

PAHO assists Bahamian health officials in post-Dorian medical needs response



Nassau, September 6 (RHC)— A Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) team is in The Bahamas, working closely with health authorities there to support recovery efforts in the wake of Hurricane Dorian, which damaged health facilities and flooded hospitals on Abaco and Grand Bahama islands.

Prior to the hurricane, the PAHO country office contributed to the Ministry of Health's preparedness and response planning.

PAHO also pre-positioned experts from its sub-regional office in Barbados to assist the country in on-site assessments of Water Sanitation and Hygiene, health infrastructure and facilities' needs. Additional support on logistics, civil and military coordination, information management, surveillance, and coordination are expected to arrive in the next 24 to 48 hours to work with their counterparts in the country.

In statements to the press, Dr. Ciro Ugarte, Director of PAHO's Health Emergencies Department, stressed that a Rapid Assessment is crucial to assist the Bahamian health ministry in the implementation of urgent life-saving interventions.

Hurricane Dorian struck the Abaco island most severely, and significant damage to health infrastructure is likely, although communications are currently cut, and the island cannot be reached.

PAHO's country office in the Bahamas is also working closely with the National Emergency Management Agency of The Bahamas. Experts are assessing what medical supplies will be needed, after an evaluation of the country's health facilities and their operational status.

Other countries and organizations in the Caribbean and elsewhere, including of course Cuba, have offered to send emergency medical teams, but the director of PAHO's Health Emergencies Department said that an assessment of needs must be completed first.

PAHO is also working closely with The Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA), the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA), and other international partners to support the Government of the Bahamas in rapidly assessing the damage from Hurricane Dorian and in prioritizing needs.

It said it will liaise with international partners to mobilize human and financial resources to respond to the health sector needs identified and requested by the national authorities.

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