



BAHAMAS PROJECT FIRST REPORT
Field coordinator: Diego Sanchez.
Schedule of the trip: 14.10.2019 – 20.10.2019

General overview.

The Bahamas is a country located in the Caribbean, with an economy that depends mostly on tourism and related services. It's urban centers present extremely low density and an architectural style reminiscent of the British colonies and the architecture of the old American south, based on wood and concrete block buildings.

On the 1st of September, Hurricane Dorian hit the Bahamas with extreme violence, leaving behind a trail of massive damage and destruction and an official death toll of at least 61, even though unofficial numbers estimate much higher casualties, with over 400 people still missing.

The areas that were most affected are the northern islands of Abaco and Grand Bahamas.

Day by day report.

Monday the 14th of October:

Arrival to the Bahamas, the house is located in a suburb 30 minutes outside of Nassau. First time meeting with our contact for this week in Nassau.

Tuesday the 15th of October:

First visit to the city of Nassau. There, we held a meeting with our second contact in Nassau, who is well connected in Abaco Island. This island will be our final destination. The two most affected islands where Abaco and Grand Bahama, both located to the north of Nassau, the hurricane stayed over the Bahamas for 42 hours and caused colossal damage in both islands, both through the wind (over 300 km/hrs) and a rise in the sea tides.

In particular, the case of Abaco is quite critical, as it's the central city, Marsh Harbour, which is the second most significant and most important city in the country, and its population went down from 20.000 people to around 500. The communications are also in a critical state, and there are no ferries moving people to or from the island, only airplanes.

In the afternoon, we hold a second meeting, visiting the University of The Bahamas and its architecture department. The University is quite new and recommended us to talk with the Institute of Bahamian Architects.

Wednesday the 16th of October:

Arrival to Abaco Island and first meeting with our Abaco contact, who took us around Marsh Harbour, to see the current state of the situation. The city is mostly abandoned now. Most of the population flew to other islands or the U.S. Most structures present some form of damage, including missing roofs, destroyed second floors, broken windows, and interior partitions. In some areas, boats were dragged inland by the sea and crashed onto buildings 500 meters from the coast. There are no basic services, like water and electricity. They are expected to return around Christmas, on time for the peak touristic season.

We visited a school for kids with special needs called "Every Child Counts" (ECC) this is a private school, and it's one of only two schools of its kind in the Bahamas. Currently, there is another NGO called "All hands and Hearts" doing cleaning and recovery of the building. We met and got contacts with representatives of this organization, that is in charge of cleaning up this school and three other private schools.

Thursday the 17th of October:

The second visit to ECC, we met with volunteers and engineers from "All Hands and Hearts" and made a draft to record the site plan, its different buildings, and the current state of conservation of each part. We have to translate that initial draft and transform it into a real plan drawing. So we have an initial document in case we start working on a Project in that site.

During the day, we visited two other schools that are under the supervision of "All Hands and Hearts": Saint Francis School, Forest Heights School.

Friday the 18th of October:

At 9:00 AM we attended a meeting with representatives of the government and many different NGOs, in this meeting many different people talked about the work they are doing on the island, they were mostly people from large scale international NGOs like Red Cross and UNICEF.

The government representatives made a brief presentation, but there doesn't seem to be a clear plan for rebuilding yet. For now, the government efforts are centered around cleaning up and removing garbage and debris. It appears in the near future the Ministry of Work will make a website where people can upload Emergency Housing proposals, they have to meet the requirements of the building code, to resist future hurricanes.

Saturday the 19th of October:

On Saturday, we returned from Abaco to Nassau and held two different meetings with Bahamian architects:

In the morning, we met with a very experienced Bahamian architect, with ties to the government and with some direct family relations to Abaco. He expressed his willingness to help once we have a more defined Project.

In the afternoon, we met with an architect from a very big architecture office from the Bahamas with a lot of experience with private and public projects. He explained the positive aspects of the Bahamian building code and gave us some advice about the “Bahamian Style” architecture. He was also very interested in helping us in the future once the projects start to be more precise and defined.

Sunday the 20th of October:

Return to Chile.