

Situation in The Bahamas and Turks and Caicos Islands April 17th, 2020

CONTEXT

In 30th January 2020 the World Health Organization (WHO) declared Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) a public health emergency of international concern. As of 16th April 2020, there were 2,032,485 cases and 138,511 deaths globally. Specifically, in the Region of the Americas, there were 743,607 confirmed cases and 33,028 deaths.

On 15th March 2020, the first confirmed case of COVID-19 was reported in The Bahamas. On 23rd March 2020, the first confirmed case was reported in The Turks and Caicos Islands.

HIGHLIGHTS The Bahamas

Since 10th April 2020, there were 12 new confirmed cases and 1 death.

Of the total 54 confirmed cases:

- Nine were health care workers;
- Ten persons are hospitalized;
- At least 12 clusters of linked cases have been identified that indicate family and work-related linkages;
- The nine deceased persons, 5 males and 4 females, ranging from ages 57-91;
- Seven of the deceased persons had a comorbidity;
- 668 laboratory tests have been done as of 16th April 2020;
- 895 persons quarantined.

Turks and Caicos Islands

Since 10th April 2020, there were 3 new confirmed cases of COVID-19.

Among the 11 total confirmed cases,

- 73% are male and 27% are female;
- Cases range from 1 month and 63 years; 46% of cases are 30-39 years, 27% of cases are 40-49 years.
- There are 43 persons under isolation and quarantine/observation;
- Six were either imported or the location of transmission was unclear, and 5 were locally transmitted;
- There are 3 hospitalized persons; 1 ventilated patient is deceased.
- 82 tests have been conducted.

The Bahamas

Island	Confirmed cases	Deaths
New Providence	45	6
Grand Bahama	7	2
Bimini	1	1
Cat Cay	1	0
TOTAL	54	9

SITUATION IN NUMBERS

TOTAL CASES

54 Bahamas
11 Turks & Caicos
Confirmed

9 Bahamas
0 Turks & Caicos
Recovered

9 Bahamas
1 Turks & Caicos
Deaths

PAHO RESPONSE

- ✓ Donation of laboratory supplies
- ✓ Risk assessment and situational analysis
- ✓ Technical guidance
- ✓ Communication
- ✓ Support to local authorities on surveillance and health systems planning

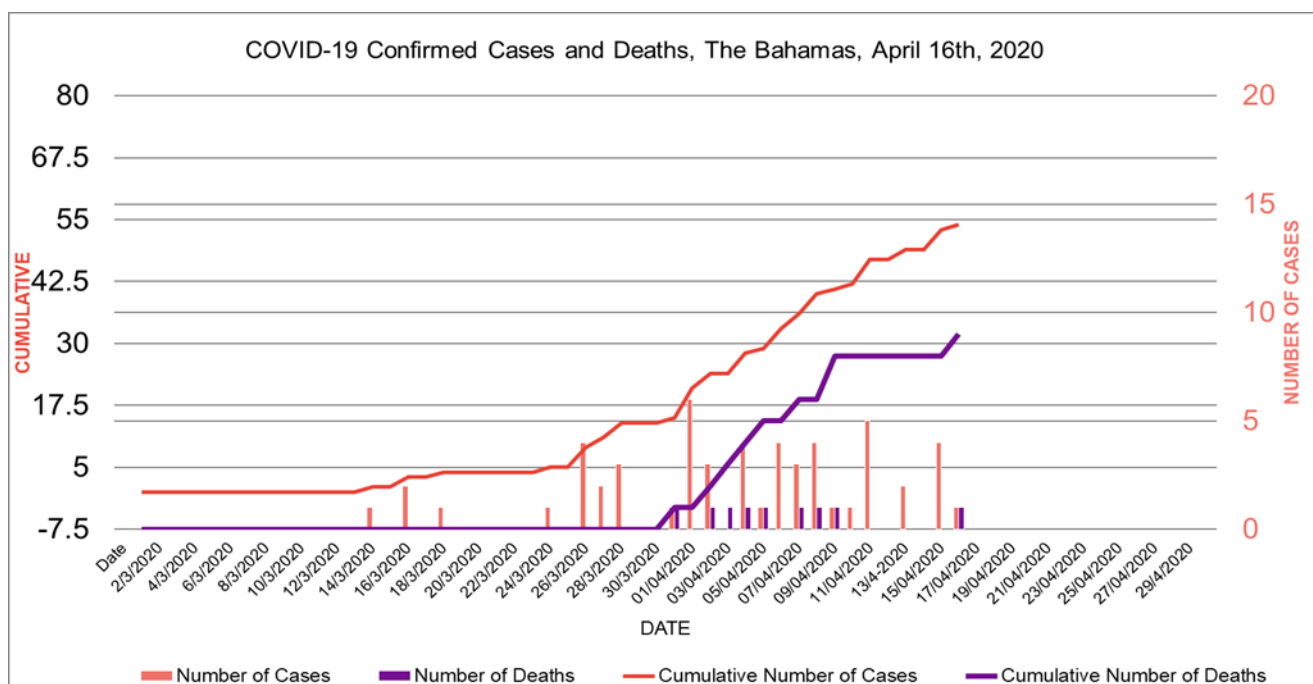
The Turks and Caicos Islands

Island	Confirmed cases	Deaths
Parrot Cay	2	0
Providenciales	9	1
TOTAL	11	1

SITUATION SUMMARY

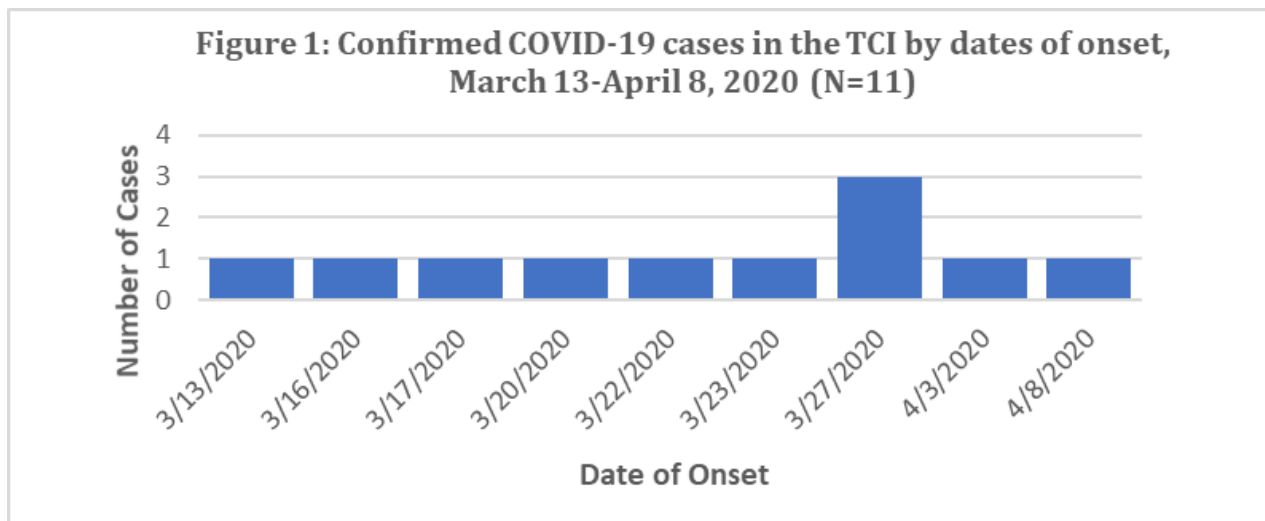
The Bahamas

- Continuation of Emergency Orders implemented since 20th March 2020, with increasingly draconian measures implemented since then. Closure of schools and businesses continue except specified categories of businesses that generally provide access to food, health care, and pharmaceutical supplies.
- A food shopping schedule is in place which specifies times for essential workers, the elderly, and persons with disabilities.
- The Prime Minister continues to participate in Special Emergency Meetings of the Conference of the Health of Government of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) -Regional food security was discussed this week.
- A Food Task force will be established to ensure those in need have access to adequate food, and to increase local food production and distribution for the short, medium, and long terms.
- The mandate for wearing face masks outside of the household continues. A ban on mass importation of non-medical grade face masks has been established to develop local industry.
- Government measures to ensure payment of unemployment benefits through the National Insurance Board are ongoing.
- The Union Health and Welfare Fund of the Bahamas Hotel Catering and Allied Workers Union will issue relief payments to hotel workers 20th-24th April 2020.
- Improvements have been made for the completeness of data collection on cases, contacts and quarantined/isolated persons.
- Government-funded isolation and quarantine facilities remain in operation for those who cannot effectively self-quarantine or self-isolate at home.
- The South Beach Clinic (SBC) is operational and will be used to increase the number of bed available for COVID-19 patients with mild to moderate symptoms. Appropriate arrangements have been made to staff the clinic. SBC will also be the facility for sample collection, referral of cases for testing who have been identified through the COVID-19 hotline.
- In Grand Bahama, is planning for a surge of cases of COVID-19. RAND Memorial Hospital will be expanded by nine inpatient beds. The Cancer Society's facility will be expanded with ten inpatient beds.
- Service utilization data such as emergency room use, and emergency medical services use are being monitored to inform planning for surge capacity.
- The Prime Minister has made an appeal to private sector health professionals to join in delivering health care services to combat COVID-19.
- Illegal migrants who meet the definition of a suspected case are being tested for COVID-19 at the point of seizure, and are appropriately quarantined and monitored for 14 days under supervision.



Turks and Caicos Islands

- Emergency Powers continue in effect and mandates the closure of the international airports and seaports, restriction of local travel, closure of schools, implementation of curfews, and compliance with physical distancing measures.
- Further to the implementation of the Emergency Powers, nightly curfews between 8pm and 5am and a stay at home regulation have been implemented for all residents except essential service workers have been extended until 4th May 2020. Complete closure of businesses on Sundays and Wednesdays will commence on 18th April 2020.
- A hotline has been established to receive COVID-19- related calls.
- Protocols are being updated in the overall reorganization of the health delivery network for triage and care of suspected COVID-19 cases.
- Airports will remain closed to regional and international flights until 4th May 2020. Cruise ports will remain closed until 30th June 2020.



NATIONAL RESPONSE

The Bahamas Ministry of Health

- COVID-19 laboratory testing continues at the National Reference Laboratory.
- Efforts continue toward establishing testing capacity on at least 2 additional islands.
- Consideration is being given to expand testing to include contacts of cases, nursing home residents, prison occupants, and at-risk healthcare workers.
- A new protocol was drafted for the rational use of personal protective equipment due to the current stock limitations.
- Online surveys and predictive tools are used to prepare models to estimate probable numbers of COVID-19 cases. This is a collaborative project of the Ministry of Health and the University of the Bahamas.
- The virtual call center is being used to guide probable cases to the appropriate health care facility or to proceed with home quarantine/isolation on a situational basis.
- Call center data is being recorded and analyzed to estimate the number of probable cases and their geographic location. guiding probable cases
- Additional staff has been engaged to boost daily contact tracing efforts.

Turks and Caicos Islands Ministry of Health

- COVID-19 laboratory testing continues through accessing the Reference Laboratory in The Bahamas and the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA), Trinidad, depending on flight availability for specimen transport.
- Several PAHO/WHO tools are being used to support the Ministry of Health in exploring probable scenarios for planning for the outbreak response by estimating the number of needed hospital beds, ICU beds, human resources, and medical and PPE supplies.
- A refresher training was conducted for health care providers and front-line workers on response protocols for Infection Prevention and Control.

- Ongoing, frequent public health messages are being broadcast to provide prevention and control advice for COVID-19, and general COVID-19 information and updates. The Ministry of Health's website and email are accessible to the public to address additional concerns.
- The TCI government is partnering with the private sector and non-governmental organizations to provide humanitarian support to those most affected by COVID-19.

PAHO/WHO RESPONSE

The Bahamas

- The PAHO Country Office (CO) continues teleworking arrangements which commenced on 20th March 2020.
- PAHO donated laboratory supplies to support real time PCR laboratory testing and is procuring rapid molecular test platforms and test reagents. The latter is with a view of expanding testing capacity to two additional islands for near-patient testing, and faster transfer of patients in need of critical care.
- PAHO continues to provide technical assistance to the Ministry of Health for production of communication materials on mental health, alcohol use, and gender-based violence among other subjects in relation to COVID-19.
- PAHO continues to provide the Ministry of Health personnel in both countries with access to updated information through PAHO/WHO WebEx meetings, online courses, technical documents and guidelines and technical briefings.
- Country Office personnel are embedded within the Bahamas' Ministry of Health's Emergency Operating Centre providing technical guidance and support in the areas of primary health care, hospitals and acute care, information management, laboratory, surveillance and contact tracing.

Turks and Caicos Islands

- PAHO provides on-going technical assistance through virtual meetings, email correspondence, and teleconferences and access to PAHO/WHO WebEx meetings, online courses, PAHO/WHO technical guidance documents and technical briefings.
- PAHO is assisting in the estimation of health sector needs for a surge in cases with planning for physical facilities to provide in-patient and critical care, as well as estimating human resource needs.

NEEDS

The Bahamas and Turks and Caicos Islands

- Personal Protective Equipment
- Laboratory test kits and supplies
- Training in Infection Prevention and Control for persons delivering care in nursing homes and at-home nursing care

GAPS/CHALLENGES

- The Ministries of Health in both countries and PAHO are seriously challenged to procure personal protective equipment, patient sampling and laboratory supplies from international commercial suppliers.
- The high prevalence of non-communicable diseases in the population increases the risk of death from COVID-19. The elderly and pregnant populations are also at higher risk of complications.

- It is extremely challenging to achieve compliance by persons who are put in self-isolation or self-quarantine.

Turks and Caicos Islands

- Limited surge capacity in secondary care facilities including limitations in bed space and human resources which are being addressed regionally and in collaboration with the UK Government.
- No in-country capacity for COVID-19 laboratory testing and delays in availability of results due to the need to refer COVID-19 samples to the Caribbean Public Health Agency (Trinidad) or Bahamas National Reference Laboratory.
- No in-country intensive care capacity remains a serious challenge, and a workable solution has not yet been put in place.
- Disruption in supply chain and long lead times for procurement of PPE, medical, patient sampling and laboratory supplies.
- There is a large population of undocumented migrants entering the country. Strategies are needed for public education and surveillance among the migrant population.