

Situation in The Bahamas and Turks and Caicos Islands 1st 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 30th April 2020, there were 3,136,174 cases and 228,414 deaths reported globally. The Region of the Americas accounted for 1,291,919 of confirmed cases and 75,873 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 24th April 2020, there were 8 newly confirmed cases and no new deaths from COVID-19. All the newly confirmed cases are female

Among total confirmed cases include:

- 32 men in age groups: 20 to 39 (3); 40 to 59 (19) and ≥ 60 (10);
- 49 women in age groups: ≤ 19 (3); 20 to 39 (15); 40 to 59 (18) and ≥ 60 (13);
- 18 (22%) of reported cases are health care workers (one is deceased);
- Since the start of the outbreak, 634 contacts were quarantined and 154 remain in quarantine;

As of 30th April 2020, 1,284 real time PCR tests have been conducted.

Turks and Caicos Islands

Since 24th April 2020, there was one newly confirmed case and no deaths from COVID-19.

57 persons are quarantined/home isolation.

101 persons have been tested for COVID-19 to date.

The Bahamas

Island	Confirmed cases	Deaths
New Providence	65	8
Grand Bahama	7	2
Bimini	8	1
Cat Cay	1	0
TOTAL	81	11

Turks and Caicos Islands

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

SITUATION IN NUMBERS

TOTAL CASES

81 Bahamas
12 Turks & Caicos
Confirmed

45 Bahamas
5 Turks & Caicos
Active Cases

25 Bahamas
5 Turks & Caicos
Recovered

8 Bahamas
1 Turks & Caicos
Hospitalized

11 Bahamas
1 Turks & Caicos
Deaths

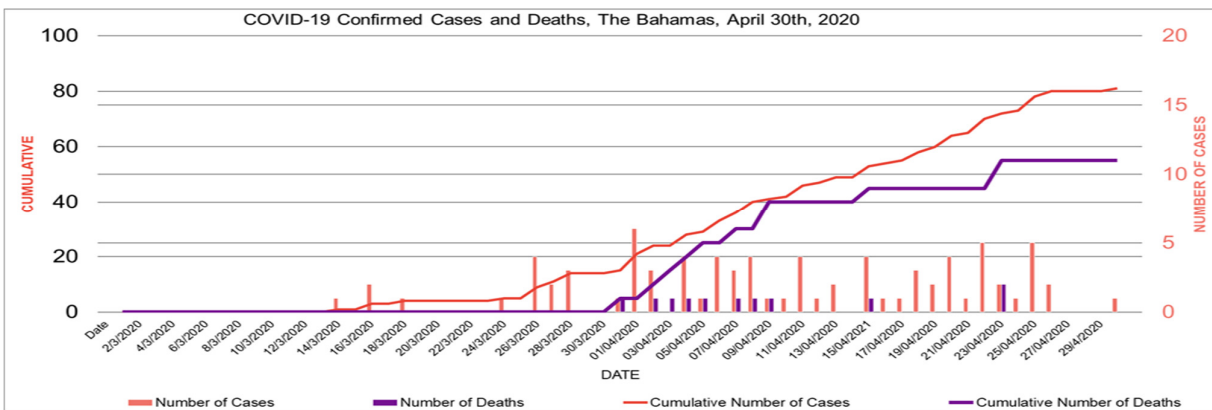
PAHO RESPONSE

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

SITUATION SUMMARY

The Bahamas

- Emergency Orders (that include curfews, lockdowns, physical distancing measures and travel restrictions) will continue until 30th May 2020.
- Strict penalties have been introduced for persons found in breach of isolation and quarantine orders.
- The list of commercial businesses exempted from curfew restrictions has been expanded.
- This past week, there were three consecutive days of no new cases detected, in a setting of increased laboratory testing.
- A measured plan for re-opening the economy has been developed which consists of five phases. The country is in the first phase which includes reopening essential businesses including those responsible for hurricane preparedness.
- A National Food Committee was created to coordinate governmental and non-governmental partners, increase food distribution, and maintain food supply chains. A digital national food distribution plan has been developed. Vulnerable populations will be prioritized for food delivery.
- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is investigating options and criteria for re-patriation of Bahamian nationals who have various urgent needs to return to the country.

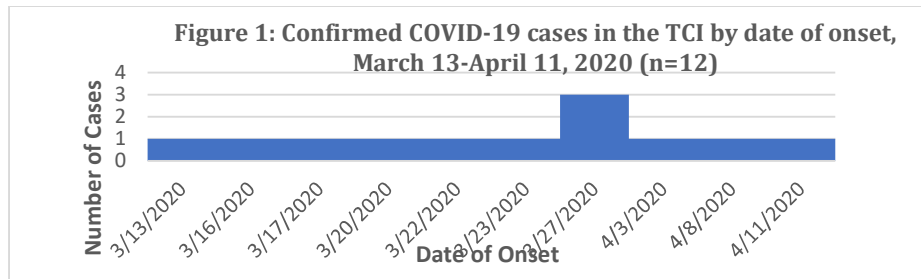


Turks and Caicos Islands

- The country will reopen in a phased approach. Key Government offices, retail grocery stores, and electrical and plumbing stores may reopen on 11th May 2020.
- Nightly curfews will continue until 25th May 2020. Business closures will continue only on Sundays.
- Schools and airports will remain closed until 1st June 2020 and cruise ports will remain closed until 30th June 2020. Domestic travel will remain restricted until there is in-country COVID-19 testing capacity.
- A Coronavirus Business Assistance Grant was created for self-employed persons and small businesses.
- The Government has waived arrears in payment for water services and provide free water on some islands.
- Inter-Health Canada and Turks and Caicos Islands Hospitals released protocols for the COVID-19 pre-triage process carried out at the hospitals. Two tents are established outside of the hospitals' main

entrance to screen patients for respiratory symptoms prior to patients' entry into the main hospital.

- United Kingdom (UK) Security Assistance personnel continue to assist with the COVID-19 response, building response capacity, and mobilizing supplies from the UK.
- Scotland Marines are currently in country under quarantine, and once released, will assist with operations related to illegal migrants.



NATIONAL RESPONSE

The Bahamas Ministry of Health

- >200 health care workers (HCW) at two public hospitals in New Providence were tested for COVID-19 after exposure to positive COVID-19 cases in the workplace. To date, only one person tested positive—this was a contact of a previously confirmed case.
- The Ministry of Health (MOH) has a one-month supply of personal protective equipment (PPE) and there are ongoing efforts to procure more PPE. Several private companies and individuals have donated PPE, disinfectants, sanitizers, and other medical supplies.
- The MOH is conducting investigations and implementing mitigation measures in response to a high prevalence of confirmed 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.
- There is increased monitoring at nursing homes and long-term care facilities and strengthening of IPC training and measures including PPE use, visitor restrictions, and implementing of cleaning and disinfection protocols.
- Newly approved and draft protocols created by the Ministry of Health include:
 - COVID-19 codes and coding for mortality and morbidity causes (approved)
 - Draft Physician procedures and case management guidelines at the South Beach Clinic
 - Draft Protocol for Resuscitation of Suspected and Confirmed COVID-19 patients
 - Draft Protocol for Critical Care & Management of suspected and confirmed COVID-19 Patients
- Collaboration continues among the MOH, University of the Bahamas and PAHO to model the COVID-19 outbreak using sensitivity, exposed, infected and resistant (SEIR) modelling.
- Family Island clinics have identified isolation rooms and use existing arrangements to transfer patients to New Providence when they are in need of urgent care, regardless of COVID-19 status.
- Community health nurses continue to administer vaccines nationally.
- COVID-19 cases and contacts are provided with written guidance on physical distancing and IPC.

- Bimini island has been identified as a new hotspot, following confirmation of eight COVID-19 cases on the island. On 29th April 2020 a team of HCWs traveled to Bimini to conduct patient interviews, contact tracing, mapping of cases and contacts, collection of laboratory samples from symptomatic contacts, inspection of quarantine and patient isolation facilities, training of staff, and public education about COVID-19.



Figure 1: HCWs at field sample collection site on Bimini Island

Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI) Ministry of Health

- In-country capacity building for COVID-19 PCR testing has been initiated following receipt of 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.
- Nasopharyngeal swabs and PPE for frontline HCW shave been added to MOH stock via donations from the UK Government, Public Health England (PHE), and local and international vendors.
- Public health communication continues to provide prevention advice and updates for COVID-19.
- TCI made an agreement with Cuba to provide nine Medical Specialists, 10 Registered Nurses, and one Administrative Professional to build HCW surge capacity. PHE also identified additional staffing.
- Approval of a policies to reserve N95 masks for use by frontline HCWs and mandatory wearing of non-medical face masks by the general public.

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).
- The CO's Health Systems and Services Advisor leads a three-member investigation team appointed by MOH's EOC to review patient records, HCW compliance with IPC and patient flow protocols at a public hospital that experienced clustering in time and location of in-patient confirmed COVID-19 cases.
- PAHO's Regional Office IPC team has been requested to provide technical assistance in the investigation of HCW infections and health care facility COVID-19 exposures in The Bahamas.
- PAHO provided another donation of real time PCR reagents to The Bahamas.

NEEDS

The Bahamas needs nasopharyngeal swabs and donated RNA extraction kits are pending delivery.

GAPS/CHALLENGES

The Bahamas

- Health care workers account for 22% of the total confirmed COVID-19 cases and 200 HCWs are in quarantine, pending the receipt of laboratory test results.
- The Government has prohibited use of serological COVID-19 tests for screening or clinical diagnosis.

Turks and Caicos Islands

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