



## NEWS RELEASE

# MERCY CORPS: ONE YEAR SINCE MARIA, PUERTO RICO IS BACK IN BUSINESS BUT DEEP WOUNDS REMAIN

## Reviving tourism and agriculture is critical for the island's economic recovery following last year's hurricane

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### ABOUT MERCY CORPS

- Leading global organization powered by the belief that a better world is possible
- Empowering people to survive through crisis, build better lives and transform their communities for good
- Meeting the urgent needs of today through emergency response and disaster preparedness
- Building a stronger tomorrow by connecting people to the resources they need to strengthen their community from within
- About 5,000 team members reaching nearly 22 million people
- \$436.6 million total operating revenue in FY2017; 87% channeled directly into programs in more than 40 countries

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SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico -- One year after deadly Hurricane Maria hit Puerto Rico, the global organization [Mercy Corps](http://mercy Corps.org) is helping the island's small businesses, farmers and fishermen get back on their feet. With one in three workers in Puerto Rico employed by a small or medium-sized business and 80 percent of the island's crop value wiped out by the storm, helping business owners generate income and providing tools to fishers and farmers to restore their livelihoods is crucial to the island's continuing recovery.

"Though the island is steadily recovering, hidden destruction remains," says Jeronimo Candela, Mercy Corps Director in Puerto Rico. "Puerto Ricans are still feeling the psychological and economic toll."

Despite businesses and roads reopening, some business owners have experienced up to a 90 percent drop in customers since last year. Puerto Ricans are greatly concerned that tourism during the traditional high season this winter will be a fraction of what it was. Mercy Corps is providing cash grants, technical assistance and business development training to help small businesses. The organization is also working with conservation groups to restore natural resources like coral reefs and nature reserves, on which many tourism businesses depend.

"Local economies are the best engine for strong, long-term recovery after disasters," says Candela. "Small business owners worked hard to reopen their shops as quickly as possible after the storm and are eager to have people explore the various attractions the island has to offer. Puerto Rico is open for business."

Following the \$780 million dollar loss in agriculture due to Maria, Mercy Corps is also distributing seeds and compost to farmers as well as bee boxes, as bees can increase agricultural production by as much as 80 percent. The organization is providing wire, nets and other tools to fishermen who lost traps and fishing gear during the hurricane.

Mercy Corps is helping Puerto Ricans prepare for future storms by conducting preparedness trainings, installing solar power, enhancing internet connectivity and planting community gardens in local community centers.

Mercy Corps' efforts in Puerto Rico are made possible by the support of [Bacardi](http://Bacardi.com), [BlackRock](http://BlackRock.com), [Google.org](http://Google.org), [The Miami Foundation](http://TheMiamiFoundation.org) and [Walmart](http://Walmart.com). Join us and [support Mercy Corps' work](http://supportMercyCorps.org) in Puerto Rico and elsewhere in the world.