

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 8 May 2021 (12:00 pm), there have been 12,226 COVID-19 cases and 121 COVID-19 deaths reported in Papua New Guinea. From the period of 3 to 8 May, there were 961 new cases and 6 new deaths reported. **Please note the reporting period only covers 6 days as opposed to the usual seven as data from Sunday May 9 were not available at the time of SitRep publication.**
- ❑ Cases have been reported from all 22 provinces, including the Autonomous Region of Bougainville (AROB). Over 90% of the 89 districts in PNG have reported one or more cases to date.
- ❑ Heart to Heart International (HHI)'s 10-person Emergency Medical Team arrived in PNG on 9 May, and will deploy to Eastern Highlands, Simbu and Jiwaka Provinces over the next six weeks.
- ❑ Since EMT deployments began in mid-April, the 47 deployed international EMT clinicians and support volunteers have contributed over 1100 person-days of work in support of PNG's COVID-19 response, providing over 1,400 patient consultations. All teams are providing training in COVID case management, infection prevention and control and other clinical areas.
- ❑ CPHL Laboratory has informed that it will likely reduce the number of weekly samples being tested on behalf of PNG due to a current surge in COVID-19 cases in Singapore. Alternative laboratory testing capacity is currently being investigated.
- ❑ Last week there was 1 positive COVID-19 case detected with a person in quarantine who became symptomatic on Day 10 and tested positive on day 12. The patient is now isolated at Pacific International Hospital.
- ❑ The national-wide COVID-19 rollout was officially launched by the PM on 4th May followed by provincial launches in each province

Table 1. Newly reported COVID-19 cases in PNG¹

	New Cases (3 to 8 May 2021)	Cumulative Total
AROB	41	284
Central	15	197
East New Britain	76	462
East Sepik	10	156
Eastern Highlands	77	595
Enga	5	168
Gulf	3	43
Hela	8	52
Jiwaka	10	115
Madang	4	229
Manus	27	101
Milne Bay	30	125
Morobe	254	837
National Capital District	201	4659
New Ireland	4	141
Northern (Oro)	43	64
Simbu	30	173
Southern Highlands	12	108
West New Britain	26	402
West Sepik	0	409
Western ²	2	2352
Western Highlands	83	554
TOTAL	961	12226

¹ As of 08/05/2021, 12:00 pm, PNG time

² 2045 cases (87%) from North Fly; 2 cases Middle Fly; 55 cases South Fly; 248 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	157 289 118	3 277 272
Western Pacific	2 596 033	39 173

² WHO COVID-19 Dashboard as of 09/05/2021, 16:34 CEST

Pillar Updates & Priorities

Surveillance:

- Over 107,500 PCR tests and over 2,000 Ag-RDTs have been conducted to date. These number do not exclude duplicate tests for individuals. While there are delays in receiving testing data, there appears to have been a decline in swabbing and reporting of test results in April compared to March 2021 (see Figure 3 for more details).
- There continue to be delays in receiving death certificates for deceased COVID-19 cases from the provinces, leading to delays in reporting COVID-19 related deaths. Deaths have been reported from 12 of 22 provinces, with 77% of confirmed COVID-19 deaths being male.
- The first draft of the Ag-RDT validation report has been prepared and circulated to key counterparts and the consultation and review process for the COVID-19 case investigation form (CIF) has been completed and the changes to the CIF are being made prior to the new form being rolled out.
- More detailed epidemiological analysis of the samples sent for Whole Genome Sequencing is being undertaken in conjunction with researchers at MDU in Melbourne, Australia.
- Ongoing work with the SPARK modelling consortium to tailor the models and outputs to ensure we are providing the most informative information about the COVID-19 situation in PNG, with the limited data that are available.

Laboratory:

- Last week the team participated in the review of CIF as it concerns laboratory and developed a laboratory data SOP.
- Of the 4 Regional laboratories undergoing renovations, sites in Goroka, Enga and Mt Hagen are due to be completed and ready to receive samples within the next 2 weeks. The site at Nonga is due to be completed by 15 June 2021.
- Analysis shows that turn-around time for laboratory sample testing has improved due to the increased supply of GeneXpert cartridges.
- CPHL Laboratory in Singapore has informed that it will likely reduce the number of weekly samples being tested on behalf of PNG due to a current surge in COVID-19 cases in Singapore. Alternative laboratory testing capacity is currently being investigated.
- Both PNGIMR based in Goroka and POM are also not testing due to non-availability of consumables and reagents.
- A Laboratory manager's meeting across the provinces was held to discuss solutions to improve sampling which included exploring options for increasing staffing capacities and supply chain for reagents and consumables.

Quarantine & Port of Entry:

- 367 passengers were screened at POE over the last 7 days of with 86% had used the Electronic Health Declaration form.
- As of 06 May, there were 402 people under quarantine (PUQ) of which 52 were in home quarantine, 274 in hotels, 25 in company sites and 51 in company apartments.
- Last week there was 1 positive COVID-19 case detected with a person in quarantine who became symptomatic on Day 10 and tested positive on day 12. The patient is now isolated at Pacific International Hospital.
- 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%.

Emergency Medical Teams (EMTs)

- International Emergency Medical Teams (EMTs) continue to provide care for COVID and non-COVID patients in Port Moresby and in the Highlands.
- Since EMT deployments began in mid-April, the 47 deployed international EMT clinicians and support volunteers have contributed over 1100 person-days of work in support of PNG's COVID-19 response, providing over 1,400 patient consultations. All teams are providing training in COVID case management, infection prevention and control and other clinical areas.
- AUSMAT departed PNG this week, wrapping up its support to Port Moresby General Hospital (PMGH) in screening patients at the hospital entry and supporting the COVID ward/ICU, obstetric ward and emergency department. In addition to direct clinical care, AUSMAT physicians and nurses provided extensive training and technical support for PMGH clinicians.
- Team Rubicon continues to support Mt Hagen General Hospital in the Western Highlands, focusing on COVID case management, paediatrics and training. Team Rubicon's Bravo rotation arrived in PNG on 29 April, and the Alpha rotation have departed. Team Rubicon is exploring potential extension support to Wabag General Hospital in Enga Province from mid-May and is also looking to expand training/capacity building support to the District Hospitals in Western Highland Province through the current deployment, given the low COVID caseload in Mt Hagen Hospital.
- MSF deployed a support mission to Gulf Province this week, working with the PHA there to evaluate case management and IPC capacities, and to provide training and technical support. Next week, MSF will be deploying a similar mission to Oro Province.
- Johanniter's Emergency Medical Team from Germany has completed their deployment to PNG, following over three weeks of support in the Nightingale Field Hospital at Taurama Aquatic Centre (TAC) and in Central Province. This week, WHO's Clinical and EMT leads visited Kwakila Hospital with the Johanniter team, providing training in IPC and PPE use.
- Heart to Heart International (HHI)'s 10-person Emergency Medical Team arrived in PNG on 9 May, and will deploy to Eastern Highlands, Simbu and Jiwaka Provinces over the next six weeks.

Clinical Management and Infection Prevention and Control:

- Last week the Clinical Management team visited to Kwakila, Central Province with the Johanniter EMT to provide technical support with COVID-19 management. The Johanniter team provided training for staff on COVID-19 transmission and protection including donning and doffing PPE.
- The team also visited Lae, Morobe Province to visit Baimo correctional facility to assess IPC needs, case recognition and establish a medical isolation facility, as well as the the PHA and provincial hospital to provide technical support on COVID-19 management.

Risk Communication & Non-Pharmaceutical Interventions (NPIs):

- Last week the team oversaw the successful launch of the National Vaccine roll out on Tuesday, 4 May by the Prime Minister. This was followed by provincial launches starting 5 May by various provinces.
- Many provinces including Jiwaka, Hela, East New Britain, West New Britain, Chimbu and Enga conducted launching on the 5 May, while Western province, Morobe, Madang and their

launching on the 6 May followed by West Sepik on Friday 7 May. The rest of the provinces will launch their roll out this week.

- The team completed vaccine advocacy and Q&A sessions with PNG Ports Corporation in Port Moresby on Monday 3 May. About 40 staff in all attended and flyers and information's sheets were provided to be distributed for those who could not attend.
- Vaccine communications training and advocacy commenced in Oro province to address the push back and vaccine hesitancy by the PHA and the public.
- Advocacy meeting with national Church leaders was conducted to ensure churches will help to take the lead in advocating for the vaccine among the church members.
- Advocacy video and radio public announcements featuring Cardinal Sir John Ribat were officially endorsed by the Vaccine Technical Working Group and will commence publishing this week.

Niuplea Pasin

- Niuplea Pasin compliance activities are ongoing although visibility of the implementation of the measures in the provinces is limited to NCD.
- The NCC team are currently planning to visit Provinces to assess compliance with Niupela Pasin and provide support to provincial teams.
- A continued priority of the team is to ensure compliance of Niupea 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:

- Last week the COVID-19 vaccination campaign was launched on 4 May by the Honourable Prime Minister James Marape.
- Most provinces started the vaccination roll out last week and over 7,000 have been vaccinated with AstraZeneca vaccine to date.
- Advocacy and awareness campaigns continue at National and Provincial levels to counter vaccine hesitancy.

Logistics and Supplies:

- Last week team dispatched 5 tons of COVID 19 supplies including PPE, Lab and support materials to NCD, Eastern Highlands, ENB, WNB, Madang, Morobe, East Sepik, Jiwaka, WIP, Western Highlands, Western – Daru, West Sepik, Manus.
- Supplies were also dispatched to the Port Moresby General Hospital and PNGDF.
- The team also commence PPE distributions to 10 provinces.
- Last week PNG Received 70 000 RDTs form World Vision and 445 cartons of 89,000 gloves.

Transmission Assessment

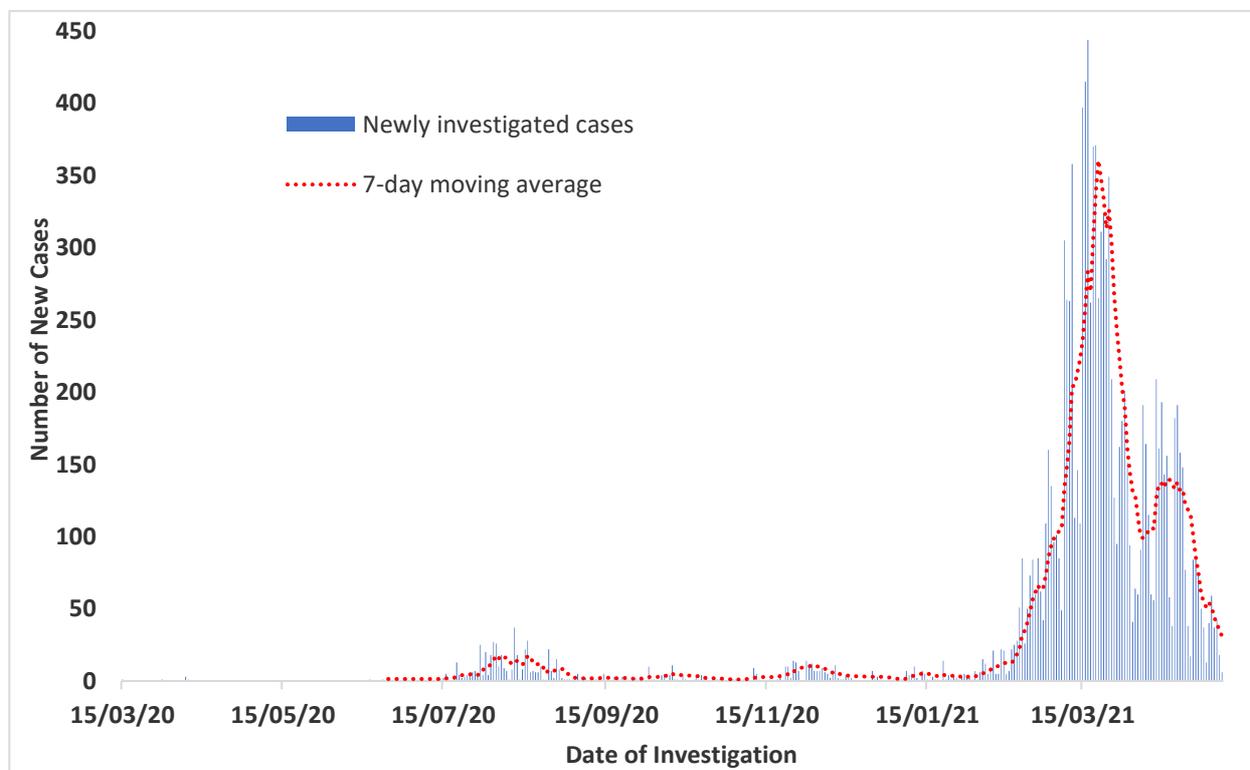
There are currently COVID-19 cases being reported from across PNG, with 20 of 22 provinces reporting COVID-19 cases in the previous seven days. There are reports from many provinces about the lack of access to testing, with swabbing often limited to extremely ill individuals who need to be admitted to hospital.

Acknowledging these limitations with swabbing, 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), Madang, Morobe, Eastern Highlands, and Western Highlands appear to be in Stage 3, widespread community transmission. In addition, East Sepik, Manus, Milne Bay, Northern, Simbu, 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 8 May 2021



Please note: The true extent of the 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=7528), 15 March 2020 to 8 May 2021

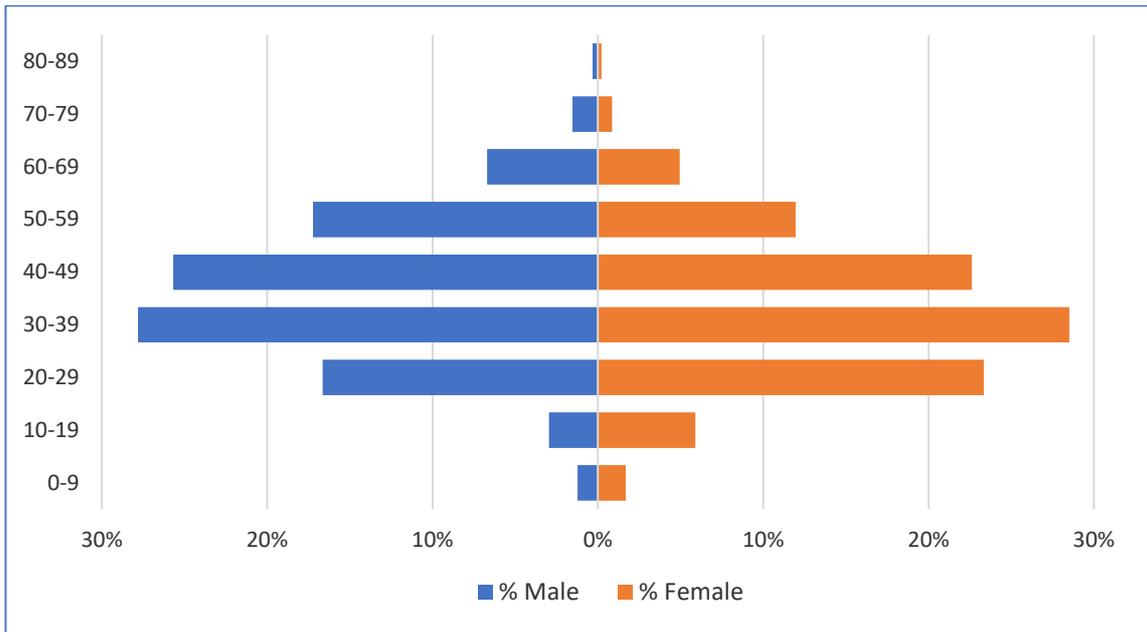


Figure 3. Weekly number of swabs taken (tests) and test positivity, 1 January to 8 May 2021

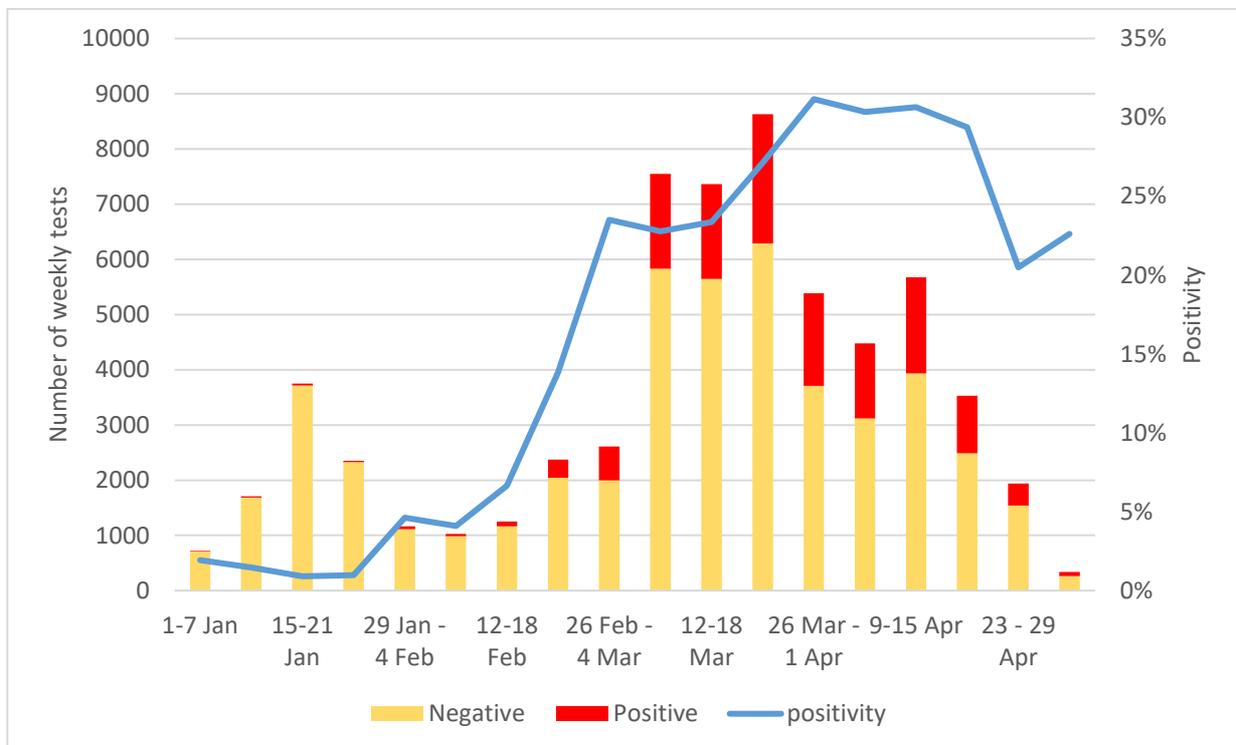


Table 4. Persons Screened by Point of Entry

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 – 8 May 2021)	Air	19,691
	Sea	671
	Land	6
	Total	20,348

COVID-19 Hotline

- For the period of 03 May to 09 May, the COVID-19 National Hotline received 3813 calls.
- Of these, 29 (about 1%) were health-related calls. 16 of these were referred to the Rapid Response Team/PHA.
- As of 09 May, the hotline had received a total of 229,989 calls. Of these, 5,967 (2.6%) were health-related calls. A total of 2390 calls to date have been referred to Rapid Response Team/PHAs.

ANNEX A – Photos



Photos 1: Australian High Commissioner attending a vaccine launch event in Western province



Photo 2-3: Staff from WHO, Angau Hospital, Department of Prisons and ICRC meeting with the Commissioner of Prisons at Buimo.

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