



ANNUAL REPORT 2021

THE BAHAMAS, AND TURKS AND CAICOS ISLANDS

Responding to COVID-19
and Preparing for the Future

PAHO



Pan American
Health
Organization



World Health
Organization
REGIONAL OFFICE FOR THE
AMERICAS



Annual Report 2021. The Bahamas, and Turks and Caicos Islands: Responding to COVID-19 and Preparing for the Future
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The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) was founded in 1902 and is recognized as the independent specialized health agency of the inter-American system, under the Charter of the Organization of American States. In 1949, PAHO agreed to serve as the Regional Office for the Americas of the World Health Organization (WHO), a specialized agency of the United Nations system. Acting in its capacity as WHO's Regional Office, PAHO participates actively in the United Nations Country Team, collaborating with other agencies, the funds and programmes of the United Nations system, and with the United Nations Resident Coordinator to contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals at country level. For 120 years, PAHO has developed recognized competence and expertise, providing technical cooperation to its Member States to fight communicable and noncommunicable diseases and their causes, to strengthen health systems, and to respond to emergencies and disasters throughout the Region of the Americas.

Given PAHO's dual legal status and the difficulty of disaggregating PAHO from WHO activities, this Annual Report reflects both PAHO and WHO activities in the Americas as related to technical cooperation in 2021. Approximately 80% of PAHO's technical cooperation in health in the Region of the Americas is funded by PAHO's own quota and voluntary contributions, as an inter-American organization. The remaining 20% of PAHO's integrated biennial budget includes WHO-funded activities. Further detailed financial information for this Annual Report can be found in the Financial Summary section.

A serene coastal scene with a wooden dock in the foreground. A small blue boat is moored at the dock, with a blue bucket and some equipment inside. The water is calm and extends to a distant shoreline under a sky filled with soft, white clouds.

Mission

To lead strategic collaborative efforts among Member States and other partners to promote equity in health, combat disease, improve the quality of, and lengthen the lives of the peoples of the Americas.

Vision

To be the major catalyst for ensuring that all the peoples of the Americas enjoy optimal health and contribute to the well-being of their families and communities.

VALUES



EQUITY

Striving for fairness and justice by eliminating differences that are unnecessary and avoidable.



EXCELLENCE

Achieving the highest quality in what we do.



SOLIDARITY

Promoting shared interests, responsibilities and enabling collective efforts to achieve common goals.



RESPECT

Embracing the dignity and diversity of individuals, groups, and countries.



INTEGRITY

Assuring transparent, ethical, and accountable performance.

An older woman practicing her daily fishing routine in Eleuthera, The Bahamas.

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MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR



In 2021, COVID-19 remained the greatest public health challenge of modern history. The Region of the Americas was hardest hit and, as new variants of the virus emerged, it became clear that the pandemic was not yet over. However, new vaccines heralded its ending and the advent of a new normal at work, at school, and in everyday social interactions.

The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) strengthened its technical cooperation to support Member States in vaccinating populations against COVID-19. However, vaccine hesitancy and misinformation sometimes hampered their valiant efforts. PAHO must continue to assist countries in implementing strategies to overcome such obstacles for the COVID-19 vaccination program and routine childhood and other immunization programs.

COVID-19 has had a devastating impact on all countries. Given the attention focused on the pandemic response, we risk losing gains already made in other areas of public health and face a significant worsening in the socioeconomic determinants of health. The COVID-19 experience has underscored the need to continue to advocate for resilient health systems; strengthen the first level of care using a primary health care approach; promote health in all policies; and revitalize essential public health functions.

Therefore, in 2021 we focused more on those areas of health neglected earlier in the pandemic. These 2021 annual reports chronicle the work in countries and subregions as we prepare for the post-pandemic era.

I sincerely thank our Member States, partners, and donors for working with us to address the challenges of COVID-19. We need to continue to collaborate closely in the complex task of ending the pandemic; tackling the inequities and inequalities in health that plague our Region; maintaining health high on the political agenda of all Member States; and championing health equity as the cornerstone for sustainable development to ensure that we leave no one behind.

Dr. Carissa F. Etienne

Director of the Pan American Health Organization

MESSAGE FROM THE REPRESENTATIVE



Despite the introduction of COVID-19 vaccinations and new therapeutics and diagnostics in this second year of the COVID-19 pandemic, 2021 was as challenging as 2020. Vaccination deployment and rollout faced difficulties due to high rates of vaccine hesitancy in both The Bahamas and Turks and Caicos Islands. High levels of COVID-19 infections, hospitalizations, and death rates due to the introduction of new variants, particularly the Delta variant, put the health systems to the test. PAHO/WHO's COVID-19 response included providing technical, financial, and operational support to the Bahamian Government for vaccine acquisition and vaccination campaigns, and to improve disease surveillance, case management, supply chain disruptions, and communication.

After spending almost two years in pandemic mode and becoming accustomed to a “new norm,” we must now begin preparing for a post-pandemic period. The health-related issues that we faced pre-pandemic were enhanced during the pandemic and will remain. The challenging scenario was further burdened by noncommunicable diseases, mental health, low vaccination coverage rates, and violence in the context of economic, political, and social adversities. Following its mandate to leave no-one behind, PAHO/WHO provided strategic technical and financial assistance, as well as human resources and medical equipment, to support ongoing restructuring of the health system, enhance management of noncommunicable diseases and mental health issues, and strengthen climate resilience.

From building robust health systems to strengthening our support of health care workers and improved collaborations with our community stakeholders, we have learned many lessons, including the importance of trust, effective communication, and our personal responsibility to truly be our brother's keeper.

We are pleased to present in this annual report the contributions, achievements, challenges, and outlook for the future resulting from PAHO/WHO's work in 2021 in collaboration with The Bahamas and Turks and Caicos Islands. As we enter 2022, on the verge of PAHO's 120th anniversary, our commitment to working in the Region will be stronger than ever.

Eldonna Boisson

PAHO/WHO Representative in The Bahamas and Turks and Caicos Islands



Casmine McKenzie encourages safe driving during the UN Road Safety Week 2021.

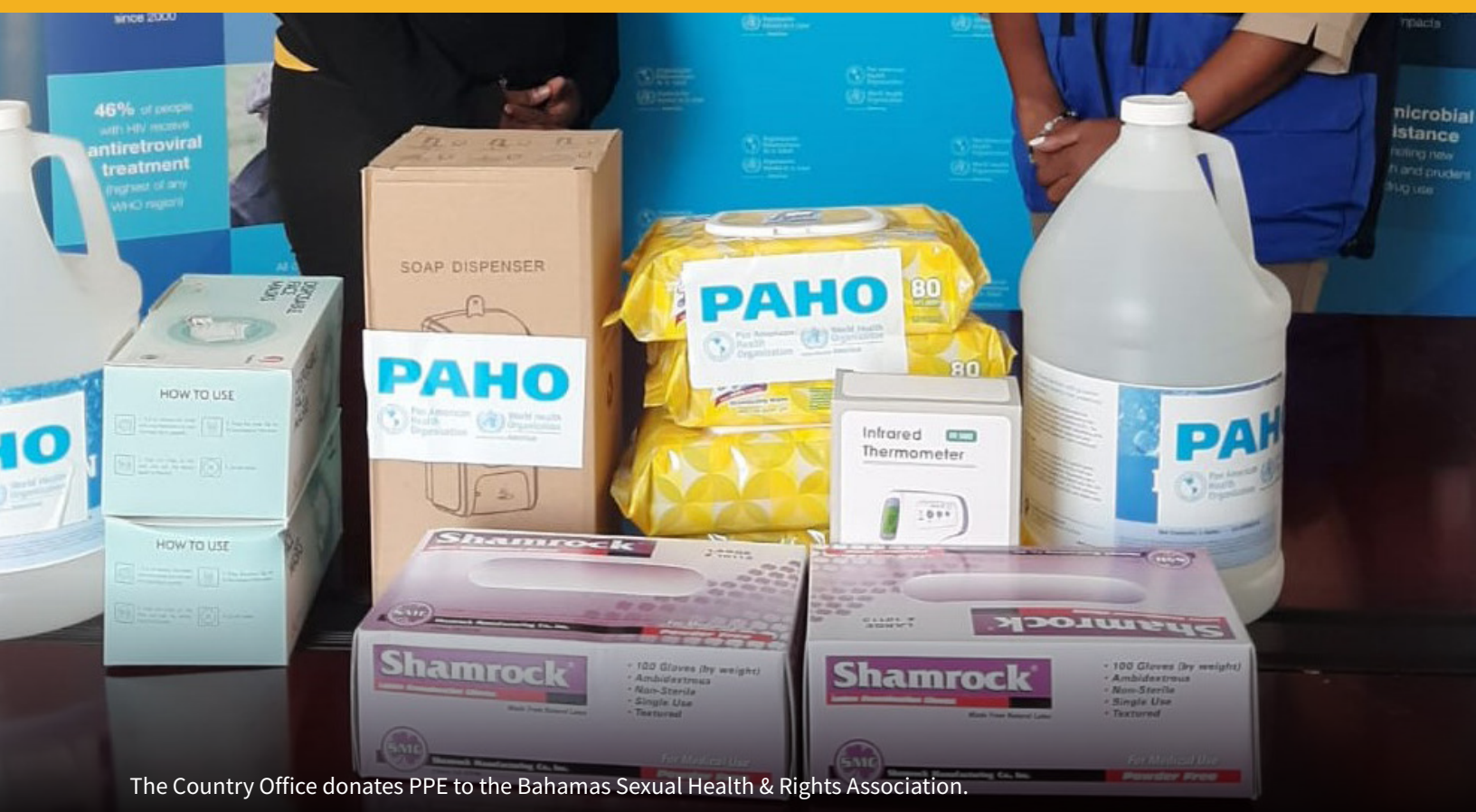
HIGHLIGHTS

- PAHO/WHO guided several initiatives of the COVID-19 response in 2021, providing technical, financial, and operational support to improve disease surveillance, case management, supply chain disruptions, and communication, as well as in the acquisition and reception of more than 81 600 vaccines in The Bahamas. These vaccines contributed to 154 153 fully vaccinated persons by 23 December 2021.
- Additionally, PAHO/WHO provided strategic, technical, and financial assistance, as well as human resources and medical equipment, to support the ongoing restructuring of the health system, regulation of medicines and other health products, digital transformation of the health information systems, and capacity building in both The Bahamas and Turks and Caicos Islands amid the pandemic.
- With significant disruptions in essential services due to the pandemic impacting the availability of care for persons living with noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) and mental health issues, PAHO/WHO engaged in several activities to enhance management of these conditions, with the HEARTS program for hypertension and diabetes, front-of-package labeling, promotion of healthy lifestyles, and multiple mental health projects.
- In response to the growing awareness that climate change is a critical threat to human health and well-being, especially in the Caribbean, which was severely impacted by the increasing exposure to hurricanes, drought, and flooding, PAHO/WHO worked closely with The Bahamas in activities focused on strengthening climate resilience.

PAHO TECHNICAL COOPERATION



HEALTH EMERGENCIES



The Country Office donates PPE to the Bahamas Sexual Health & Rights Association.

The COVID-19 pandemic impact led to a PAHO/WHO-supported response regarding reorganization of human and financial resources in The Bahamas and Turks and Caicos

Islands for the continuation of essential health services and to strengthen key areas including disease surveillance and contact tracing, COVID-19 vaccination, case management, supply chains, and risk communication capacity.

COVID-19 response and vaccination

During the COVID-19 pandemic, human and financial resources were reorganized in The Bahamas and Turks and Caicos Islands for the continuation of essential health services and to strengthen key areas including coordination, planning, monitoring, disease surveillance, operational support, logistics, and supply chains. PAHO/WHO supported the development of public health and COVID-19 outbreak prevention and control policies for clinical management, infection prevention and control (IPC), disease surveillance, cases and contacts management, mental health and psychosocial support, travel, employers, schools, and social support for vulnerable groups.

PAHO/WHO supported the production and dissemination of various COVID-19 campaigns through traditional and non-traditional media. The campaigns included leaders and individuals from the community, as well as health care professionals. Animated public service announcements (PSAs) were produced in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Wellness (MOHW) and the Healthy Bahamas Coalition. The Country Office also highlighted other public health issues as the number of patient services decreased because of fears of COVID-19. For example, health facilities experienced a large decrease in patient visits for the management of diabetes.

PAHO assisted in the acquisition and reception of more than 81 600 vaccines in The Bahamas. In addition to encouraging residents to obtain their COVID-19 vaccines

and boosters, the Country Office assisted in facilitating the arrival of vaccines. As of 23 December 2021, there were 154 153 fully vaccinated persons in The Bahamas, with less than 45% of the population fully vaccinated.

COVID-19 surveillance

PAHO/WHO provided technical advice and operational support to The Bahamas and Turks and Caicos Islands for disease surveillance, which was strengthened with the assignment of temporary epidemiologists to support the MOHW of The Bahamas in COVID-19 surveillance and data management. An important action was the adaptation to the local contexts of The Bahamas and Turks and Caicos Islands of the PAHO/WHO guidelines on epidemiological surveillance, contact tracing, isolation of cases, and quarantine of contacts. PAHO/WHO also supported COVID-19 outbreak investigations and assessments, as well as vaccine distribution in some of the Family Islands.

To enhance data analysis and reporting, PAHO/WHO gave assistance for capacity building in the use of the WHO GoData contact tracing tool and, in the Bahamas, for the review of medical records to assist with the classification of COVID-19 deaths. In addition, PAHO provided financial support for the development of an online contact tracing course in collaboration with the University of The Bahamas and the MOHW. Moreover, PAHO/WHO engaged a software engineer to assist The Bahamas in developing a relational database that integrates the required data collected from different stakeholders (e.g., laboratories, hospitals, contact tracers, etc.), to improve data gathering, analysis, and information generation.

PAHO/WHO continued collaborating to strengthen The Bahamas Health Emergency Operating Center by providing equipment and developing dashboards to monitor emergencies, including the COVID-19 pandemic.

Case management and supply chain

PAHO/WHO offered guidance for the development and updating of clinical guidelines for the management of COVID-19 patients according to the severity classification. In addition, PAHO/WHO supported the operations, logistics, and supply chain with the donation of medical equipment and devices, laboratory equipment and supplies, personal protective equipment (PPE), and hand sanitizers in both The Bahamas and Turks and Caicos Islands.

Risk communication capacity

To improve risk communication capacity during the pandemic, the Country Office supported The Bahamas

and Turks and Caicos Islands in the development and implementation of communication strategies utilizing press conferences, town hall meetings, radio/TV interviews, newspaper articles, social media, and social mobilization. Logistic support was also provided to the MOHW of The Bahamas for the preparation and printing of communication products for the rollout and distribution of COVID-19 vaccines throughout The Bahamas. The campaigns reiterated the importance of adherence to COVID-19 public safety protocols.

PAHO/WHO also collaborated with the other United Nations agencies in The Bahamas to prepare Haitian Creole-language communication materials for the Haitian migrant community. Furthermore, PAHO/WHO led the development of risk communication and public education products in the areas of mental health, cyber safety for children, prevention of gender-based violence and substance use, parenting during COVID-19, and quarantine/isolation tips. These materials were disseminated through PAHO/WHO social media platforms and via local mass media and partner agencies.



HEALTH SYSTEMS AND SERVICES



Health professionals discussing various solutions during a GoData training.

As The Bahamas and Turks and Caicos Islands continued working to restructure the health system and regulating medicines and other health products, as well as to enhance health services, information systems, and

capacity building amid the pandemic, PAHO/WHO provided strategic technical and financial assistance toward these aims, in addition to human resources and medical equipment.

Health system restructuring

PAHO/WHO continued delivering technical guidance to strengthen the stewardship and governance role of the Bahamas National Health Authority and the interface among relevant stakeholders, which include the MOHW, Public Hospitals Authority (PHA), and the National Health Insurance Authority (NHIA). The current management structure of the MOHW is under revision to effectively address its stewardship role and its state of readiness to monitor the essential public health functions, which are currently being assessed using the renewed PAHO/WHO framework. Phase 1 of this assessment, which includes the situational analysis and the institutional mapping of the main related stakeholders, is close to completion. Governance structure options have been discussed around the implementation of the NHIA Primary Care Transformation Initiative (PCTI), with an agreement that all government sector clinical services should be managed by one entity. Other key elements are under discussion at high-level forums regarding health legislation, health financing, human resources for health, health service delivery, and health information systems.

National regulatory system

The Bahamas continues to strengthen its national regulatory system for medicines and other health products. This year, a technical core group comprising MOHW, PHA, and PAHO/WHO developed a medium-term road map and met weekly. PAHO/WHO supported several activities, such as the planning for implementing a Regulatory Unit for health products at the MOHW, development of a proposal for a regulatory framework

to control the purchase/procurement and management of medicines, evaluation of the legal provisions for regulation of medicines and medical devices, development of The Bahamas pharmaceutical profile, and production of “The Bahamas ensures its population receives safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines,” an audiovisual story from the field.

In addition, PAHO/WHO provided guidance for the review of the essential medicines list that will be supported by Centro Universitario de Farmacología (CUFAR), a WHO Collaborating Centre on the Rational Use of Medicines. Turks and Caicos Islands also advanced in this area with a thorough revision of the Food and Drug ordinance and the National Pharmaceutical Strategy, with recommendations to address gaps to establish a national regulatory system.

Information systems

PAHO/WHO continued providing strategic and policy recommendations to support The Bahamas health system’s digital transformation and adoption of the Information Systems for Health (IS4H) framework. The country continued the execution of the framework with the implementation of the medium-term IS4H Strategic Plan, approved by the National IS4H Steering Committee, which is informed by a wider group of national stakeholders including MOHW, PHA, NHIA, the Department of Transformation and Digitization (DTAD), Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Education, the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), the National Insurance Board, University of The Bahamas, and representatives of the private sector.

The initiative was funded by an Inter-American Development Bank loan, with the recruitment of the initial IS4H human resources structure proposed in the plan. A pilot project is underway to implement the Electronic Medical Record (EMR) in some of the public health clinics in two islands: New Providence and Grand Bahama. Turks and Caicos Islands received technical guidance for starting the implementation of the IS4H framework.

Ensuring health services during the pandemic

Throughout 2021, the Country Office supported The Bahamas and Turks and Caicos Islands with monitoring the continuity of health services during the COVID-19 pandemic and assisted in planning for clinical and hospital surge capacities (hospital beds, human resources, and supplies) using PAHO/WHO tools and

guidelines. The Country Office also provided assistance for the expansion of acute care services in hospitals, and for improving patient and staff workflows to minimize COVID-19 infections, modular units to expand isolation and triage capacity in two hospitals in The Bahamas, and medical equipment and devices to strengthen clinical care to COVID-19 cases in the main hospitals and primary health clinics.

Capacity building

The Country Office provided personnel of The Bahamas and Turks and Caicos Islands ministries of health and other sectors with access to the PAHO Virtual Campus of Public Health (VCPH) to build capacity in the areas of epidemiology, data management, health care technology, infection prevention and control, mental health, human rights, and other areas.



COMMUNICABLE DISEASES



Health officials pause for a photo during a pop-up HIV testing site in a neighborhood park.

In the context of the pandemic, in 2021 PAHO/WHO continued to focus on programmatic work in the area of other communicable diseases, in particular HIV and

sexually transmitted diseases, vector control, and immunizations.

HIV and sexually transmitted diseases

PAHO/WHO provided technical support to the National AIDS Program (NAP) of the MOHW to increase NAP's visibility during the various community outreach and HIV testing events, aimed at increasing the number of persons getting tested for HIV and knowing their HIV status. Through the purchase of branded PAHO/WHO and NAP tents, flags, signage, and an Instagram photo card used at the testing and outreach events, both entities were easily identified and the collaboration between the two was highlighted.

Furthermore, in commemoration of World AIDS Day 2021, under the theme "End inequalities. End HIV/AIDS. End pandemics," the Country Office supported awareness activities of the HIV Resource Committee and the NAP. These included a candlelight vigil, school assembly, slogan competition, and various media-related activities, such as the Proclamation for World AIDS Day and radio and television appearances.

In addition, in the Turks and Caicos Islands, PAHO/WHO provided technical assistance to strengthen HIV support services with workshops and other activities, and several consultants and facilitators engaged in their delivery. The first workshop focused on youth HIV education and empowering young people in the fight against HIV/AIDS, while also incorporating information on noncommunicable diseases and the COVID-19 pandemic. The second activity focused on training young people previously involved in a peer program, re-engagement of former peers, and the production of a video and guide with information on HIV prevention and the principles of peer education. The third workshop provided support for persons living with HIV, with an emphasis on ensuring their involvement in health

care and programs. Finally, discussions were held on a peer support system for persons living with HIV, with a focus on treatment adherence and treatment literacy.

In the latter part of the year, PAHO/WHO engaged a nurse consultant to assist with efforts to advance the validation report for the elimination of mother-to-child transmission of HIV and syphilis. This process involved the collection and compilation of HIV and syphilis data from both public and private entities, update of the draft validation report, and input of audited cases.

Vector control

In 2021, The Bahamas continued working on solidifying its Rodent Control Program. Two years before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, and after the passage of Hurricane Dorian, PAHO/WHO engaged an expert rodent control consultant to conduct an assessment of the rodent situation and control system, build capacity of staff working in the area, and provide recommendations to improve the Rodent Control Program. One of the recommendations acted upon during the year was the development of Rodent Control Management Guidelines for The Bahamas. Specific input was given by the Department of Environmental Health Services, the lead agency in this regard, with which the Country Office continues to collaborate to advance the work on protecting human and environmental health in the country.

PAHO/WHO also supported strengthening of the Vector Control Program in Turks and Caicos Islands. Based on an evaluation of the Program's gaps, the Country Office procured and provided supplies to improve testing capacity for mold, bacteria, and drinking water. Moreover, technical assistance was provided to identify food safety issues that may arise in the territory.

Immunization

Throughout 2021, much of the Expanded Program on Immunization (EPI) was focused on the COVID-19 response, resulting in a reduction of routine vaccinations being administered. PAHO/WHO collaborated with stakeholders to increase knowledge and capacity of staff with regard to COVID-19, and on the implementation of the Electronic Immunization Registry in The Bahamas in anticipation

of the COVID-19 vaccine rollout. Several virtual training exercises were held with MOHW personnel across the islands of The Bahamas in preparation for the rollout. The use of these exercises later broadened as the platform for the wider immunization program. To increase visibility and promote the COVID-19 vaccine distribution exercises, PAHO/WHO and EPI co-branded tents were provided to the Immunization Unit in mid-2021.



NONCOMMUNICABLE DISEASES AND MENTAL HEALTH



Members from the Special Olympics participating in the United Nations Road Safety campaign.

Across the globe and in both The Bahamas and Turks and Caicos Islands, the pandemic has led to significant disruptions in essential services that have challenged care for persons living with noncommunicable diseases (NCDs).

The pandemic has negatively impacted the mental health and well-being of many persons in The Bahamas and Turks and Caicos Islands. To address these challenges, PAHO/WHO engaged in several activities to enhance management of NCDs with the HEARTS program for hypertension and diabetes, front-of-package labeling, promotion of a healthy lifestyle, and multiple mental health projects.

The HEARTS program

To mitigate challenges and empower individuals, the ministries of health in both The Bahamas and Turks and Caicos Islands, in collaboration with the Country Office, made strides in planning for the launch of the [WHO HEARTS program](#) for the management of cardiovascular and diabetic conditions. In The Bahamas the launch will include clinicians from both the public health care sector and private sector (via the National Health Insurance Authority). Plans are also underway for a pilot project to provide clients with remote monitoring devices (glucometers and blood pressure meters) to better support them for self-management. Furthermore, many clinicians participated in HEARTS regional webinars and conferences to improve knowledge and awareness for the program and prepare for its implementation.

Promoting well-being and a healthy lifestyle

The Country Office engaged in a proactive advocacy campaign and provided technical support for the implementation of front-of-package warning labeling as part of the regional “Now More than Ever: We Need to Protect Our Children” campaign in The Bahamas. The country was part of the multi-platform digital campaign, which included social media and digital media dissemination, that was implemented from October through November 2021, across 14 CARICOM Member States. The campaign’s overall goal was to increase

awareness and support for the creation of environments that better support the well-being and development of children and young people.

The Country Office developed and launched additional multimedia campaigns in both The Bahamas and Turks and Caicos Islands to enhance community awareness in support of healthy lifestyles (physical activity, reducing harmful use of alcohol, healthy eating); NCD treatment adherence during the pandemic, with emphasis on diabetes and hypertension, road safety, mental health (coping with the pandemic, grief, depression, and seeking mental health services); as well as relevant WHO observation days. Public service announcements (PSAs) were also developed to encourage the general population to return to community health care facilities for NCD care.

The Country Office and the Government of Turks and Caicos Islands also initiated a school nutrition program with emphasis on school gardens. Grow boxes were procured and provided to junior high and senior high schools to teach children how to plant and harvest crops. This project is a first step within a larger project to develop a school nutrition program to teach school-age children about growing, preparing, and consuming healthy foods.

Lastly, in collaboration with Turks and Caicos Islands Ministry of Health and Human Services, the Country Office provided technical guidance for the planning and implementation of three surveys. Two of these were youth surveys (a Global School Health Survey and a Global Youth Tobacco Survey) and were the first iteration of global surveys, with implementation scheduled for early 2022. The third, a national telephone-based survey to ascertain the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on residents of Turks and Caicos Islands, explored access to NCD services and medication, the impact of COVID-19 public health measures, vaccine hesitancy, and assessment of mental health and well-being of residents.

Mental health

The stresses associated with the pandemic lockdowns, COVID-19 cases and deaths, and loss of livelihoods, have affected the mental health of persons in both The Bahamas and Turks and Caicos Islands. In this scenario, mental health was seen as a priority, and the Country Office engaged in several projects with The Bahamas and Turks and Caicos Islands in response to this significant challenge.

First, the Country Office provided technical support in 2021 for the revision of The Bahamas Mental Health Act 1969 in collaboration with the Commonwealth Nurses and Midwives Federation. Consultations with an array of stakeholders, which were held after a zero-draft was disseminated, called attention to the human rights of persons with mental health conditions.

In 2021, The Bahamas completed the Standards of Practice to guide mental health response in disasters. Within weeks of this draft, Hurricane Dorian landed on the shores of some Bahamian islands. PAHO/WHO facilitated an After-Action Review of the Hurricane Dorian Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) Response during the year 2021. The Country Office also conducted MHPSS training to front-line workers, which was inclusive of psychological first aid, MHPSS coordination, prevention of sexual abuse and exploitation (including gender-based violence and child abuse), and self-care and stress management.

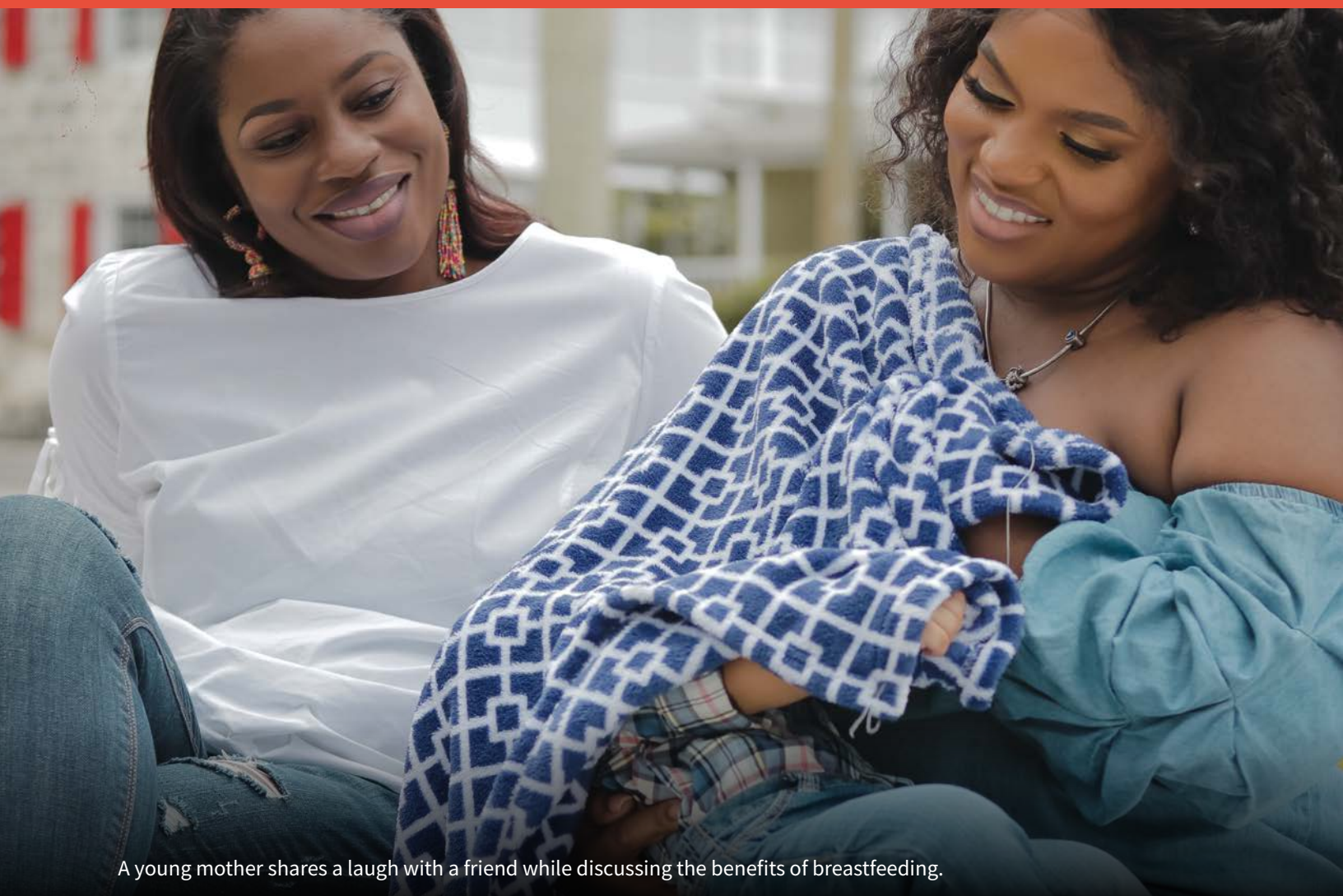
The Country Office also provided technical support for the evaluation of substance use treatment facilities in The Bahamas using the adapted Cooperation Program (COPOLAD) standards, funded by the European Commission.

In Turks and Caicos Islands, PAHO/WHO conducted training as part of the Provision of Mental Health GAP Action Program (mhGAP) to further enhance the number of primary care clinicians involved in early detection and treatment of mental health conditions, with a total of 12 primary care clinicians trained. The Government completed a purpose-built long-term care facility (Center of Hope) on Grand Turk. The mission of this facility is to provide quality community-based mental health and substance use services aimed at removing the stigma associated with mental illness and providing a nurturing environment that enables individuals to achieve their full potential.

The Country Office provided technical assistance for the development of standards of practice for the new facility, in alignment with WHO guidance on community-based services in the delivery of person-centered and recovery-oriented care and services in all sections of the establishment. The Center for Hope is expected to be commissioned in 2022.



HEALTH THROUGHOUT THE LIFE COURSE



A young mother shares a laugh with a friend while discussing the benefits of breastfeeding.

The Country Office provided guidance on projects centered on a life course approach to health that underscored a temporal and societal point of view focusing on older people, mothers, and newborns.

Older people

To enhance community awareness in support of physical activity among the older person population, PAHO/WHO gave technical assistance for the development and launching of multimedia campaigns in both The Bahamas and Turks and Caicos Islands, with production and airings of PSAs on national media platforms and social media. While both The Bahamas and Turks and Caicos Islands support the concept of healthy aging, physical activity in older people is often limited. Thus, these communication materials were aimed at dispelling commonly held misconceptions and addressing the importance of exercise in the later phases of life to prevent onset of illnesses, improve mental health and well-being, enhance social engagement, decrease risk of falls, and improve cognitive functioning.

Mothers and newborns

The Country Office provided technical support to relaunch the PAHO/WHO Perinatal Information System (SIP)+ platform. This software is part of the PAHO/WHO tool kit for improving the quality of care provided to mothers and newborns. Over the last few years, The Bahamas had lost some capacity following Hurricane Dorian and was running different versions of the SIP software. This project seeks to standardize SIP versions in the country and improve the quality of data and clinical documentation.



HEALTH THROUGHOUT THE LIFE COURSE

STORIES FROM THE FIELD

PPE donation to Teen Life Skills Services

Teen Life Skills Services (TLSS) is a nonprofit youth organization in The Bahamas specifically geared toward the sustainable development of adolescent parents. During the pandemic peak, when PPE such as masks, sanitizers, and cleaning supplies were limited due to high demand or very high prices, TLSS began to limit services. However, in 2021 TLSS received PPE donations from the Country Office, which enhanced and promoted the safety of its volunteer staff, community partners, and the clientele they served during the COVID-19 outbreak. “The donation of PPE was of critical importance to our agency,” said the founder of TLSS, Mrs. Felicia Campbell-Carey. The donated materials allowed TLSS to set up

sanitizing stations with masks, sanitizers, and wipes for volunteers, which made them more willing to dedicate their time to serving comfortably. Additionally, these allowed TLSS to partner with a local NGO to host a collaborative community event in May 2021 where PPE was distributed to the wider public.

Another recipient of the PAHO/WHO PPE donation was The Family: People Helping People Program (The Family), a group therapy intervention designed to improve socialization through the offering of support, opportunities, and training to improve communication and relationships. Dr. David Allen, the founder of The Family, said, “Yes, your COVID-19 masks were very helpful. They were a blessing and we shared them with many persons.”



Seniors from Harbour Island (The Bahamas) socialize while keeping safe.



ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH



Dr. Eldonna Boisson discussing with two children the importance of eating and recognizing native fruits.

There is a growing awareness globally that climate change is a critical threat to human health and well-being. The Caribbean subregion has been severely impacted by

the increasing exposure to climate hazards, such as hurricanes, drought, and flooding.

The Bahamas, a small island developing state, is particularly vulnerable to the health-related impacts of climate change: vector-borne, foodborne, and waterborne diseases, heat-related diseases, cardiovascular and mental health disorders, injuries, and death. Additionally, vulnerable populations that are disproportionately impacted include women, children, people who are displaced or living with chronic conditions, and those facing economic hardship. The health sector, along with other sectors, is tasked with strengthening its capacity to adapt to climate change, especially in the areas of climate leadership, preparation of healthcare workers, climate-sensitive surveillance for decision-making, service and systems planning, sustainable financing, and services and technology. This year PAHO/WHO worked closely with The Bahamas in activities focused on strengthening climate resilience, and with Turks and Caicos Islands in the development of waste management protocols.

Climate resilience in the health system of The Bahamas

Although the health system has been mostly dedicated to the pandemic response, efforts to build climate resilience are critical in moving toward the post-pandemic period. Climate change will continue to be an existential threat to the lives and livelihoods of the residents of The Bahamas, and so it is important that the adaptation strategies and efforts for capacity strengthening in the health sector build resilience for future pandemics, health emergencies, and climate hazards.

In this regard, The Bahamas Country Office is serving as the implementing agency, in collaboration with the MOHW and the Department of Environmental Planning and Protection, to commence the implementation of an EU/CARIFORUM Project on *Strengthening Climate Resilience in the Health System of The Bahamas*.

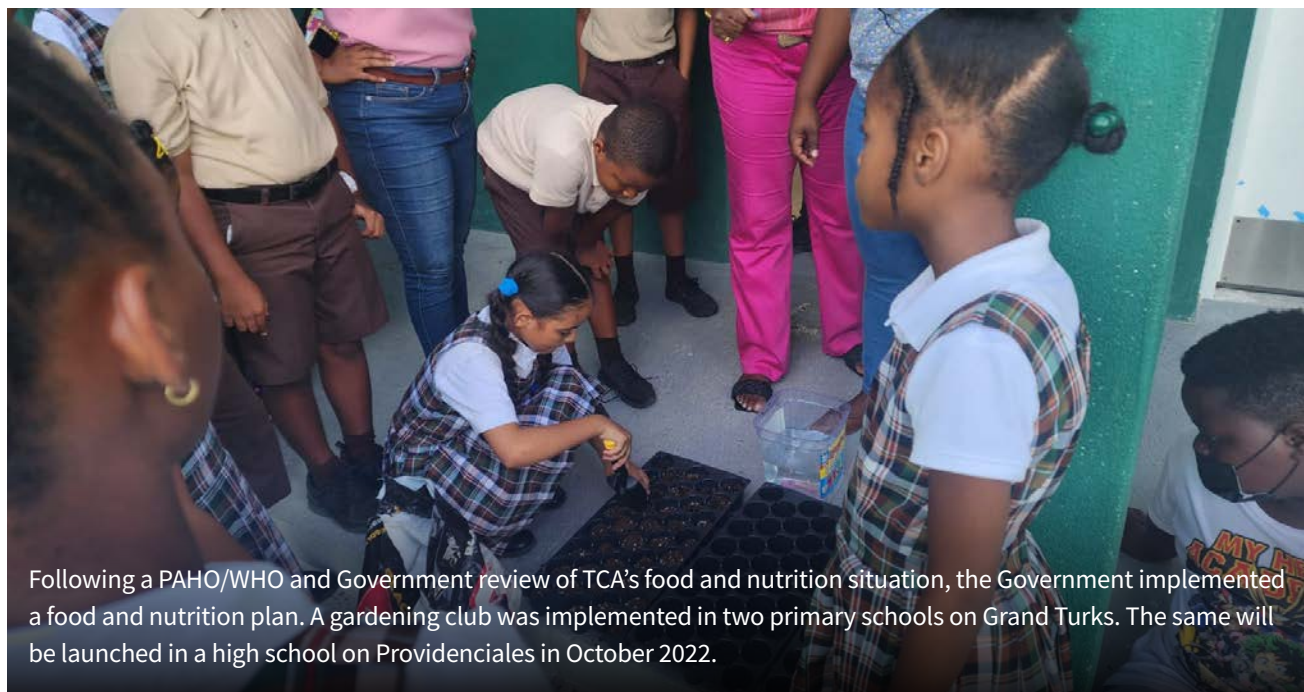
The Bahamas is one of 16 countries participating in the EU/CARIFORUM project, which seeks to reduce the morbidity and mortality of the health impacts of climate change. The primary output for The Bahamas will be a comprehensive Health Chapter of the National Adaptation Plan (HNAP) for climate change.

The development of the HNAP document commences with a vulnerability and adaptation assessment (V&A) to evaluate the country's health systems, populations, and geographies for the vulnerabilities to the health impacts of climate change. The V&A also proposes adaptation interventions to build resilience. Using an interdisciplinary approach, the project has convened a multisectoral meeting to identify primary stakeholders, sources of data, and gaps in human and technical capacities to inform the V&A. Additionally, a convenience sample survey has been conducted among healthcare workers, persons living in urban poor communities, and outdoor workers to assess their level of knowledge about climate change and its health impacts, their perceived level of importance of the linkage, and their sources of information, among other themes.

A draft communication plan has been developed that outlines the strategies for raising awareness about this important topic. Finally, the Country Office continues to develop newspaper articles and digital media products to raise national awareness. Climate health has been identified as a national priority of the Government.

Waste management in Turks and Caicos Islands

In Turks and Caicos Islands, the management and disposal of sewerage waste is a public health concern. Contamination of ground and sea water can threaten human and environmental health and lead to potential



Following a PAHO/WHO and Government review of TCA's food and nutrition situation, the Government implemented a food and nutrition plan. A gardening club was implemented in two primary schools on Grand Turks. The same will be launched in a high school on Providenciales in October 2022.

outbreaks of waterborne and foodborne diseases. The country currently does not have an established sewerage waste collection system at the community level, and households are required to have a mechanical treatment system or cesspit. Residents are responsible for disposal of their own sewerage waste. Moreover, private waste collection companies on the island of Providenciales dump untreated waste into a trench at the landfill, which serves as a temporary solution for sewerage disposal until the Government establishes a liquid waste facility at the island's landfill.

Therefore, the Government has recognized the need to develop protocols for waste management throughout the islands for the protection of human, environmental, and marine health. The Country Office supported a consultancy to conduct an environmental impact assessment and develop waste disposal protocols and guidelines for the construction and operation of a liquid waste facility in Providenciales. An initial site visit, conducted to identify the incoming wastewater parameters by sampling various discharges from the septic tanker contractors, was followed by testing at the Provo Water Company laboratories, off-island

laboratories, and Provo Water wastewater facility in Providenciales. In addition, local on-site testing was conducted for immediate results.

The pathway for wastewater disposal was also investigated by using existing groundwater monitoring boreholes on the site. The boreholes are used to monitor water levels and physical and chemical parameters such as salinity, acidity, oxygen, and temperature. The findings of the site visit, along with data from key stakeholders in the water, marine, and coastal areas were used to understand the groundwater flow direction, speed, and pollution dilution as the pollution plume migrates away from the landfill.

The development of proper protocols for liquid waste is critical for the household and community level monitoring and management of waste disposal practices. In preparation for the transition to a post-pandemic period, environmental health issues like waste management will continue to play a role in the prevention of future communicable disease (foodborne and waterborne diseases) outbreaks that could threaten human health.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

PAHO's reports on the budget and its financing cover a biennial period. Hence, the financial information shown in this report corresponds to the 2020–2021 biennium. For more information, visit <https://open.paho.org/2020-21/country/BHS> and <https://open.paho.org/2020-21/country/TCA> and select the “Financial Flow” tab (upper right-hand part of the screen).

The Bahamas

The PAHO/WHO Country Office in The Bahamas received US\$ 6 725 444 for activities, contractual services, donation procurements, and personnel costs during the 2020–2021 biennium. The Government of the United States of America funded 34.78% of the overall budget (US\$ 2 242 000 was contributed from a USAID/OFDA grant to fund post-Hurricane Dorian recovery of the health sector, and over US\$ 97 000 funded COVID-19 emergency response).

WHO facilitated funding 34.5% of the budget through various emergency grants for COVID-19 emergency response, as well as US\$ 266 172.92 in carryover funds to complete post-Hurricane Dorian emergency recovery projects. The Canadian Government contributed over US\$ 600 000 in funding supporting procurement of PPE, equipment, and services in the COVID-19 emergency response (supporting 8.94% of the total budget). Assessed contributions supported 20.1% of the budget, which contributed toward funding staff positions, some

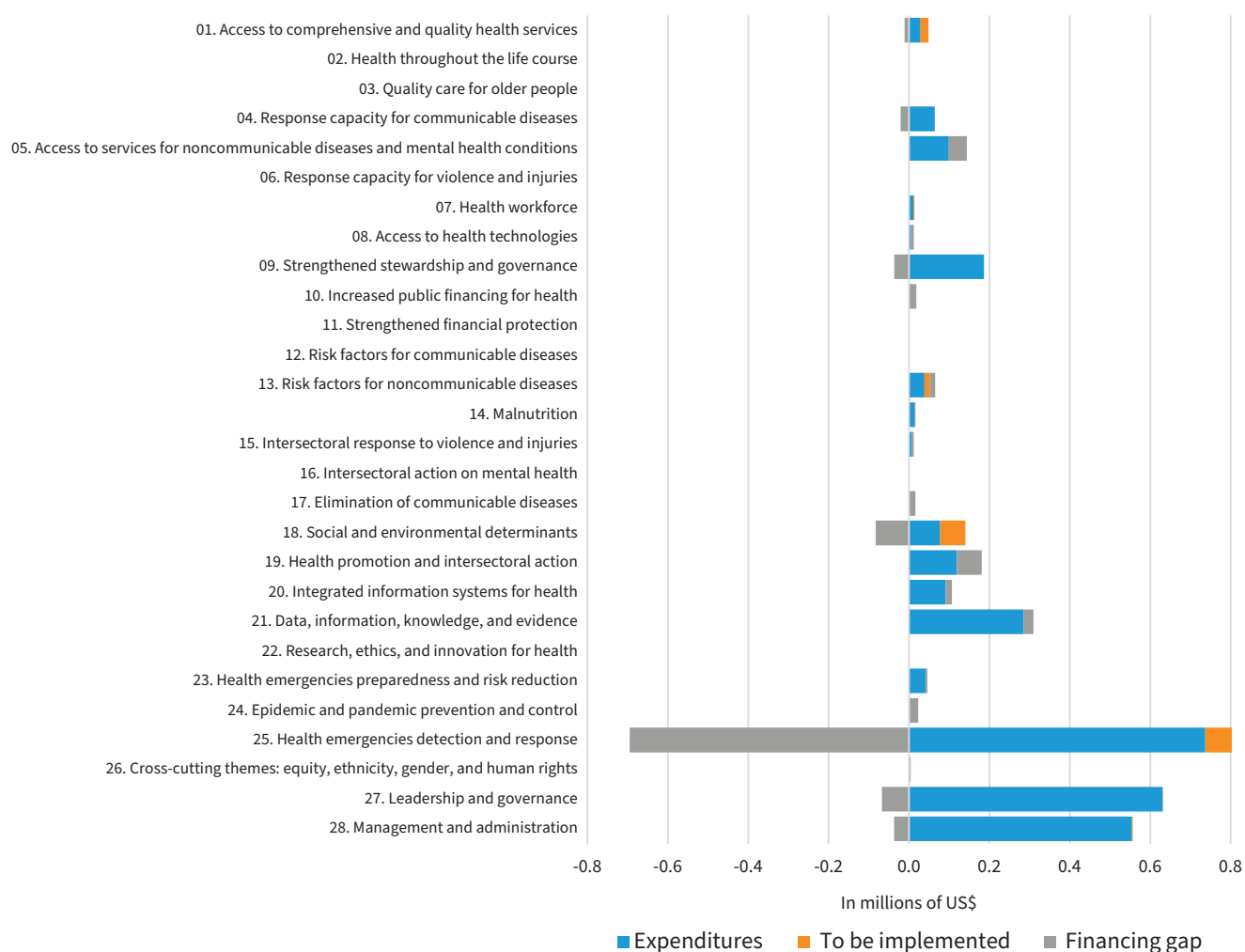
consultant positions, and general operating expenses. The European Union supported 1.28% of the budget, which primarily funded universal health care activities, and the Rockefeller Foundation supported 0.39% of the budget, which supported COVID-19 emergency response.

It should be noted that 37.4% of the US\$ 6 725 444 funds received for the 2020–2021 biennium were disbursed during 2021 (62.6% was spent during 2020). For graphical descriptions of how funding was allocated and spent across program outcomes, please access <https://open.paho.org/2020-21/country/BHS>. Extracts from this site are provided below:

Following the passage of Hurricane Dorian, PAHO issued an Initial Donor Alert and Funding Request to assist it in responding to the unprecedented health needs arising from this emergency. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) responded to this appeal on 19 September 2019, by allocating US\$ 2 600 000 in funding to support the program titled Hurricane Dorian PAHO Appeal. PAHO and USAID activated a funding agreement in January 2020 and began implementing these funds during February 2020. USAID subsequently approved an extension request, which allowed these funds to be implemented up to 19 December 2020. These funds were assigned both to the PAHO/WHO Country Office in The Bahamas and the PAHO Health Emergencies Department, which supported local project implementation.

The Bahamas

Figure 1. Outcome budget allocations, financing, and implementation: Base programs



Turks and Caicos Islands

The Country Office received US\$ 424 950 for implementation of activities, donation procurements, and consultant contracts for the 2020–2021 period of operations in Turks and Caicos Islands. The budget was 100% funded by assessed contributions from Member States. These funds were received in three tranches: at the start of the biennium, Q4–2020, and Q3–2021. As a result of this funding allocation schedule, the Country Office implemented over 91.7% of the total budget during 2021 (8.3% of funds were implemented during 2020).

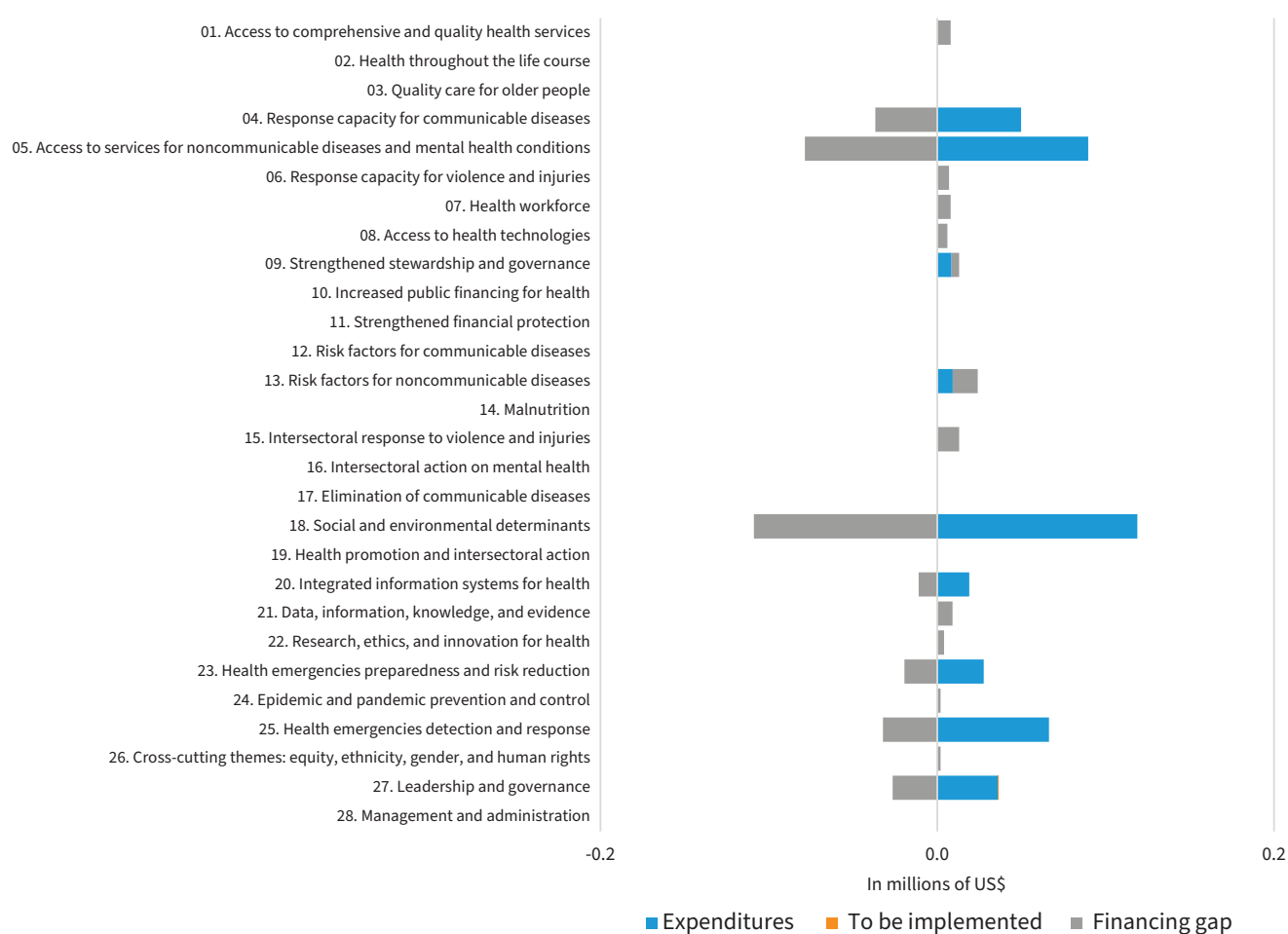
The availability of PAHO assessed contributions during 2021 allowed the Country Office to advance major technical cooperation in environmental determinants of health, through the engagement of international consultants to provide recommendations to strengthen national wastewater treatment (28% of total biennium budget). PAHO also made major investments in strengthening long-term care and in statistical surveys

to assess the status of noncommunicable diseases (21% of total budget). Strengthening the COVID-19 emergency response was the third largest budget expenditure, with 15.6% of the budget allocated for this purpose.

Project implementation across several program areas was significantly impacted by the national prioritization of human and financial resources to respond to the COVID-19 emergency. All funds allocated to the Country Office came from the collective contributions of Member States to PAHO. The Country Office did not receive any voluntary contributions to support technical cooperation with this United Kingdom Overseas Territory. However, the PAHO HSS department provided over US\$ 60 000 to support the engagement of a country program officer, which supported the Country Office efforts to accelerate program implementation during 2021. For a more detailed description of how funding was allocated and spent across program outcomes, please access <https://open.paho.org/2020-21/country/TCA>. Extracts from this site are provided below:

Turks and Caicos Islands

Figure 2. Outcome budget allocations, financing, and implementation: Base programs



LOOKING AHEAD

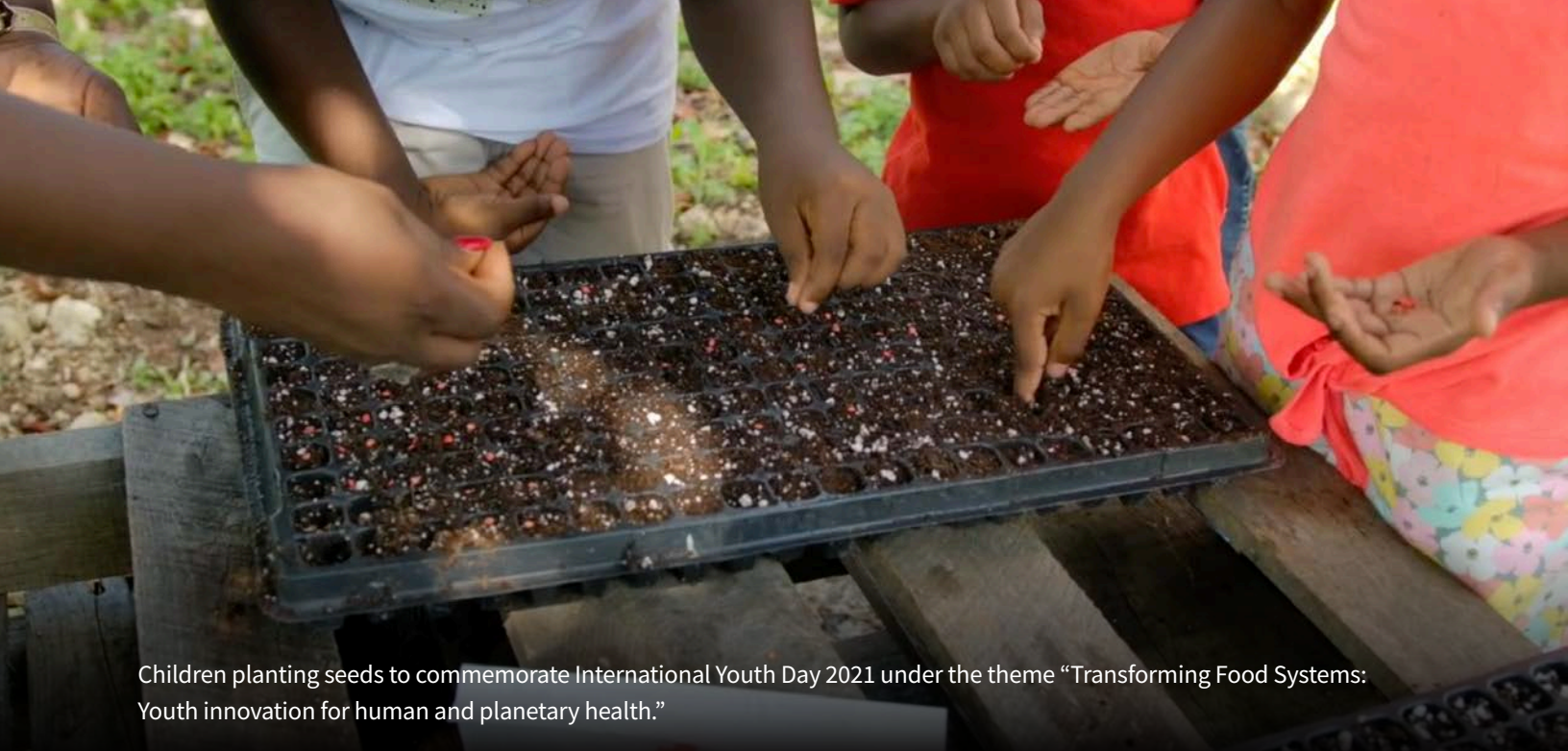
The year 2021 has taught us the great value of partnership to address complex and evolving public health issues. Moving forward, the technical cooperation of PAHO/WHO with The Bahamas and Turks and Caicos Islands will continue to employ the Health in All Policies approach, collaborating with governmental and nongovernmental agencies within and beyond the health sector to address the ongoing priorities of NCDs, health system strengthening, climate change and environmental determinants of health, and vaccine-preventable diseases.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted existing weaknesses and inequities within the public health system. However, it also created an opportunity for the strengthening of health services and the closing of equity gaps. In both The Bahamas and Turks and Caicos Islands, the Country Office will continue to support the development of strategic policies that regulate and provide direction for the organization, functioning, and financing of the health system to ensure equitable access and affordability to universal health care. A focus on strengthening the governance and stewardship of the national health authority, and on the essential public health functions, such as improving access to medicines and health technologies, human resources for health, and digital transformation of the health system through the adoption of the Information Systems for Health platform, will remain a priority for technical cooperation.

The vaccination efforts should go beyond COVID-19 and include other vaccine-preventable diseases. The Country Office is committed to its continued efforts in

communications and community engagement to rebuild momentum to attain high immunization rates across the life course, especially among vulnerable populations and children. As new communicable diseases and the threats of public health emergencies emerge, PAHO/WHO will continue to support both The Bahamas and Turks and Caicos Islands with surveillance, data management and centralization, emergency preparedness and response efforts, to facilitate timely and evidence-based decision-making and resilient recovery.

As data inform policies, legislation, and programs, surveys on the prevalence of NCDs, especially among children, are a priority for Turks and Caicos Islands. Primary care is the cornerstone of disease detection, prevention, and management. Therefore, PAHO/WHO will prioritize, in both The Bahamas and Turks and Caicos Islands, the implementation of the technical package of the HEARTS initiative, which is considered critical for the adoption of global best practices to prevent and control cardiovascular diseases.



Children planting seeds to commemorate International Youth Day 2021 under the theme “Transforming Food Systems: Youth innovation for human and planetary health.”

Climate change is recognized as one of the biggest threats to human health. This is particularly true for The Bahamas and Turks and Caicos Islands, as both are small island developing states that are highly vulnerable to adverse impacts from hurricanes and others environmental hazards. Thus, the Country Office will continue to focus part of the technical cooperation in conjunction with national partners to develop strategic documents and activities toward increasing the resilience of the health sector.

Lastly, we thank the team at the Country Office for a year of dedicated work with the two ministries of health toward improvement in several health categories in the context of the pandemic, while also promoting well-being and mental health programs.



The Country Office provided technical support to relaunch the PAHO/WHO Perinatal Information System to improve the quality of care provided to mothers and newborns.

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