



John McGhie (left), International Medical Corps team lead in the Bahamas, briefs members of USAID's Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) about the care provided at our Type 1 EMT clinic in High Rock, which they toured on September 18.

SITUATION UPDATE

Important public services and commercial life continue to resume activity in hard-hit areas of the Bahamas more than three weeks after Hurricane Dorian destroyed large pockets of this small island country.

On Grand Bahama, the island's main container port in Freeport has resumed normal activities, with trucks seen leaving the port loaded with urgently needed building materials required to begin the daunting task of rebuilding damaged and destroyed homes, businesses and other structures lost to the hurricane.

Education officials on Grand Bahama toured the island's public schools on September 19 as part of a plan to restart classes for most students on Monday, while other in authority struggled with the challenge of returning residents displaced by the storm back to their home areas. One Public Health Authority official estimated that only 30% of the population have so far returned to their communities in eastern areas of Grand Bahama, which were especially hard-hit. "Getting people back depends on repairing the infrastructure," the official said. "The roads are clear and the traffic is up, now we have to get the power and water back."

As more rural health clinics reopen on Grand Bahama, a local public health official noted several concerns they face in the coming weeks and months. Among them:

- Getting patients—especially those with chronic disease such as diabetes or hypertension—back to their normal clinic, where they are known and staff have the time to address, explain and be prepared to follow up on any special needs.

FAST FACTS

- The death toll from Hurricane Dorian rose to 53 during the past week but more than 1,000 remain missing and the number of fatalities is expected rise.
- The main container port in Grand Bahama, located in Freeport, has reopened and is operating normally.
- Education officials on Grand Bahama toured the island's public schools on September 19 as part of a plan to restart classes for most students on Monday, September 23.
- At the request of the Grand Bahama Public Health Authority, International Medical Corps has expanded its emergency medical care and related services to island residents in communities west of the capital, Freeport.

- Maintaining a close watch for any evidence of water-borne disease in a post-disaster environment where so many familiar water sources are either unavailable or polluted.
- Preparing for what they anticipate will be a spike in needs for psychosocial support once the immediacy of the disaster and the experience of their own personal survival begin to fade. Dr. Stacie Bevans, manager of the Grand Bahama Public Health Authority's Community Health Programs, underscored this in a recent meeting: "It's an adrenalin rush now, but after a month, reality sets in and people begin to get angry and depressed."

INTERNATIONAL MEDICAL CORPS RESPONSE

Acting in consultation with The Grand Bahama Public Health Authority, International Medical Corps has expanded and reconfigured its response to meet the island's medical and healthcare needs.

On Friday, Sept. 20, two of our medical teams deployed to areas west of the capital, Freeport, for the first time. A team of two physicians and three registered nurses supported an existing government hypertension and geriatric care clinic at Eight Mile Rock, while a second team of one physician and three registered nurses deployed to support a second government-operated clinic in Hawksbill, southwest of Freeport, for diabetic and general care patients. The Hawksbill team also conducted home visits in the surrounding community.

In addition, we added a weekend shift to our recently established clinic at High Rock, 32 miles east of the capital, staffed by a smaller team comprising one physician and two nurses. A Bahamian nurse from Freetown will join our staff at High Rock starting Monday. We will continue to serve the now-sparsely populated east Bahama island communities of Freetown, Pelican Point and McCleans Town with mobile medical teams based in High Rock.

On Sunday, our team lead and mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) advisor travelled to High Rock, Pelican Point and McCleans Town to assess a possible location for providing MHPSS services, a program that would be supported by a grant from USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA).

In the coming week, we will conduct an assessment of healthcare needs in the isolated community of Sweetings Cay, a tiny island off the eastern edge of Grand Bahama, largely destroyed in the storm. A government report listed all 37 structures on the cay were destroyed, with an estimated 25 survivors—including a nurse—remaining there.

In addition to these deployments, we also continue to support a maternity clinic serving public healthcare patients temporarily housed at the privately-owned Sunrise Medical Center in Freeport. Friday, two of our volunteer nurses and a midwife provided labor and delivery and postpartum care at the clinic.

Staffing for all locations during the week will include six physicians and nine registered nurses.

Our technical advisor for water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) has completed installation of a potable water system at the High Rock clinic that includes two 500-gallon bladders of drinking water. One of those storage units will supply the clinic, while the second will serve those residents of High Rock who remained there during the storm or have returned in the days since to begin rebuilding. We also have four portable toilets adjacent to the clinic—two gender-separated units for the clinic and two for the staff. Two more WASH specialists will be arriving in the coming days.