

# PUERTO RICO

Open Society has been actively involved in Puerto Rico since 2014, when we began supporting efforts to increase transparency and government accountability on the island. In 2015, Puerto Rico's economy collapsed after the commonwealth's governor said the island could not service its \$72 billion in debts. Two years later, Hurricanes Irma and Maria devastated the island, followed by a series of destructive earthquakes. All the while, Puerto Ricans grappled with an austerity plan imposed by an unelected and unaccountable fiscal control board—a stark reminder of the legacy of colonialism that has hindered progress for generations.

These circumstances led Open Society to expand our work in the region and, in 2017, create the Puerto Rico Project, which focuses on a three-pronged approach to addressing the challenges on the island. First, by increasing participation of civil society actors on the island, with a particular focus on recovery and decolonization practices. Second, by building the political strength of Puerto Ricans in the diaspora. And third, bringing voices of Puerto Ricans into Congress and into progressive organizations on the mainland.

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## PUERTO RICO: 2020 BUDGET

Total Budget for Puerto Rico in 2020:

**\$3.8M**

2020 Budget for the United States:

**\$261.1M**

## **9 FACTS ABOUT OPEN SOCIETY IN PUERTO RICO**

- 1** Since the inception of the Puerto Rico Project in 2017, Open Society has invested a total of \$15 million to help advance our three pronged strategy.
- 2** Immediately after the hurricanes, Open Society worked to help Puerto Ricans access federal disaster aid. Meanwhile, Open Society joined forces with the Ford Foundation and Rockefeller Foundation to provide \$5 million to create a “resiliency commission,” fund damage assessment studies, and invest in Puerto Rican civil society.
- 3** In 2018, after witnessing a deeply inadequate hurricane response effort by the U.S. federal government, Open Society launched a new initiative that paired mayors from U.S. mainland cities who had experience with disaster recovery alongside their counterparts in Puerto Rico.
- 4** In 2018, Open Society’s coordination with advocates led to the passage of Act 17, which calls for a complete clean energy transformation on the island by 2050. Further, we are making additional investments to ensure that the government is held accountable to the policy. For example, our support to Casa Pueblo, in the central mountain town of Adjuntas, has in part led to a bold experiment featuring 30 local business that are connected to a community-controlled and community-owned solar powered microgrid.
- 5** Open Society’s direct support for civil society groups on the island has led to historic human rights victories for women, LGBTI people and black Puerto Rican communities. In 2021, after years of advocating for this matter, three of our grantees were successful in getting the newly elected administration to commit significant funding to address the gender violence crisis in Puerto Rico.
- 6** In Florida, Open Society has seeded new organizations led by and for Puerto Ricans, including Alianza for Progress and a strong chapter of the Hispanic Federation. Together, these organizations created the Respeta Mi Gente coalition, which has registered and mobilized thousands of Puerto Ricans to vote. As a result, the number of Puerto Ricans participating in the elections has increased significantly.
- 7** In Washington, D.C., Open Society funded Power4PR, a Puerto Rican-led advocacy organization that is a leader in the U.S. Congress on issues affecting the island, including the issue of self-determination. Open Society also played a leading role in funding Puerto Rico-related research and policy work in D.C.
- 8** In 2019, Open Society created the Puerto Rico Youth Fellowships, an initiative aimed at supporting young Puerto Rican leaders who will promote human rights and serve marginalized communities in the region.
- 9** For years, as part of Open Society’s commitment to transparency and accountability, multiple Open Society programs have supported the Centro de Periodismo Investigativo, a groundbreaking investigative journalism outfit that is active in Puerto Rico and the wider Caribbean. In addition to its own vital journalism, the Centro de Periodismo Investigativo has been able to train dozens of other investigative journalists in the Caribbean region.