

Trinidad & Tobago Red Cross Society

Introduction: The IFRC launched an Emergency Appeal on 31 January 2020, to mobilize resources to support the National Societies' COVID-19 domestic response plans. We are currently preparing the 20-month progress report to showcase the great work conducted by our members across the world, so the IFRC can better position and promote our valuable work.

Photo and caption:



Figure 1: The TTRCS team in Cotton Hill, Bonne Aventure, Trinidad conducting a distribution of water storage drums, hygiene kits, and water purification tablets to the community of approximately 55 homes that rely on rain water as their main water-supply as part of the Coca-Cola Foundation, Stop the Spread project. Improved access to water and hygiene supplies were a critical element in ensuring proper sanitization was achieved to help combat the spread of COVID19. Credit TTRCS, August 2022

Regional Emergency Appeal:	<u>MDR42006</u>
National Society:	Trinidad and Tobago Red Cross Society
Reporting period:	February 2020 – 31 August 2022
Report delivery date:	22 nd August 2022
Total Country Budget to date:	TTD\$7,991,313.67
Total estimated financial expenditure to date:	TTD\$7,810,573.42

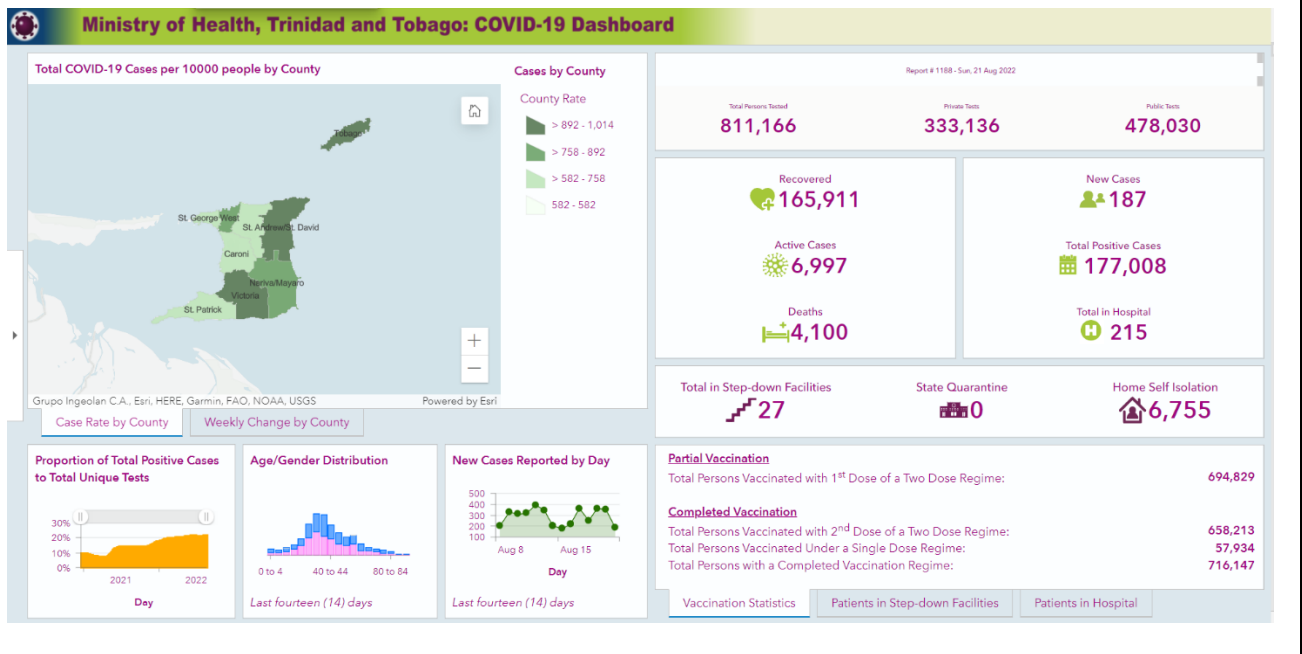
Part I. General Context

1. Summary of the current response

Summary:

In 2022, as Trinidad and Tobago eased COVID19 restrictions with the complete re-opening of the economy as well as the return to in-person classes at all Early Childhood, Primary and Secondary Schools, the country has not seen any major spikes in cases from the general population. There have been several cases where schools have been highlighted as areas of concern as pockets of cases have emerged where dozens of children, usually in the same class, have tested positive. However, with the average daily record of new positive cases ranging from 200 to 400, the pandemic is still active in Trinidad & Tobago. There has been a reduction in the number of daily deaths with many days reporting one or two deaths which is a large reduction from 10 plus deaths per day. As the economy opened up, there has been a slow but positive increase in economic activity as many businesses rebounded and persons unemployed were re-hired, nonetheless it is estimated that approximately 6000 small businesses would have permanently closed during the pandemic.

The Trinidad & Tobago Red Cross Society (TTRCS) continued its response to COVID19 by supporting gaps identified in areas of community health and access to WASH facilities at community and school level; community engagement and accountability which included a perception survey targeting parents to assess their perceptions around vaccinations for their children between 5-11 years, as well as communications assets in the form of PSAs for radio and educational video materials to strengthen communications with children in Primary and Secondary Schools.



2. Objectives and achievements of the reporting period

Priority 1: Sustaining Health and WASH

Pillar 1: Epidemic control

There were no activities in this pillar.

Pillar 2: Risk communication, community engagement, and health and hygiene promotion

The TTRCS continued to engage the national population through radio station PSAs. While the country was excited to get back to pre-COVID19 activities such as large parties and “fetes”, where typical safety measures such as physical distancing and mask-wearing were not enforced, it was important to ensure that persons were aware of the risks and took personal measures to ensure their own safety. The TTRCS radio messages continued to be engaging and conversational, and delivered in a non-authoritarian tone and segmented to reach distinct target audiences (young men, young women, and two general messages) aired on radio stations and specific programmes selected to reach each group. Aired on morning and afternoon drivetimes and on popular youth stations, the combined listening audience was in excess of 120,000. TTRCS also aired its five-part television series aimed at providing different demographics a platform to air their concerns about the vaccine and other COVID-19 issues, as well as their personal accounts of contracting the virus. At the end of each episode, PAHO and other COVID-19 specialists provide answers to some of the questions posed by the people featured in the videos. Two television stations carried the series.

Pillar 3: Community-based surveillance (CBS)

There were no activities in this pillar.

Pillar 4: Infection prevention and control and WASH in health facilities

There were no activities in this pillar.

Pillar 5: Infection prevention and control and WASH at the community level

The TTRCS intervention in community level WASH programming was implemented in two additional communities. In March 2022, the TTRCS supported a migrant community with the installation of water storage tanks, improved their solid waste collection system and provided materials to construct additional toilet and shower facilities. The community of approximately 30 migrant families all shared one toilet and one shower and had access to pipe-borne water only twice per week, when water came in the pipes that had to fill up many containers as they had little water storage capabilities. The TTRCS supported with the installation a 1000-gallon water tank and provided hygiene items and training in Participatory Hygiene and Sanitation Transformation (PHAST) to improve their hygiene practices especially among the youth in the community who showed little to no knowledge of safe hygiene practices. Solid waste management was also an issue as the community lived beyond the access to municipal waste collection which resulted in them burning their garbage. The TTRCS provided metal drums for them to collect waste and wheel-barrows for them to move it to the burn-site more efficiently.

The community of Cotton Hill, Bonne Aventure, Trinidad has seen water issues for decades as the community lies just beyond the official water connection. The community has improvised rain-water collection for decades, however during the dry-season they are not able to meet their water needs and spend large sums on having water delivered via truck and many households have to purchase bottled water for their younger ones to drink as they get frequent illness from drinking impure water. With

support from the Coca-Cola Foundation, Stop the Spread project, the TTRCS was able to assist the community of 55 households (180 persons, 56 Males, 56 Females, 38 Boys, 30 Girls) to improve their situation by providing water storage drums, drum-proofing materials, hygiene kits and water purification tablets. By improving their ability to safely collect rain-water and treat it for drinking and sanitation, the community will be better able to reduce incidences of illness.



Figure 2: TTRCS Community Liaison Officer, Julio Pereira, teaches a Cotton Hill resident the proper technique of “drum-proofing” using mosquito netting and elastic cords to create a filter to prevent mosquitos from breeding in their drums, as well as keep foreign debris out, while still being able to collect the rain water from the guttering of the home. Credit, TTRCS August 2022.

As schools re-open the need to protect students has been crucial as they have been a population of concern, as children do not effectively follow the guidelines especially during their breaks when direct supervision of school staff is reduced. The TTRCS supported 30 primary schools with temperature and sanitizer devices to ensure effective screening and sanitizing on entry to the school as well as 2000 student protection pouches which include masks, sanitizers and disinfectant wipes to be distributed to vulnerable students who cannot afford to purchase these on their own.



Figure 3: Distribution of Temperature and Sanitizer Device and Student Protection Pouches to Valencia RC Primary School. Credit, TTRCS July 2022

Pillar 6: Mental health and psychosocial support services (MHPSS)

Mental health services continued to be provided via our WhatsApp Lines, Toll Free Call Hotline and via teleconferencing. With the support of the IFRC Panama Office, the TTRCS increased its capacity to provide PSS to the migrant population with 15 new Spanish-speaking volunteers and staff being trained to staff our WhatsApp hotlines for the migrant community.

Pillar 7: Isolation and clinical case management for COVID-19 cases

There were no activities in this pillar.

Pillar 8: Ambulance services for COVID-19 cases

There were no activities in this pillar.

Pillar 9: Maintain access to essential health services (community health)

As the country opened back up, the demands on the public health system have also been high as persons sought to catch up with their visits that were postponed during the pandemic. The TTRCS Henry Dunant Clinic continues to operate to fill the gap where needed. The migrant population continues to be the main group that seeks support from the Clinic, where they are able to access services such as doctor's consultations, prescriptions, referrals and basic blood tests. Increased access to health services is facilitated by community health outreach where TTRCS targets last-mile communities that have difficulty accessing health services.

Pillar 10: Maintain access to essential health services (clinical and paramedical)

There were no activities in this pillar.

Pillar 11: Support for immunization

There were no activities in this pillar.

Pillar 12: Management of the dead

There were no activities in this pillar.

Priority 2: Addressing Socio-Economic Impacts

Pillar 1: Livelihoods and Household Economic Security

The TTRCS piloted its entrepreneurship training programme with a group of 20 migrants. As part of our COVID19 operations, we built capacity in livelihoods through our "Garden to Kitchen" initiative and this training taught persons the key elements of starting their own business. Our pilot focused on migrants who had registered in the 2019 work-permit registration process and could legally earn an income and wanted to start their own business or learn techniques to expand their existing trade. Some of the topics covered include budgeting, how to self-organize, customer service, brand presence and social media marketing. The outcomes of this initiative allowed the 20 participants to become closer to taking their business ideas to market and make a sustainable income either as a primary source or an alternative source.

Pillar 2: Shelter and Urban settlements

There were no activities in this pillar.

Pillar 3: Community Engagement and Accountability, and Community Feedback Mechanisms

The TTRCS launched a Perception Survey on vaccinations for children targeting parents of children 5 – 11 years to determine gaps in information and communications strategies to meet these gaps. As the country made vaccines available to children in this age group, with the hesitancy adults were facing with vaccines for themselves, the TTRCS thought it prudent to get parents’ perception about their concerns on this vaccine. The survey had an overwhelming response with 4154 respondents to the online survey and the TTRCS also conducted four focus groups, 3 in Trinidad and 1 in Tobago. The results are still being analyzed and will be published by mid-September 2022.

Pillar 4: Social Cohesion and Support to Vulnerable Groups

There were no activities in this pillar.

Priority 3: National Society Strengthening

Pillar 1: Readiness (preparedness, capacity strengthening, auxiliary role and mandate)

The TTRCS continued to review its disaster plans and SOPs for various hazards that may affect Trinidad and Tobago. During the period March to August 2022, seven community capacity building trainings were done which included three Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) trainings where 185 persons were trained, three Shelter Management trainings where 213 persons were trained and one Incident Command System (ICS) training was done with 32 persons trained.

Pillar 2: National Society Sustainability

There were no activities in this pillar.

Pillar 3: Support to volunteers

There were no activities in this pillar.

3. Other – National Society’s Own Indicators

Indicator <i>(Add rows as needed)</i>	Target	Reached <i>(Description of progress, if possible, including sex and age disaggregated data)</i>
NOT APPLICABLE		

4. Constraints, Challenges, and Lessons Learned

Challenges identified and support needs from IFRC:

Description	Status (Resolved/ Pending)	How resolved
Continued relevance of the actions and making meaningful impact	Pending	While COVID19 continues to pose a serious threat, actions of the government in terms of full reopening and limiting communications about COVID19 in the media have given the population a sense that the pandemic is over. Vaccine uptick has slowed significantly with 1000's of doses of vaccine expiring and being destroyed. This has made the work difficult to continue to engage persons on the continued seriousness of COVID19. To address the issue, we ensured communications was engaging and elicited feedback and highly targeted to a specific group rather than generic.
Continued funding	Pending	Aggressive resource mobilization that focused on creating a pool of donors, traditional and untraditional, that were able to sustain the organization and not rely solely on the IFRC supported funds to ensure operations continued.

Main learnings:

- Evidence based approaches continue to be the main reason for the TTRCS success in implementation. While the target numbers could be greater it would certainly dilute the level of impact, the persons who are reached by the TTRCS get a more impactful response that changes and improves their vulnerable situation as it is tailored to their needs.
- The use of CEA tools like surveys and focus groups carried out in the perception survey allowed the TTRCS to tailor the communication messages and PSAs for TV and Radio to a few specific groups that were likely to be at risk. The main audiences were younger males and females between the ages of 18 to 39 who were likely to take part in large celebrations where COVID19 regulations were not enforced. The second group were students in school who were at risk if they did not follow protocols.
- Innovative solutions are needed to engaging the population as the majority have an impression that COVID19 is no longer a threat. Actions such as removing mask-mandates, easing travel restrictions and reducing the communication about pandemic in the media are giving the impression that the pandemic is over. Communication has to remain constant to ensure the public remains cognizant of the threat.

5. Next steps and moving forward

Next steps and moving forward:

An assessment of the relevance of the COVID19 operations moving forward is needed to ensure the work of the TTRCS meets the gaps in country as well as in alignment to the national response. While the threat of COVID19 is present, in the past six months Trinidad and Tobago has not experienced any major rise in cases and the state has moved to remove mask-mandates, close all the mass-vaccination sites and all but two COVID19 hospitals have closed. Therefore, convincing the population to remain vigilant is a growing challenge as the mindset is that the pandemic is over.

Addressing the longer-term economic impacts of the pandemic will be the main focus of the work. In July 2022, the TTRCS and IFRC conducted an assessment in Tobago for the implementation of climate-smart livelihoods which will teach three communities about using hydroponics to grow in limited land space and resources. This project together with the TTRCS' entrepreneurship training will solidify the TTRCS' role in building capacity in livelihoods.

Photographs, links to videos etc

Contact Information

Contact information:

Ms. Jill De Bourg
President
Trinidad & Tobago Red Cross Society
7a Fitzblackman Drive
Wrightson Road Extension
Port of Spain
TRINIDAD W.I.
presidentttrcs@gmail.com
(868) 708-6699

Mr. Stephan Kishore
Crisis Management Coordinator
& Project Implementation Lead
Trinidad & Tobago Red Cross Society
7a Fitzblackman Drive
Wrightson Road Extension
Port of Spain
TRINIDAD W.I.
stephan.kishore@ttrcs.org
(868) 479-1069

Useful Links

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24-month update on COVID-19 Outbreak (MDRCOVID19):

https://prddsgofilestorage.blob.core.windows.net/api/sitreps/4379/ARO_COVID19_Sit_Update_No_20_24-month_report.pdf

Revised Emergency Plan of Action for COVID-19 Outbreak (MDRCOVID19):

https://prddsgofilestorage.blob.core.windows.net/api/sitreps/4379/MDR42006_Revised_EPoA_2022_Americas.pdf

Revised Emergency Appeal for COVID-19 Outbreak (MDRCOVID19):

<https://prddsgofilestorage.blob.core.windows.net/api/event-featured-documents/file/MDRCOVID19REA5.pdf>