
The purpose of this research study is to understand the skills that professionals need to promote economic recovery in Puerto Rico. The results will guide the development of continuing education courses and other workforce development and capacity building initiatives. They will be shared as a special report, in academic publications, in a webinar and in conference sessions.
Publications

Centro’s reports, research, and policy briefs are important sources of data and analysis about critical issues in Puerto Rico. These reports have been covered broadly by the stateside and island media. Below is a listing of the most significant publications in chronological order.

State of Puerto Ricans 2017
This book provides an updated overview of some of the most salient subjects and themes about the Puerto Rican population in the United States. It highlights the continued mobility and expansion of the Puerto Rican population throughout the country, including intra-state migration, migration from Puerto Rico in light of the economic crisis on the island, as well as the role of service in the armed forces in terms of new areas of settlement.

Puerto Rico in Crisis Timeline (May 2017)
In this timeline, we summarize the most important milestones as well as the impacts of federal and local policies on Puerto Rico’s economy.

Estimates of Post-Hurricane Maria Exodus from Puerto Rico (October 2017)
Though it is difficult to find comparable situations, we estimated that between 114,000 and 213,000 Puerto Rico residents would leave the island annually in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria. From 2017 to 2019, we estimated that Puerto Rico might lose up to 470,335 residents or 14% of the population—comparable to the population the island lost during the previous decade, due to economic stagnation.

Post-Hurricane Maria Exodus from Puerto Rico and School Enrollment in Florida (December 2017)
Hurricane Maria’s impact on Puerto Rico and its population has led to a significant exodus to the United States, especially to Florida. In this report, we use post-Hurricane Maria school enrollment data from Florida school districts to assess the population flows from Puerto Rico. School enrollment data is considered a more reliable indicator of permanent migration than other available data.

Puerto Rican Post-Maria Relocation by States (March 2018)
This research brief presents findings of the relocation of Puerto Ricans to the U.S. mainland as a result of Hurricane Maria’s aftermath. Data from FEMA and school enrollment data from the selected states’ Department of Education are used to analyze Puerto Rican relocation patterns in the U.S. mainland. Overall, the data shows that Puerto Ricans have dispersed throughout the United States, concentrating disproportionally in Florida.

The Housing Crisis in Puerto Rico and the Impact of Hurricane Maria (June 2018)
At least 18% of Puerto Rico’s housing stock is vacant as a result of the island’s prolonged economic recession, which commenced in 2006. The spike in foreclosures after Hurricane Maria suggests that vacant units are increasing at an accelerated rate. Puerto Rico’s economic recession led to depopulation and the loss of jobs, which induced a decline of home equity values and an increase in foreclosures.

Puerto Rican Exodus: One Year Since Hurricane Maria (September 20, 2018)
One year since Hurricane Maria made landfall in Puerto Rico on September 20, 2017, nearly 160,000 residents of the island had relocated to the United States. This exodus represents one of the most significant migrations of Puerto Ricans to the U.S. mainland in the island’s history, both in terms of volume and duration. The new emigration estimates are as high as the net migration flow from the previous two years, combined (144,801).

STORM SURGE: Report on Hartford Survey (September 2018)
Fully one quarter of Puerto Rican respondents in the Greater Hartford Region are harboring people displaced by the cyclones. Survey respondents identified housing issues and insufficient food as the most critical needs they were facing in Connecticut, along with healthcare. These needs have added a heavy responsibility on Connecticut’s already over-extended and resource-limited Puerto Rican community.
Puerto Rico is in a unique position as a beneficiary of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (Stafford Act, 1974), the law that structures federal natural disaster assistance for states and territories. This report examines funding from the multiplicity of local and federal agencies involved with disaster recovery, which include Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and many others.

According to the 2018 U.S. Census Bureau’s Population Estimates, Puerto Rico’s population declined 4% since 2017, down to 3.1 million. This declining population has led to school closures throughout the Island. The total number of operational schools has declined from 1,515 --at its peak in 2006-- to 855 in 2018. Most school closures disproportionately occurred in the island's rural areas (65%) relative to urban areas (35%).

In this report we provide a continuation of last year's timeline of the major occurrences in the aftermath, an analysis of the media's coverage of the disaster, the impact of Hurricane Maria Evacuees on the Puerto Rican population in the United States and the migration effects resulting in school closures.

Using the 2017 U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey (5-year estimates), at least 15% of Puerto Rico’s population resided in the 100-year floodplain. This report utilizes the Center for Disease Control’s (CDC) ‘social vulnerability index’ (SVI) to measure resiliency among the Island’s communities faced with human or natural induced hazards, like flooding. The purpose of this research brief is to help inform policy, planners, and community leaders the population and housing structures at risk in the Island’s floodplains.

Post-disaster planning and federal funding for economic recovery offer Puerto Rico’s community development industry a unique window of opportunity. This opportunity hinges on the capacity of the nonprofit sector securing federal grants, joining government efforts in planning and then executing economic development projects. This report provides an evidence-based assessment of the current capacity of and prospects for the nonprofit sector to become an active participant in the economic recovery of Puerto Rico and, more generally, to be able to take advantage of this window of opportunity.

Other related Policy Briefs, published regularly in our newsletter Centro Voices and available in the Puerto Rico News repository on our website, include, among others:

- A Critical Point for Puerto Rico
- Policy Recommendations for a Long-Term Disaster Recovery Package
- Hurricane Maria: Immediate Impact and Response
- Disaster Relief Appropriations for Puerto Rico
- Disaster Aid for Puerto Rico: Congressional Actions
- The Diaspora Helps Rebuild Puerto Rico
- Disaster Relief Appropriations for Puerto Rico
- How Latest Federal Appropriations for Disaster Relief Help Puerto Rico
The Puerto Rico, Puerto Ricans National Youth Leadership Encuentro is a student driven leadership experience. A space where participants explore the socio-economic crises that Puerto Ricans in the United States and Puerto Rico face; and gain the skills necessary to analyze, frame, and develop solutions that would impact Puerto Ricans throughout the nation.

The Encuentro provides a safe space for the discussion of policy issues and the articulation of community responses to Puerto Rico’s challenges from the perspective of stateside Puerto Ricans and other stakeholders.

**Participants:**

*Learn* about the current situation in Puerto Rico and its impact on stateside Puerto Ricans, through presentations and discussions at the Encuentro, events, videos and Centro research.

*Connect* with other student leaders through networking and community-building events. Attendees will have the opportunity to meet with community leaders from around the country, exchange ideas about affecting social change for our community, and dream a better future for 8.7 million Puerto Ricans.

*Develop plans of action* for addressing Island and stateside socio-economic challenges.
In October of 2015, Centro co-sponsored a conference along with a coalition of community leaders and organizations entitled Encuentro Nacional de la Diáspora Puertorriqueña: Construyendo Una Agenda Por Puerto Rico in Orlando, Florida. This was the first major event with representatives from multiple states addressing the Puerto Rico debt crisis from a diaspora perspective. The goal of the conference was to discuss potential policy alternatives to the debt and delineate an engagement plan of action.\(^2\) Since that initial departure point, Centro has actively engaged in providing a non-partisan public discussion space for the understanding of unfolding historical events.

The Puerto Rico, Puerto Ricans is a series of search conferences and forums that disseminate accurate and non-partisan information based on research findings. They foster safe spaces for the discussion of policy issues and the articulation of community responses to Puerto Rico’s economic and environmental crisis from the perspective of stateside Puerto Ricans and other stakeholders. Conference programs are designed to balance topics including the economic, fiscal and unfolding humanitarian crisis in Puerto Rico and to engage the community in a thorough discussion of the impacts of the crisis on stateside Puerto Ricans. Top scholars and leaders come together to explore solutions to the critical problems facing our people. ¡Los de aquí y los de allá! For a detailed account of the initiative’s trajectory, please see the following timeline.

**Puerto Rican Voices: Rebuild Puerto Rico**

*Puerto Rican Voices*, our television series, premiered in 2015 and highlights the contributions of Puerto Ricans across the United States. Co-produced with WIPR, it has had a successful three-season run since its debut. In 2016, it received the Imagen Award for Best Local Informational Program. Its programming is presently available through CUNY-TV and CentroTV.

The fourth season of Puerto Rican Voices will be devoted to RebuildPR. Debuting on BronxNet and CUNY-TV this fall season, the show will highlight the contributions civic organizations have made to the reconstruction efforts. Filmed in Puerto Rico and the United States, each thirty-minute episode will be devoted to a different reconstruction topic. Topics include:

1. Housing
2. Agriculture
3. Community Centers Development
4. Education
5. Faith-Based Communities
6. Environment
7. Health
8. New York Response
9. Diaspora Solidarity
10. Energy
11. Economy

**Encuentro Nacional de la Diáspora Puertorriqueña: Construyendo Una Agenda Por Puerto Rico**

**ORLANDO, FL, OCTOBER 13 & 14, 2015**

Representatives from multiple states discussed key elements of the debt crisis. As the economic crisis deepens in the island, stateside communities are redefined. Today more Puerto Ricans reside stateside than in Puerto Rico and they are increasingly dispersed across the nation. In this context, how can we in the U.S. support Puerto Rico?

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Diaspora Summit
NEW YORK, APRIL 22 & 23, 2016

Hundreds of stateside and island-based Puerto Ricans came together at the conference, hosted by Centro, at the pinnacle of the current economic and humanitarian crisis. Close to eighty stateside organizations and several members of Congress were represented among the panelists.

Parades and Festivals
NEW YORK, DECEMBER 03, 2016

This conference brought together key members of organizations in the United States that organize Puerto Rican parades and festivals to gain a broader understanding of how they promote Puerto Rican culture and heritage and how they can work together in solidarity with Puerto Rico.

Puerto Rican Studies Association
NEW YORK, OCTOBER 28, 2017

Puerto Rican higher education scholars and their allies presented academic research on Puerto Rico and shared ideas for an academic diaspora’s response to the crisis.

New England Summit
HOLYOKE, MA, SEPTEMBER 17, 2016

Puerto Ricans from Connecticut, Rhode Island and Massachusetts, along with policy experts from the island and New York, met in Holyoke, Massachusetts to gain a broader understanding of the island’s economic crisis and its impacts on their local communities.

Diaspora Summit II
NEW YORK, MAY 12 & 13, 2017

The timing of this conference was critical: May 1 was the deadline for the stay on the debt enacted as part of PROMESA. The core objective at the summit was to take stock of where we were after this key deadline, how to make a difference in our community’s understanding of the situation, and how to shape strategies moving forward.

Multimedia Makers & Actors Friday
NEW YORK, NOVEMBER 10, 2017

In light of the devastation caused by Hurricane Maria, Centro’s Creative Network of the Puerto Rican Diaspora, in partnership with Prime Latino Media brought together multimedia content makers, actors, and journalists from across the country to gain a broader understanding of the humanitarian and economic crises in Puerto Rico and explore the use of multimedia arts as vehicles for social change.
Washington, DC Diaspora Summit
NOVEMBER 18, 2017

Just two months after Hurricane Maria, Centro, Cenadores Puerto Rico (PR), the National Conference of Puerto Rican Women (NACOPRW) – DC Chapter, UDC Latino/a Law Students Association, 100 Days for Puerto Rico, Friends of Puerto Rico, and the National Puerto Rican Agenda hosted a one-day summit to discuss policy issues and to articulate the community responses to Puerto Rico’s economic and humanitarian crisis from the perspective of Puerto Ricans in the Washington, D.C. area and other stakeholders.

Diaspora Summit III
NEW YORK, MAY 11 & 12, 2018

This was the first Summit after Hurricane Maria. In response to the recommendations from this event, Centro, in partnership with other educational institutions and civic organizations throughout the diaspora and Puerto Rico, launched the Rebuild Puerto Rico Initiative. This clearinghouse seeks to facilitate the connections and collaborations of Puerto Rico’s civic sector and Puerto Ricans in the diaspora who want to join efforts in rebuilding Puerto Rico.

In Pursuit of Puerto Rican Studies Research Summit
ORLANDO, FL, APRIL 16 & 17, 2019

Co-sponsored by the University of Central Florida Research HUB, and in conjunction with Florida scholars from across an array of colleges and universities, this research summit was designed to establish a strategic direction for research specifically for Puerto Ricans in Florida, and more generally for Puerto Rican Studies as a field.

Washington, DC Diaspora Summit II
OCTOBER 26 & 27, 2018

This was a two-day conference on policy issues and community responses from the perspective of Puerto Ricans in the nation’s capital. In addition to the founding partners, this event was co-sponsored by the DC Mayor’s Office on Latino Affairs.

National Youth Leadership Encuentro
JUNE 4-7, 2019

This is a student driven, four-day leadership conference. Participants examined the socio-economic crises that Puerto Ricans in the United States and Puerto Rico face; gained skills necessary to analyze, frame, and develop solutions that would impact Puerto Ricans throughout the nation; and, connected with other student leaders from around the country.
The Puerto Rico, Puerto Rican Conference, co-sponsored by the Puerto Rican Studies Association (New York, October 28, 2017), brought close to thirty Puerto Rico community leaders from the island who had called a meeting with the Centro leadership to discuss recommendations made by many of the sessions. Their main takeaway was that the search-conference approach and neutral forum for deliberations and strategy formulations would be beneficial to the civic sector in Puerto Rico. They strongly urged us to convene a planning meeting in Puerto Rico to further collaborate with academic and other community leaders from the diaspora.

In a planning meeting in December, an expanded group of those attending the New York conference made two core recommendations: to celebrate a Puerto Rico, Puerto Ricans conference in Puerto Rico, and to support the creation of communications and information mechanisms among civic organizations in Puerto Rico that would foster collaborations with civic organizations in the diaspora. That engendered a series of public forums in Puerto Rico co-sponsored by Centro and an expansion of the functions of the digital platform RebuildPR to include three additional components: Directory, Data Hub, and Exchange.

The conference Resiliencia y Solidaridad: Encuentro con la Diáspora (June 15, 2018) was held at the University of Puerto Rico and included a second day of training workshops or “talleres” (June 16) on the RebuildPR Data Hub for community planning. The conference, co-sponsored by numerous local organizations and hosted by the UPR School of Planning, sought to facilitate the connections and collaborations of Puerto Rico’s civic sector and Puerto Ricans in the diaspora who aimed to join efforts in rebuilding Puerto Rico. The Talleres de Mapeo was held June 16, 2018 at the UPR. This workshop trained about 75 participants in community planning on the Centro mapping application. As part of the promotion for this conference, Centro released the report, “The Housing Crisis in Puerto Rico and the Impact of Hurricane María” (June 2018). The planning group identified the housing crisis as a research priority.

Among other recommendations for collaborations, conference participants were unanimously interested in clarifying how civic organizations could benefit from federal funding and participate in the recovery and economic reconstruction of the island. In tandem with a working group of civic leaders --which eventually morphed into the Institute for Social Entrepreneurship and Community Action (Instituto de Desarrollo Empresarial y Acción Comunitaria, IDEAComún)—we organized the conference Conferencia Empresarismo Social y Reconstrucción (October 5, 2018) at the UPR, followed by the capacity-building training Talleres de Empresarismo Social y Reconstrucción (October 6, 2018), hosted by the Puerto Rico Manufacturers Association (Asociación de Industriales de Puerto Rico). In conjunction with this event, Centro released the report, “Rebuild Puerto Rico: A Guide to Federal Policy and Advocacy” (October 2018).

After the conferences, IDEAComún evolved into a civic, multi-sector coalition, which promotes social entrepreneurship as a strategy to support “comprehensive and sustainable economic development in Puerto Rico for the benefit and welfare of all communities and their residents.” In their view, “Puerto Rico’s present and future sustainable economic and social development depends on the active engagement toward common goals and the empowerment

III. Support to Puerto Rico’s Civic Sector and IDEAComún
of residents, private and nonprofit entrepreneurs, the civic sector, and other community collaborators.

One of the main goals of IDEAComún is to promote training and skills development in methods of social entrepreneurship. For this purpose, they created an education group of academics and other practitioners. One of their main goals is to offer continuing education training for professionals involved with community organizing and planning, economic and municipal development, and capacity building.

In addition, IDEAComún seeks to coordinate collaborative efforts among social entrepreneurs, communities, and their allies. To achieve this goal, it is important to create communication mechanisms and shared knowledge of effective practices for social change and community development. In general, Centro will collaborate with the IDEAComún organizations to support forums and conferences, research and publish relevant reports on topics related to reconstruction in Puerto Rico, make our newsletter, web resources, and co-sponsored seminars available, and support other means of dissemination of effective community practices.

In collaboration with IDEAComún, Centro co-sponsored the conference Empresarismo Social y Reconstrucción II (March 2019). The Social Entrepreneurship and Reconstruction II Conference: Development of Professional and Organizational Capabilities, was held at the Interamerican University in San Juan and the training workshops on social entrepreneurship for economic recovery were held and co-sponsored by the Manufacturers’ Association in Guaynabo, Puerto Rico. Both events were cosponsored by the IDEAComún member organizations and other partners. Our main objective with this conference was to assess the challenges and opportunities at a critical juncture of economic recovery and examine how community groups can foster social entrepreneurship and participate in federal programs to support economic development, job creation and reduction of poverty.

The last Symposium of Empresarismo Social y Recuperación Económica, was held on the island on August 7, 2019, and presented recent research on the civic and community sector participation after Hurricane María (Dra. Ivys García, Utah University), social entrepreneurship case studies (Dr. Ramón Borges, Clark University) cooperativism case studies (Dra. Marinés Aponte, University of
This table summarizes the core components of the proposed professional development and training program for program managers and community planners. The headings on the left correspond to the CDGB-DR RFQ and the entries on the right correspond to the competences that will be developed in the proposed training program.
Puerto Rico-Rio Piedras), a professional skills research (Dr. Edwin Meléndez - Center for Puerto Rican Studies), as well as mitigation case studies (Dra. Martha kohen - University of Florida) and a manual for mitigation in Puerto Rico, prepared by Rafael Torrech San Inocencio PhD. Hundreds of participants reached IDEAComún’s mitigation informative video, instructions and letter of intention model. Three Q&A webinars were organized during August to inform the participants about reaching mitigation federal funds for different projects.

FONDOS PARA MITIGACIÓN DE RIESGOS Y DESASTRES EN PUERTO RICO

The Community Development Block Grant-Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) program approved a series of funds that could be used for communities to develop a more resilient and prepared response for further emergencies. Dr. Rafael Torrech San Inocencio, Ph.D. produce an introductory video and conducted four (4) webinars guiding participants in the development of letters of intent for HMGP/404 mitigation projects.

Proponents were helped to refine their letters of intent (LOI), with and open forum for questions. Attendees discussed visuals illustrating the forms, samples of answers and a tool kit of materials, including the guide on mitigation for Puerto Rico. Approximately, $500,000,000 in proposals were submitted to FEMA.

IDEAComún Education Group

Centro will collaborate with the IDEAComún Education Group to develop a sequence of competency-based modules to train community planning and economic recovery professionals who are facing a new and challenging context (e.g., the advent of CDGB-DR and mitigation funding). This curriculum is based on a sequence of competency-based modules for comprehensive training on community planning and social entrepreneurship for the era of economic recovery in Puerto Rico. The proposed training...
and capacity-building components of the project are specific to the needs of community and municipal planning staff; professionals who are involved in the management of various related recovery programs.

The proposed program is aligned with the sets of skills specified in the RFQ issued by the Puerto Rico Department of Housing (PRDOH) for professional services for planners to implement the CDBG-DR program. A unique element of the proposed training program is its focus on specific development options, divided into sections for community economic development, and another set of modules for municipal economic development. In addition, the training includes modules for the development of community and municipal master plans. Finally, the proposed program would include a practicum where training participants will implement a development project for their organizations or a community client. Potential projects would include options such as a funding proposal for a CDGB-DR and/or other federal funding sources; planning and implementing a housing rehabilitation or construction project; or a social enterprise, among others.

In collaboration with Dr. José Sánchez Lugo, Director of Escuela Graduada de Ciencias y Tecnologías de la Información (EGCTI) at the University of Puerto Rico, Centro is currently supporting the creation of a distant learning platform and course management system to help educators in Puerto Rico collaborate on the development of an effective online professional training on community planning and social entrepreneurship for the era of economic recovery in Puerto Rico.

February 1st: Meeting with Instructors for the IDEA-Común certificate
A Group of more than 15 professionals have developed a curriculum and are working towards completing a certificate in different areas such as circular economy, mitigation and cooperativism, to create the first social entrepreneurship certificate in Puerto Rico.

February 5: CDC from US and PR meeting
More than 20 community development organizations from the island and mainland gathered to share perspectives, work and plans, to further cooperation, alliances and dialogue. The group in Puerto Rico is working towards creating the first Community Development Corporation’s cooperative in the islands.

February 5 2020: Simposio sobre vivienda y desarrollo económico comunitario en Puerto Rico
Almost a hundred of participants gathered to take part of this one day afternoon simposium, that gave perspectives from professionals regarding the development community corporations, experiences from organizations working in the ground and workshops on GIS data and USDA rural development funds.

Centro’s response to the storms, earthquakes and COVID-19
Centro’s PR initiative keeps bringing together a vast group of specialists and leaders, in a fruitful and active dialogue. During the past months, Centro’s PR initiative has held major events in Puerto Rico, oriented to continue the capacity building of leaders and communities, facilitating alliances and cooperation between entities, groups and organizations.

COVID-19 Webinar Series:
Elegibilidad para apoyo de FEMA durante la crisis del COVID-19 (March 27, 2020)
Around 500 attendees participated in this webinar conduct-
ed by Dr. Rafael Torrech San Inocencio, that focused on public assistance during the pandemic of COVID-19 and the funds available from FEMA to confront it.

COVID-19, Respuestas e intervenciones de salubridad y reembolsos federales disponibles
A webinar conducted on April 3rd, 2020 gathered around 400 participants with a specialized group of health professionals to communicate about the funds available for health research and funding. Centro’s GIS map with data on the virus was presented and the tool explained as part of the webinar that included partners from the Puerto Rico Science and Technology Trust, the Puerto Rico health trust and the director of the Instituto de Estadísticas de Puerto Rico.

Fondos CARES Act para iniciativas en respuesta a COVID-19: CDBG-CV y USDA (May 8, 2020)
The webinar “CARES Act Funds for Initiatives in Response to COVID-19: CDBG-CV and USDA” presented the flexibility guidelines for the use of the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds of the CARES Act used to support the response to coronavirus. In addition, the coronavirus response funds allocated to USDA-Rural Development in the face of the health and economic crisis caused by the pandemic was discussed. Also addressed the Food and Nutrition Services Agency (FNS) series of waivers to allow state and local governments to incentivize local supply chains to continue to supply food.

Oportunidades de financiamiento disponibles para organizaciones sin fines de lucro programas CDBG-DR y PPP - (April 29, 2020)
Webinar addressing the support opportunities currently available to nonprofits, stemming from both the COVID

Pandemic (PPP) and Hurricane Maria Recovery Funds (CDBG-DR). As panelists, the Puerto Rico Secretary for Housing in charge of CDBG-DR funds and with the Executive Director of COFEC, an eminent community development and financing corporation (CDFI) certified by the SBA and other federal agencies.
RebuildPR

RebuildPR serves as an information clearinghouse, hub, and research mechanism to inform public policy and community engagement with regards to rebuilding Puerto Rico. It grew organically from our support of the solidarity movement with Puerto Rico. RebuildPR provides support to those affected by the crisis on the island as well as stateside supporters and collaborators by way of improving data accessibility, strengthening collaboration, increasing available knowledge sources. We continue Centro’s legacy of linking scholarship to social action and policy debates in order to contribute to the betterment of our community and enrichment of Puerto Rican studies.

The first component of RebuildPR was created only days after hurricane Maria. In response to an overwhelming demand for information about where to donate and assurances of the legitimacy of organizations helping hurricane victims, Centro launched the Donate component of the platform. The website contains a list of charities and local initiatives; we provide relevant information about these organizations that directly serve the victims. RebuildPR expanded quickly, and in a few weeks evolved into a full-fledged clearinghouse and repository. In addition to Donate, the first set of sections were:

- **News.** Users can stay up to date with recent events related to recovery and reconstruction efforts in Puerto Rico.
- **Events.** The calendar of events allows users to identify activities sponsored by Work Groups through an interface. Filters facilitate searches by type of event and location.
- **Policy.** This section maintains public awareness for disaster relief efforts and engagement, not just in the emergency phases but also during recovery and reconstruction.
- **Volunteer.** Featuring current volunteer opportunities in support of disaster relief, recovery, and reconstruction efforts.

- **Need Help?** This page contains a collection of important resources and agencies that can help Puerto Rican residents who have relocated to communities across the United States during this difficult time.

In response to the requests from civic organizations in Puerto Rico, we started working on the following additional components to the RebuildPR platform:

- **Directory:** Connect with people and organizations that provide a service or work with the Puerto Rican community, stateside and in Puerto Rico.
- **Data Hub:** Find information related to pre- and post-Maria conditions in Puerto Rico and the Puerto Rican solidarity movement in the United States by way of two interactive maps.
- **Exchange:** Find information about collaboration opportunities or request support from organizations that are rebuilding Puerto Rico.

The RebuildPR digital platform was designed both as a community-planning tool and a research platform. As a tool, the RebuildPR digital platform offers users the most comprehensive set of GIS layers available to the public as an interactive application. For example, users can focus on any community and select layers from FEMA about damages to infrastructure and housing, flooding zones, or demographic data from the Census Bureau.

As a platform, RebuildPR offers users available information regarding who is engaged (nonprofit organizations, government agencies, and other actors) and where (to the extent feasible by municipalities, barrios, census tracts and blocks, and zip codes). With the support and participation of the RebuildPR Research Group, we are adding layers of data containing additional key components for socio-economic impact analysis—who is doing what (actions), and when (dates that can be portrayed as moving images). The goal is to be able (a) to define indicators of impact and (b) to correlate social outcomes to the actions of key agents and other reconstruction process inputs, such as foundations and federal investments in communities.
We are currently adding data indicators to be able to track progress on the implementation of the recovery plans published by the Commonwealth and the CDBG-DR, and for the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. In this effort, research group members have participated in workshops, so as to familiarize themselves with the digital platform, and develop the analytical framework and questionnaire forms used for crowdsourcing data on reconstruction projects. Those frameworks and surveying forms could also be used in sponsoring organizations and individuals—data that is collected using an online survey tool and added as GIS layers for analysis. We expect the group to meet quarterly and present research findings in upcoming conferences and other forums.

The interactive GIS maps are housed in the Data Hub. Currently, the Data Hub has the most comprehensive set of GIS layers for Puerto Rico available to the public. To date, the platform offers close to a hundred layers and continues to develop. GIS provides an open platform for global engagement and tracking of economic recovery indicators. We are currently developing and integrating two sets of layers for indicators: those identified by the government of Puerto Rico's recovery action plan and the broader “Sustainable Development Goals” as developed by the United Nations. These indicators, as discussed above, can be used to evaluate socio-economic impact analysis but they are also used for community planning. GIS delivers a platform that can be used for the observation, tracking, and management of community planning indicators. Overlays can be used to integrate information and analyze relationships among and between all indicators and overlapping initiatives. Layers can be visualized, analyzed, and combined to help us better understand the issues facing future development.

The other components of the second development phase of RebuildPR are under construction, though fully operational to our staff. Both the Directory and the Exchange are in a Beta testing stage. The Directory contains all the nonprofit organizations in Puerto Rico and the United States. The user interface is operational and will be available to the public once testing is completed. Next steps involve adding additional data from 990 forms for 501c3 organizations and harvesting information from web pages, directories, and other sources to be added.

The main goal of the Exchange is to support stateside faculty and students, in addition to other diaspora-based civic groups, to connect community planning and capacity building projects with civic organizations in Puerto Rico. In addition, we will place students and other young professionals to volunteer and complete internships to support local organizations’ capacity building. In collaboration with stateside Puerto Rican student organizations, this exchange would essentially address the intersection between the students’ interest in solidarity with Puerto Rico, while making it consistent with contextual learning, participatory research, and community service, thereby rendering the experience relevant to their career trajectory and professional development.
Celebrating 45 Years of Achievements
The Center for Puerto Rican Studies (Centro) has grown considerably over the past forty-five years, fine-tuning our research, archives, pedagogy, and programming so as to evolve with the times. This guide provides an overview of the history and achievements of Centro since its founding in 1973, and a summary of the programs and educational tools available to the public.
https://centropr.hunter.cuny.edu/centrovoices/current-affairs/celebrating-45-years-guide-centro

The Housing Crisis in Puerto Rico and the Impact of Hurricane Maria
By all counts, Puerto Rico’s housing market is in a deep and prolonged crisis. At least 18 percent of Puerto Rico’s housing stock is vacant as a result of the island’s prolonged economic recession. This report examines the housing crisis which commenced in 2006, and how the spike in foreclosures after Hurricane Maria suggests that vacant units are increasing at an accelerated rate.
https://goo.gl/eTZG2Y

Puerto Rico in Crisis Timeline
Since 2006 Puerto Rico has been facing an unprecedented economic and fiscal crisis that shows little signs of ending or abating in the foreseeable future. In this timeline, we summarize the most important milestones and turning points since 1898, and the impacts that United States and local policies have had on Puerto Rico’s Economy.
https://centropr.hunter.cuny.edu/education/puerto-rico-crisis-timeline

The impact of Hurricane Maria will be felt for decades, and long-term recovery and rebuilding efforts in Puerto Rico are expected to take years. This report provides an overview of federal disaster relief policy, dissects the recovery process and the role of federal assistance, and discusses possible entry points for advocacy efforts.
https://goo.gl/7rKUa9

Puerto Rico: Two Years After Hurricane Maria (September 2019)
In this report we provide a continuation of last years’ timeline of the major occurrences in the aftermath, an analysis of the media’s coverage of the disaster, the impact of Hurricane Maria Evacuees on the Puerto Rican population in the United States and the migration effects resulting in school closures.
https://centropr.hunter.cuny.edu/research/data-center/research-briefs/puerto-rico-two-years-after-hurricane-maria

Puerto Rico’s Vulnerable Communities and Flood Hazards and Mitigation (forthcoming)
Using the 2017 U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey (5-year estimates), at least 15% of Puerto Rico’s population resided in the 100-year floodplain. This report utilizes the Center for Disease Control’s (CDC) ‘social vulnerability index’ (SVI) to measure resiliency among the Island’s communities faced with human or natural induced hazards, like flooding. The purpose of this research brief is to help inform policy, planners, and community leaders the population and housing structures at risk in the Island’s floodplains.

Nonprofit Sector’s Capacity for Disaster Recovery in Puerto Rico (forthcoming)
Post-disaster planning and federal funding for economic recovery offer Puerto Rico’s community development industry a unique window of opportunity. This opportunity hinges on the capacity of the nonprofit sector securing federal grants, joining government efforts in planning and then executing economic development projects. This report provides an evidence-based assessment of the current capacity of and prospects for the nonprofit sector to become an active participant in the economic recovery of Puerto Rico and, more generally, to be able take advantage of this window of opportunity.