



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

Situation Summary and Highlights

- ❑ As of 4th July 2021 (12:00 pm), there were a total of 17,282 COVID-19 cases and 175 COVID-19 deaths reported in Papua New Guinea (PNG). From the period of 28th June to 4th July, there were 89 newly reported cases. One additional death was reported from East New Britain Province.
- ❑ As of 4th July 2021, a total of 59,125 people has been vaccinated in PNG. This includes 7,844 health workers and 43,206 essential workers and 8,075 people over the ages of 18 including those with comorbidities.
- ❑ Over 1984 people have received their 2nd dose of the AstraZeneca Vaccine and thereby fulfilled the criteria for maximum protection offered by the vaccine as of the 4th July.
- ❑ Infrastructure setup for Papua New Guinea's first ever mobile testing lab, also known as the Air Lab, has completed. All high-throughput diagnostic laboratory equipment and ancillary items installed had undergone necessary checks and tests successfully including sample testing.
- ❑ Leveraging on church partnerships as a communications strategy to address vaccine hesitancy was featured in Western Pacific Regional Office Partners workshop organised by WHO.

Pillar Updates & Priorities

Surveillance:

- ❑ The number of newly reported confirmed positive cases have been low and 30% of cases being reported with a two week or more delay.
- ❑ Test positivity remains at about 13%. However, this is to be interpreted with caution due to the low rate of testing and of reporting particularly of negative results. The case fatality rate remains at 1%.

Table 1. Newly reported COVID-19 cases in PNG¹

	New Cases (28 June to 04 July 2021)	Cumulative Total
AROB	0	435
Central	0	271
East New Britain	12	1189
East Sepik	0	252
Eastern Highlands	9	747
Enga	1	284
Gulf	0	131
Hela	0	167
Jiwaka	1	157
Madang	2	432
Manus	6	485
Milne Bay	6	238
Morobe	7	1198
National Capital District	17	5183
New Ireland	1	546
Northern (Oro)	0	196
Simbu	11	247
Southern Highlands	0	214
West New Britain	3	1024
West Sepik	2	451
Western	0	2393
Western Highlands	11	1042
TOTAL	89	17282

¹ As of 04/07/2021, 12:00 pm, PNG time

Table 2. COVID-19 GLOBAL AND REGIONAL UPDATE²

	Confirmed Cases	Deaths	Vaccine Doses Administered
Global	183 560 151	3 978 581	2 988 941 529
Western Pacific	3 650 964	55 951	

² WHO COVID-19 Dashboard as of 05/07/2021, 22:45 CEST

- ❑ The point of entry risk assessment algorithm has been revised to include the presence of one or more variants in a given country in the assessment.

COVID-19 Hotline:

- ❑ For the reporting period of 28th June – 4th July, the COVID-19 National Hotline received 3153 calls. Of these, 20 (about 0.63%) were health-related calls. 18 of these were referred to the Rapid Response Team/PHA.
- ❑ As of 4th July, the hotline had received a total of 260,327 calls. Of these, 6,236 (2.4%) were health-related calls. A total of 2585 calls to date have been referred to Rapid Response Team/PHAs.
- ❑ The hotline is receiving a new wave of calls from anxious people with mix emotions seeking information around the new measures for international & domestic travels.
- ❑ Information, education and awareness is continuously disseminated to callers as call centre operators tend to queries for updated statistics of COVID-19 within provinces in PNG and abroad while others request for information on the signs and symptoms of COVID-19.
- ❑ The hotline is still receiving a number of calls from people seeking information around vaccination, type of vaccines available in country, vaccine side effects, 2nd dose follow-up and vaccination pathways for general public.

Laboratory:

- ❑ The Air lab infrastructure setup has been completed. It has been fully powered, inspected and certified. All high-throughput diagnostic laboratory equipment and ancillary items were installed and successfully tested including sample testing while training for CPHL (and biomedical) staff has commenced. A technical inspection by NCC, NDOH and CPHL is expected soon to prepare for formal commissioning.
- ❑ The whole genomic sequencing strategy including criteria for COVID-19 positive samples to be sent for sequencing has been shared with the provinces. Hence positive samples meeting the criteria must be forwarded to CPHL to be organized for genomic sequencing abroad.

Emergency Medical Teams (EMTs):

- ❑ The first national EMT team, *Team Sana*, have identified core members to form two teams that can be deployed as mobile medical teams to provinces in the event of a surge of positive cases and increasing demand for clinical assistance. A technical working group consisting of clinicians from different specialities has been formed as an advisory body. The WHO EMT network is providing on-going guidance on the development of this team.

Clinical Management:

- ❑ The clinical management team has collaborated with the national EMT, Team Sana, on the development of scenario-based training packages for acute patient management.
- ❑ PNG based guidelines on swabbing of the deceased in health - care facilities have been developed.
- ❑ A team of 3 personnel from the clinical management and IPC teams visited Kiunga and Tabubil between 28th June to 1st July in the Western Province to support their respective areas.

- ❑ A meeting was held between the clinical management team and visiting clinicians from Australia who will be embedded in the Port Moresby General Hospital and Angau Memorial Hospital, Lae, to share experiences and give insight on the local context of clinical management.

Infection Prevention Control (IPC)

- ❑ The IPC team travelled to North Fly District in Western Province to support key facilities and COVID-19 incident management teams in its implementation of IPC guidance into practice. In collaboration with Ok Tedi Mining Limited (OTML) they visited COVID-19 related screening & testing sites in Tabubil and Kiunga. Team supported IMT in reviewing current practices, plans for future and provided technical advice on IPC in line with National protocols and guidelines.
- ❑ While the team of experts were on ground, Rumginae School of Nursing seized the opportunity and organised an impromptu IPC refresher for its final year CHWs, 2 weeks prior to their placements in aid posts.

Risk Communication & Non-Pharmaceutical Interventions (NPIs):

- ❑ 'Vaccine Champion' public service announcements approved changes in vaccine eligibility and safety as campaign is set to roll out next week. Digital package on 'Vaccine Champion' IEC key awareness material has been finalised for wider distributions.
- ❑ Leveraging on church partnerships as a communications strategy to address vaccine hesitancy was featured in a Western Pacific Regional Office Partners workshop organised by WHO.
- ❑ The National Church Advocacy Strategy Plan which is currently in development will support in cascading church's position on vaccine to community level.
- ❑ Business for Health private sector monthly engagement event on COVID-19 focused on the importance of vaccine uptake in the business sector. Panellists included NDoH and WHO representatives who provided technical support relating to questions around COVID-19 and vaccines.

Logistics and Supplies:

- ❑ About 1.2 ton of COVID-19 supplies mainly PPEs and lab items were dispatched to East New Britain, Eastern Highlands and East Sepik provinces. The team continues to process requests for COVID-19 supplies including IPC and lab consumables from provinces weekly.
- ❑ The logistics cell received local donations of masks, gloves, disinfectants and hand sanitizer from British American Tobacco and Curtain Brothers.
- ❑ Donations from ADB, DFAT and Global Fund are yet to be received as logistic cell continues to face challenges with space at Murray Barracks Warehouse. Shipments are incurring storage fees at the airport and wharf with the slow process of acquiring a new warehouse.
- ❑ mSupply integration has completed in Simbu and Oro. This brings the total to six provinces and facilities currently using mSupply internally to manage COVID-19 commodities.

Quarantine & Point of Entry:

- ❑ As of 4th July, there were 251 people under quarantine (PUQ) of which 79 were in home quarantine, 279 in hotels, 108 in company sites and 40 in apartments.

There are no reported COVID-19 cases of international travellers in quarantine during this reporting period.

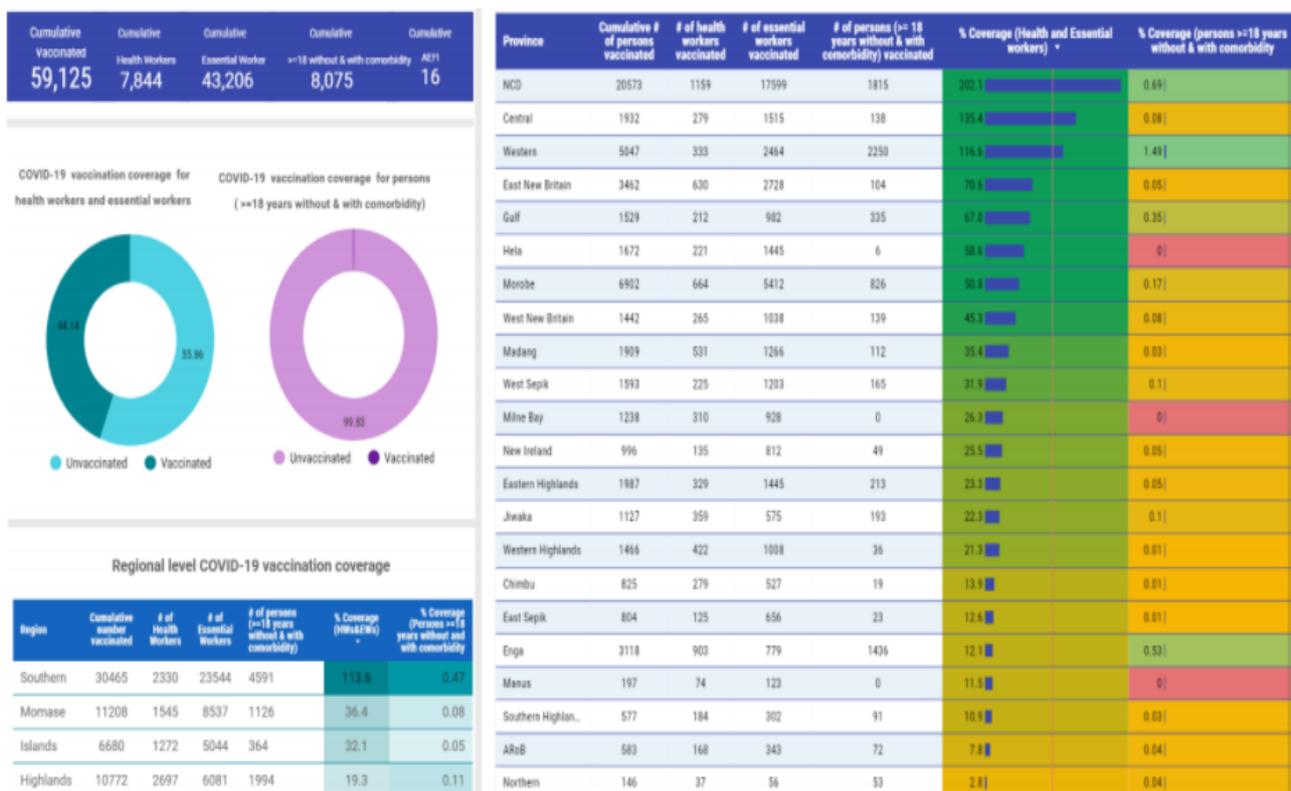
Table 3. Persons Screened by Point of Entry

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 – 3 July 2021)	Air	23,063
	Sea	671
	Land	6

National Vaccine Rollout

- ❑ A total of 152 vaccination sites have started vaccinations, out of 164 sites planned to provide COVID-19 vaccinations nationwide.
- ❑ As of 4th July 2021, a total of 59,125 people has been vaccinated in PNG. This includes 7,844 health workers and 43,206 essential workers and 8,075 people over the ages of 18 including those with comorbidities.
- ❑ 44% vaccination coverage of health care workers and other essential workers across the country.
- ❑ Over 1900 people have received their 2nd dose of the AstraZeneca Vaccine and thereby fulfilled the criteria for maximum protection offered by the vaccine.

Figure 1. Cumulative number of persons vaccinated by region and province (4th July, 2021)



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.

COVID-19 Control Measures

Measure 3 – Domestic travel

- Police Commissioner and Controller of the PNG COVID-19 National Pandemic Response David Manning issued revised measures effective from 02 July:
- Vaccinated persons are exempted from the five reasons to travel as outlined in Measure 3, Schedule 1. Valid Reasons for Domestic Travel are;
 1. Students returning to their usual place of residence or returning to their educational institutions (one-way tickets to be issued);
 2. Persons returning to their usual residence (one-way tickets to be issued);
 3. Essential business travel;
 4. Seeking medical assistance and medivac;
 5. Emergency transport, including but not limited to repatriation of deceased persons; and
 6. A person who is vaccinated against COVID-19.
- Full details of all measures can be found at www.covid19.info.gov.pg

Transmission Assessment

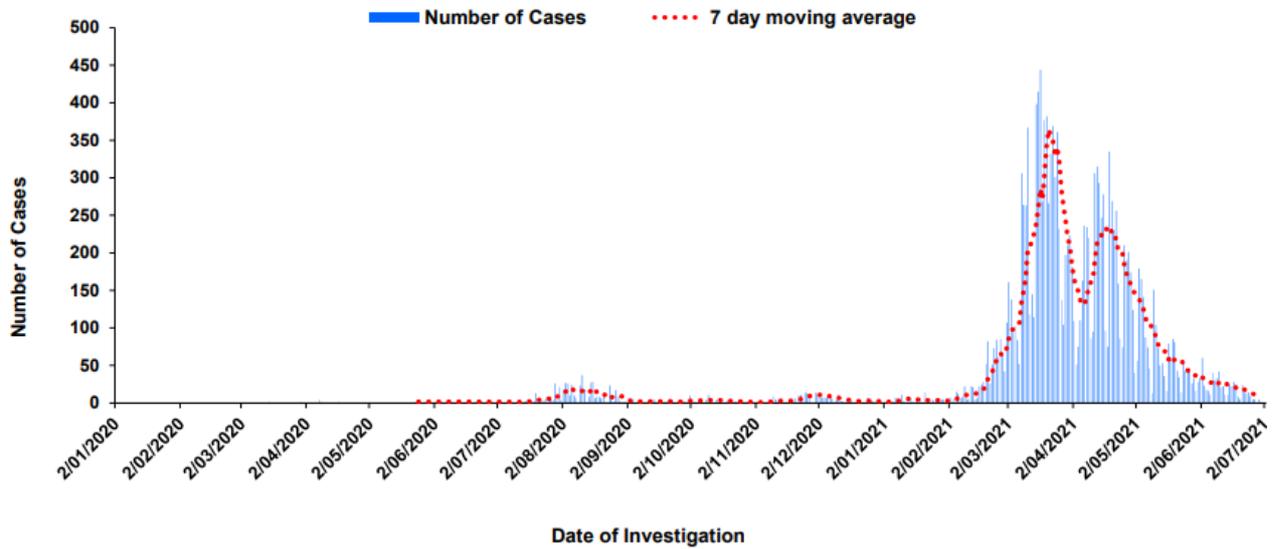
Currently COVID-19 cases are being reported from across PNG, with cases reported from 14 out of 22 provinces in the previous seven days. Northern (Oro), East Sepik, West Sepik, Central, Gulf, Hela, SHP and Western provinces did not report any cases on the past seven days. The epidemic curve, although showing a marked decline in the trend, should be interpreted with caution as it may not be reflective of true positivity. The current weekly test positivity remained at 13%. However, this measure is highly reliant on receiving testing data from all facilities across PNG, particularly with regards to negative test results. Despite this, the relatively high positivity rate in the context of overall low testing is suggestive of ongoing community transmission in most provinces.

Challenges around obtaining swabbing, testing and reporting data are still observed and strategies are currently being explored to improve and strengthen current response. While there continue to be low rates of testing and limited contact tracing, it is believed that community transmission of COVID-19 is occurring in much of PNG. With a low level of confidence based on the available data, National Capital District (NCD), Morobe and East New Britain appear to be in Stage 3, widespread community transmission. In addition, AROB, East Sepik, Enga, Hela, Manus, New Ireland, Northern, Western Highlands, 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

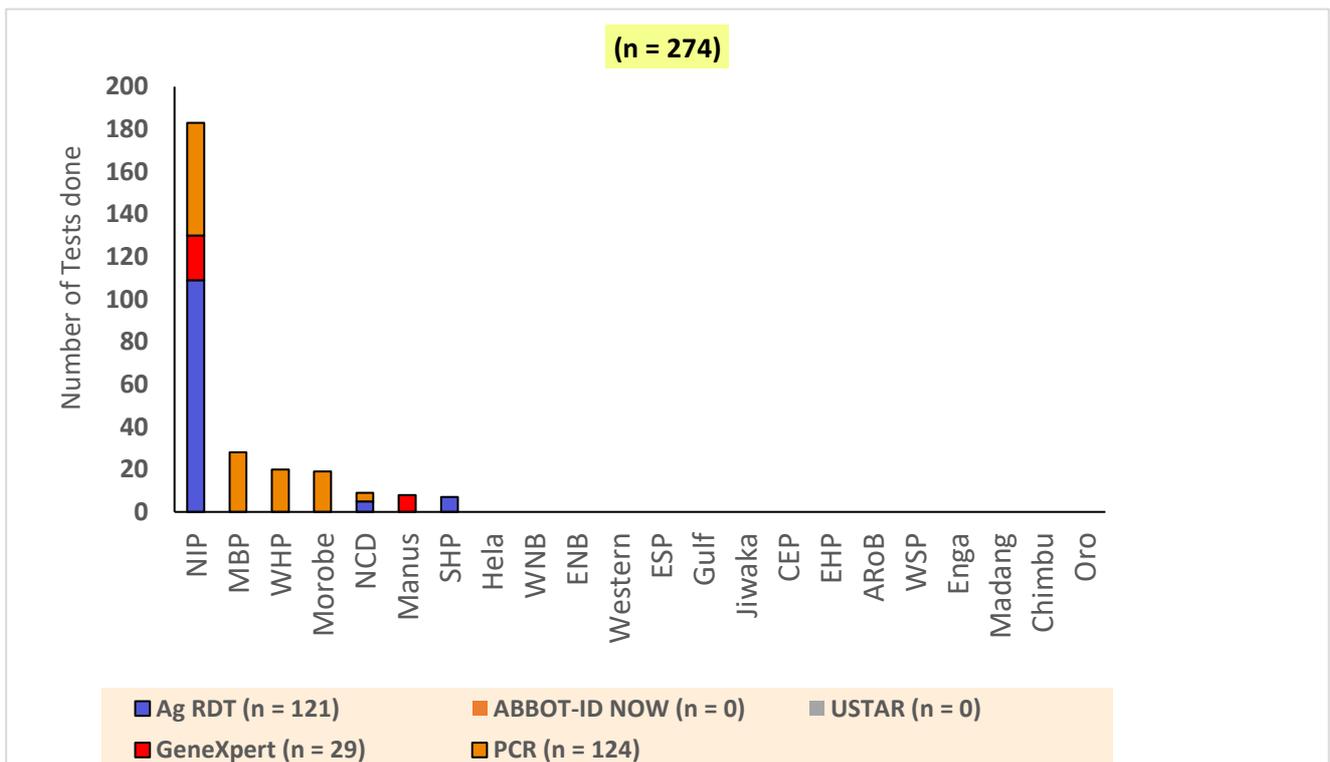
Epidemiology

Figure 3. Epidemiological curve of COVID-19 cases in Papua New Guinea, 15th March 2020 to 4th July 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 4: Tests done by provinces using different testing platforms in the last 7 days (28th June to 4th July)



ANNEX A – Photos

Photo 1: Set-up of the state-of-the-art RT-PCR mobile testing laboratory set up in the Taurama Aquatic Centre

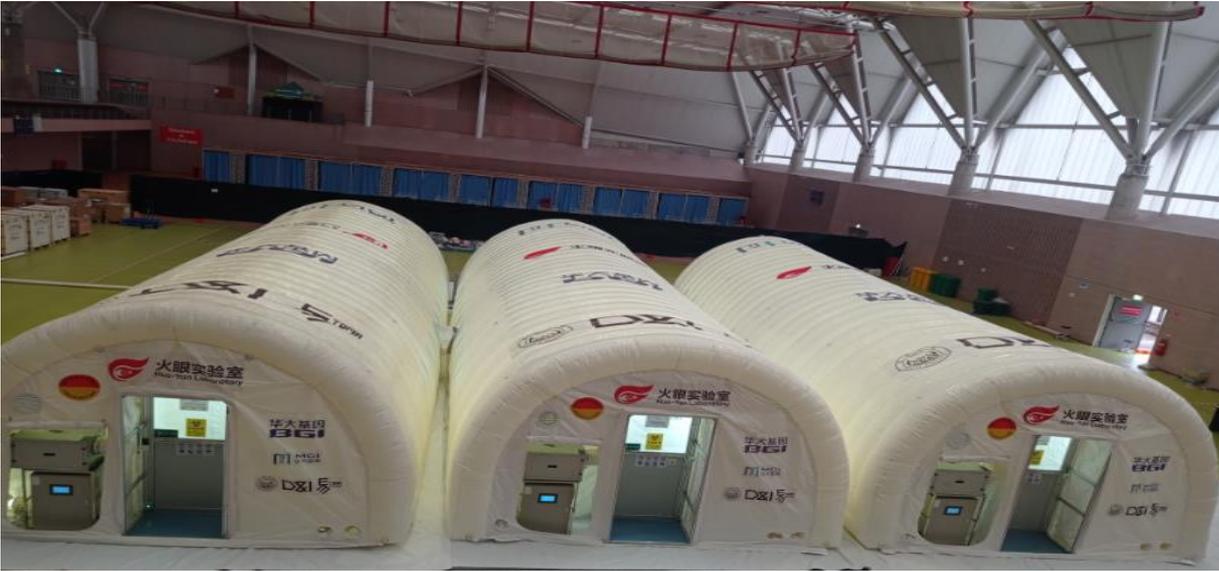


Photo 2: AstraZeneca Vaccine administered to inmates at Buyebi CIS camp



Photo 3: IPC refresher training with 2nd year CHW's at Rumginae School of Nursing in Western Province

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