

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Local and Visiting Voluntary Organizations Crucial to Recovery Efforts in the U.S. Virgin Islands

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As the Virgin Islands makes strides toward recovering from hurricanes Irma and Maria, the united effort to meet survivors' needs remains strong, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) said on Monday. Helping hands from voluntary agencies, nongovernmental organizations and businesses are delivering food and essential supplies, clearing out homes, removing debris, making repairs, and providing comfort as survivors work to get their lives back on track.

Since Hurricane Irma struck the islands on September 5, followed closely behind by Hurricane Maria, hundreds of local and visiting volunteers have extended their time, energy, and compassion to help people in need. Now, long-term recovery groups

consisting of local grassroots organizations, and faith- and community-based groups are being formed to address survivor needs, distribute resources, and help reinforce vital support systems going forward.

FEMA voluntary agency liaisons help coordinate activities among the many voluntary and nongovernmental organizations on the ground. They also provide technical advice to local groups to help the recovery process move forward into the future.

As survivors struggle with the heavy burden of rebuilding their lives, the volunteers on the ground have helped them shoulder the load. Behind a great deal of the efforts are the Virgin Islands' own community foundations, the St. Croix Foundation for Community Development and the St. John Community Foundation that have helped raise funds and direct assistance to survivors – and will be here long after recovery.

Recovery partners, including the American Red Cross, the Salvation Army, All Hands Volunteers, Community Action Now!, My Brothers Workshop, Virgin Islands ASAP Disaster Relief, and dozens of other local, national and international groups have been on the ground in the Virgin Islands for months, providing life-saving and life-sustaining food and water, hot meals, fresh clothing, cleanup kits and so much more for survivors in need.

Just recently, a multi-agency warehouse was established in coordination with the Virgin Islands Department of Human Services on St. Thomas, providing a place for volunteers and local groups to direct commodities to survivors.

Those who wish to make donations or volunteer to help Virgin Island disaster survivors should contact the voluntary or charitable organization of their choice through the National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (NVOAD) at www.nvoad.org. Cash donations offer voluntary organizations flexibility in obtaining the most-needed resources, while also assisting the local economy.

The Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands, at www.cfvi.net, also has the “Fund for the Virgin Islands” at www.USVIrecovery.org. To learn more about the St. Croix Foundation for Community Development, go to www.stxfoundation.org. The St. John Community Foundation is at <http://stjohncommunityfoundation.org>.