



A member of the International Medical Corps nutrition team speaks with an 80-year-old displaced person from Yauco. Suffering from Type 2 diabetes, glaucoma, hypertension and thyroid disease, she said she will be leaving soon to live with her son on the mainland.

FAST FACTS

- There are now 41 shelters open with 7,500 registered occupants. The number of individuals encamped in informal shelters across the region continues to fluctuate but remains high.
- Aftershocks continue to plague the southwest part of the island's coast, further extending recovery time and increasing emotional distress.
- Public services are being restored to the island, though the pace is slow due to aftershocks and ongoing assessment efforts.

SITUATION UPDATE

Following the largest earthquake that shook Puerto Rico—a 6.4-magnitude tremor that hit on January 7—aftershocks continue, but are consistent with the U.S. Geologic Survey forecast of 54% probability for earthquakes of 5.0 magnitude or more in the next seven days. Though services are slowly being restored to the island, thousands remain displaced or homeless.

The Puerto Rico Emergency Management Bureau (PREMB) is coordinating with the National Guard and volunteer agencies to help assess requirements to establish survivor base camps to meet immediate sheltering requirements. The Federal Emergency Management Agency is working closely with Puerto Rican officials on any requests for assistance needed to support these facilities, while a range of organizations are working to ensure that shelters and feeding stations are available in the impacted area.

INTERNATIONAL MEDICAL CORPS RESPONSE

International Medical Corps' team is continuing its work in the southwest, providing crisis counseling and psychological first aid (PFA). During the last two days the mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) team, along with a group of volunteers trained in PFA by International Medical Corps MHPSS staff, supported two communities in Guánica and four in Peñuelas, reaching more than 100 individuals. However, more help is needed—in every community shelter that the teams visit, most of the people show signs of high levels of distress and anxiety, such as sleeplessness, hyperalertness and nightmares.

Three International Medical Corps nutrition experts have deployed to Guánica, Yauco and Guayanilla to assess the needs of those affected by the earthquakes. The team identified poor sanitary conditions, food safety issues and a lack of availability of nutritious foods. In some municipalities, such as Guánica, supermarkets are closed, and people have no place to purchase fresh produce and healthy foods. The only options available are a few fast-food restaurants that are

still open and meals that can be delivered by local restaurants. The people are being referred to Yauco, the town next door, but its supermarket has considerable damages and will most likely be shut down. Because offices of the federal Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) are closed, program representatives are distributing vouchers to participants. However, there are limited places for participants to purchase foods covered by the WIC program.

In Guayanilla, the team arrived at a shelter right after an aftershock and found people gathered outside, displaying signs of anxiety or participating in prayer circles for comfort. The team identified some children with special health needs requiring specialized food, as well as a young female with Type 2 diabetes but no insulin. Because the foods provided in shelters are not nutritionally adequate for diabetic patients, some prefer to skip meals to avoid spikes in blood sugar, or discontinue their insulin use to avoid running out.

The elderly population in shelters also are experiencing significant challenges. Some have no way of getting to a pharmacy to get prescriptions filled, which makes people with chronic diseases feel helpless because they are unable to get their medications quickly and treat their existing conditions. The team talked with an 80-year-old female at the Estadio Municipal de Yauco shelter who has Type 2 diabetes, hypertension, thyroid disease and glaucoma, and uses multiple pillows to support her back because she suffers from chronic back pain. For the last two nights, she said, she had slept in a chair next to her bed because it was more comfortable for her back than the cot she was given.

On January 17, the team headed out to the mountainous municipality of Jayuya, approximately 80 miles north of the earthquake epicenter, to continue nutrition- and needs-assessment efforts. The team's first stop was at a local business of roughly 30 employees, where management reported an urgent need for mental health support and other necessities for their staff, including tarps and cots (which we provided). The MHPSS team will conduct a follow-up visit to provide emotional support activities for the employees and their other family members.

Afterwards, the nutrition team headed to the center of the town to assess needs at the municipal shelter, but found it had been closed down, to encourage people to return to their houses. The team was able to talk to the Director of Emergency Management for Jayuya, who emphasized the need for education sessions, focusing mainly on mental health, for the residents. International Medical Corps will reach out to community members by participating in its health fair, ensuring that our training has a wide reach.

International Medical Corps staff continues to remain in close contact with national and municipal authorities, and is adjusting and expanding response activities as requested.



International Medical Corps staff assist residents from Urbanización Villa Tania in Guánica with a distribution center for basic products for those living in non-traditional shelters, including food, water, baby food, blankets and towels.