

## Situation in The Bahamas & Turks and Caicos Islands 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020.

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 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020, there were 81,592,364 cases and 1,801,160 deaths reported globally. The Region of the Americas accounted for confirmed 35,511,445 cases and 858,406 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 26<sup>th</sup> December 2020, there were 53 newly confirmed cases.

Among the new cases:

- Seventy-five percent were from New Providence and fifteen percent were from Grand Bahama;
- 23 (43.4%) males and 30 (56.6%) females.

Among total confirmed cases:

- 52,137 real time PCR (RT-PCR) tests have been conducted to date.

### Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI)

Since 26<sup>th</sup> December 2020, there were 49 newly confirmed cases.

Among the new cases:

- Sixty-seven percent were from Providenciales and thirty-three percent were from Grand Turk.

Among total confirmed cases:

- 466 (53.3%) males, 407 (46.6%) females and 1 (0.1%) unknown gender (data to 30<sup>th</sup> December 2020);
- The age distribution of all cases (data to 30<sup>th</sup> December 2020) is 0-5 (3.1%), 6-19 (11.0%), 20-29 (19.8%), 30-39 (25.4%), 40-49 (22.2%), 50-59 (11.7%), 60-79 (5.6%), 80 and over (0.6%), unknown (0.7%);
- 315 persons are quarantined/home isolation;
- 11,754 real time PCR (RT-PCR) tests have been conducted to date.

#### The Bahamas

Island	Confirmed cases	Deaths
New Providence	5717	132
Grand Bahama	1136	24
Abaco	200	3
Eleuthera	156	1
Exuma	120	1
Bimini/Cat Cay	82	2
Berry Islands	47	1
Inagua	19	0
Andros	24	0
Long Island	11	0
Cat Island	8	0
Acklins	7	0
Crooked Island	6	0
Mayaguana	3	0
Pending	351	7
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>7887</b>	<b>171</b>

#### Turks and Caicos Islands

Island	Confirmed cases	Deaths
Providenciales	812	5
North Caicos	20	0
Parrot Cay	11	0
Grand Turk	47	1
South Caicos	3	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>893</b>	<b>6</b>

## SITUATION IN NUMBERS

### TOTAL CASES

**7887 Bahamas**  
**893 Turks & Caicos**  
Confirmed

**1421 Bahamas**  
**103 Turks & Caicos**  
Active Cases

**6239 Bahamas**  
**783 Turks & Caicos**  
Recovered

**15 Bahamas**  
**2 Turks & Caicos**  
Hospitalized

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

**171 Bahamas**  
**6 Turks & Caicos**  
COVID-related Deaths

**36 Bahamas**  
Non-COVID-related Deaths

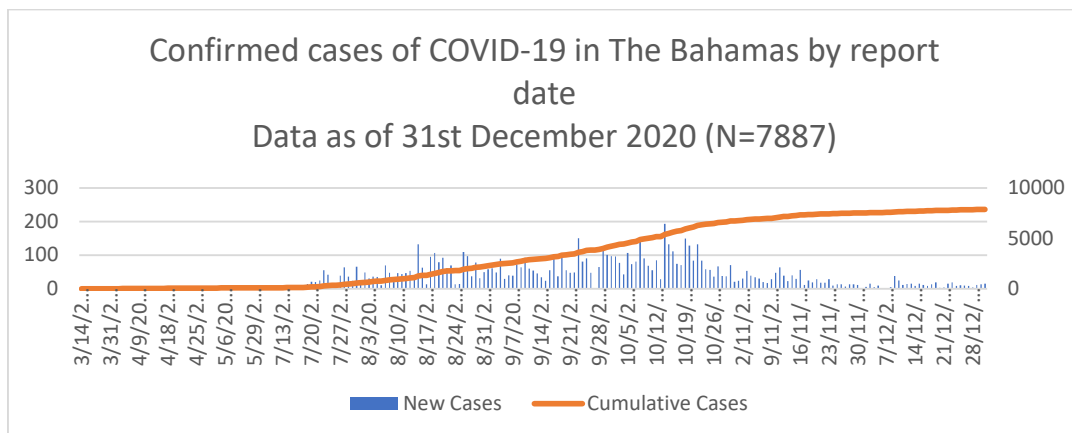
**20 Bahamas**  
Deaths under investigation

### 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

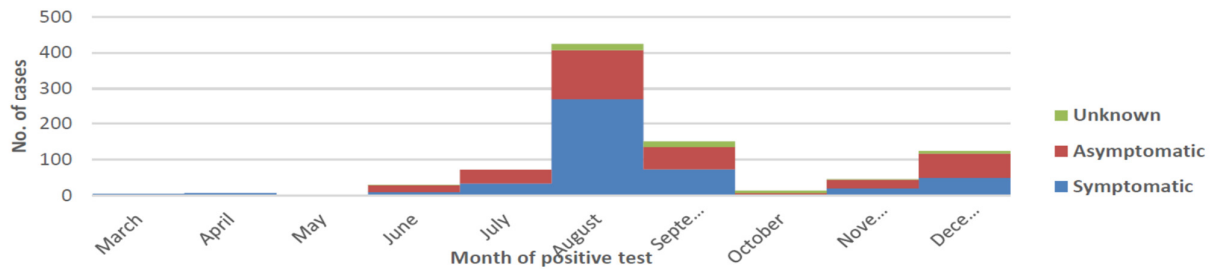
- Emergency Orders have been extended to 31<sup>st</sup> January 2021.
- Nightly curfews continue for Abaco, Grand Bahama, Mainland Eleuthera, Mainland Exuma and New Providence from 10:00 pm to 5:00 am, Mondays to Sundays.
- Special provisions for the Christmas Season from 24<sup>th</sup> December 2020 to 3<sup>rd</sup> January on Abaco, Grand Bahama, Mainland Eleuthera, Mainland Exuma and New Providence are:
  - Church services may be held after the 10:00 pm curfew time.
  - Social gatherings may be held with a maximum of 10 persons (All other islands permitted to have 20 persons maximum).
- Non-guests at hotels or other like commercial entity wishing to use indoor facilities at that facility are required to present a negative COVID-19 RT PCR Test or negative COVID-19 Rapid Antigen Test. If a non-guest wishes to use an outdoor facility at the hotel or commercial entity, no COVID-19 RT PCR Test or Rapid Antigen Test is required provided the non-guest does not access the facility from indoor.
- All schools will reopen on 4<sup>th</sup> January 2021. However, students on Abaco, Eleuthera, Exuma, and New Providence will continue virtual learning.



## 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 2020.
- No gatherings of more than 25 persons are permitted. Only outdoor activities are permitted.
- Occupancy at places of worship are limited to 30% capacity indoors. Outdoor capacity is limited to 40 persons. Signage indicating capacity must be placed at the entrance of the place of worship.
- While beaches are open, gatherings are limited to 10 persons from outside the same household. No alcohol is permitted on the beach.

**Figure 1: Symptomatic and asymptomatic TCI COVID-19 cases by month of positive test  
March 23 to December 30, 2020 (n=874)**



## NATIONAL RESPONSE

### The Bahamas Ministry of Health (MOH)

- There has been a slight increase in the daily number of new confirmed cases of COVID-19 throughout the Commonwealth of 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.
- Daily laboratory testing continues at the National Reference Laboratory (NRL), PMH, Rand Memorial Hospital and private sector laboratories.
- The Contact Tracing Command Centre is still operational and an on-line contact tracing course continues to be offered through the University of The Bahamas (UB).
- Preparatory work continues towards developing the National COVID-19 Vaccine Plan, with support from PAHO.
- 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.

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

- There has been an increase in the daily number of new confirmed cases of COVID-19.
- The National Public Health Laboratory continues to conduct COVID-19 PCR testing and 11,754 tests were completed to date. Testing has been expanded to include "frontline" workers and community-based testing.
- Preparatory work continues for developing the National COVID-19 Vaccine Plan, with support from PAHO.
- Community drive-thru testing for COVID-19 continued in Providenciales and at "walk-up" sites on other islands.
- Go.Data is being utilized for field data collection and contact tracing investigations.

- 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 technical assistance.

### **The Bahamas**

- PAHO Country Office personnel remain embedded within The Bahamas' MOH Emergency Operating Centre (EOC) to provide technical advice.
- 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.

### **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 is convened between MOH and PAHO for discussion of the technical cooperation programme.
- 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.
- Tropical storms and hurricanes pose a risk to COVID-19 response efforts.

### **The Bahamas**

- A tented patient facility donated by Samaritan's Purse increased health care capacity in New Providence. However, there are still concerns about insufficient capacity for handling severe cases.
- COVID-19 testing has been expanded in both the public and private sectors to cope with increased demands for testing. Many sites have started using antigen tests, before MOH disseminated guidance on the subject. Reporting of antigen test results compounds on-going challenges with coordination and timely receipt of results from all laboratories and test sites.
- 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**

- The decline in confirmation of new cases has decreased the workload for contact tracers. The Ministry of Health has initiated community-based COVID-19 testing.
- Stigma and discrimination by public towards COVID-19 confirmed and suspected cases.