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Local Team Creates Tools to Improve Housing Addresses in Puerto Rico [1]

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The **Initiative for Civic Address Systems Assessment in Puerto Rico, iCasaPR**, a local nonprofit organization, has begun a project to tackle the challenges of address infrastructure in Puerto Rico and its effect on disadvantaged communities. This project, called **Puerto Rico Civic Address Vulnerability Evaluation, PRCAVE**, is the first systematic evaluation of address infrastructure in Puerto Rico. PRCAVE is backed by a generous donation from the non-profit organization Filantropía Puerto Rico.

Raúl Ríos-Díaz, president of iCasaPR, who served as manager of the Address Management Office for the US Postal Service, was a key figure in creating uniformity in the addresses of almost one million homes on the island, “In Puerto Rico there are still deficiencies in the addresses for a large percentage of the dwellings, especially in rural areas. The problem of civic addresses on the island makes a large part of our population invisible in statewide data systems and in the federal space.”

Puerto Rico has struggled for decades with deficiencies in its address infrastructure. In some municipalities, over 60% of the population reside in structures that lack a valid civic address, which can be used by emergency services to locate residents in a timely manner or accurately locate an address on a map using geospatial technology. Hurricanes Irma and María exposed the tragic consequences of this situation during the management of emergency operations, by the inability to secure funds for individuals and communities, and the failures of federal, state and

local entities to implement the necessary responses in a timely and effective manner.

According to Ríos-Díaz, “The deficiency in civic addresses in Puerto Rico hinders emergency services in its efforts to locate the population, limits the ability of federal programs to effectively account for structures and equitably distribute aid for the reconstruction of the Island, and also impacts our economic development, since it affects several aspects of our daily life, from the delivery of packages from giants such as Amazon to the ability to use geo-location tools and map applications from Google, Apple or Microsoft. As they say in the industry, if you are not on a map, you do not exist. ”

This project will produce a set of tools that seeks to catalyze new ways of thinking about data invisibility in Puerto Rico and foster alliances between communities and nonprofit organizations, and between federal, state and local agencies. Glenisse Pagán Ortiz, president of Filantropía Puerto Rico, sponsor of the project, adds, "The invisibility of data is a systemic problem that affects the social development of Puerto Rico; this must be addressed if we aspire that all people on the island have the same opportunities to participate and prosper. "

The PRCAVE project is led by a team of leading experts from Puerto Rico and the States. It uses as a base data from the United States Postal Service, the Census Bureau, FEMA and other local municipal and state sources. The initiative includes a direct mail campaign to the population that lacks localizable addresses to create a vulnerability index to support the next steps of the process. The iCasaPR team is working to complete this effort before the next hurricane season.

According to Jon Sperling, Ph.D, a member of the iCasaPR Board and former HUD and Census official, "The use of standardized addresses throughout the island will be a key factor for its economic development and is an important component of census operations to guarantee a precise and complete count of the population of Puerto Rico. This data, in turn, is the basis for the redistricting of Puerto Rico’s legislature, and the allocation and distribution of billions of dollars in federal grants for social and economic programs. The guiding principle of our efforts is to support the construction of more resilient and economically viable communities throughout Puerto Rico, and to promote the ability to link and share data between local, state and federal agencies. "

Last December, iCasaPR was one of five winners awarded first prize by the Census-sponsored Opportunity Project in the category of “Resilient People and Places” for its project to help municipalities and communities in Puerto Rico improve their address infrastructure to foster a stronger and more resilient future.

Ríos-Díaz concluded by stating that "this work will allow us to help municipalities implement very necessary data governance practices that preserve local cultural practices and create data compatible with federal geospatial data standards."

The Initiative for Civic Address Systems Assessment in Puerto Rico (iCasaPR) is an organization that began in 2018 after the devastation of Hurricane Irma and María in Puerto Rico, committed to helping communities overcome the problems of "data invisibility" through the evaluation and improvement of their civic directions. More information at https://icasapr.com [2].

Filantropía Puerto Rico is an organization with 10 years of experience in the development of philanthropic infrastructure in Puerto Rico. Our fundamental purpose is to develop and stimulate strategic social investments by amplifying the voice and impact of donors in Puerto Rico. We bring together organizations that donate for learning, alignment and joint action. More information at http://filantropiapr.org [3].

Tags:

- tecnología [4]
- technology [5]
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