Foundation for Puerto Rico, P.E.C.E.S., and Punta Santiago Small Business Owners Highlight Recovery Progress to the Clinton Foundation

*Foundation for Puerto Rico and local Bottom Up Destination Recovery Initiative partners from Punta Santiago provide update to President Bill Clinton, Secretary Hillary Clinton and the Clinton Foundation Delegation during their Puerto Rico visit.*

**For Immediate Release**

Punta Santiago, Humacao — January 28, 2019 — Local NGOs’ Foundation for Puerto Rico (FPR) and P.E.C.E.S., and local small business owners provided an update of its Bottom Up Destination Recovery Initiative to President Bill Clinton, Secretary Hillary Clinton, and members of the Clinton Foundation during their visit to Puerto Rico. Led by FPR, the Bottom Up Destination Recovery Initiative aims to support communities in their long-term sustainable recovery through collaborative efforts with local community leaders. During the update, the delegation visited small businesses Olas restaurant, Kremey, Water Sports & Ecotours at Humacao Natural Reserve, and Kolore.

“Foundation for Puerto Rico is committed to the social and economic development of our communities through multisectoral collaborations. Through the Bottom Up Destination Recovery Initiative, our goal is to help communities recover quicker and develop resilience for their long-term economic growth by creating, in alliance with key stakeholders, a Community Destination Development Plan to cultivate economic opportunities focused on the visitor economy and help increase both local and international tourism,” emphasized Annie Mayol, president and COO of Foundation for Puerto Rico.

As part of the initiative, it is critical that community members take a front row seat in the revitalization planning and implementation. In the case of Punta Santiago, FPR joined forces with P.E.C.E.S. leveraging their community knowledge, experience and commitment. “The objective is to co-design the entire process with our partners and the community,” added Mayol.

P.E.C.E.S., founded in 1985, provides prevention services, education and entrepreneurial training to communities in Puerto Rico’s southeastern region to foster socioeconomic development. Its leader, José Oquendo said, “the collaboration with Foundation for Puerto Rico and its Bottom Up Initiative has been an excellent opportunity to revive the community and help P.E.C.E.S. to reactivate our people both socially and economically. This approach should lead to sustainable development based on mutual collaboration and solidarity.”

In April of 2018, the Clinton Foundation, as part of the Clinton Global Initiative (CGI) Action Network, recognized FPR’s work of providing capital and mentoring to small businesses on the island after Hurricane María. FPR committed to expand the Bottom Up Destination Recovery Initiative in partnership with local non-profits Centro para Emprendedores, Grupo Guayacán, Kiva and Fundación Banco Popular, among others.

“This visit and the support from Foundation for Puerto Rico has brought a lot of benefits. They have been concerned about small businesses in places where they have a hard time to make themselves heard and make sure that there is awareness that Punta Santiago is here to receive them with open arms,” stated Lourdes Roman, owner of Kreamy, a local ice-cream shop.
Bottom Up: Punta Santiago

The Punta Santiago community, through the Bottom Up Program, has focused on three of its main tourist assets: the Humacao Natural Reserve, which includes lagoons, hiking trails, mangroves and abundant bird life, the Villa Pesquera or fishing village and Cayo Santiago, a University of Puerto Rico research facility that dates back from the 1930’s. Specifically, Cayo Santiago has a Rhesus colony roaming free for research purposes since the 30s, attracting researchers from around the globe.

Businesses in the area also received support and training from FPR allies and key local organizations that specialize in providing support to entrepreneurs and small businesses, including Centro para Emprendedores and INprende.

Bottom Up Destination Recovery Initiative is expanding to impact 24 communities in 12 towns during the next years. Its goal is to support 300 additional small businesses and create 72 new businesses and 1,116 jobs. Within weeks of Hurricane Maria, FPR set out to support small and medium-sized businesses so they could reopen and/or continue operations. FPR has supported more than 200 businesses in 11 municipalities with an investment of half a million dollars.

About Foundation for Puerto Rico

Foundation for Puerto Rico, a 501c3 non-profit organization founded in 2011, creates opportunities that drive social and economic development in Puerto Rico, with a focus on the visitor economy and transforming the island into a global destination. For more information visit www.foundationforpuertorico.org

CONTACT:

Leilani Geller
Sr. Director, Communications & Marketing
Foundation for Puerto Rico
607-227-9685 | leilani.geller@foundationpr.org