

Situation in The Bahamas and Turks and Caicos Islands 8th May 2020.

CONTEXT

On 30th January 2020 the World Health Organization (WHO) declared Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) a public health emergency of international concern. As of 7th May 2020, there were 3,722,800 cases and 264,454 deaths reported globally. The Region of the Americas accounted for 1,586,130 of confirmed cases and 95,059 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 1st May 2020, there were 11 newly confirmed cases and no deaths from COVID-19.

Of the newly confirmed cases:

- Eight are female in age groups: ≤19 (1); 20 to 39 (2); 40 to 59 (3) and ≥ 60 (2);
- Three are male in age groups: 20 to 39 (3);
- Cases were distributed among three different islands-New Providence (7), Bimini (3), Grand Bahama (1).

Among total confirmed cases:

- 35 male in age groups: 20 to 39 (6); 40 to 59 (19) and ≥ 60 (10);
- 57 female in age groups: ≤19 (4); 20 to 39 (17); 40 to 59 (21) and ≥ 60 (15);
- 22 are Health Care Workers (HCWs) representing 23.9% of total cases;
- As of 7th May 2020, 1,539 real time PCR tests had been conducted.

Turks and Caicos Islands

Since 1st May 2020, there were no newly confirmed cases and no deaths from COVID-19. The last case was confirmed on 25th April 2020.

Among total confirmed cases:

- 8 (66.7%) are male;
- 4 (33.3%) are female;
- 44 persons are quarantined/home isolation.
- 109 persons have been tested for COVID-19 to date.

The Bahamas

Island	Confirmed cases	Deaths
New Providence	72	8
Grand Bahama	8	2
Bimini	11	1
Cat Cay	1	0
TOTAL	92	11

Turks and Caicos Islands

Island	Confirmed cases	Deaths
Parrot Cay	2	0
Providenciales	10	1
TOTAL	12	1

SITUATION IN NUMBERS

TOTAL CASES

92 Bahamas
12 Turks & Caicos
Confirmed

50 Bahamas
4 Turks & Caicos
Active Cases

31 Bahamas
Turks & Caicos
Recovered

8 Bahamas
3 Turks & Caicos
Hospitalized

11 Bahamas
1 Turks & Caicos
Deaths

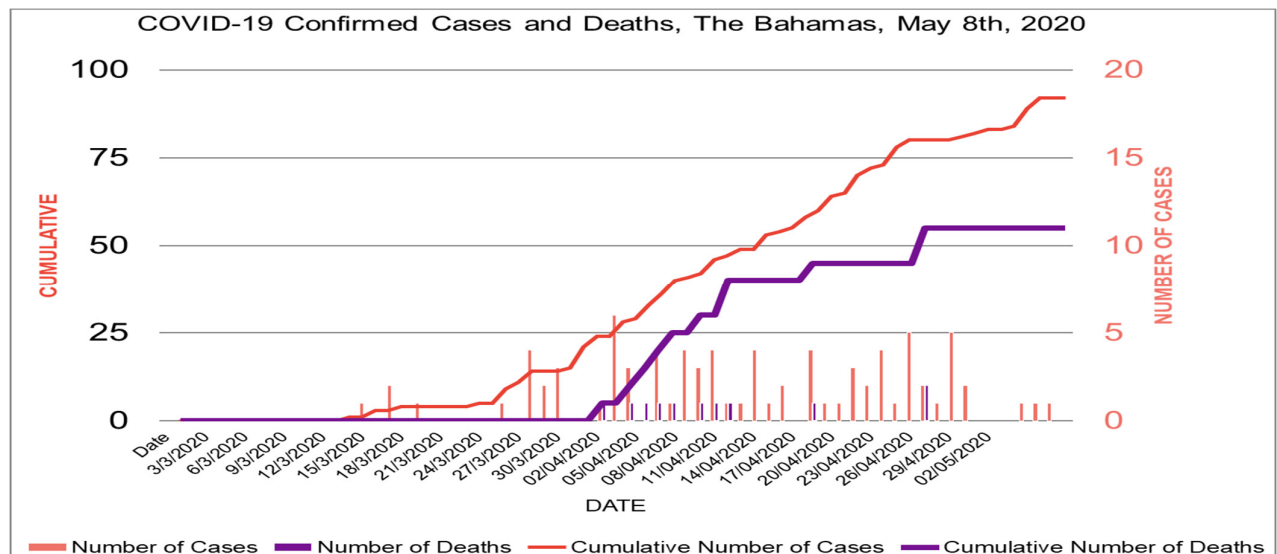
PAHO RESPONSE

- ✓ Donation of laboratory supplies
- ✓ Risk assessment and situational analysis
- ✓ Investigation of HCW infection in The Bahamas
- ✓ Technical guidance
- ✓ Communication
- ✓ Support to local authorities on surveillance and health systems planning

SITUATION SUMMARY

The Bahamas

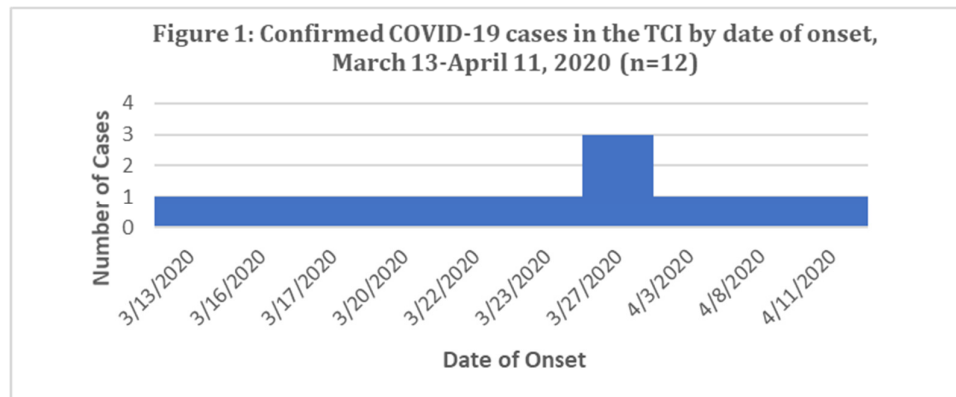
- Emergency Orders (that include curfews, lockdowns, physical distancing measures and travel restrictions) will continue until 30th May 2020.
- An increasing number of commercial businesses are being exempted from curfew restrictions.
- In accordance with the plan for phased re-opening of the economy, the country graduated to the second step of the first phase of re-opening which includes the operation of essential businesses, delivery and curbside service, and construction.
- The phased reopening of Family Islands commenced this past week with the southern islands. While these islands have resumed normal activities during the day, nightly curfew and lockdown measures remain in effect. These islands include Ragged Island, Rum Cay, Mayaguana, Inagua, Crooked Island, Acklins and Long Cay.
- The National Food Committee continues preparations to ensure equitable food distribution. A national database for registration of individuals in need of support is being developed and details on the distribution are being worked out.
- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has arranged for the phased return of Bahamian nationals and residents to the country, beginning 8th May 2020. The National Airline Carrier will transport approximately 200 persons from South Florida. Travelers are to be PCR tested before travel. All returning nationals will be quarantined. An evaluation will be conducted of each person's situation to decide whether they will be allowed to quarantine at home or at the government's facility for a 14-day period.



Turks and Caicos Islands

- Emergency Powers will continue in effect until 1st June 2020. Nightly curfews will continue until 25th May 2020. Business closures will continue only on Sundays.
- The country commenced reopening in a first Phase. Selected businesses and services have resumed operations in addition to exempted businesses. All other businesses must adhere to previous lockdown orders. Specifically, gyms, casinos, spas, discos, bars and dining in restaurants are to remain closed. Police, public health, and environmental health officials have been authorized to shut down businesses in violation of orders for this phase.

- Domestic travel is now unrestricted between South Caicos, Grand Turk, and Salt Cay and between Middle Caicos and North Caicos. Other domestic travel will remain restricted until there is in-country COVID-19 testing capacity. Restrictions on international travel remain.
- Increased incidents of crime have been reported during the curfew periods.



NATIONAL RESPONSE

The Bahamas Ministry of Health

- Prime Minister Hubert Minnis has temporarily assumed the position of Minister of Health, following resignation of the previous incumbent.
- The Ministry of Health (MOH) continues efforts to procure more PPE. Several private companies and individuals have donated PPE, disinfectants, sanitizers, and other medical supplies.
- The MOH is investigating and implementing mitigation measures in response to a high prevalence of COVID-19 infected HCWs and numerous HCWs in quarantine. Follow up measures include in-depth cleaning of facilities, re-training HCWs in Infection Prevention and Control (IPC), and COVID-19 molecular testing based on presence of symptoms or end of 14-day quarantine post-exposure.
- Laboratory testing for healthcare workers (HCWs) from two public hospitals in New Providence who had occupational exposures to COVID-19 have now been completed. During the first screening, 218 HCWs were swabbed and one positive case was detected. During the second screening 36 HCWs were swabbed and no positive cases were detected.
- 130 HCWs providing home care complied with a national mandate to provide credentials to the Chief Medical Officer and have undergone IPC training.
- PAHO has been invited to collaborate with the Ministry of Health to investigate risk factors for HCW infections. Review of risk assessment data and conduct of a case-control study are being considered.
- Bimini island was identified as a new transmission hotspot, following confirmation of 11 COVID-19 cases, including three new cases this past week. More draconian physical distancing measures are being considered.
- Follow up with 12 persons who have completed their quarantine period is incomplete. MOH is considering the use of an electronic platform to monitor persons in quarantine.

Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI) Ministry of Health

- In-country capacity building for COVID-19 PCR testing continues following receipt of PCR testing equipment. In the interim, COVID-19 testing is accessed at the Reference Laboratory in The Bahamas and the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA), Trinidad.
- The MOH is drafting a protocol for the use of PPEs for non-health first responders.
- Public health communication continues to provide prevention advice and updates for COVID-19. The show 'Health Matters' focused on "Managing stress and taking care of your overall health during the COVID-19 Outbreak" as well as print materials on "Coping with grief and loss during COVID-19."

PAHO/WHO RESPONSE

PAHO continues to provide both The Bahamas and Turks and Caicos Islands with access to updated technical guidelines and technical assistance.

The Bahamas

- PAHO Country Office (CO) personnel are embedded within the Bahamas' MOH Emergency Operating Centre (EOC).
- PAHO CO and MOH have initiated a collaborative project to: investigate risk factors for HCW infections; describe clinical course and disease outcomes; plan and implement fact driven mitigation measures.
- PAHO made donations of RNA extraction kits and PCR primers to MOH.

NEEDS

The Bahamas needs nasopharyngeal swabs.

GAPS/CHALLENGES

The Bahamas

- Health care workers account for 23.9% of total confirmed COVID-19 cases.
- There is public concern about 13/1063 named contacts of cases who could not be reached. Of the total quarantined persons since the start of the outbreak, 23 became cases and 761 have completed 14 days of quarantine.

Turks and Caicos Islands

- No in-country intensive care capacity remains a challenge. A feasible solution is yet to be identified.