

WHAT IS RESILIENCE?

Resilience is the capacity of individuals, communities, institutions, businesses, and systems to survive, adapt, and grow no matter what kinds of chronic stresses and acute shocks they experience. The concept of resilience is one that is embedded in Puerto Rico's history and culture. No matter the challenge, Puerto Rico has found ways to survive and thrive. That said, as demonstrated by Hurricane Maria, there are opportunities and needs to strengthen the island's resilience.

Building resilience requires looking at an island or community holistically, understanding the systems that make up the place and the interdependencies and risks they may face. By strengthening the underlying fabric of an island and better understanding the potential shocks and stresses it may face, an island can improve its development trajectory and the well-being of its citizens.

RESILIENCE IN THE CONTEXT OF PUERTO RICO

The concept of resilience shows up differently in every unique context. That said, there are certain questions that are commonly considered in understanding resilience. These include:

- Are basic needs for all citizens / residents being met?
- Are people's livelihoods effectively supported?
- Are strong public health systems in place?
- Are communities cohesive and engaged socially and politically?
- Is economic prosperity being fostered?
- Are natural and physical assets available and functional?
- Are critical services, eg, energy services, consistently available?
- Do people have reliable access to mobility and communications services?
- Do governance processes allow for leadership and effective management?
- Do a broad range of stakeholders have access to and participate in decision-making processes?
- Is planning undertaken in a long-range and integrated manner?

All of these issue areas are important, and the process of rebuilding Puerto Rico offers the opportunity to address some of the underlying challenges that prevent Puerto Rico from answering the aforementioned questions in an affirmative manner. Given the unique context of Puerto Rico, the process of developing recommendations for the resilient rebuild of Puerto Rico must take into account:

- The urban / rural divide in the island. We'll need to think through, for example, what the resilient economic development opportunities for rural communities are just as much as the opportunities in the island's urban centers.
- The variety of ecosystems present in the island and the challenges and opportunities each present. We'll need to take into account, for example, the ability of coastal ecosystems and inland forest ecosystems to provide ecosystem services in a changing climate.
- Lastly, and perhaps stating the obvious, the recommendations we create must be tailored for an island context – the fact that it's surrounded by water and the associated exposure to climate hazards; its dependence on tourism and imports; the cost of infrastructure in comparison to the small tax base; and its overreliance on limited natural resources.

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