

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 18 April 2021 (12:00 pm), there have been 9799 COVID-19 cases and 90 COVID-19 deaths reported in Papua New Guinea. From the period of 12 to 18 April, there were 1202 new cases and 21 new deaths reported.
- ❑ Due to logistical difficulties, lengthy test turnaround time, clinic shutdowns, and low testing capacity in PNG, there have been delays in swabbing, testing, and reporting of results, thus the number of cases reported is an under-representation of the situation that is occurring.
- ❑ Cases have now been reported in all 22 provinces throughout PNG, with Manus Province reporting their first cases in the previous week.
- ❑ New measures were released by the National Pandemic Controller, around antigen rapid diagnostic tests (Ag-RDT), declaring that positive results no longer have to be confirmed by PCR testing. See new measures at [www.covid19.info.gov.pg](http://www.covid19.info.gov.pg)
- ❑ A delivery of donated medical supplies was received from the French Government which included oxygen concentrators, Ag-RDT kits, PPE and other oxygen and ventilation related equipment.

### Pillar Updates Priorities

#### Surveillance:

- ❑ Among the 9799 cases reported to date, 42% are from the National Capital District, and an additional 23% from Western Province. In part, this is due to higher testing in these provinces, thus identifying more cases.
- ❑ To date, 65% of PNG COVID-19 cases have been males (n=6115); the majority of cases are between 30 and 49 years
- ❑ The median age of COVID-19 deaths in PNG was 55 years, however, 8% of deaths (n=7) have been in people aged less than 30 years.
- ❑ The NCC surveillance team is constantly working to improve timely and complete reporting of cases, which requires prompt reporting of all cases and deaths from each province.

**Table 1. Newly reported COVID-19 cases in PNG<sup>1</sup>**

	New Cases (12-18 April 2021)	Cumulative Total
AROB	44	171
Central	44	149
East New Britain	54	371
East Sepik	21	105
Eastern Highlands	92	466
Enga	29	97
Gulf	14	27
Hela	11	37
Jiwaka	27	79
Madang	28	115
Manus	15	15
Milne Bay	44	58
Morobe	21	422
National Capital District	561	4073
New Ireland	34	123
Northern (Oro)	0	3
Simbu	5	113
Southern Highlands	19	88
West New Britain	41	278
West Sepik	0	356
Western <sup>2</sup>	57	2301
Western Highlands	41	352
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1202</b>	<b>9799</b>

<sup>1</sup> As of 18/04/2021, 12:00 pm, PNG time

<sup>2</sup> 2012 cases (97%) from North Fly; 2 cases Middle Fly; 26 cases

**Note:** Due to additional data cleaning, provincial case numbers may not add up from last week.

**Table 2. COVID-19 GLOBAL AND REGIONAL UPDATE<sup>2</sup>**

	Confirmed Cases	Deaths
Global	140 322 903	3 003 794
Western Pacific	2 204 866	34 909

<sup>2</sup> WHO COVID-19 Dashboard as of 18/04/2021, 14:35 CEST

- The team is also conducting more detailed analyses of all COVID-19 deaths in PNG as well as infections among health care workers.
- The team is working on the transition from the use of ODK to the Go.Data platform for data management

#### **Quarantine & Port of Entry:**

- 1,084 passengers were screened at POE over the last 7 days.
- As of 16 April, there were 430 people under quarantine (PUQ) of which 48 were in home quarantine, 339 in hotels, 28 in company sites and 14 in company apartments.
- There were no reported cases of symptomatic PUQs in this reporting period.
- Due to unresolved payment of staff salaries from NDoH, only 3 monitoring staff are reporting to work on any given day. This means that only approximately 25% of POQ are being monitored and the team are relying on the goodwill of hotel staff and other facilities to monitor the remaining 75%.

#### **Laboratory:**

- The PNG COVID-19 testing algorithm has updated to reflect the changing measures, with a short and clear guidance document produced and disseminated to all provinces to enhance uptake of AgRDT testing at the provincial level. This was contained in an SOP developed and submitted for approval, where it was agreed that a positive test by AgRDT be retained as positive without further confirmation by Rt-PCR.
- The team has also been engaging in discussions with partners and donors include DFAT, Doherty Institute, and Abbott about enhancing PNG's COVID-19 testing strategy to increase accessibility of testing and reduce turnaround time.
- Additional Whole Genome Sequencing data was obtained from MDU at Doherty Institute, Australia, with no variants of concern identified in over 800 samples sequenced to date. Positive cases continue to be grouped into two main lineages - B.6.8 and B.1.466.2/B.1.459
- An SOP for sample management is being reviewed and will be finalised in the coming week.
- Slight challenges with AgRDT have been identified and possible refresher training of those handling the test has been planned.
- Laboratory requests for the Global Fund proposal have been submitted and presented
- Training of more laboratory scientist on AgRDT was conducted.
- This week the team will visit CPHL and conduct an assessment to get first-hand information on laboratory networks.
- The team will also continue work to establish a database of all laboratory coordinators to include their phone numbers and emails for easy communication and conducting weekly meetings.

#### **Clinical Management and Infection Prevention and Control:**

- The IPC & CM team have been working in collaboration with NDOH, partner organisations and key stakeholders to build capacity for vulnerable populations.
- Analysing health worker infections and COVID deaths to determine if there are any mitigating circumstances that could be addressed.
- A pilot project is being developed for Bomana Correctional Facility emphasizing awareness activities about COVID-19 and its misconceptions, testing pathways, isolation facilities and referral pathways to nearest health care facilities for cases that cannot be handled at the facility.

It is anticipated that the project will be expanded to include all other correctional facilities in the country.

- The team continues to provide support to provinces to build capacity and provide technical advice and training on clinical management and IPC.

#### **Risk Communication & Non-Pharmaceutical Interventions (NPIs):**

- This week the RCCE team will be delivering a train the trainer workshop on vaccine communication. The workshop will train national trainers to deliver a package for the whole vaccine roll out when officers are deployed to the provinces for technical support. This will be facilitated by WHO, UNICEF and NDOH/RCCE team.
- The second around of advocacy training will be provided to airlines on Wednesday 21 April, and a briefing will be provided to members of parliament on the vaccine rollout plan and vaccine communication. This will be presented by the Health secretary and the Health Minister.
- The team are planning for a combined clinical visit with NCDPHA RCCE team to conduct advocacy for each clinic starting this week. Purpose is to build vaccine confidence and increase uptake of vaccination among the HCWs in NCD.
- A meeting will be convened on Monday 19<sup>th</sup> April to plan for providing urgent technical support to the PHAs and assist with developing the community and social mobilization advocacy and awareness aspects of the vaccine deployment micro plans.

#### **Niupela Pasin**

- The National Pandemic Controller has issued instructions to PHA CEOs to identify Niupela Pasin Provincial focal leads to be responsible for reporting on the implementation of Niupela Pasin measures in their respective provinces.
- Provincial Police Commanders are now required to report on the enforcement of Niupela Pasin Measures in their respective provinces using the reporting template/checklist provided by NCC.
- The Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) on Elections during COVID- 19 for the Moresby North West By Elections has been endorsed by the National Pandemic Controller.
- On Tuesday 13 April the Electoral Commission conducted the order of the Draws in which candidates contesting the Moresby Northwest seat were allocated their respective candidate or box numbers. The event was organized in compliance with all Niupela Pasin measures with social distancing, mask wearing, and hand sanitization clearly observed.
- All contesting candidates signed an agreement with the Electoral Commission in the presence of the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary affirming that that they will comply with the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for Elections during COVID-19 Pandemic that was recently endorsed by the National Pandemic Controller.
- The agreement will ensure that Candidates take ownership and responsibility of their Supporters in terms of getting them to comply with our Niupela Pasin Measures throughout the election period, especially in regard to campaigning.
- The Chinese and Bangladesh business community have agreed to adhere to the Niupela Pasin measures within their setting but have raised concerns over other unregulated activities in front of their business premises. As such The National Pandemic Controller has instructed the NCCDC to remove unregulated informal markets or loitering in front of business premises.

### **COVAX/Vaccine Planning & Introduction:**

- The COVAX shipment of the AstraZeneca vaccine arrived in PNG on 13 April 2021. A total of 132,000 doses were received and will be allocated to health care workers and other front line essential staff.
- The official receiving ceremony for the COVAX vaccine was conducted on 15 April at APEC Haus.
- Preparations for deployment of this vaccine are underway with vaccine shipments to provinces to begin early next week.
- Training for provincial officers was conducted on the technical aspects of COVID19 vaccine deployment.
- Most provinces have now completed their micro plans and are in process of notifying provincial AEFI Committees.
- Vaccination of NCD health care workers is continuing and a total of 1600 persons have been vaccinated to date.
- The National Technical Working Group (NTWG) meetings continue weekly to progress planning for National roll out.
- This week the team will focus on finalising arrangements for the vaccine deployment to provinces as well as the training of vaccinators and health promotions staff.

### **Logistics and Supplies:**

- Last week the team dispatch UTMS to Rita Flynn (2000), IMR (2000), WHP (1000) and EHP (2000).
- Antigen Rapid Diagnostics tests (Ag-RDT) were also dispatched to the PNG Defence Force (300), St John (800) and PNG Power (300).
- Approximately 700 units of hand sanitizer were also dispatched to all 21 PHAs through Bismark shipping free of charge.
- A delivery of donated medical supplies was received from the French Government which included oxygen concentrators, Ag-RDT kits, PPE and other oxygen and ventilation related equipment.
- A donation of 20,000 UTMs was also received from WHO Regional Office.
- WHO order of Oxygen Plant for Port Moresby General Hospital has been finalised options are being sought for delivery by air transport as sea shipping will take 2 months.  
currently looking for air shipping to speeding up the delivery as sea shipping will take 2 months.

## Transmission Assessment

There are currently surges occurring in several provinces across PNG, with 20 out of 22 provinces reporting cases in the previous seven days. This includes the first cases reported from Manus Province. There have been extended delays in swabbing, sending samples for testing, and receipt of results from laboratories, which means that even people meeting the case definition for COVID-19 testing are not always able to be swabbed and receive their test results in a timely manner. In addition, large-scale population-level testing remains low across most of PNG. Test positivity is high, with some laboratories reporting over of 30% of tests returning positive results.

All 22 provinces in PNG have now reported at least one COVID-19 case since March 2020. It is believed that community transmission is occurring throughout much of PNG. However, due to testing limitations and inadequate staffing to conduct thorough contact tracing for all cases it is difficult to determine the extent and if cases are still localised to specific areas or population groups or are more widespread. With a low level of confidence based on the available data, National Capital District (NCD), East New Britain, Western, Eastern Highlands, and Western Highlands appear to be in Stage 3, widespread community transmission. In addition, the Autonomous Region of Bougainville (AROB), Jiwaka, Madang, Milne Bay, Morobe, and West New Britain appear to have localised community transmission (stage 2).

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

### Epi Update COVID-19

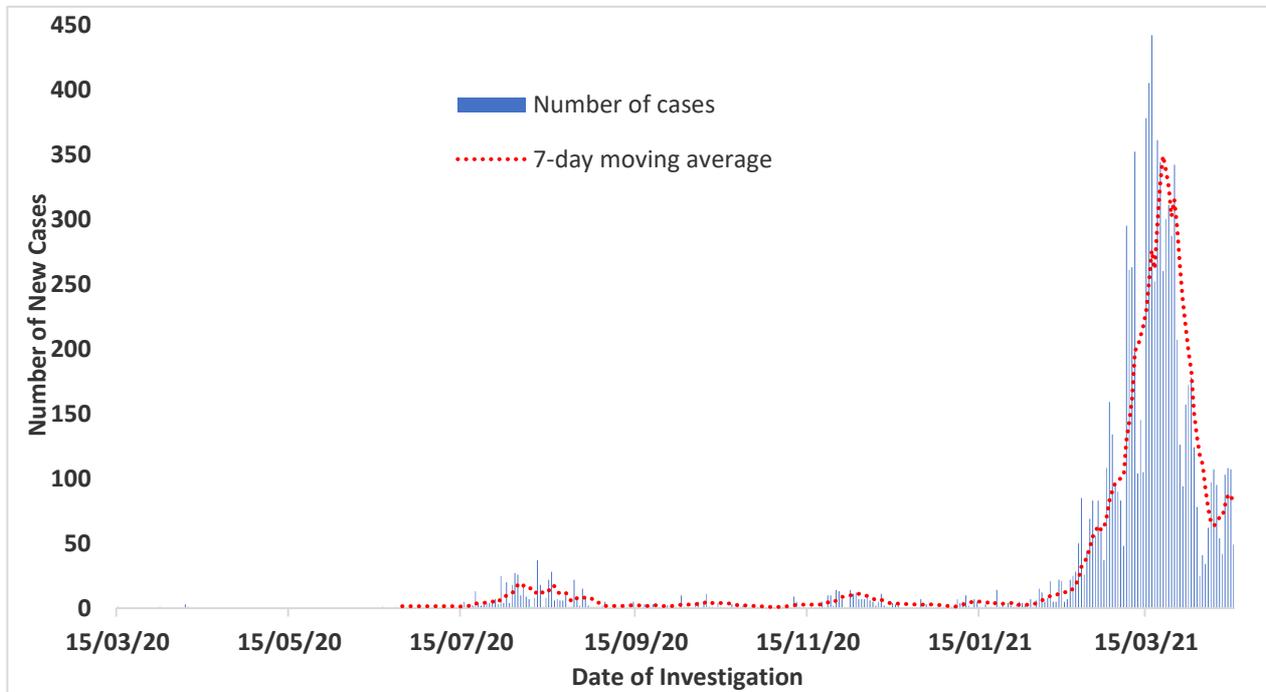
Tests	Cases	Deaths
<b>2186</b>	<b>1202</b>	<b>21</b>
NAT Tests past 7 days	New cases past 7 days	Deaths past 7 days
<b>82516<sup>^</sup></b>	<b>9799</b>	<b>90</b>
Cumulative NAT Tests	Cumulative Cases	Cumulative Deaths
<b>0</b>	<b>931*</b>	<b>23*</b>
Imported Cases in past 28 days	Cases in past 7 days with no link	Active Clusters in the past 7 days

\*Case investigation ongoing

<sup>^</sup> Some provinces and private facilities have not reported their negative test results to the National Control Centre prior to publication of this Situation Report, so the actual number of tests conducted in the previous 7 days is expected to be higher.

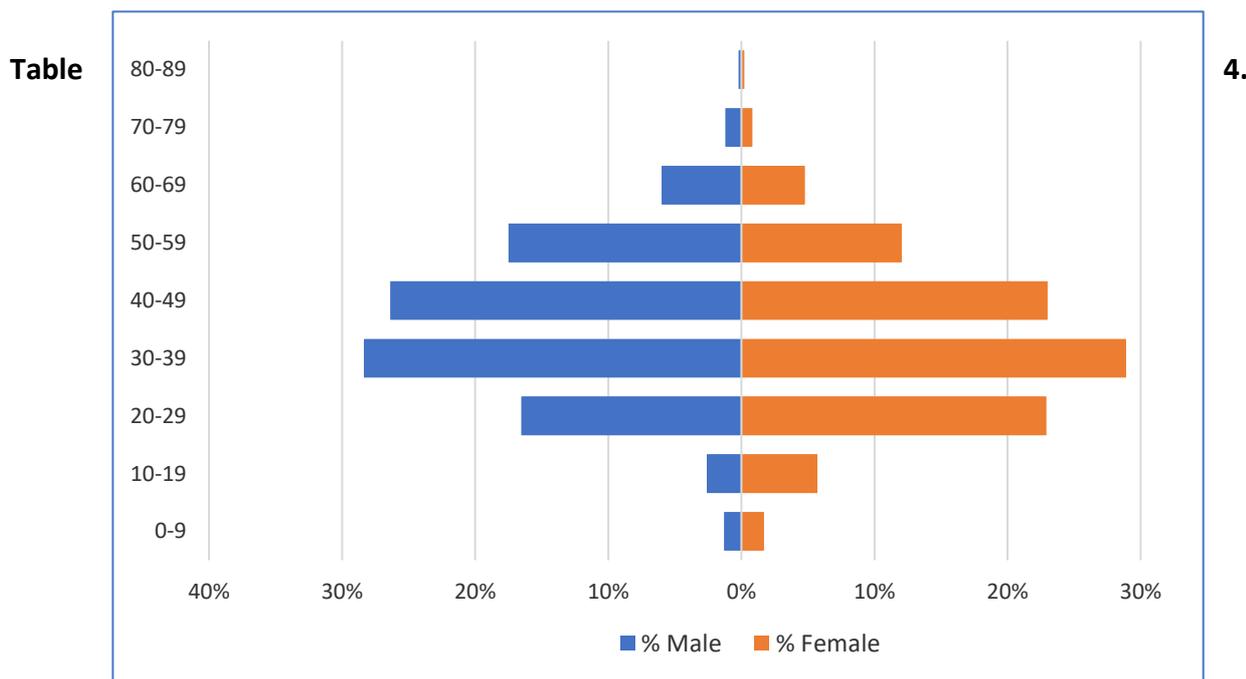
## Epidemiology

Figure 1. Epidemiological curve of COVID-19 cases in Papua New Guinea, 15 March 2020 to 18 April 2021



Please note: Decreasing trend must be interpreted with caution as there are delays in receiving and reporting results from provinces.

**Figure 2. Percentage age distribution of COVID-19 cases (65% male, n=6115), 15 March 2020 to 18 April 2021**



#### 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 – 17 April 2021)	Air	18,745
	Sea	671
	Land	6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>19,402</b>

#### COVID-19 Hotline

- For the period of 12 April to 18 April, the COVID-19 National Hotline received 6298 calls. Of these, 81 (about 1.29%) were health-related calls. 49 of these were referred to the Rapid Response Team/PHA.
- As of 18 April, the hotline had received a total of 212,226 calls. Of these, 5,824 (2.7%) were health-related calls. A total of 2292 calls to date have been referred to Rapid Response Team/PHAs.
- The hotline is receiving an increase in the numbers of call relating to questions about the vaccine rollout and vaccine safety.

## 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.

### Emergency Medical Teams (EMTs)

- Over the past week, AUSMAT, Team Rubicon, MSF and Johanniter Emergency Medical Teams initiated clinical service delivery in Port Moresby and in the Western Highlands.
- Through EMT deployments, over 40 doctors, nurses, logisticians and public health specialists have arrived from four countries.
- EMTs are now working across four hospitals - three in Port Moresby, and one in Western Highlands Province.
- Since initiating services in April, EMTs have contributed over 400 person-days of emergency clinical response work, looking after over 400 COVID and non-COVID patients, providing much needed decompression support in PNG's hospitals.

## Partner Coordination

### WASH Cluster

- The WASH Cluster continues to support the pandemic response with a focus on WASH in Health Care Facilities and schools.
- World Vision PNG, UNICEF and NDoE completed assessments hand washing facilities in 535 schools across six provinces in PNG (specific districts) and a presentation will be made to NCC once the report is approved by UNICEF and NDoE.
- Implementation phase of constructing handwashing facilities in schools will begin in 40 schools in NCD. Contractors have already been identified and moving towards being engaged.
- World Vision PNG and Save The Children have secured funding through AHP to work in 5 Health Care Facilities: 2 in Western Province, 2 in Morobe and 1 in NCD.
- CARE and Save the Children are supporting schools with the installation of tippy taps in schools through AHP.

### Sexual Reproductive Health Sub-Cluster

- In response to the number of maternal mortality cases reported from Western province, UNFPA supported with the establishment of bus fare funds for emergency transportation for pregnant and postpartum women, in partnership with OTML and Digicel in Western Province. There are now reports of a reduction in maternal mortalities and essential services are on-going.
- The cluster received requests from maternal and antenatal service providers in health facilities for PPEs as well as increase requests for cleaning and disinfectant supplies due to the increasing surges from especially from Port Moresby General Hospital Obstetrics and Gynaecology Department.

## Protection Cluster

- ❑ The Child Protection Sub-Cluster co-led by UNICEF and the Office of Child and Family Services (OCSF) continues to be an important platform for Government and development partners to ensure that child protection related concerns are in the response to COVID-19.
- ❑ As a result of the collaboration among stakeholders, the Referral Pathways for Violence against Children was reviewed and updated on 25 March 2021 under the leadership of the Office of Child and Family Services and the Family and Sexual Violence Action Committee.
- ❑ The Protection Cluster, Child Protection and Gender Based Violence Sub-Clusters, have jointly produced two advocacy papers. The first advocated for priority to be given to vulnerable populations to have access to the COVID-19 vaccine. The second advocated for essential services for family and sexual violence, including out of home care facilities for children, as well as health services, to remain open.
- ❑ As a result of recent cases of Sorcery Related Violence (SRV) due to accusations of COVID-19, UNWOMEN have been working with organisations and partners on ground to get information and develop ways to better communicate the issue and identify those who may require protection.

## Education Cluster

- ❑ Through funding support provided by GPE and the PNGAus Partnership, UNICEF is distributing Information, Education and Communication materials on COVID-19 prevention and awareness to 412 schools in five provinces. These materials which were previously promoted on social media platforms, in print, and on the radio have now been printed for a fresh 'Back to School' Campaign beginning on April 19 when schools resume classes post lock-down.
- ❑ Four comprehensive Home Learning Packs aligning with the National Department of Education syllabus were developed for all sectors (Early Childhood, Elementary, Primary and Secondary) by the National Department of Education with the support of UNICEF.
- ❑ The Home Learning Packs funded under GPE for basic education and the PNGAus partnership for secondary students, support students of all ages to continue studying at home. They contain carefully curated pieces of work which lend themselves to independent or light-touch support for home learning.
- ❑ Trial versions of the packs will be distributed in Western and Sandaun in Term 2 of 2021 and will reach approximately 35,000 students.
- ❑ Psychosocial support materials have been designed and trialled by the National Department of Education and ChildFund with the support of UNICEF. These include sector specific counselling cards to guide teacher and student conversations. These materials will be printed and distributed post-lockdown in April 2021.

## COVID-19 Health Care Worker and Community Leaders Training

- ❑ Since 23 June 2020 UNICEF have facilitated COVID-19 training for 913 Health Care Workers in 16 provinces on all aspects of COVID-19 response. The training is funded by the World Bank through the NDOH-UNICEF COVID19 Emergency Response Project and will run through to the 3<sup>rd</sup> 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.
- ❑ 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.
- ❑ Since June 2020, all over the country 943 Front Line Health workers were trained on IPC, Surveillance, Clinical management and Risk Communication & Community Engagement (RCCE)
- ❑ Since June 2020, a total of 2,249 community leaders oriented on community engagement on Niupela Pasin, which is now being expanded to all the remaining areas in the country.
- ❑ 3,115 contacts of cases were also traced in different provinces, facilitated by providing logistic support from the project.

## ANNEX A – Photos



Photo 1-2: Arrival of medical supplies donated by the people of France.



Photo 3-4: WHO Visit to Bomana Correctional Facility

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