



The Eastern *Vibes*

Monthly Newsletter 2018

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Seeing the Rainbow Through the Storm



Aerial view of Sangre Grande

A picture says a thousand words. However, on the evening of Friday 19th October, 2018 members of staff at the Eastern Regional Health Authority (ERHA) along with several citizens of Trinidad and Tobago were speechless when they began to receive reports of the destruction caused by the October floods.

From as early as 9:25 a.m. on 17th October, 2018, Ms. Alana Lewis, Disaster Preparedness Coordinator alerted staff to the adverse weather report that was issued by the Trinidad and Tobago Meteorological Service (MET Office).

The Disaster Preparedness Team continued to monitor the situation throughout the region to inform staff and to make arrangements for service continuity. The Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) was activated in response to the adverse weather alert by the MET Office to coordinate response and recovery efforts. The EOC was led by Mr. Ronald Tsoi-a-Fatt, Chief Executive Officer and Ms. Lewis. They were assisted by Ms. Michelle Ramnarine, Manager – Quality.

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Staff on the North Coast encountered challenges to return to Sangre Grande as the road was impassable. To ensure their safety, they then journeyed to the nearest Health Centre. Recognising the challenges ahead, our ERHA drivers Mr. Darren Baldeosingh and Mr. Peter Shears, together with villagers cleared the debris in St. Helena for a safe journey home. ***"Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much."***



Damage to bridge

Over the next two days the weather conditions worsened and the MET Service upgraded the Riverine flood alert to orange and then to red some hours later. There were several alerts of flooding in areas within our region, which included among others Vega de Oropouche, North Oropouche, La Siva Junior, Coalmine, Sangre Grande, Navet, Biche, Poole and Plum Mitan. There were also landslides along the north coast. These developments prompted the Authority to dismiss staff residing in areas prone to landslides and flooding early. They were also cautioned to be vigilant and to take the necessary steps to preserve life and property. As the time progressed, the water level rose in several areas. No one expected what

eventually occurred.

Recognizing the need to provide emergency services, staff of various categories overnighted at the Sangre Grande Hospital on Friday 19th October, 2018 and willingly filled roles outside of their scope of duties in an effort to keep services running. They remained cheerful and dedicated despite the disaster looming around them.

In their commitment to providing healthcare to the affected community of Mayaro, two doctors also overnighted at the Mayaro District Health Facility. During their shift they had to arrange for a pregnant patient to be air lifted from the facility to Mt. Hope for an emergency C-section for the delivery of twins. Sangre Grande Hospital was totally cut off. At 3:22 a.m. a helicopter landed at the Mayaro Recreation Ground. A doctor accompanied the patient to the Mt. Hope Medical Complex where she was then transferred to the Women's hospital for a safe delivery.



While some of our facilities were difficult to access the provision of quality healthcare never stopped. Members of staff who were marooned at facilities, including Matron at Sangre Grande Hospital worked around the clock to ensure that patients received care. A shuttle service was implemented while others traversed through flood waters to reach their assigned facility. The Regional Corporation also provided assistance. At the same time concerned colleagues at home volunteered to return to work and some were even prepared to be transported via unconventional vehicles, while others offered their services to prepare meals to take to their colleagues. The kitchen staff at Sangre Grande Hospital also attempted to service marooned staff.

On Saturday 20th October, 2018, the nation awoke to a startling reality. It was estimated that 80% of the country was affected by the flooding as Trinidad alone received a full month supply of rain over two days. Sadly, approximately 150,000 people were impacted. The magnitude of the situation contributed to an increase in anxiety and uncertainty in the citizenry.



Mr. Tsoi-a-Fatt braved the flood waters on the Uriah Buttler Highway when the road was closed to most vehicles to assess the situation and look after staff and the facilities of the ERHA and to mobilize the response and recovery effort. Television and radio reports did not prepare him for the destruction caused by the flood waters as it carved a path through offices of the ERHA. The ground level of Supercare and Libert Buildings, inclusive of the offices of the CEO, GM-Finance, GM-Legal and Corporate Affairs and GM- Operations were inundated. Nine (9) Departments/Units housing forty (40) employees were temporarily relocated to continue operations, while response and recovery exercises were coordinated by the EOC.



*ERHA Head Office -
Supercare Building*



ERHA Head Office- Libert Building

Members of the public were also challenged accessing some of our facilities as roadways in the vicinity of Sangre Grande Hospital, Sangre Grande Enhanced Health Centre, and the Mayaro District Health Facility were impassable. In response to these challenges, staff were redeployed to the nearest facility to ensure continuity of service to our clients. Eager to attend to the needs of staff, the Management Team assembled on Sunday 21st October, 2018 at the Conference Centre to implement a recovery strategy and assign teams to spearhead the recovery and relocation exercise.

Relocation

As decisions were taken, members of staff were informed and advised on the way forward. During the clean-up exercise, the office of the CEO was housed at the Conference Centre while the offices of the Regional Nursing Manager and the Occupational Safety and Health Departments were housed at Sankar Building. The offices of the GM-Legal and Corporate Affairs and GM-Finance were housed upstairs Supercare Building and staff of Libert Building were relocated to Regis Building.

Guided by the need to be vigilant and to preserve life, a strategic decision was made to postpone services in areas where the flooding placed personal safety at risk. However, clients were advised to access services from other facilities and other RHAs also offered their assistance.

Charity Begins At Home

Dealing with a disaster of this magnitude can be very traumatic. 144 employees were personally affected by the flood. In an effort

to assist affected members of staff to cope with the situation and to organize their families, the ERHA granted time off and counselling was offered via the EAP to assist with emotional recovery. A very important lesson was learnt as members of staff were reminded that there was strength in unity. They came together and coordinated efforts to assist affected colleagues. Through the generous donations received from management and staff, over 160 hampers were prepared and personally distributed by management to colleagues and other families in need in the community. Assistance was also received from the Sangre Grande Regional Corporation, Boodansingh Supermarket, PriceSmart, American Stores and the San Fernando Yacht Club among others.



Ms. Alana Lewis, Disaster Preparedness Coordinator and Mr. Sean Ramdial, Quality Coordinator (Ag.) prepare hampers

The Authority also recognised that persons were challenged to launder their clothes. To answer this call, a laundry facility with a coffee station was set-up at the Conference Centre.



Mr. Ronald Tsoi-a-Fatt, Chief Executive Officer and Ms. Alana Lewis, Disaster Preparedness Coordinator at the laundry facility

Clean up

Eager to provide a safe, healthy and comfortable environment within the Administrative Offices, a comprehensive clean-up exercise was implemented by Mr. Tsoi-a-Fatt and managed by Ms. Yolande Benjamin and Ms. Angelina Rampersad-Pierre building managers for Supercare and Libert Buildings respectively. Recognizing the urgency to address the situation, workers from the Regional Corporation assisted in the removal of files, slush and damaged items. This herculean task was simplified with the assistance of Sanitec Ltd. The company appreciated the invaluable service the ERHA provides to the Eastern region and the people of Trinidad and Tobago and donated their services to assist in the clean-up exercise and sanitizing of the offices and furnishings. They mobilized with their hi-tech equipment and remained with staff to thoroughly clean the affected areas. Ms. Lewis, Ms. Ramnarine, Mr. Videsh Rambharack, Ms. Amanda Roberts and Mr. Terronce Tsoi-a-Fatt assisted with supervising the clean-up exercise which ended after 1:00 a.m.



Remnants or evidence of flood inside Supercare Building

Concerned about the welfare of the staff, Members of the Board of the ERHA led by Ms. Esme Rawlins-Charles, Chairman visited the affected offices to demonstrate their support and to assess the extent of the damage.



Ms. Esme Rawlins-Charles, Chairman visits Administrative Offices with other members of the Board, CEO and Management



Members of the Board, CEO and Management visit Libert Building



Items housed in Libert

Staying true to our slogan "Caring is the Key," the ERHA responded to the needs of our clients and conducted outreach programmes to provide services for persons affected by the flooding. These programmes were conducted in the Guaico/Tamana area and North Oropouche Government Primary School. The Trinidad and Tobago Medical Association assisted with the latter initiative. The health Team consisted of doctors, nurses, pharmacists and administrative staff. They provided screening, medical checks, pharmacy services, immunization and psychological counselling and public health advice.



*Verna Farrell-Williams,
Primary Care Nurse
Manager
administers a
vaccine to a
community
member of
Guaico/Tamana*



Pharmacists chat with resident of North Oropouche



*Outreach programme at North Oropouche
Government Primary School*



*Resident of Guaico/
Tamana gets his blood
pressure
tested by Beverly
Le Andre-James,
Registered Nurse*

During the period the Disaster Preparedness Team continued to monitor the weather pattern to advise staff and coordinated activities to get operations of the Authority normalised.

Displaced members of staff began the move-in process to their offices after the completion of the extensive clean-up exercise on 31st October, 2018 and the EOC was deactivated.

Interfaith Ceremony

On 13th November, 2018 the Honourable Terrence Deyalsingh, Minister of Health hosted an Interfaith Ceremony at the Cipriani Labour College Auditorium. The ceremony was held to recognise the contributions of the public health sector to the response and recovery efforts during the two recent natural disasters (the earthquake on 22nd August 2018 and flooding on 19th October, 2018).

Ms. Nelcia Smith, Registered Nurse at the Sangre Grande Hospital set the tone for the event in song with her angelic performance of "How Great Thou Art." During the programme, Minister Deyalsingh acknowledged

and awarded the ERHA for the stellar performance of members of staff during both natural disasters. Ms. Alana Lewis, Disaster Preparedness Coordinator acted as an Ambassador on behalf of the Authority and received the token.



Ms. Alana Lewis, Disaster Preparedness Coordinator receives an award on behalf of the ERHA from the Honourable Terrence Deyalsingh, Minister of Health



Ms. Maxine Greaves, Registered Nurse performs at the service

During this trying period there was a desire to continue to serve and a strong team spirit that was fuelled by dedication, passion and quality service from all the members of the ERHA Team.



ERHA staff at the Interfaith Service

The ERHA offers its deepest appreciation to staff for their timeless efforts and commitment to providing quality healthcare during this trying period. We are also thankful to our stakeholders and friends who came forward to assist in our time of need. Let us continue to demonstrate that,

"Caring is the Key."



OCTOBER, 2018

Sangre Grande Hospital
Ojoe Road, Sangre Grande
Tel: 668-2273/2221/2468/2577
Tel/Fax: 668-4368

Mayaro District Health Facility
Pierreville, Mayaro
Tel: 630-1258/9
Tel/Fax: 630-1257

Biche Outreach Centre
Canque Village
Biche
Tel: 668-9053

Brothers Road Outreach Centre
Brothers Road
Tabaquite
Tel: 656-2547

Coryal Outreach Centre
Balata Hill Road and Cumuto Main
Road
Coryal
Tel: 668-8066

Cumana Outreach Centre
Toco Main Road
Cumana Village, Cumana
Tel: 670-8250

Cumuto Outreach Centre
Main Road
Cumuto
Tel: 643-9075

Grande Riviere Outreach Centre
Hosang Street
Grand Riviere
Tel: 670-8264

**Guayaguayare Outreach
Centre**
Guayaguayare Road,
Guayaguayare
Tel: 630-8777

Manzanilla Outreach Centre
Eastern Main Road
Manzanilla
Tel: 668-2063

Matelot Outreach Centre
Main Road
Matelot
Tel: 670-2428

Matura Outreach Centre
Toco Main Road
Matura
Tel: 668-6276

Rio Claro Health Centre
De Verteuil and Dougdeen Street,
Rio Claro
Tel: 644-2236, 644-0181 Fax: 644-3463

**Sangre Grande Enhanced Health
Centre**
Ojoe Road
Sangre Grande
Tel: 668-2509

San Souci Outreach Centre
Main Road
San Souci
Tel: 670-2382

Toco Health Centre
Paria Main Road, Toco
Tel: 670-8277

Valencia Outreach Centre
Alexander Street
Valencia
Tel: 667-8197

**Submit Articles / Pictures for the ERHA's Newsletter by the 20th of each month to
corpcomm@erha.co.tt**