



This Situation Report is jointly issued by PNG National Department of Health and World Health Organization once weekly. This Report is not comprehensive and covers information received as of reporting date.

Situation Summary and Highlights

- ❑ As of 7 March 2021 (12:00 pm), there have been 1670 COVID-19 cases and 16 COVID-19 deaths reported in Papua New Guinea. From the period of 1 to 7 March, there were 357 new cases reported, **the highest number of cases in a single week in PNG since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.**
- ❑ In the previous week, 212 cases have been reported from the National Capital District, 39 from Morobe, 36 from both West Sepik and the Autonomous Region of Bougainville, 11 from Eastern Highlands, eight from Madang, six from Western Highlands, four from East Sepik, two cases each from Western Province and Southern Highlands, and one case from Central Province.
- ❑ The total number of provinces that have reported COVID-19 cases to date is seventeen.
- ❑ The COVID-19 Hotline has experienced a 12.89% increase in calls since the last reporting period.
- ❑ The Clinical Management and IPC team have been strongly supporting NCD PHA with the clinical management of the current surge in positive COVID-19 cases. Activities have included support to re-establish the Rita Flynn facility through revision of the previous operational plan as well as clinical management and IPC training for the clinical staff.

- ❑ Work is ongoing for PNG regulatory approval and import clearance for the AstraZeneca vaccine while the NDoH is seeking data from all provinces on number of health care workers and essential workers within their province to further plans for deployment of the first allocation of vaccines once approved.

Summary of Activities and Upcoming Priorities

Surveillance:

- ❑ Last week the surveillance team undertook new epidemiological investigations to highlight the scale of the current outbreak, including more detailed assessments of data over a 7-day period.

Table 1. COVID-19 IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA¹

	New Cases (1 to 7 March 2021)	Cumulative Total
National Capital District	212	704
Western	2	325
West New Britain	0	196
West Sepik	36	174
Morobe	39	48
Madang	8	43
AROB	36	39
East New Britain	0	38
Eastern Highlands	11	24
New Ireland	0	23
Western Highlands	6	19
Central	1	15
East Sepik	4	13
Enga	0	3
Southern Highlands	2	3
Milne Bay	0	2
Hela	0	1
TOTAL	357	1670

¹ As of 07/03/2021, 12:00 pm, PNG time

Table 2. COVID-19 GLOBAL AND REGIONAL UPDATE²

	Confirmed Cases	Deaths
Global	116 135 492	2 581 976
Western Pacific	1 662 186	29 637

² WHO COVID-19 Dashboard as of 07/03/2021, 2:03 pm CET

- Work was undertaken with NCD PHA to create a template for monitoring incoming passengers at the domestic airport, assisting with screening and swabbing symptomatic passengers.
- The team also continued to provide technical support to the NCD PHA in their current surge response, which included data analysis, creating materials for dissemination, and assisting with planning and operational activities.
- With this week the surveillance team will continue to support the provinces to undertake swabbing, contact tracing, surveillance activities, and analysis of data.
- The team will also finalise the implementation of the Health Declaration Monitoring Database at Jacksons Domestic Airport.
- Work will continue with local and international modelling teams to better understand the current trajectory of the epidemic and the most effective ways to mitigate further cases and deaths, including undertaking analysis to determine the sensitivity and specificity of the AgRDT validation and make a recommendation regarding the widespread use of AgRDT in PNG.

Quarantine & Port of Entry:

- Persons in Quarantine (PUQ) Numbers averaged around 700+ this week, of which 500 were in Hotel Quarantine and approximately 200 in home quarantine and other sites.
- There were no symptomatic PUQs this week.
- NCD PHA has now taken over the Domestic Point of Entry screening from Thursday 4th March with the assistance of WHO through the use of an electronic data management system.
- NCD PHA are advocating for home isolation for positive cases as there is no capacity for NCD PHA to quarantine positive cases in managed facilities.

Laboratory:

- Last week the Laboratory team completed establishing a Genexpert COVID-19 testing capability at Mabudawan Health Facility, located in South Fly, Western Province. This capability can perform tuberculosis and COVID-19 tests.
- Last week the Laboratory team held a PCR Support Meeting where discussions were held on the status of PCR set up in Nonga, ANGAU, MT Hagen and Goroka. A travel plan has been developed to undertake PCR assessments for these four regions this month.
- The Laboratory team are currently finalising supporting documents to guide the basic requirements for PCR set up which will include a checklist and an implementation plan for supporting the setup, onsite training, validation and continuous ongoing support for quality assurance.
- This week the team will focus on providing a listing for COVID-19 RT-PCR laboratory diagnosis which will include equipment, consumables and reagents with their estimated costs.
- The team will also continue to provide technical advice on site installation for PCR container for Nonga General Hospital.

Clinical Management and Infection Prevention and Control:

- The Clinical Management and IPC team have been strongly supporting NCD PHA with the clinical management of the current surge in positive COVID-19 cases. Activities have included support to re-establish the Rita Flynn facility through revision of the previous operational plan as well as clinical management and IPC training for the clinical staff.

- The team have been regularly visiting hospitals and clinics in NCD to provide support with screening and patient pathways.
- In addition to supporting NCD, the team have also been in Wewak supporting the PHA with a surge in cases through clinical management and IPC training for clinical staff as well as support with surge planning.

Risk Communication & Non-Pharmaceutical Interventions (NPIs):

- Vaccine communication infographics have been completed, reviewed, endorsed and now out for public consumption.
- Messages and Infographics on Isolation and Quarantine were finalised last week and approved for public viewing.
- TV and radio scripts on COVID facts, signs and symptoms and testing have also been developed in partnership with NDoH, WHO, UNICEF and World bank and are now out for public viewing.
- A media release was published on safe mourning which gained traction with many local and international media outlets as well as a front-page side bar on the Post Courier.
- The NDoH & WHO Incident Manager also sat for interviews on FM100 Talkback and ABC's Pacific Beat on safe mourning practices.
- Next week the team will focus on developing Infographics and messages on managing deceased persons in community and safe funeral and mourning practices.

COVAX/Vaccine Planning & Introduction:

- The Indemnity and Liability document was signed and submitted to COVAX Facility last week.
- Work is ongoing for PNG regulatory approval and import clearance for the AstraZeneca vaccine
- Last week the team were also heavily focused on resource, funding and operational planning, coordinated through the vaccine technical working group.
- Focus this week will be on obtaining data from every province on number of health care workers and essential workers within their province to further plans for deployment of the first allocation of vaccines.

Logistics and Supplies:

- Last week the Logistics team supported Air Niugini with PPEs and sanitizers for coffin handling and inter provincial boarder transfers.
- Ventilator support was provided to Port Moresby General Hospital and additional ventilators were also dispatched to the following locations:
 - Kimbe - 2
 - Morobe - 5
 - Rabaul – 1
- Further ventilator distributions are planned for 7 provinces next week.
- Next week the logistics team will be focused on working with Police and other partners to collect PPE donated by the Republic of Korea and other from the Air Niugini storage facility. The supplies consist primarily of surgical masks and coveralls which are greatly needed to protect frontline workers.

Transmission Assessment

There are currently surges occurring in several provinces across PNG, with outbreaks in the National Capital District (NCD), West Sepik, Madang, Morobe, and Autonomous Region of Bougainville. These outbreaks include a large number of healthcare workers, as well as other key populations of concern, such as incarcerated people and people working in closed settings including mine sites. Large-scale population-level testing remains low across most of PNG, with few health facilities conducting routine screening, swabbing symptomatic patients, and reporting test results on a regular basis. Despite this, test positivity is high, with some facilities recording over 30% of tests returning positive results.

Currently West Sepik and NCD are in Stage 3, large-scale community transmission, with almost all infections locally acquired and not linked to specific groups or locations. In addition, Western Province, Madang, and Morobe are in Stage 2, localised community transmission, with cases locally acquired but localised to specific areas or populations. Eastern Highlands, Western Highlands and the Autonomous Region of Bougainville (AROB) are in Stage 1, imported cases, with recent transmission imported from another province or area, or linked to imported cases. Seventeen out of 22 provinces, including AROB have reported at least one COVID-19 case since March 2020. However, current testing rates and contact tracing data are inadequate to make more detailed sub-national transmission assessments within all provinces.

More information on the WHO Western Pacific Regional Office COVID-19 transmission stages can be found here: bit.ly/WPRODashboard

Epi Update COVID-19

	Tests	Cases	Deaths
	2051	357	3
	NAT Tests past 7 days	New cases past 7 days	Deaths past 7 days
	54442	1670	16
	Cumulative NAT Tests	Cumulative Cases	Cumulative Deaths
	0	219	12*
	Imported Cases in past 28 days	Cases in past 7 days with no link	Active Clusters in the past 7 days

*Case investigation ongoing

Table 3. Number of GeneXpert and RT-PCR tests conducted* in PNG, and total tests per 100,000 population to date

Province	GeneXpert tests to date	RT-PCR tests to date	Total Tests per 100,000
AROB	0	719	215
Central	0	336	106
East New Britain	452	2007	654
East Sepik	0	849	132
Eastern Highlands	133	1681	253
Enga	0	551	115
Gulf	34	155	99
Hela	28	1226	416
Jiwaka	74	146	66
Madang	458	205	92
Manus	0	989	1478
Milne Bay	288	235	150
Morobe	231	3715	426
NCD	3081	9401	2777
New Ireland	29	1981	946
Northern	49	9	25
Simbu	59	218	73
Southern Highlands	21	251	42
West New Britain	14	8582	2466
West Sepik	273	767	329
Western	610	11223	3953
Western Highlands	381	1988	535
<i>Missing province</i>		961	
Total tests	6215	48195	599

*Please note, this information is based on the test results received at the time of reporting. Some provinces may have conducted additional testing but have not shared their results with the National Control Centre.

Epidemiology

Figure 1. Epidemiological curve of COVID-19 cases in Papua New Guinea, 15 March 2020 to 7 March 2021

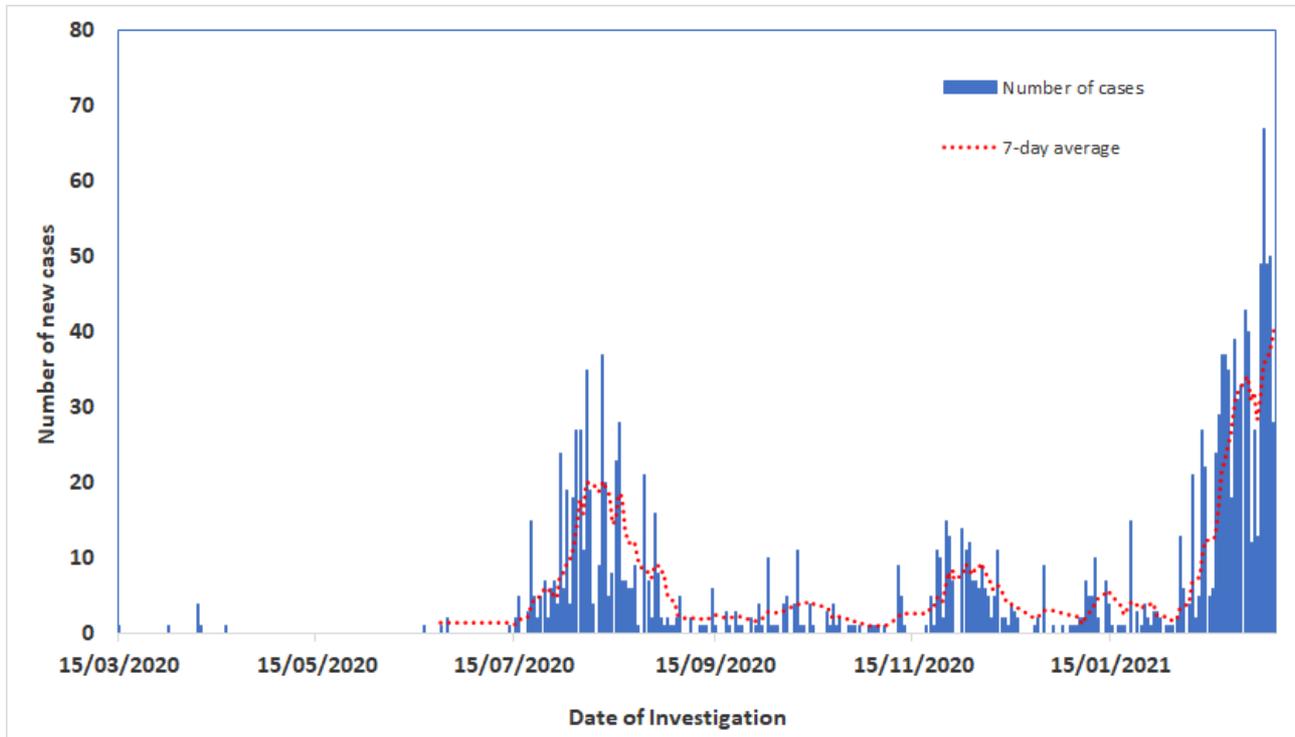


Figure 2. New COVID-19 cases reported daily by province, 1 to 7 March 2021

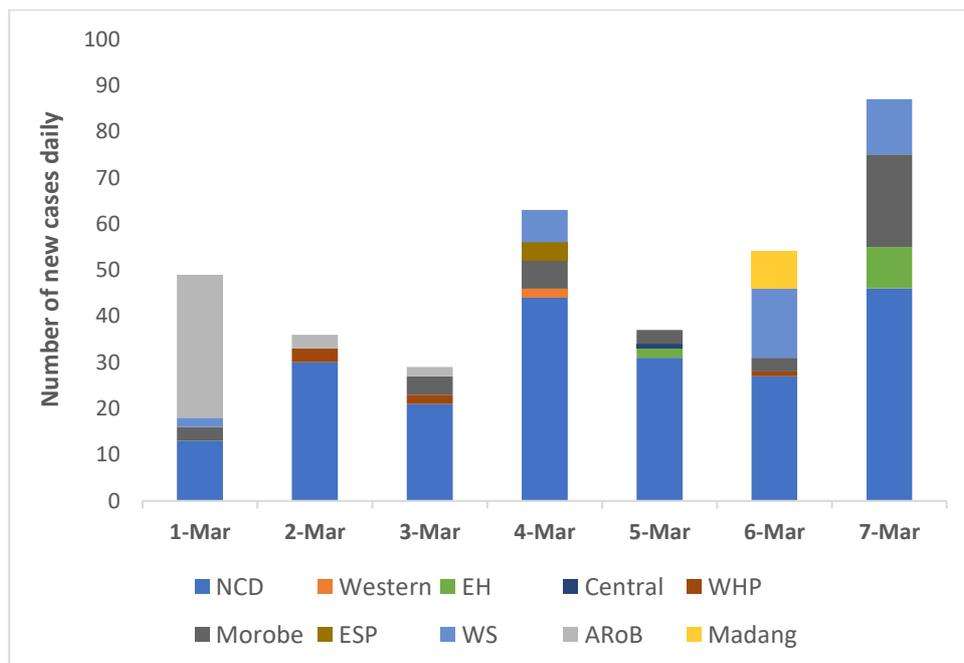
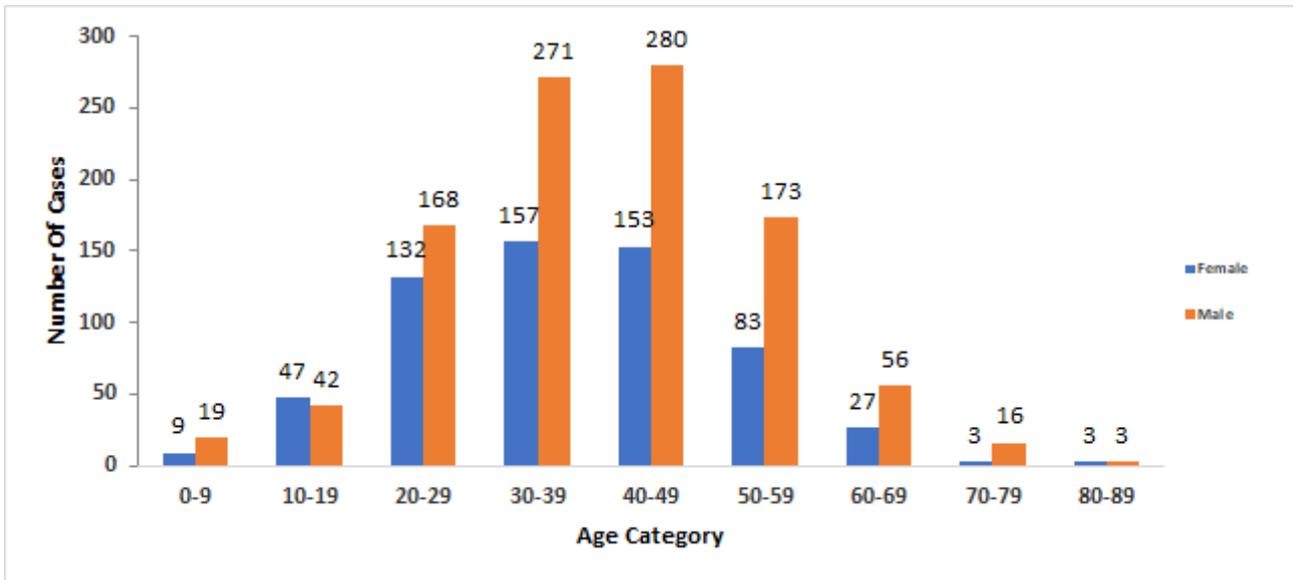


Figure 3. COVID-19 cases by age-group and sex in Papua New Guinea, 15 March 2020 to 7 March 2021



COVID-19 Hotline

- ☐ For the period of 02 March to 07 February, the COVID-19 National Hotline received 3,249 calls. **This is a 12.89% increase of calls from the week prior.** Of these, 56 (about 1.72%) were health-related calls. 34 of these were referred to Rapid Response Team/PHA.
- ☐ As of 7 March, the hotline had received a total of 176,404 calls. Of these, 5,228 (3%) were health-related calls. A total of 1,880 calls to date have been referred to Rapid Response Team/PHAs.

Table 4. Persons Screened by Point of Entry

Total Number of Travelers Screened before SOE (until 22 March 2020)	29,387	
Total Number of Travelers Screened during SOE (23 March – 16 June 2020)	3,788	
Total Number of Travelers Screened after SOE (17 June 2020 – 7 March 2021)	Air	15,705
	Sea	671
	Land	6
	Total	16,362

Strategic Approach

National and Provincial Public Health Response

- The Pandemic Response Coordination Group and the Health Operations Team continue to meet regularly at the National Control Centre.
- Focus continues to be on supporting PHAs with Surveillance, Clinical Management and Testing.

Outbreak response visit to West Sepik

- A team from NCC spent several days last week in West Sepik supporting the provincial authorities with the response to the current break.
- The team reported that the PCC and PEOC meeting daily and were attended by experienced technical staff from all sectors including armed forces, police, business council, school representative, CIS representative.
- Decisions were made promptly with full participation from all sectors including declaring a surge and taking lockdown measures.
- On the PCC meeting of the 24th February 2021 decision was made to implement control measures to immediately take control of the escalating cases in enforcing 14 days lockdown.
- Approval was granted by the National Controller on the 26th of February of the lockdown of West Sepik province from the 1st to 15th of March 2021 as per the Provincial Lockdown Orders #1/2021 outlining 13 focal Control Measures.
- A joint Agency Task Force was immediately set up within the PCC to coordinate the 2 weeks lockdown operations to support the health response measures in controlling and stopping the spread of the outbreak.

Outbreak response visit to East Sepik

- A team from NCC spent several days last week in East Sepik supporting the provincial authorities with the response to the current break.
- The team reported that the PCC and PEOC meeting daily and were attended by experienced technical staff from a range of sectors but that not all district health facilities were participating in the meetings.
- The team provided advice to the Provincial Administrator and the PEOC on possible measures to mitigate the effects of the large crowds that were expected during the mourning period and funeral for Sir Michael Somare.

Operational COVID-19 Surge Plan

- The NCC has developed an Operational COVID-19 Surge Plan template has been developed to provide guidance on a range of strategic response activities for provinces to effectively prepare and respond to surges in the health system caused by a COVID-19 outbreak in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Plan is intended to provide guidance on the response to an outbreak in a Province in order to reduce the adverse health impacts on the population and reduce the burden and disruption to health-related services.
- Surge Plan template and Surge Capacity Assessment documents have been shared with provinces experiencing increase in positive COVID-19 cases; East New Britain, Madang, East

Sepik, West Sepik, Morobe, NCD, Western Provinces. The first province to use the surge template was West New Britain in January, 2021, who have incorporated this well into their emergency response to mitigate widespread transmission.

ARoB

- Last week the main Nuka Market was closed by the responsible Local Level Government. Additional measures have been developed and are due to be released this week once approved by the Autonomous Bougainville Government through the Bougainville Emergency Controller.

West New Britain

- The province is still in level 3 alert with large scale community transmission and has been encouraged by Controller during the week to maintain the good work they have done during their shutdown earlier this year. The newly refurbished Pathology laboratory was completed with the assistance from NBPOL, and the Pathology team have moved in to use. All testing using geneX is now conducted at this site which will improve turn-around time for COVID-19 specimens.
- The PHA continues to be supported by Manaia Guest House to accommodate spill over of mild positive cases. And Rabaul Metal Industries Ltd is progressing with establishing the White House Isolation and quarantine facility.
- Risk Communication, surveillance and point of entry teams will be dispatched to Kendrian Gloucester for RCCE training, social mobilization, assessment of the district facilities, IPC, surveillance and swabbing training.

National Capital District

- The Rita Flynn facility was reopened last week for isolation and swabbing.
- Wide-spread community transmission has seen an increasing number of positive COVID-19 cases at Port Moresby General Hospital (PMGH), including PMGH staff. This has resulted in a decision being reached by the PMGH administration to scale down on some of the services starting on the 8th March, 2021 however they will continue to provide support for NCDPHA Rita Flynn facility.
- there is also an increasing need of engaging short term contract staff for Rita Flynn as well as PMGH during this surge period.

Madang

- The province has spent the week (22nd-26th Feb) conducting awareness on strict adherence to the new normal, especially focusing on wearing of masks, physical distancing, and hand hygiene. The provincial health team also conducted a 3-day refresher training for Clinical & Surveillance from 23rd to 25th February highlighting SOPs in place for clinical pathways, contact tracing, cough triaging and specimen collections. This training was supported through World Vision and UNICEF.
- The triage set-up at the Madang Hospital was ready for use by 25th February.
- Measures for the province will be released by the end of this week.

West Sepik Province

- The province has released 16 Measures covering all Niupla Pasin travels and public transport, border crossing, schools, COVID-19 testing, business and social gatherings, shops and markets and enforcement of these measures.

- A team from NCC provided training on IPC, Clinical management and Surveillance to 36 health care workers last week as part of an outbreak response visit.

Western Highlands Province

- WHP have continued providing daily updates on all cluster activities, including surveillance, screening and triaging at the 6 main health facilities, including Mt Hagen Hospital.
- A total of 2416 swabs have been collected since 2020 and screened 91,275 individuals through their screening processes in the 6 facilities of Togoba, Tambul, Bukapena, Kotna, Tinsley and Mt Hagen Hospital. Isolation and infection prevention control measures are also indicated.
- The province is also one of the remaining provinces that continues domestic airport screening activities (POE).
- WHP is also one of the provinces validating the Ag-RDT and have completed their staff training on the use of the RDT on the 2nd-3rd of February 2021.

COVID-19 Prevention and Control

Considering current surges in COVID-19 cases across PNG, all provinces have been requested to immediately prepare a Provincial Operational Surge Plan, including an assessment of resources, facilities and capacities. PHAs have been requested to include information on all available resources and capacities within the province including public, private, NGO and faith-based facilities.

Communication, Community Engagement and Non-Pharmaceutical Interventions (Social Measures) – NIUPELA PASIN

- The Niupela Pasin Team have been monitoring the Hauskrai of late Grand Chief Sir Michael Thomas Somare and will continue until the mourning period ends. This is to ensure adherence to Niupela Pasin Measures of mask wearing, social distancing and hand sanitizing.
- The same message has been replicated to Provinces to ensure their respective Hauskrais are compliant to the Niupela Pasin measures and strong communication is particularly being maintained with East Sepik Province which will likely host a large hauskrai.
- East Sepik PHA has approved measures to implemented during the funeral and burial of Grand Chief Sir Michael Thomas Somare. There interventions include public messages via SMS blasters and radios, compulsory mask wearing at the mourning place, one way flow in and out of stadium, elderly people being asked to stay home, television screens to set up in Districts to limit people from travelling to Wewak Town.
- Hauskrai activities in West Sepik have been put off by local authorityies due to surge of covid cases in the province.
- The team will continue to maintain communication with all provinces to ensure continued enforcement and monitoring of Niupela Pasin measures in their respective hauskrai activities.

Logistics and Supplies

- Biomedical bundles consigned for Hela, Enga, Southern Highlands and Jiwaka Provinces.
- UTMs were distributed to West Sepik, East Sepik, Madang, Morobe, Eastern Highlands, Simbu, Jiwaka, Western Highlands, Southern Highlands, Enga, Hela, Milne Bay, NCD, Western (Kiunga, Daru & Tabubil), Manus, New Ireland, East New Britain, West New Britain & AROB.
- Gene Xpert Cartridges were distributed to West Sepik, East Sepik, Madang, Morobe, Eastern Highlands, Simbu, Jiwaka, Western Highlands, Southern Highlands, Enga, Hela, Milne Bay, NCD, Western (Kiunga, Daru & Tabubil), New Ireland, East New Britain, West New Britain & AROB.
- Information, Education and Communication Materials (IEC) were also distributed to West Sepik & Madang.

Table 5. Additional Priority Distributions completed

Location	Items	Location	Items
Rita Flyn	7x pulse oximeters 2x Infrared thermometer	Gerehu Hospitals	4 pulse oxymeters 2 Infrared thermometer
Sky Medical Center	x2000 UTMs	Pacific International Hospital	x2000 UTMs
West Sepik	80 GenX Cartridges 2 pulse oximeters	Gulf	x240 GenX Cartridges

COVID-19 Health Care Worker Training

- Since 23 June 2020 UNICEF have been facilitating COVID-19 training for Health Care Workers around the country on all aspects of COVID-19 response. The training is funded by the World Bank and will run through to the 3rd quarter of 2021.
- The training program aims to build capacity of district-level health workers and covers a range of topics including IPC, surveillance (including POE & quarantine), clinical Management, Risk Communication & Community Engagement and Testing & Contact Tracing.
- Since June 2020, 913 health care workers have been trained across 16 provinces.
- In the past week COVID-19 training was provided in to 67 health care workers in Kavieng District in New Ireland. The training was facilitated by NDoH, UNICEF and ADRA.

Table 6. Healthcare Worker Training

Province	Number of Districts Covered	Number of Training Batches Completed	Number of Individuals Trained	
Western Highlands	4	3	72	
Jiwaka	3	3	65	
Simbu	6	3	64	
Hela	3	1	18	
Central	3	3	54	
Morobe	4	8	124	
Madang	6	2	85	
Eastern Highlands	8	1	32	
Southern Highlands	5	3	43	
Gulf	2	2	21	
Milne Bay	2	2	38	
Oro	2	2	44	
Western	2	2	80	
Manus	1	1	25	
ARoB	2	2	45	
New Ireland	2	3	103	
15	52	37	913	
			Male	545 (60%)
			Female	368 (40%)
Health Worker Cadres Trained so far under UNICEF Arrangement				
Doctor	Nursing Officer/CHW (including midwives)	Paramedics (HEO)	Public Health Managers	Other health workers
31 (3%)	642 (70%)	109 (11%)	109 (11%)	53 (5%)

Funding and Expenditure

- Below is a summary of COVID-19 funding and expenditure as of 05 March 2021. The tables below pertain only to funds that were held and transacted through the NDOH Health Services Improvement Program (HSIP) Trust Account, thus not comprehensive to cover all COVID-19 support made available through other modalities such as UN agencies.

- Under the HSIP Trust Account, the total available funds from all sources are PGK 41,051,001.

COVID-19 Funding Status

- Balance Brought forward in 2021 K41.05 million broken up as follows:

GoPNG – PHAs	K 15,300,000
GoPNG - NDoH clusters	K 22,764,502
DFAT	K 2,202,845
Other DPs	<u>K 783,654</u>
Total funds available	<u>K 41,051,001</u>

- Outstanding commitments brought forward are K12.8 million mainly payments for Quarantine Facilities in Port Moresby (Dogura); Part payment for COVID Hospital at Sir Ignatius Kilage Stadium, Lae; Waste Management & OT Allowances; PHA GoPNG Tranche #2; and DFAT additional funds to all PHAs still in HSIP Parent Account.

Year to Date Expenditure

- GoPNG - NDoH Clusters funding brought forward K 22,764, 502. Out of this K 1,600,125 will be for part payment of outstanding commitments brought forward and K21,164 377 will be expended per the revised 2021 ERP as follows:

Table 7. Expenditure Summary for NDoH Clusters in Kina (Revised ERP) as at 05 March 2021

Pillar	GoPNG-2021	Expenditure to Date	Committed Funds	Balance
NCC incident Management & Coord	3,800,000	195,064	37,506	3,567,430.47
RCCE	1,620,000			1,620,000.00
Clinical Management	2,620,000			2,620,000.00
NPI	606,000			606,000.00
RRT & Surveillance	2,315,000		52,784	2,262,216.00
IPC	673,000	62,558	-	610,442.00
POE	1,348,000	13,585	134,150	1,200,265.00
Laboratory	1,600,000			1,600,000.00
Operations and Logistics	6,582,377		377,236	6,205,141.00
Total	21,164,377	271,207	601,676	20,291,494

PHAs Expenditure Update

- Total funds transferred to PHAs from GoPNG and Development Partners to date amounted to K51.0 million. Expenditure to date for all PHAs is K22.5 million (44% of total funds transferred) the available funds still not used and in the provincial accounts is K28.5million which is fifty six percent (56%) of funds received in PHAs.

ANNEX A – Photos



Photos 1 -2: Clinical management, IPC, surveillance training session – East Sepik



Photos 3 - 3 Clinical management, IPC, surveillance training session – West Sepik

For more information about this Situation Report, contact:

Dr Daoni Esorom
Incident Manager – COVID-19
National Department of Health
Email: daoniesorom@gmail.com; Mobile: +675-72313983

Greg Cameron
Information & Planning Pillar Lead
National Control Centre / UN RCO
Email: greg.cameron@undp.org