

## Situation in The Bahamas & Turks and Caicos Islands 4<sup>th</sup> February 2021.

On 30<sup>th</sup> January 2020 the World Health Organization (WHO) declared Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) a public health emergency of international concern. As of 4<sup>th</sup> February 2021, there were 104,226,730 cases and 2,268,141 deaths reported globally. The Region of the Americas accounted for 46,434,416 confirmed cases and 1,075,992 deaths.

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

### HIGHLIGHTS The Bahamas

Since 28<sup>th</sup> January 2020, there were 82 newly confirmed cases.

Among the new cases:

- Seventy percent were from New Providence;
- 40 males and 42 females;
- 12 (14.6%) cases (from New Providence) were travel-related.

Among total confirmed cases:

- 61,709 real time PCR (RT-PCR) tests have been conducted to date.

### Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI)

Since 28<sup>th</sup> January 2020, there were 155 newly confirmed cases.

Among the new cases:

- Seventy-six percent were from Providenciales;
- Four cases reported on a new island, Middle Caicos.

Among total confirmed cases:

- 750 (48.3%) males, 793 (51.1%) females and 10 (0.6%) unknown gender (data to 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2021);
- The age distribution of all cases (data to 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2021) is 0-5 (2.7%), 6-19 (10.7%), 20-29 (19.1%), 30-39 (25.9%), 40-49 (21.2%), 50-59 (13.1%), 60-79 (6.6%), 80 and over (0.5%), unknown (0.1%);
- 804 persons are quarantined/home isolation;
- 14,526 real time PCR (RT-PCR) tests have been conducted to date.

#### The Bahamas

Island	Confirmed cases	Deaths
New Providence	5982	137
Grand Bahama	1188	24
Abaco	218	3
Eleuthera	160	1
Exuma	122	1
Bimini/Cat Cay	83	2
Berry Islands	49	1
Inagua	19	0
Andros	33	0
Long Island	11	0
Cat Island	8	0
Acklins	7	0
San Salvador	10	0
Crooked Island	6	0
Mayaguana	3	0
Pending	357	7
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>8256</b>	<b>176</b>

#### Turks and Caicos Islands

Island	Confirmed cases	Deaths
Providenciales	1385	8
North Caicos	47	0
Parrot Cay	11	0
Grand Turk	137	1
South Caicos	7	0
Middle Caicos	4	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1591</b>	<b>9</b>

## SITUATION IN NUMBERS

### TOTAL CASES

**8256 Bahamas**  
**1591 Turks & Caicos**

Confirmed

**1208 Bahamas**  
**326 Turks & Caicos**

Active Cases

**6819 Bahamas**  
**1254 Turks & Caicos**

Recovered

**15 Bahamas**  
**10 Turks & Caicos**

Hospitalized

**1 Turks & Caicos**  
Positive Cases that Left Country

**176 Bahamas**  
**9 Turks & Caicos**  
COVID-related Deaths

**38 Bahamas**  
Non-COVID-related Deaths

**15 Bahamas**  
Deaths under investigation

## PAHO RESPONSE

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



## **NATIONAL RESPONSE**

### **The Bahamas Ministry of Health (MOH)**

- While there is a decrease in newly confirmed COVID-19 cases, daily new confirmed cases of COVID-19 continue to be reported in The Bahamas.
- The national authorities continue to require negative real time PCR tests from arriving travelers and rapid antigen testing five and ten days post entry for all in-coming travelers, including citizens and residents.
- COVID-19 samples have been sent out of country for genomic sequencing to ascertain whether any variant strains are in-country.
- COVID-19 laboratory PCR testing continues at the National Reference Laboratory (NRL), Princess Margaret Hospital (PMH), Rand Memorial Hospital and private sector laboratories.
- The Contact Tracing Command Centre is still operational, although with a decrease in the number of volunteer contact tracers. An on-line contact tracing course continues to be offered through the University of The Bahamas (UB).
- A SharePoint platform is utilized for multiple user entry of contact tracing data, case investigation and laboratory test results whilst Go.Data is used for epidemiology analysis of a subset of exported data variables.
- Moderate to severe suspected and confirmed cases are treated at PMH, Doctors Hospital West and Rand Memorial Hospital.
- The Public Hospital's Authority continues to distribute PPEs across all public hospitals and clinics.
- MOH continues to provide telemedicine, telepsychology, mental health, and psychosocial support services.
- MOH continues to implement a communication campaign to increase immunization coverage for influenza and other vaccines.
- Preparatory work continues towards developing the National COVID-19 Vaccine Plan, with support from PAHO.
- The communication campaign for COVID-19 vaccine continues.

### **Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI) Ministry of Health**

- There has been an increase in the daily number of new confirmed cases of COVID-19.
- COVID-19 vaccine distribution continued this past week with distribution commencing in North and Middle Caicos, South Caicos and Salt Cay. 6,114 persons and 233 persons have received the first and second doses respectively of the COVID-19 Vaccine as of 4<sup>th</sup> February 2021.
- Persons continue to register for the COVID-19 vaccine via the online portal which is available in three languages: English, French-Creole, and Spanish.
- Go.Data is being utilized for field data collection and contact tracing investigations.
- Community drive-through services continue to provide access to COVID-19 tests throughout the islands.
- The National Public Health Laboratory continues to conduct COVID-19 PCR testing and 14,526 tests were completed to date. Testing has been expanded to include "frontline" workers and community-based testing.

- The National COVID-19 Vaccine Plan is being implemented – work having been expedited in line with the receipt of Pfizer vaccine. A national committee and a technical task force are supporting vaccine introduction policy development and implementation.
- The communication education campaign continues with communication materials on the COVID-19 vaccine shared via traditional means and social media.
- A Cuban health contingent of 20 persons continues to operate in medical facilities through a bilateral agreement between the two countries.

## PAHO/WHO RESPONSE

- PAHO continues to provide both The Bahamas and Turks and Caicos Islands with access to updated technical guidelines and to technical assistance.
- WHO/PAHO briefing documents have been shared with both countries on COVID-19 vaccination and the emergence of COVID-19 mutant strains in different locations.

## The Bahamas

- There has been a decrease in the frequency of EOC meetings. PAHO continues to share global and regional data and technical documents with MOH.
- Three staff members provide data management support to MOH, assisting with coordination of data entry for cases, contacts and laboratory tests and with standardizing of analysis and reporting.
- A PAHO led Infection Prevention Control Training course was completed by 36 physicians and nurses from MOH, Public Hospitals Authority, and Department of Public Health.
- PAHO's regional and country office HSS and EOC groups have advised the MOH on expanding acute care services in three hospitals and adjusting workflow and workplace layout to minimize risks of COVID-19 infection.
- PAHO Country Office personnel continue to participate in MOH's planning committee for developing the country's COVID-19 Vaccination Strategy and plan.
- MOH has requested PAHO's assistance to procure syringes to support the vaccine rollout.

## Turks and Caicos Islands

- PAHO continues to provide technical assistance and access to technical guidelines, information and communication products, has advised on contact tracing and data management and made donations of PPE.
- A weekly virtual meeting was convened between MOH and PAHO for discussion of the technical cooperation programme. Meetings have been suspended for the past eight weeks due to the holiday season and focus on COVID-19 vaccine distribution exercises. However, there are plans to resume these meetings in the coming weeks.
- A PAHO led Infection Prevention Control Training course was completed by 20 personnel from MOH.

## GAPS/CHALLENGES

- Public compliance with and enforcement of public health protocols are challenges in both countries.
- Surges in travel-related cases and virus transmission among nationals and residents occurred in both countries after the re-opening of international borders, however, within-country transmission of COVID-19 currently accounts for most of the confirmed cases in both countries.
- There is a new risk to both The Bahamas and Turks and Caicos Islands from the emergence of mutant COVID-19 strains in large numbers in the United Kingdom and South Africa with evidence of spread through travel to other countries.

- CARPHA has advised Caribbean countries that it is offering genomic sequencing for COVID-19 strains through collaboration with a researcher at the University of the West Indies. Neither The Bahamas nor Turks and Caicos Islands have in-country sequencing capacity. Furthermore, The Bahamas normally experiences significant challenges to refer biological samples to CARPHA.

### **The Bahamas**

- A tented patient facility donated by Samaritan's Purse remains available in New Providence for expanded clinical capacity.
- COVID-19 testing offered in both the public and private sectors, both real time PCR and SARS CoV-2 antigen testing are offered with a requirement to report positive results and workload through the national COVID-19 surveillance system.
- There has been a decline in infections and requirements for isolation/quarantine of frontline health, security service and other sector workers.

### **Turks and Caicos Islands**

- There appears to be a surge in confirmed COVID-19 cases on the islands. Responsive contact tracing and epidemiological investigations are on-going.
- Stigma and discrimination of COVID-19 confirmed and suspected cases remain a concern.
- "Roll out" of COVID-19 vaccines is on-going and it will be important to document country experiences and lessons learned.