



**Hurricane Joaquin Disaster Response
Trip Report: Long Island
Submitted: October 12, 2015**

From: Rotarian Shaun Ingraham, Charter President of the Rotary Club of Eleuthera & RCOB International Service Chair

To: RCOB Disaster Relief Committee

Subject: Long Island visit, 8-11 October, 2015

1. Purpose. To provide a first-hand overview of the on the ground conditions, especially areas associated with affected livelihoods and how Rotary might best be deployed and involved in the recovery process.
2. Areas visited. Various settlements from Salt Pond to Clarence Town, The Fishing and Economic Centre of LI.
3. Key personnel contacted:
 - Keith Caroll, President of Bahamas Sports Fishermen's Association.
 - Shenique Albury and Eleanor Phillips, The Nature Conservancy. Possible support for fishermen
 - Paul Aranah, Trans Island Air – Discussion Around support for continued flights
 - Emile Knowles, local Businessman, and fisherman. Local host.
 - Island Administrator Boodle,
 - Chief Councillor/BTC Manager, Ian Knowles
 - Maurice Minnis, Dept of Agriculture/Local Red Cross Rep.
 - Local Fishermen and farmers,
 - Tourism Island Manager, Dorn Simmons, DEH, Defense Force,
 - Toby Smith, Bahamas Mosquito Fogging Company Ltd
 - Roderick Simms, Out Island BCCEC (The Chamber).

4. Discussion.

Economic Development/Livelihoods

a) Fisheries

Long Island is primarily a fishing island, with most of its income coming by way of commercial fishermen fishing for lobster, grouper, reef fish and a little sponging. It has been estimated by some that more than 90% of the fishing boats have been either totally destroyed or seriously incapacitated. The exact number was hard to ascertain as some fishermen had still not located their boats in order to assess damage. It should also be noted that in the area between Salt Pond and Clarence town all fish houses had been wiped out.

Fishermen are anxious to get back on the water to check their traps and ascertain damage. They also feel that there will be an abundance of lobster crawling as the hurricane would have displaced their habitats. Anxiety was prevalent about poachers taking advantage of the situation, as it was felt the RBDF would be pre-occupied with hurricane relief efforts.

b) Farming

There was a high level of backyard farming being carried on. While families typically have some animals and livestock (primarily goats and sheep), there is no organized effort to bring relief as yet. In speaking to the local Ministry of Agriculture Representative, he felt it was still too early to determine damage because many farmers had not been back to their farms. Additionally, the animals tend to run for higher ground during storms and then return once waters subside. This has not happened as yet. In short, no full assessment has been done. However, it can be stated that the packing house in Clarence Town has been destroyed.

c) Tourism

There are an estimated 206 owner occupied and hotel rooms on Long Island. Approximately 180 are hotel rooms designated for tourists. In speaking to the local Ministry of Tourism Manager, she estimated that most of the hotel/lodges had been damaged with most of them not being able to give a date for reopening.

d) Construction

There was some on-going construction going on the island, however, this accounted for a small percentage of the economy.

5. General Observations.

- Fishing is the biggest portion of the economy with government employment being the second largest.
- Most fishermen either have another business, or are skilled in another trade such as carpentry or farming.
- Some can fish from their dingy.
- Scotia Bank recently closed daily operations on island.
- Most people didn't have insurance and owe the banks on tools/equipment that were lost in the storm.
- Land will be unusable for a while. Rain will be needed to wash out the salt deposited into the soil as a result of the extensive sea surge.
- Spanish Well's Fishermen have been and expected to continue to be a valuable resource to the local Long Island Community of Fishermen as Spanish Wells experienced similar loss and devastation during Andrew.
- There is a severe lack of big trucks/heavy equipment to transport garbage and materials. This will delay clean-up and relief/rebuilding efforts.
- Communications are coming back slowly but surely.
- Families are concerned about children/students wellbeing as it pertains to emotional and educational performance. Ongoing counselling will be needed. It would be very beneficial to students, parents, teachers and the community at large to reopen schools as soon as possible. Priority should be placed here.
- There was minimal on the ground island wide coordination. This was partially the result that all government agents had been affected and they were finding it difficult to get around and communicate.

6. Way Ahead/Recommendations.

a) Shelter

The immediate need is to help those affected “dry in” their homes (a construction/disaster response term which means ensuring the shelter is safe from further rain / water damage). Additionally, help is needed to re-establish the businesses of those affected. There is a shortage of building materials on the ground. This shortage will begin to be addressed this week with the second wave of materials. If able, Rotary should join this effort as in some areas, particularly in the Deep South, complete communities have been wiped out. Due to concerns about mosquitos, sand-flies, weather and safety, locals seem to be adverse to tents.

b) Livelihoods

- i. Assist farmers to get their salvageable boats back into the water. This will require a salvage company; Emile and Peter Goudie are getting quotes. (List of some of the fishermen attached)
- ii. Explore the possibility of leasing/purchasing a smack fishing boat from Spanish Wells. There is one available for sale by Thomas Pinder, The Water Spout. He was asking \$275,000.00 but is prepared to let it go for \$200,000 to assist in relief efforts for LI fishermen. An SPV (Special Purpose Vehicle, to allow lending or micro-lending and regulated by the Securities Commission) can be set up through Rotary Club of East Nassau to facilitate. Local fishermen and farmers are being encouraged to form a cooperative which would own/operate and manage this boat in an equitable fashion. Essentially, the Fishermen who are Members of the cooperative will take turns going to sea.
- iii. Support to local fish houses to get them back up and running. There might be a possibility to use reefer trailers as temporary facilities.
- iv. Lend tractor / heavy equipment support to the local farmers. There might also be the need for seeds and plants and possible animals to replace those lost. It was also suggested than an abattoir (to allow slaughter of animals) is purchased. This might be done through a co-op if established.
- v. Rotarians should be encouraged to volunteer to help rebuild. This will accomplish a number of objectives:
 - a. Moral Support to locals
 - b. Help local economy as rentals and services will be needed
 - c. Creates empathy for those affected.
 - d. They can also work with local teachers to help get schools ready for reopening. There is a lot of cleaning needed that would not require highly skilled or technical volunteers.
- vi. Trained counsellors continue to travel to the affected areas.
- vii. Fishermen whose boats have been damaged can also be hired to help move debris, for construction of damaged homes and public buildings
- viii. Water tanks should be sent to LI to be used for water distribution.

Respectively Submitted by Shaun Ingraham