

## Challenges and obstacles:

Acquainting ourselves to the new environment and accommodations took a while. The work schedule was demanding but understandable, as we had targeted goals. We had to use the tools that we were provided with though it wasn't always efficient.



## Benefits and takeaways:

The benefits summed up in one word is community. It was a gathering of lovely locals and wonderful volunteers. It helped me appreciate teamwork more as people of different walks of life came together to achieve a common goal in a timely and comprehensive manner.



# Rise 2019 National Conference Lessons from Puerto Rico

By Mirabel A Lartey

Hurricane Maria was recorded as one of the worst natural disasters to hit Puerto Rico in years. There is a lot to learn about emergency response to disaster and, this was personally an eyeopener. When the opportunity to volunteer was presented, I decided to sign up. I did a lot of research and I was provided with a lot of information beforehand but being there was a different feel and experience.



We would work hours from Sunday to Thursday and would try to put in as much effort as possible. We had good guidance and some of the volunteers were able to pickup skills on the job. There's nothing as rewarding as enriching the life of another person. No matter how small your contribution is, it counts. When the program ended, the head of one of the families we worked with gave me a thank you package on it he quoted Mary Poppins, "in every job that must be done, there is an element of fun." This quote symbolizes the duality of the experience working with the Puerto Rico Task Force, the many wonderful and genuine people I met had that the element of fun.

### References:

Mirabel A. Lartey  
University at Albany  
[mlartey@albany.edu](mailto:mlartey@albany.edu)  
Biology '20

Please visit the Instagram page

[sunny\\_cuny\\_standswithpuertorico](#) for more photos!

## Suggestions:

The organization of the program is superb and there are not many flaws but I would like to suggest having a workshop so the volunteers can have few days training and some simulation of how the program will be.



I believe, this would be immensely beneficial for the volunteers since the training can help them discover their strengths and weaknesses in different humanitarian efforts prior to arriving. That way, volunteers can use their best skills to help the distressed communities immediately.

  
**UNIVERSITY  
AT ALBANY**  
State University of New York

