



A Helping Hand in Times of Crisis

Presented by



Pastor Urayoán Silva has witnessed many crises in his beloved Vieques, and COVID-19 is no exception. On this occasion, the lack of access to food was the main challenge for thousands of Viequenses.

"The first weeks were very hard. Not only was there little food, but its cost also increased by around 37%," explained Pastor Silva of the organization Fe que Transforma. Fortunately, according to Pastor Silva, Banco de Alimentos has lent a helping hand to meet the food needs of Viequenses.

He points out that the cost of living in Vieques is at least 20% higher than in the main island and that 65% of Viequenses live below the poverty line. Therefore, when quarantine began, its impact on jobs "almost eradicated what was left of the middle class in Vieques. We saw a lot of despair and depression."

He explains that, between March and May, his organization distributed more than 85,000 pounds of food in the community. "Seventy percent of that food came from Banco de Alimentos. Therefore, when you donate to Banco de Alimentos, you are donating to Vieques."

Denise Santos, Executive Director of Banco de Alimentos, assures that all of Puerto Rico has experienced a similar situation. "You have more than 300,000 additional people applying for unemployment, and whatever few savings they had went towards groceries," elaborates Santos. She explains that all cash donations received by Banco de Alimentos have been distributed via food vouchers, since the businesses and distributors that usually donate food did not have enough inventory to meet the demand of their clients and donate at the same time.

"Banco de Alimentos is a key organization for the Triple-S Foundation. Food insecurity exists in Puerto Rico during normal times and when there is a crisis due to natural disasters or a health crisis, the importance of this organization becomes even more evident. That was the case after Hurricane María and now, with COVID-19, they once again demonstrate a great capacity and agility to respond to community needs," stated Ivelisse M. Fernández, Executive Director of the Triple-S Foundation.

Banco de Alimentos de Puerto Rico was founded in 1988 to mitigate hunger and improve disadvantaged people's nutrition. It manages a food collection and distribution center that works on a permanent basis and supports more than 150 organizations that channel their aid all over the island, including Vieques and Culebra.

Pastor Urayoán Silva from Vieques assures that 70% of the food distributed by his organization on the island came from Banco de Alimentos. "When you donate to Banco de Alimentos, you are donating to Vieques."