It was a relief effort seldom experienced in the United States. Three back-to-back major hurricanes devastated the homes and lives of hundreds of thousands of individuals and families in Texas, Florida, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

You made a difference in their recovery.

Your support helped them through the immediate aftermath and continues helping them today as they work through the long process of recovery. Dedicated staff and volunteers of Catholic Charities agencies in impacted communities provided help — and hope — to those in need. Contributions from more than 50,000 individuals and organizations made it possible for Catholic Charities agencies to carry out their mission of helping those in need.

At Catholic Charities USA (CCUSA), we support the agencies working in the streets to reach those in need. In 2017, the need was greater than ever after the widespread devastation caused by the storms. Our coordination and relief funding was made possible by your contributions, large and small.

CCUSA’s year-round preparedness training was an important factor in Catholic Charities agencies executing their mission. That mission continues today and we thank you for your support.

Gratefully,

Sister Donna Markham OP
President and CEO

2017-2018
HURRICANE RELIEF AND RECOVERY: 6 MONTHS LATER

PROVIDING HELP, CREATING HOPE, RESTORING LIVES

Three major hurricanes in 2017 put Catholic Charities USA’s (CCUSA) mission to serve those in need to the test. In response to the devastation, CCUSA launched the Hurricane Relief and Recovery Campaign to raise funds for emergency and long-term assistance. During the fall, our entire ministry worked tirelessly to provide hope and healing immediately to residents of Texas, Florida, the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico.

Today, Catholic Charities agencies continue to serve on the front lines meeting the long-term recovery needs of disaster survivors every day.
TEXAS

Hurricane Harvey dumped 19 trillion gallons of rain over southeast Texas with winds of 132 miles per hour and destroyed entire communities and neighborhoods. Eight Catholic Charities agencies in Texas were called to action to help their communities. By mid-October, CCUSA distributed a total of over $6.1 million to these agencies to support the recovery efforts. CCUSA’s newly outfitted Mobile Recovery Center (MRC), a truck with emergency communications and supply capabilities, was deployed to distribute emergency food and supplies.

Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston received $3.4 million of vital funding for disaster response. In the immediate aftermath, these funds allowed the agency to pay for tents and short-term relief supplies to support residents as they awaited local, state, and federal government aid.

Weeks after the storm, Catholic Charities of Galveston-Houston pivoted to intermediate-term needs such as case management, clean-out assistance, and help paying rent for those whose jobs were unavailable because of the storm. In the continuing recovery efforts, the agency has used funding provided by CCUSA to fill the gaps that often remain after federal assistance is exhausted. The recovery process is expected to take three to five years, and CCUSA will be with those in need every step of the way.

Catholic Charities of Southeast Texas-Beaumont received $1.2 million in funding. Many residents not directly impacted by the hurricane volunteered to prepare and deliver individual care packages. Today, case management staff continues to help families rebuild their lives. Families are guided through developing a recovery plan, including setting goals, identifying resources, acquiring construction and building needs, and receiving emotional and physical health care.

Catholic Charities of Corpus Christi received $1 million in disaster funding for short- and long-term assistance. Priority was given to transportation, rental assistance, and relocation of individuals and families. Much of the funding was used to meet needs not met by government relief efforts, including immediate housing services and help with basic supplies.

Catholic Charities of San Antonio, Dallas, and Fort Worth collectively received $600,000. Over 1,800 volunteers worked in these agencies from September through December. Catholic Charities of San Antonio distributed 40,000 pounds of food, 400,000 bottles of water and 200,000 diapers. Care was taken to provide short- and long-term supplies.

Many resources exist to help disaster survivors recover, but identifying and applying for them can be difficult for those who have lost everything. Trained Disaster Case Managers help guide them to ensure they have access to all the resources they need to rebuild their lives.
After the mandatory evacuation on August 23 in Dallas, there were 4,800 evacuees in temporary shelters and hotels. Close to 1,000 people were not able to return to their homes. Catholic Charities of Dallas spent the majority of its funding providing rental assistance and relocation expenses.

In Fort Worth, staff and volunteers supported shelter operations and began case management, completed intakes, helped with FEMA applications, and provided information on resources and referrals. In one month after Harvey made landfall, Catholic Charities recruited 186 volunteers and deployed staff to the Gulf Coast to assist with shelter operations and long-term recovery. The agency deployed two teams in September and completed 1,300 hours of service, serving more than 800 families in 21 days.

THE U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS AND FLORIDA

On September 6, Hurricane Irma followed Hurricane Harvey and ravaged the U.S. Virgin Islands before turning to Florida. Hurricane Irma made landfall in the lower Florida Keys with 130 mph winds and travelled up Florida’s west coast. Homes and the infrastructure in parts of the U.S. Virgin Islands were destroyed. In the initial days after Irma, the relatively undamaged island of St. Croix was used as a staging area until it, too, was also struck by Hurricane Maria two weeks later.

CCUSA sent $3.65 million to Catholic Charities of St. Thomas and the Virgin Islands. The existing service centers and parishes on the islands ramped up their kitchen services and established new distribution centers to aid victims. Four additional full-time case managers were hired to assist survivors, including one specifically to work with the elderly, who are among the most vulnerable after a disaster.

Most of the funds were used for temporary housing assistance. This has taken many forms: paying for home repairs and supplies, providing security deposits and first month’s rent, and paying hotel bills for short-term temporary housing. In conjunction with the Diocese of St. Thomas, Catholic Charities has also enrolled students, regardless of religious affiliation or ability to pay, in Catholic schools on the island while their schools are being rebuilt.

Catholic Charities of Miami, Venice, St. Petersburg, St. Augustine, Orlando, Palm Beach and Pensacola-Tallahassee collectively received $4.3 million in funding. In the immediate aftermath, electricity was down and stores were closed, so food and supply distribution became a priority. These agencies mobilized thousands of volunteers and deployed case managers and work crews to help those in need. Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Miami played a critical role in assisting those displaced from Hurricane Maria, helping them find temporary housing.
PUERTO RICO

Hurricane Maria, a Category 5 storm, struck Puerto Rico on September 20. The damage to housing, businesses and infrastructure was catastrophic. Caritas de Puerto Rico was called to service and received $4 million initially from Catholic Charities USA.

Because our agencies serve in their communities throughout the year, Caritas de Puerto Rico was uniquely able to support sustainable recovery efforts. Caritas de Puerto Rico used its existing network and procured many immediate supplies from local businesses that still had stock. This aid focused on supplying the basic needs of food, water and shelter, and addressing medical and counselling assistance, spiritual support and care.

Caritas de Puerto Rico is using funds to address multi-year recovery efforts by expanding to provide job-training programs for those whose employers may not be able to re-hire them, and permanent re-housing assistance to those whose homes were damaged beyond repair.

An example of our unique standing in local communities:
The Ramirez family has suffered greatly in the last two years. They were not only affected by the 2016 flooding in Texas, but endured additional devastation in the wake of Hurricane Harvey. Seeing their home destroyed a second time made them feel hopeless.

At Catholic Charities, we work in the streets and we get to know those in need. Maria, the Ramirez family’s case manager who helped the family rebuild from the 2016 flooding, proactively reached out to the family, as she did for other families who had been helped. She wanted to know how they were after Hurricane Harvey.

Maria spoke with Mrs. Ramirez. “When she heard my voice, she said God had answered her prayers,” Maria said. The family was still living in their damaged, unsafe apartment. Maria was able to provide the family with shelter at a hotel not far from their home and supplies to make it through the immediate aftermath of the storm.

Maria worked with the Ramirez family to find a home close to school and work and she provided them with a security deposit and the first month’s rent. The family’s immediate needs were met but Maria will continue to work to ensure they fully recover.