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Solidarity Has No Color

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Solidarity has no Color 4/20/16

Last Saturday night, April 16th, a 7.8 earthquake hit the coast of Ecuador. About four hours away in Quito we registered as a 6.7. Luckily, being a well-developed city, there was little damage done. The cities and village on the coast however were not so lucky. Pictures of roads turned puzzle pieces and buildings demolished are all true representations of what the aftermath is. The numbers are still climbing, but the number of dead are already in the hundreds, thousands are injured, and hundreds more are still missing. The rest are displaced and in desperate need of aid as the infrastructure has more or less dissolved and some of the smaller villages were completely swept away. Ecuador as a country is in a state of emergency.

However, despite being a grim picture, I don't think I have ever seen anything as inspiring or hopeful as how the people have responded. The very next morning, a Sunday, which usually means deserted streets, there were lines of cars and hordes of people in the supermarkets. Carts full of food, water, and other necessities were bought and donated. Donation centers also quickly popped up all over the city in the churches and parks.

In the park near my home, Parque Carolina, donation efforts have been an all-day affair and on-going since Sunday. Trucks of supplies have been driven out, with hundreds of people helping pack boxes and crates to be taken to Manabi and other areas in need. These people, for the most part, are volunteers. They are all typical citizens who just decided to dedicate their day to helping out those who were affected most.

Online support as well has been unbelievable -- monetary fundraisers have gone well past \$100k on each different site. These are both from Ecuadorian citizens as well as from people around the world. Neighboring countries have also dedicated various rescue teams to the recovery effort, though there is still a desperate need for emergency-response therapists and psychologists.

It is a bit strange, to see this odd mixture of grief but camaraderie. In the U.S., we have had Katrina, however I can't say that I have seen a population across the country galvanized so strongly into helping with the recovery effort. It was awe-inspiring to see so many work together and be genuinely affected by this natural disaster, even if was not their homes that had been destroyed. And, if anything, the momentum seems to be building as the days go on.

- Stacey Strovink