

Situation in The Bahamas and Turks and Caicos Islands 22nd 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 21st May 2020, there were 4,947,540 cases and 326,212 deaths reported globally. The Region of the Americas accounted for 2,220,282 of confirmed cases and 131,606 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 15th May 2020, there was one newly confirmed case and no deaths from COVID-19.

The newly confirmed case:

- Is a male in age group: 40 to 59 (1), residing in New Providence, who works in a health care setting, but is not involved in direct patient care. ;
- The last reported case in Grand Bahama was 30th April 2020;

Among 97 confirmed cases up to 22 May:

- 38 were male in age groups: 20 to 39 (6); 40 to 59 (21); 60-79 (9); and ≥80 (2);
- 59 were female in age groups: ≤19 (4); 20 to 39 (19); 40 to 59 (21); 60-79 (13); and ≥80 (2);
- 23 (23.7%) of all cases are infected health care workers;
- 44 cases are still being actively followed up and 6 of them are hospitalized;
- There were no new COVID19-related deaths within the last 3 weeks. The case fatality ratio is 11.34% (11 deaths / 97 cases)
- As of 21st May 2020, 1,910 real time PCR (RT-PCR) tests were performed;

Turks and Caicos Islands

Since 15th 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 are male in age groups: ≤19 (1); 20 to 39 (3); 40 to 59 (3); 60-79 (1);
- 4 are female in age groups: ≤ 20 to 39 (3); 40 to 59 (1);
- 68 persons are quarantined/home isolation.
- 121 persons have been tested for COVID-19 to date.

The Bahamas

| Island | Confirmed cases | Deaths |
|----------------|-----------------|-----------|
| New Providence | 75 | 8 |
| Grand Bahama | 8 | 2 |
| Bimini | 13 | 1 |
| Cat Cay | 1 | 0 |
| TOTAL | 97 | 11 |

Turks and Caicos Islands

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

SITUATION IN NUMBERS

TOTAL CASES

97 Bahamas
12 Turks & Caicos
Confirmed

44 Bahamas
0 Turks & Caicos
Active Cases

42 Bahamas
10 Turks & Caicos
Recovered

6 Bahamas
0 Turks & Caicos
Hospitalized

1 Turks & Caicos
Left country

11 Bahamas
1 Turks & Caicos
Deaths

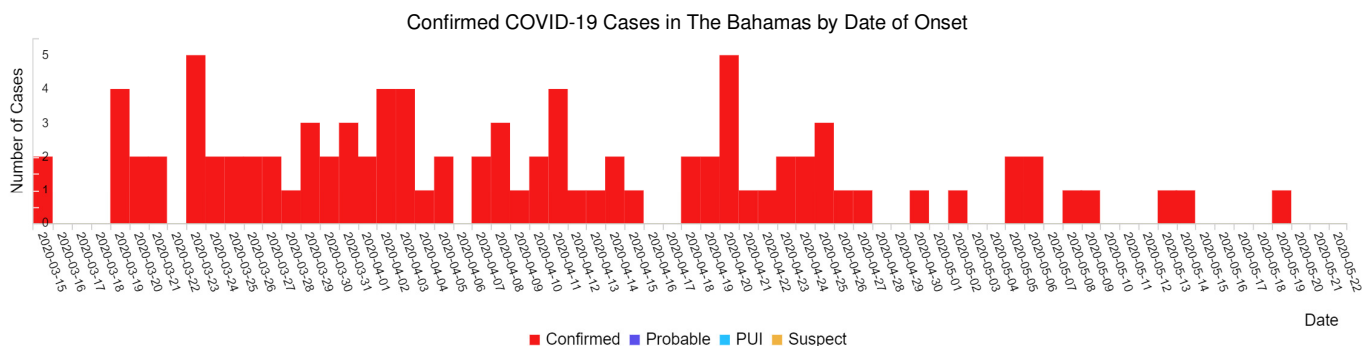
PAHO RESPONSE

- ✓ 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

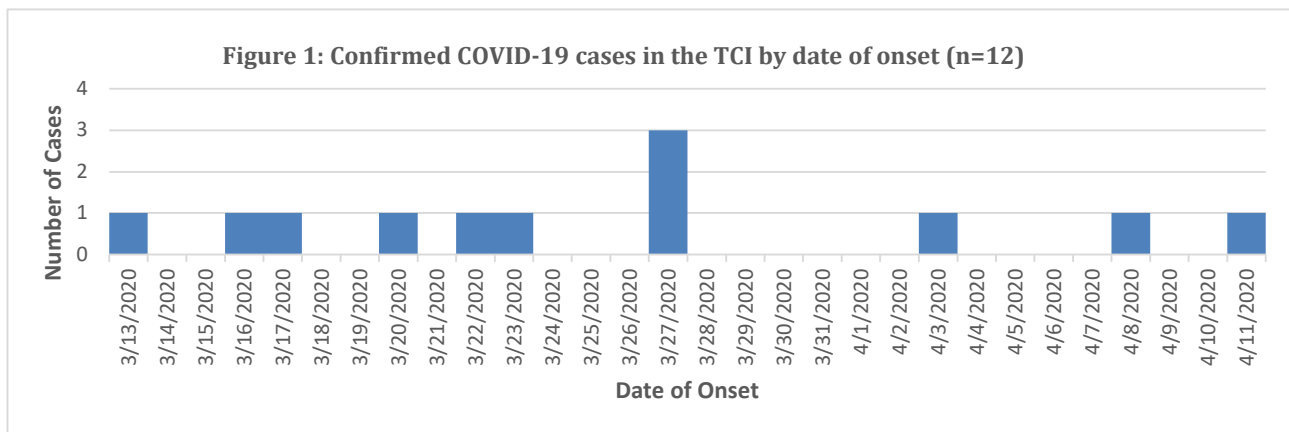
- Emergency Orders (that include curfews, lockdowns, physical distancing measures and travel restrictions) will continue until 30th May 2020.
- An increasing number of commercial businesses are being exempted from curfew restrictions, particularly those needed for Hurricane preparedness activities.
- Exercise is permitted during weekend lockdowns between 5am and 8am in proximal neighborhoods.
- In accordance with the plan for the phased re-opening of the economy, the country remains in the second part of the first phase in which commercial activity is being expanded to an additional four islands that have not had COVID19 cases, namely Abaco, Andros, Cat Island, and Long Island.
- Registration for inter-island work or business travel commenced on 20th May 2020, to islands that resumed normal commercial activity. Traveler undergo as risk assessment and/or a physical exam by an approved physician, as a prerequisite for consideration of approval for travel.
- No restrictions are in place for travel between islands cleared for resumption of commercial business and to New Providence and Grand Bahama. However, passengers returning to their respective Family Islands must apply for authorization to travel.
- The repatriation of Bahamian nationals and permanent residents continued on 21st May 2020 with the arrival of persons in New Providence who travelled from Fort Lauderdale.
- Revised repatriation protocols include coordination of return directly with the National Carrier, submission of COVID-19 negative RT-PCR test results via email and physical copy at airport check-in, and validation that testing was done in accredited laboratories.
- All persons from the first batch of returnees to New Providence and Grand Bahama are scheduled to end quarantine by 23rd May 2020. Some previously repatriated persons were hospitalized for non-COVID-19- related conditions. No adverse outcomes have been reported for those persons.
- A National Food Committee in collaboration with a local non-governmental organization distributed food to residents of Bimini during emergency lockdown measures after confirmation of 13 cases.
- An Economic Recovery Committee commenced a seven-week public consultation to garner recommendations for the economy's rebuilding efforts.



Turks and Caicos Islands

- Emergency Powers will remain in effect until 1st June 2020. Nightly curfews will continue until 25th May 2020. Business closures will continue only on Sundays.

- The country remains in Phase 1B of its plan for reopening.
- Preparations have commenced to allow travel from Providenciales to the other TCI islands. Residents must make application to the Ministry of Health (MOH) and further instructions will be provided for COVID-19 testing.
- The Government announced its first batch of payments for the Social Enhancement Aid COVID-19 Stimulus, in the form of food vouchers to cover a 3-month period.
- Approval was made in Cabinet for COVID-19 quarantine facilities for prisoners, and subsequent COVID-19 testing for prisoners and prison officers.



NATIONAL RESPONSE

The Bahamas Ministry of Health (MOH)

- “Lockdown measures” are being implemented in Bimini for 14 days following the island’s identification as a transmission hotspot.
- MOH continues to provide mental health and psychosocial support services in Bimini.
- MOH approved COVID-19 Authorization Travel Cards are being issued for inter-island travel of low-risk passengers who have been evaluated by an approved physician. Travel cards must be presented at the point of departure.
- Starting 25th May 2020, an electronic mobile phone application is to be used to monitor the movements and receive health status reports from persons who have been ordered by health authorities to quarantine at home.

Turks and Caicos Islands Ministry of Health

- In-country capacity building for COVID-19 PCR testing continues following receipt of two PCR testing machines. PAHO is advising on mechanisms to validate test performance. In the interim, COVID-19 testing is accessed at the Reference Laboratory in The Bahamas and the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA), Trinidad.
- MOH reiterated in-country testing is under the remit of the National Public Health Laboratory.
- A group of local resorts donated 17 ventilators to the TCI Government, increasing the country’s critical care capacity.
- An Information Paper on the MOH Standard Operating Procedures for COVID-19 and Environmental Health Department Guidelines for the country’s phased reopening was developed and presented in Cabinet.

- The MOH is drafting protocols for the use of PPEs for non-health first responders and for prioritization for the COVID-19 testing. Mass-testing is under discussion.
- Public health communication continues to provide prevention advice for COVID-19 and tips for maintaining good mental health.

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 remain embedded within the Bahamas' MOH Emergency Operating Centre (EOC).
- PAHO CO and MOH 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 CO is providing technical assistance to the MOH for COVID19 outbreak data management using the WHO Go Data surveillance platform. Upload of case data from Excel spreadsheet into the GoData platform was successful. A presentation on the platform was made to the MOH Emergency Operating Centre. Work will continue to achieve the same for upload into godata of data for contacts.
- PAHO donated 4,000 nasopharyngeal swabs to the MOH and clearance by the Customs Department is ongoing for donated RNA extraction kits.
- An offer of donation of 75,000 N95 masks procured by PAHO using contributions from the Caribbean Confederation of Credit Union was made to MOH.

GAPS/CHALLENGES

The Bahamas

- HCWs account for 23.7% of total confirmed COVID-19 cases.
- Rumors of some persons not complying with public health measures in Family Islands where full emergency orders remain in effect.

Turks and Caicos Islands

- No in-country intensive care capacity. Recent private sector equipment donations may help with capacity building.
- There have been delays with shipping samples to both the Reference Laboratory in The Bahamas and CARPHA. On-going in-country capacity building for testing should resolve this problem.