Project HOPE’s Emergency Response Team (ERT) arrived in Nassau on September 4 to begin providing aid in response to Hurricane Dorian. The team has been distributing medicines, hygiene kits and supplies to survivors and will be providing support for pharmaceutical management to Marsh Harbour Community Clinic on Abaco. As the situation evolves, Project HOPE continues to assess needs in coordination with the Bahamian Ministry of Health.

**Hurricane Dorian Situation Update**

Hurricane Dorian made landfall as a Category 5 storm on Abaco island of the Bahamas on midday September 1 and then moved across Grand Bahama on September 2 as a Category 4. It is one of the strongest storms on record in the Atlantic, and the strongest ever to hit the Bahamas, with maximum sustained winds of 185 mph.

According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), more than 76,200 people were affected across Grand Bahama and Abaco, with some 2,000 people sheltering in the Marsh Harbour area. Approximately 60% of homes in northern Abaco are completely destroyed or damaged\(^1\)

**HOPE Updates**

- In partnership with Restoration Abaco, deployed a barge loaded with water and relief supplies from Nassau to Abaco on Sep 6.
- Imported 2,160 hygiene kits, distributing half to evacuees sheltering at Fox Hill Community Center in Nassau.
- Delivered trauma care items and other supplies to Marsh Harbour Community Clinic in Abaco on Sep 8 and deployed a medical volunteer for donation management on Sep 9.
- Anticipating arrival of 3 Interagency Emergency Health Kits and additional hygiene kits and medical supplies in the coming days.
As of September 8, the official death toll climbed to 45 (37 in the Abacos and 8 in Grand Bahama); however, this number is expected to increase drastically as hundreds remain missing. Across the affected islands, airports and seaports are becoming increasingly operational; however, there is still no power, limited to no running water, unreliable network service and blocked roads impeding access to areas for further assessment. The “Mudd” area of Abaco, home to a majority of migrants, was completely destroyed leaving this community extremely vulnerable.

![Aerial view of Marsh Harbour on Abaco island. Photo by Javier Galeano for Project HOPE.](image)

The Bahamian government’s National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) is leading the response, in close coordination with the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA) and supported by U.N. agencies and humanitarian organizations. According to the OpsGroup, the response strategy is currently focused on evacuations, in part due to the remoteness of many areas of Abaco and Grand Bahama and damage to local infrastructure, which impedes the timely delivery of relief supplies. Attempts to fly multiple shipments of aid in to the islands on small aircraft is resulting in over-crowded airspace. New temporary flight restrictions went into effect for the Northern Bahamas on Sunday; all aircraft traveling to this area are required to secure approval from NEMA.

Other avenues for delivery of aid are becoming difficult to navigate for relief organizations. On September 7, the Old Bahama Bay Marina was shut down by the president of the Old Bahama Bay Resort and Yacht Harbour due to a sudden influx of relief vessels. The marina will stay closed “until civility and order can be achieved.”

Evacuations from the islands are voluntary; according to NEMA, so far approximately 3,500 people have left Abaco for Nassau, resulting in a growing population of displaced individuals in need of shelter. Evacuees are being processed at the Odyssey Aviation Processing Center, managed by Social
Services and private sector partners. They are either taken to the homes of friends and families or a shelter. As of the morning of September 8, there were six shelters in and near Nassau housing 860 people.

For those remaining, the government has identified several safe spaces in Abaco, which they are currently clearing of debris to establish shelters for people wishing to remain. These communities and individuals are still in critical need of items such as water, food, hygiene and sanitation supplies and medicines.

**Project HOPE in the Bahamas**

Project HOPE’s emergency response team (ERT) in the Bahamas has been delivering immediate assistance to affected populations while meeting regularly with the office of the Ministry of Health’s chief health officer. Since September 4, Project HOPE has worked alongside Restoration Abaco, a locally registered NGO dedicated to supporting their communities devastated by Hurricane Dorian. Key activities are described below.

**Procurement and Distribution of Medicines and Supplies**

Project HOPE is partnering with a local nonprofit, Restoration Abaco, for the procurement, shipping and distribution of medicines and supplies to Abaco and other areas. Restoration Abaco is Project HOPE’s local partner and consignee of goods in the Bahamas. In addition to the distributions made to Marsh Harbour Community Clinic, the Project HOPE ERT has:

- Locally procured relief and hygiene supplies for delivery via barge to Abaco. The shipment included items such as soap, toothbrushes, toothpaste, deodorant, diapers, body bags, first aid kits and drinking water.
- Accepted its first shipment to the Bahamas in Nassau, which included 2,160 (four pallets) disaster hygiene kits, donated by MAP International. On September 7, the Project HOPE ERT distributed 1,000 of the kits to Fox Hill Community Center in Nassau, which is currently sheltering 202 displaced survivors. This number is expected to increase significantly in the coming days and kits from this distribution will be available immediately for new evacuees.
- Completed two distributions of needed items to the Marsh Harbour Community clinic via helicopter. Supplies included insulin needles, phenobarbital, cleaning supplies, infant diapers and items for wound care such as gauze, bandages and wraps.

Project HOPE is currently in the process of coordinating and receiving two more shipments, donated by MAP International:

- More than $58,000 of medicines and supplies expected to arrive on September 10. The shipment includes items such as respirators, exam gloves, coveralls, safety eyewear, hydrochloride and basic personal hygiene supplies.
- Three interagency emergency health kits (IEHKs), which have been accepted by the chief medical officer’s office with the Ministry of Health.
Each IEHK contains one basic module of medicines, including paracetamol, albendazole, omeprazole and tetracycline, and one supplemental module of medicines including vitamin C, calcium gluconate, vitamin A, hydrocortisone and magnesium sulphate. The three IEHKs together amount to three metric tons of supplies sufficient to serve 30,000 people over three months.

![Image](image-url)

*Project HOPE ERT members load water, hygiene items and other relief supplies onto a barge set for Abaco. Photo by Javier Galeano for Project HOPE.*

**Marsh Harbour Community Clinic**

Project HOPE’s ERT conducted an initial rapid assessment of Marsh Harbour Community Clinic on Abaco on September 5 and returned on September 8 to deliver requested medicines and supplies. The team has noted a notable shift in the situation as more people are evacuated from the island.

During the initial assessment of the clinic on September 5, the waiting room was packed with people waiting for consultations and there was a critical need for trauma care supplies for wounds and injuries in addition to cleaning supplies and other basic items. Upon the team’s return on September 8, fewer patients were waiting and the number of consultations for wounds and injuries had decreased as many of search and rescue missions were completed. However, there remains a need for basic medicines as well as specific supplies for the management and treatment of chronic diseases. The clinic asked for support managing pharmaceutical donations and one of Project HOPE’s medical volunteers began working on September 9 to help the clinic establish an emergency inventory management system as donations continue to come in.
Health Needs Assessment
Since arriving in Nassau, Project HOPE has been assessing the health situation through interviews with survivors, coordination with local partners and visits to affected areas in Abaco.

The team immediately noted widespread emotional distress among survivors as many still search for missing loved ones and are left homeless without food, water or basic livelihood supplies following the storm. With the mass evacuations of Abaco and Grand Bahama, it is anticipated that there will be increased need for medicines and medical and hygiene supplies for the thousands of displaced survivors needing shelter and assistance. Protection is also a significant concern, with a reported spike in gunshots and violence in affected areas as displaced and stranded populations grow increasingly desperate for basic resources.

With lack of electricity, chronic disease management is another priority health concern, particularly due to disruption of the cold chain and difficulty accessing medicines for disease management.

Additionally, Project HOPE remains very concerned about the lack of clean running water, poor sanitation and damaged water infrastructure, all of which can increase the likelihood of disease outbreaks.

Ministry of Health: Procedures & Needs Lists
Project HOPE’s ERT has been in regular communication with the Ministry of Health to ascertain priority health needs as well as to obtain the necessary permissions to continue providing assistance through procurement and, potentially, through medical volunteers.
Due to the mass devastation of the hurricane, the Ministry of Health issued an order allowing the duty-free importation of specific goods for the next 90 days. Approved goods include items such as personal hygiene products, medicine, medical supplies and mosquito netting. For the full list and information on the process, visit the Department of Inland Revenue’s page.

Additionally, a process for volunteer health care providers and emergency medical teams (EMTs) was activated. All health care providers and EMTs must complete and submit the appropriate forms and documentation to the Ministry of Health. Directions and links to the forms can be found under the September 4, 2019 Press Release on the Ministry of Health’s website.

Project HOPE has 42 volunteer medical professionals and engineers on standby for deployment and medical volunteers have completed and submitted the appropriate paperwork to obtain the necessary ministerial approvals to provide direct patient care. In addition, Project HOPE has obtained permission to import medicines and medical supplies and has already begun distributing its first shipment which arrived Friday, September 5.

Additionally, the Ministry of Health shared an updated needs list with Project HOPE identifying pharmaceuticals, medical and surgical supplies and other essential items, based on the needs of 75,000 people across Abaco and Grand Bahama. Pharmaceuticals listed include anti-infectives and electrolytes as well as cardiovascular, respiratory, central nervous system, pain management, adjunct, eye/ear/nose/throat, gastrointestinal and anti-diabetic medicines. Project HOPE is currently working with partners to begin filling these needs.
SOURCES

5 https://ops.group/blog/bahamas-relief-operations-summary/