A low pressure tropical trough brought heavy rainfalls to the Eastern Caribbean on 24th December 2013, severely affecting the islands of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and St. Lucia. The sustained torrential rains caused severe flooding, landslides, and damage to infrastructures including health facilities, homes, roads and bridges.

In St. Vincent & the Grenadines the rainfall totaled 310mm in a 2-3 hour period. This resulted in 9 deaths, and 3 persons unaccounted for. A national level 2 disaster was declared in accordance with the national Emergency and Disaster Management Act 2006 for 12 main areas on St. Vincent. Damage and losses were calculated at US$108.4 million or 15% of the country’s Gross Domestic Product. It was estimated that 97% of the damage was sustained in critical infrastructure, including the Milton Cato Memorial Hospital, the referral hospital in the country.

In Saint Lucia, 6 individuals lost their lives. The torrential rainfall resulted in flooding, landslides, destruction of roads and bridges, and the collapse of the pipe-borne water supply island wide. These severely impacted access to healthcare. Health Centres in the two most affected areas, Canaries and Anse La Ray, were left nonfunctional with 4-6 feet water marks and loss of essential medical supplies and equipment.

Following the impact of the floods in both countries, sanitation at the health facilities was in a poor condition, and disease surveillance, vector control and water quality monitoring were identified as high priority.

International commitment for humanitarian assistance
Following the initial health sector impact report prepared by the PAHO Emergency Health Response Team, a number of partners pledged their support. Voluntary contributions were received from various partners:

- The UK Department for International Development, DFID
- European Commission: Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection, ECHO
- Australia Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, DFAT
- Canada Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development, DFATD
- PAHO regular funds

PAHO Rapid Response Team
A PAHO Rapid Response Team, comprised of a Coordinator, Structural, Electrical, and Water and Sanitation Engineers, an Architect and an Information Manager conducted immediate needs assessments in St. Vincent and St. Lucia.
10 months after the event

Restoring Access to Healthcare

Large steriliser in the Milton Cato Memorial Hospital (MCMH) damaged by the 4 ft high flood waters

Testing residual chlorine in the water supply in Saint Lucia, using donated test kits

Cold chain for immunization restored in Anse La Ray and Canaries Health Centres

Vector Control

Replacement Tuttnaer Steriliser of 510L capacity, installed and commissioned at the hospital, MCMH.

Handheld and truck mounted foggers, together with vector control chemicals were supplied to the Environmental Health Department of the MoH, St Vincent.

Water and Sanitation

Secured storage facility established off-site of MCMH to store emergency medical supplies.

Water storage capacity at MCMH increased by 14,000 gallons

The Environmental Health Department of Saint Lucia was provided with a vehicle to intensify vector control activities.