LOCAL NEWS

Opinion: keep the earthquake emergency from becoming chronic poverty

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Where	Panama (Chiriquí, Bocas del Toro, Ngäbe-Buglé, Azuero)
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Summary

A La Prensa opinion piece argues that the 9 October earthquake exposed pre-existing poverty in Chiriquí, Bocas del Toro, the Ngäbe-Buglé comarca and Azuero, and that without a single chain of command and non-politicised aid thousands of families could fall into lasting poverty.

Details (summary of the article)

Writing in La Prensa, a neurosurgeon argues that the 9 October earthquake made visible a poverty that already existed outside Panama's urban skyline. He cites reporting from 24 October showing multidimensional poverty rates of 19.6% in Macaracas, 16.5% in Tonosí and 27.9% in Los Pozos, and notes SINAPROC's findings of damage to homes, schools, health facilities and water systems in Chiriquí, Bocas del Toro and the Ngäbe-Buglé comarca. He says the response needs a single command under the Emergency Operations Centre attached to SINAPROC, with clear responsibilities so ministries, the Goals Secretariat and the First Lady's Office do not duplicate work or leave communities unattended. He warns that aid used for party or electoral advantage erodes trust, and that distribution should follow damage and vulnerability, with indigenous authorities included in decisions. Families left waiting may lose housing, a harvest and weeks of income at once, then sell animals or tools to survive; poor sanitation, lack of drinking water and malnutrition could also trigger outbreaks. He calls for a public register of needs, aid delivered and pending tasks, sustained financing and measurable results: homes made habitable again, services restored, children back in class and incomes recovered.

Original (es)

Que la emergencia no se convierta en pobreza crónica

El terremoto expuso una pobreza que ya existía; sin coordinación ni ayuda despolitizada, miles de familias pueden hundirse en una pobreza más duradera.

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