



Susan Mangicaro, International Medical Corps' Director of Emergency Response for North America, Latin America and the Caribbean, surveys what's left of the health clinic at High Rock, on Grand Bahama island.

FAST FACTS

- A tropical disturbance approaching the Bahamas is forecast to bring gusty winds and heavy rains, complicating assessment and recovery efforts
- The official death count stands at 50, but thousands of people are reported missing, and the death toll is expected to rise as searches continue
- Thousands of displaced people are living in government shelters or have left the Bahamas entirely

SITUATION UPDATE

Relief efforts continue on Grand Bahama and Abaco islands, where the official death toll stands at 50, but is likely to rise as assessments and debris removal continue. Approximately 2,500 people have been reported missing (though government officials have warned that these names have not been confirmed) and thousands more have been displaced. Some have sought shelter on other Bahamian islands, with more than 2,000 in government-run shelters in Nassau, and more than 4,000 have traveled to the United States.

The hardest hit parts of Grand Bahama island, where International Medical Corps has been requested by the government to help lead assessment efforts and provide medical care, include the tightly knit communities of High Rock, Pelican Point and McLean's Town. Residents are slowly beginning to return, to find their homes—many of which have been passed down for generations and are not covered by homeowner's insurance—completely destroyed, along with their livelihoods.

The health clinics in the communities were completely destroyed, leaving the population with no access to healthcare. Urgent needs include shelter, food, sanitation, clean water, continuity in medication for chronic conditions, urgent medical care, screening for infectious diseases and tetanus vaccines for puncture wounds. In High Rock, significant needs and gaps in water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) have been identified: the residents currently have no access to power, potable water or working toilets. The cost of bottled water is placing an economic burden on already overwhelmed population.

There also are notable mental health needs in communities affected by the hurricane, as many residents who survived the storm in relatively good physical health have been left with severe trauma and emotional distress.

Bad weather is expected over the next couple of days, as a tropical disturbance will bring gusty winds and heavy rain to the already waterlogged islands. This could complicate efforts to reach isolated communities on storm-damaged roads.

INTERNATIONAL MEDICAL CORPS RESPONSE

International Medical Corps is continuing to work with the Bahamian Ministry of Health (MoH), in coordination with the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and World Health Organization (WHO), to lead assessment efforts on Grand Bahama island and provide medical care in the hard-hit central and eastern parts of the island, from Freeport in the west through McLean's Town in the east.

Our teams are working in close collaboration with Rand Memorial Hospital in Freeport, where some volunteers—including an oncology nurse, midwife, and mental health and WASH specialists—worked on Wednesday to help provide the local nurses there with time off to attend to their homes and families.

Also on Wednesday, we sent three teams to cover the eastern edge of Grand Bahama. One team returned to Freetown, to deliver medications to patients we screened on Monday and Tuesday. Another team returned to High Rock to set up a temporary clinic and provide medicines and medical care that they were unable to provide during visits on previous days.

The third team continued east to Pelican Point and McLean's Town, areas we had not yet been able to reach, because damage to roads has limited travel and treatment to daylight hours. With the communities' health clinics completely destroyed, International Medical Corps was the first emergency medical team on the ground to evaluate and treat survivors.

At all locations, we treated people for conditions common to surviving a storm or trying to clear debris, including puncture wounds, lacerations and infections, as well as a number of chronic conditions. The teams also administered more than 50 tetanus shots.

On Thursday, team leads will meet with representatives from PAHO and the UN, to discuss assessment findings and coordination of efforts attending the Grand Bahama EOC. We have been asked to travel to Sweetings Cay to assess conditions and provide care; however, these tiny islands are accessible only by boat, and our efforts to reach them have been hampered by unavailability of boats and coming bad weather.

We also will continue setting up our Emergency Mobile Health facility in High Rock, with mobile outreach to Freetown. Our mobile medical teams will continue their work in communities, assessing needs and focusing on providing medical, WASH and mental health care to vulnerable populations.



After assessing conditions and providing simple medical treatment on Monday and Tuesday in High Rock, where the local clinic was completely destroyed by Hurricane Dorian, our medical team returned on Wednesday to provide medicines and more comprehensive care at this makeshift clinic.