

## Situation in The Bahamas & Turks and Caicos Islands 11<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 11<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 4<sup>th</sup> February 2021, there were 76 newly confirmed cases.

Among the new cases:

- Seventy-eight percent (78%) were from New Providence;
- 38 (50%) males and 38 (50%) females;
- 4 (6%) cases (2 from New Providence and 2 from Eleuthera) were travel-related.

Among total confirmed cases:

- 63,870 real time PCR (RT-PCR) tests have been conducted to date.

### Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI)

Since 4<sup>th</sup> February 2021, there were 222 newly confirmed cases.

Among the new cases:

- Sixty-four percent (64%) were from Providenciales;
- One (1) case reported on a new island, Ambergris Cay.

Among total confirmed cases:

- 858 (48.1%) males, 910 (51.0%) females and 16 (0.9%) unknown gender (data to 10<sup>th</sup> February 2021);
- The age distribution of all cases (data to 10<sup>th</sup> February 2021) is 0-5 (2.4%), 6-19 (10.0%), 20-29 (18.7%), 30-39 (25.3%), 40-49 (21.5%), 50-59 (14.2%), 60-79 (7.2%), 80 and over (0.6%), unknown (0.1%);
- 937 persons are quarantined/home isolation;
- 15,568 real time PCR (RT-PCR) tests have been conducted to date.

#### The Bahamas

Island	Confirmed cases	Deaths
New Providence	6041	139
Grand Bahama	1194	24
Abaco	222	3
Eleuthera	164	1
Exuma	122	1
Bimini/Cat Cay	83	2
Berry Islands	49	1
Inagua	19	0
Andros	35	0
Long Island	11	0
Cat Island	8	0
Acklins	7	0
San Salvador	10	0
Crooked Island	6	0
Mayaguana	3	0
Pending	358	7
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>8332</b>	<b>178</b>

#### Turks and Caicos Islands

Island	Confirmed cases	Deaths
Providenciales	1528	9
North Caicos	72	0
Parrot Cay	11	0
Grand Turk	170	3
South Caicos	13	0
Middle Caicos	18	0
Ambergris Cay	1	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1813</b>	<b>12</b>

## SITUATION IN NUMBERS

### TOTAL CASES

**8332 Bahamas**  
**1813 Turks & Caicos**  
Confirmed

**1134 Bahamas**  
**375 Turks & Caicos**  
Active Cases

**6966 Bahamas**  
**1424 Turks & Caicos**  
Recovered

**19 Bahamas**  
**12 Turks & Caicos**  
Hospitalized

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

**178 Bahamas**  
**12 Turks & Caicos**  
COVID-related Deaths

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

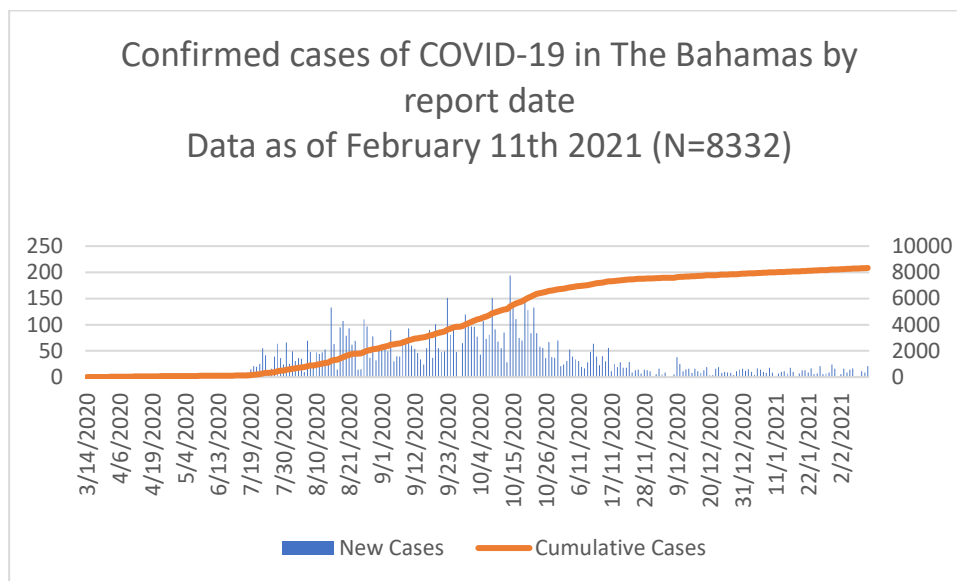
**16 Bahamas**  
Deaths under investigation

## PAHO RESPONSE

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

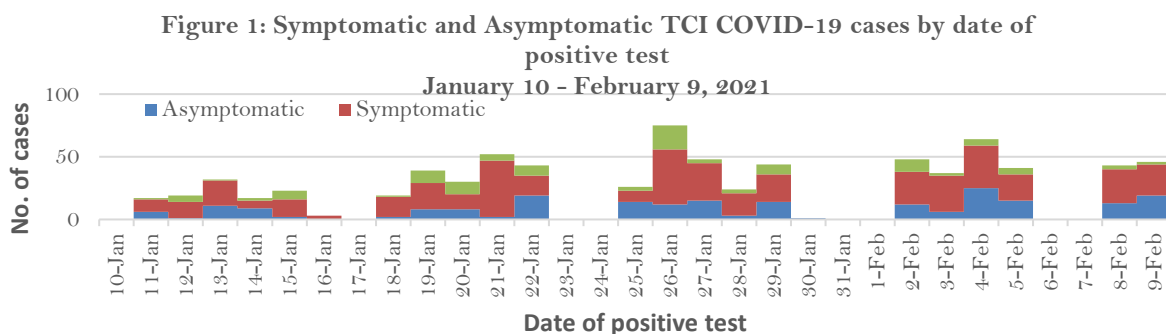
## The Bahamas

- Emergency Orders have been extended to 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2021.
- Nightly curfews continue for Abaco, Grand Bahama, Mainland Eleuthera, Mainland Exuma and New Providence from 10:00 pm to 5:00 am, Mondays to Sundays.
- A donation of personal protective equipment valued at \$150,000 was donated by the State of Qatar to the Government through the Public Hospitals Authority.
- The National Emergency Medical Services released a report detailing activity and challenges for the department from March to December 2020 in which there were a total 1,909 calls related to COVID-19.



## Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI)

- Protocols related to social distancing, wearing of masks and other related measures including screening for travel have been extended to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021.
- Restrictions on pleasure crafts, attendance at Church, funerals, religious places of worship, and weddings remain in effect.
- From 9<sup>th</sup> February 2021 to 16<sup>th</sup> February 2021 the following changes take effect:
  - Nightly curfew on all islands from 6:00 pm to 6:00 am;
  - Business closures at 5:00 pm daily with the exception of hotels for guests;
  - Only curbside pickup and delivery is permitted for restaurants and bars;
  - No public gatherings on beaches



## **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 particularly on the islands of Middle Caicos and North Caicos.
- COVID-19 vaccine distribution continued this past week with distribution commencing in Parrot Cay. 6,433 persons have received the first dose of the COVID-19 Vaccine as of 8<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 15,568 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.
- PAHO/WHO briefing documents have been shared with both countries on COVID-19 vaccination and the emergence of COVID-19 mutant strains in different locations.
- The Country Office is assisting with procurement Cepheid Testing Kits for COVID-19 for both countries.

## The Bahamas

- There has been a decrease in the frequency of EOC meetings.
- 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 has submitted samples for genomic sequencing to the WHO reference laboratory in Brazil and is awaiting results.
- Both countries require continuous supply of Cepheid Testing Kits for COVID-19.

### **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.