

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 25 April 2021 (12:00 pm), there have been 10,835 COVID-19 cases and 105 COVID-19 deaths reported in Papua New Guinea. From the period of 19 to 25 April, there were 1036 newly reported cases and 15 new deaths reported.
- ❑ COVID-19 vaccine from the initial 132 000 doses from COVAX facility has now been delivered to all provinces.
- ❑ COVID-19 Champion and vaccine media campaign including developing community-based approaches together with dissemination of key campaign messages and tools will be finalized this week.

Pillar Updates & Priorities

Surveillance:

- ❑ Despite reporting fewer than 800 COVID-19 cases in 2020, PNG reached the milestone of 10,000 confirmed COVID-19 cases last week. The number of reported deaths are approximately 1% of confirmed COVID-19 cases.
- ❑ COVID-19 related deaths have now been reported from 12 of 22 provinces, with 61% of deaths being reported from NCD.
- ❑ Limitations in the availability of COVID-19 testing continue to pose challenges for case identification, prompt isolation and contact tracing efforts.
- ❑ Last week the surveillance team focused on developing a transition plan for migration of data from ODK to Go.Data in preparation for a national rollout of the system.
- ❑ This week focus will be on continuing to work with partners to enable the timely rollout of the Go.Data system by provincial surveillance teams and laboratories, as well as the private sector who conduct independent testing.
- ❑ The team were also focused on preparing data for a briefing to the PNG Government on the effectiveness of the current containment strategy and change in cases and deaths over the past month.

Table 1. Newly reported COVID-19 cases in PNG¹

	New Cases (19-25 April 2021)	Cumulative Total
AROB	62	233
Central	25	174
East New Britain	10	381
East Sepik	16	121
Eastern Highlands	21	487
Enga	63	160
Gulf	3	30
Hela	6	43
Jiwaka	15	94
Madang	40	155
Manus	22	37
Milne Bay	24	82
Morobe	140	562
National Capital District	286	4359
New Ireland	13	136
Northern (Oro)	18	21
Simbu	1	114
Southern Highlands	5	93
West New Britain	67	345
West Sepik	53	409
Western ²	47	2348
Western Highlands	99	451
TOTAL	1036	10835

¹ As of 25/04/2021, 12:00 pm, PNG time

² 2042 cases (87%) from North Fly; 2 cases Middle Fly; 54 cases South Fly; 250 have no district stated

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

Table 2. COVID-19 GLOBAL AND REGIONAL UPDATE²

	Confirmed Cases	Deaths
Global	146 054 107	3 092 410
Western Pacific	2 336 827	36 219

² WHO COVID-19 Dashboard as of 25/04/2021, 18:00 CEST

Quarantine & Port of Entry:

- 266 passengers were screened at POE over the last 7 days with no suspect cases identified
- The POE Gurney Airport in Milne Bay now has POE Screening Station set up for arrivals with 3 dedicated POE officers working each day.
- On the 16 of April PX393 from Singapore to Port Moresby arrived with 24 Passengers of which 23 had used the electronic Health Declaration system (eHDF), providing a usage rate of 96%.
- The priority, focus and aim for POE is to have all persons travelling into the country to fill the HDF online using the eHDF.

Laboratory:

- Last week a meeting was held with the provincial laboratory managers to discuss the delays in laboratory results and identify areas for improvements. There was agreement for the recruitment of data entry clerks with laboratory background to improve shorten the delay.
- The team visited the School of Medicine and Health Sciences to commence discussion on the use of their premises for COVID-19 testing.
- The team finalised a Sample Management SOP to facilitate sample, management
- 30,000 GeneXpert cartridges were received and distribution plan developed and shared with the Logistics team for dispatch.
- Catholic Health Services have requested to have their staff trained in conducting Ag RDTs and the team are currently developing a plan for this.

Clinical Management and Infection Prevention and Control:

- The IPC & CM team have completed the Isolation facility SOP for PNG and Home Isolation guidelines for PNG have now been endorsed and disseminated.
- The team are continuing analysis of health worker infections and COVID deaths to determine if there are any mitigating circumstances that could be addressed.
- Development of a pilot project is continuing for Bomana Correctional Facility which is 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.
- 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 is working on strategy for International Immunisation Week with the communications approach being finalised to include mass media and community-based approaches.
- The team will also continue to support advocacy efforts for Vaccine safety with a focus on working with identified advocates and key influencers to disseminate communications messages.
- Interviews continue for the COVID-19 Champion campaign and the team will focus this week on finalising the vaccine media campaign including developing community-based approaches together with dissemination of key campaign messages and tools.

- Team will also be working to identify, and map current communications activities being undertaken by key sectors of public, private and NGO sectors in order to inform improved coordination and strengthen communications efforts.

Niuplea Pasin

- Niuplea Pasin compliance activities are ongoing although visibility of the implementation of the measures in the provinces is limited to NCD.
- The current priority of the team is to ensure compliance of Niuplea Pasin during the upcoming Moresby North West byelection as well as in the planning for the general election later in the year.

COVAX/Vaccine Planning & Introduction:

- Supplies of the COVID-19 vaccine from the initial 132 000 doses of COVAX facility has now been delivered to all provinces of PNG.
- Provinces have now developed training plans for their vaccination teams.
- The vaccination of NCD essential frontline workers with initial 8 000 doses of AstraZeneca vaccines continues with 2900 people vaccinated so far.
- This week the team will continue to provide training to vaccinators as well as training for health promotions staff.

Logistics and Supplies:

- 10,000 GeneXpert cartridges were received last week from WHO Fiji and 20,000 from DFAT.
- The team have finalised the new PPE dispatch plan for provinces and distribution will start this week.
- A distribution plan for 30,000 GeneXpert cartridges was also finalized for the provinces with reserve stock allocated at national level. Distribution began on Friday 23 April and will be completed this week.
- The team have also partially finalised an assessment of biomedical needs with the clinical management team and have submitted a fast-track request to the Global Fund.
- This week the team will finalise details of the full assessment to be included in a full proposal to the Global Fund.

Transmission Assessment

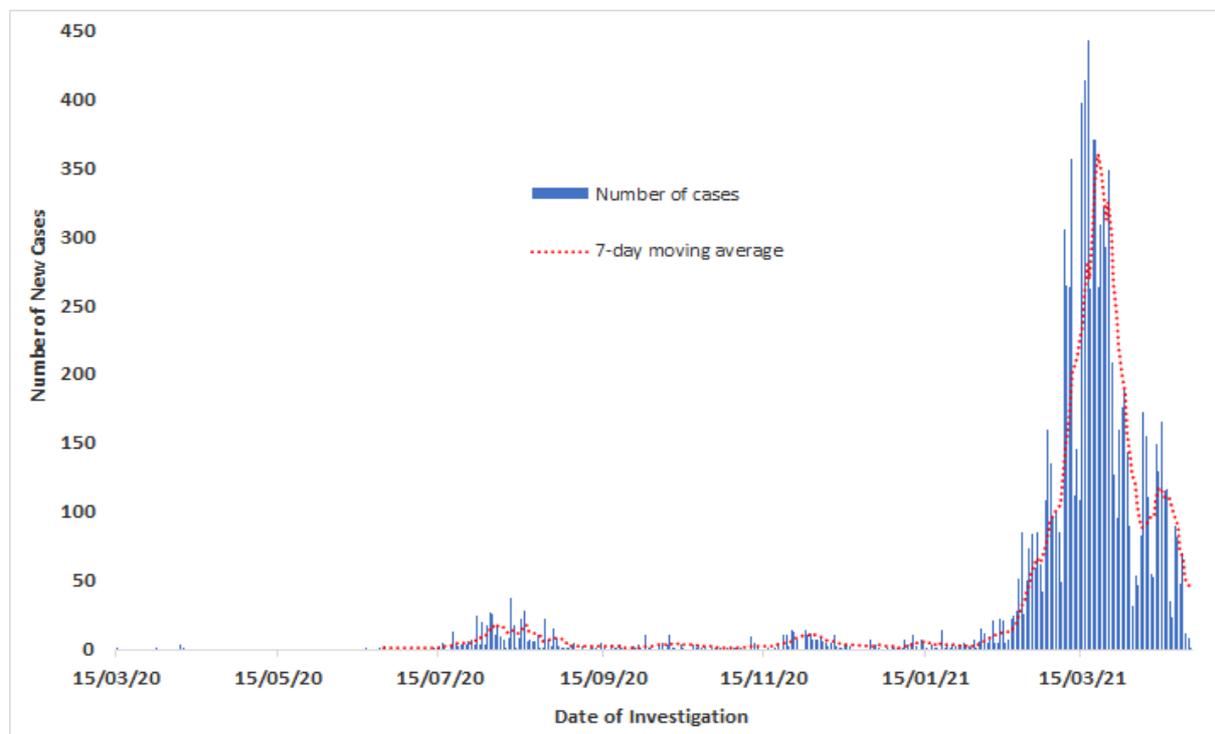
There are currently surges occurring across PNG, with all 22 provinces reporting COVID-19 cases in the previous seven days. There continue to be delays in symptomatic individuals accessing swabbing, samples being sent for testing, and receipt of results from laboratories, with a median time from sample collection to receipt and reporting of results for RT-PCR of 12 days in April 2021 (interquartile range 3 to 18 days). Despite Ag-RDT samples no longer requiring confirmatory testing, test positivity remains high, with some laboratories reporting over 25% of samples testing positive for COVID-19.

Acknowledging these limitations with population-level screening, testing, and contact tracing, it is difficult to determine the extent of COVID-19 spread throughout PNG, particularly in more rural and remote areas. However, it is believed that community transmission is occurring throughout much of PNG. With a low level of confidence based on the available data, National Capital District (NCD), Morobe, Eastern Highlands, and Western Highlands appear to be in Stage 3, widespread community transmission. In addition, the Autonomous Region of Bougainville (AROB), Enga, Madang, Manus, Milne Bay, Northern, West New Britain, and Western 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

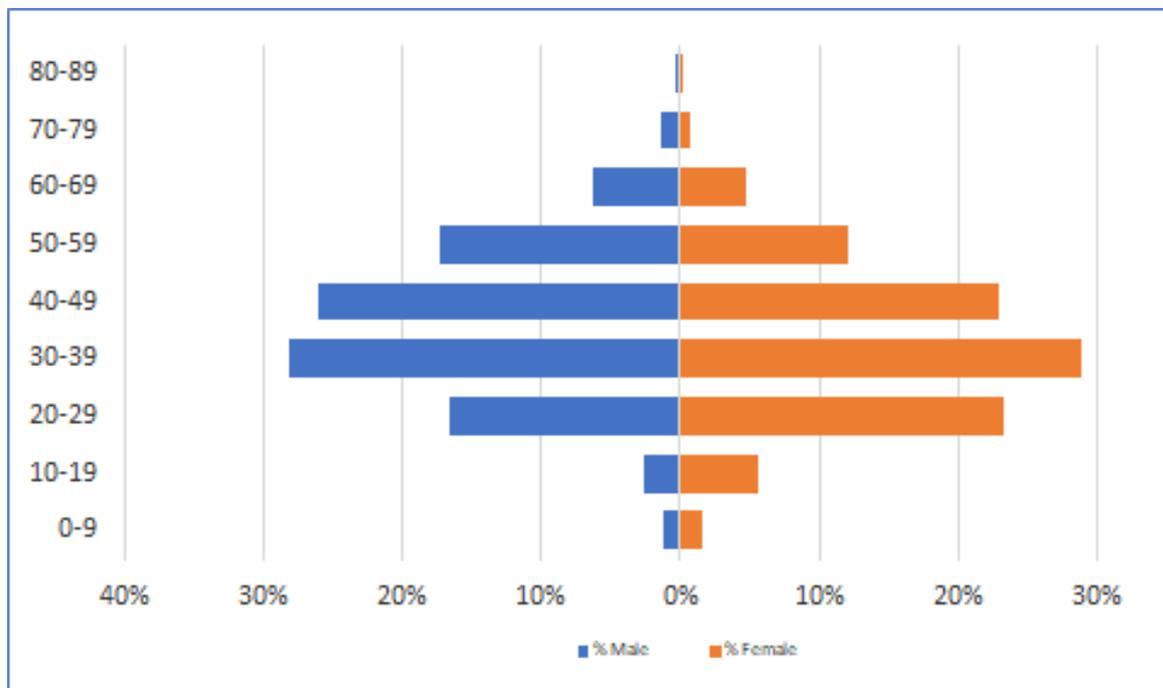
Epidemiology

Figure 1. Epidemiological curve of COVID-19 cases in Papua New Guinea, 15 March 2020 to 25 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 (64% male, n=6717), 15 March 2020 to 25 April 2021



COVID-19 Hotline

- For the period of 19 April to 25 April, the COVID-19 National Hotline received 4894 calls. Of these, 55 (about 1.12%) were health-related calls. 40 of these were referred to the Rapid Response Team/PHA.
- As of 25 April, the hotline had received a total of 220,160 calls. Of these, 5,879 (2.7%) were health-related calls. A total of 2332 calls to date have been referred to Rapid Response Team/PHAs.

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)

- AUSMAT (Australia), Team Rubicon (USA), MSF, St John Ambulance and Johanniter (Germany) Emergency Medical Teams (EMTs) continue to provide clinical surge capability in Port Moresby and in the Western Highlands.
- EMTs are providing COVID case management support and are also providing decompression assistance in other clinical settings.
- Through EMT deployments, over 40 doctors, nurses, logisticians and public health specialists have from four countries are supporting COVID response efforts.
- EMTs are now across four hospitals - three in Port Moresby, and one in Western Highlands Province.
- Since initiating services in early April, international EMTs have contributed over 600 person-days of emergency clinical response work, looking after over 500 COVID and over 300 non-COVID patients, providing much needed decompression support in PNG's hospitals.

ANNEX A – Photos



Photo 1: Team Rubicon Physician Dr Mackenzie Scribbs entering the COVID isolation unit at Mr Hagen Hospital in the Western Highlands Province.



Photo 2 & 3: Dr Kaima providing vaccine confidence advocacy session for the IEA teaching staff and management.



Photo 4: AUSMAT team briefing at Port Moresby General Hospital.

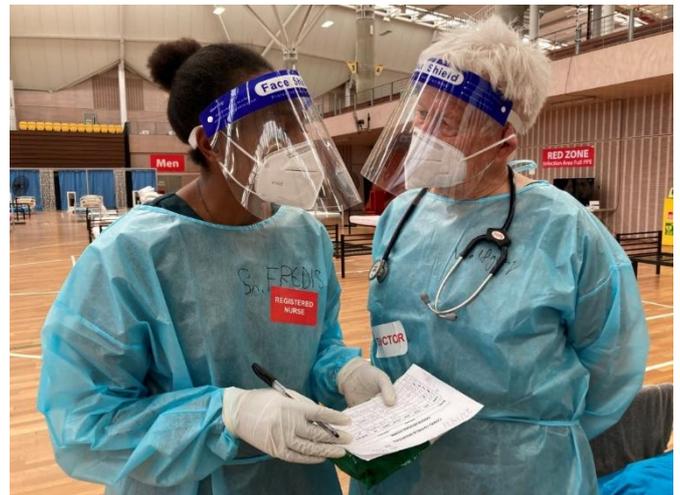


Photo 5: Johanniter Physician Dr Wolfgang Pramendorfer working alongside a national colleague at the Nightingale COVID Hospital in Port Moresby.

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