



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 29th August 2021 (12:00 pm), a cumulative total of 18,012 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 192 COVID-19 deaths were reported in Papua New Guinea (PNG).
- ❑ From the period of 23rd August – 29th August, there were 86 newly confirmed COVID-19 cases reported with zero deaths.
- ❑ No delta cases were reported this week.
- ❑ The current available data preliminarily shows there is localised community transmission (stage 2) occurring in most parts of PNG while Western, West Sepik, NCD and Madang provinces appeared to be in widespread community transmission (stage 3).
- ❑ Over 102,204 people have received at least one dose of vaccine and 60.11% vaccination coverage of health care workers and other essential workers across the country as of 29th August.
- ❑ Over 32,240 people received their 2nd dose of the COVID-19 AstraZeneca Vaccine.
- ❑ A National Ventilator Workshop in response to COVID eventuated over 3 days in NCD. The participants may be called upon as teams to assist with decision making towards ventilating a patient, committed care, and then weaning, plus reporting on progress and results of ventilated patients regardless of outcome.

Table 1. Newly reported COVID-19 cases in PNG¹

	New Cases (23 August to 29 August 2021)	Cumulative Total
AROB	1	446
Central	0	279
East New Britain	5	1220
East Sepik	0	257
Eastern Highlands	0	753
Enga	0	293
Gulf	0	133
Hela	0	189
Jiwaka	1	164
Madang	0	509
Manus	6	522
Milne Bay	29	268
Morobe	0	1291
National Capital District	14	5312
New Ireland	0	583
Northern (Oro)	0	196
Simbu	0	276
Southern Highlands	0	217
West New Britain	0	1026
West Sepik	11	544
Western	18	2452
Western Highlands	1	1082
TOTAL	86	18012

¹ As of 29/08/2021, 12:00 pm, PNG time

Pillar Updates & Priorities

Surveillance:

- ❑ As of 29th August, a total of 4 newly confirmed COVID case which increased the cumulative number of confirmed COVID cases to 18,012. There were no deaths reported and deaths cumulative remains at 192 with case fatality rate of 1%. No delta cases were reported this week.
- ❑ There are 143 (0.5%) active cases, 17,677 (98%) cases have recovered and 1% have died. Over 85% of all reported deaths had underlying comorbidities.
- ❑ Among all reported cases, 54% reported being symptomatic while 46% are asymptomatic.

Table 2. COVID-19 GLOBAL AND REGIONAL UPDATE²

	Confirmed Cases	Deaths
Global	216 303 376	4 498 451
Western Pacific	6 477 611	88 975

² WHO COVID-19 Dashboard as of 25/08/2021, 22:45 CEST

- ❑ In the last seven 7 days, 86 cases were reported. Milne Bay Province accounted for almost 34% of the reported cases, followed by Western Province (21%), NCD (16%), WSP (13%) and other provinces as shown in Table 1.
- ❑ All cases reported from MBP have fully recovered.
- ❑ Among all cases reported from Western Province, 89% of the cases were reported from Middle-fly district while the remaining 11% were reported from Tabubil and Kiunga in the North fly district.
- ❑ In West Sepik Province, 100% of the reported cases are from the Vanimo Green River district. It was found among the newly reported cases that 9% (1 case) was an employee of the Indonesian consulate in Vanimo and 27% were employees of Ok Tedi Mining Ltd across at Western Province hence preliminarily assumption of possible transmission between the two border provinces and Indonesia.
- ❑ Meanwhile in NCD, all 4 (29%) of the reported cases were from the Garuda flight with travel history between Indonesia, India and Fiji. 21% (3 cases) were staff (volunteers) of the MV YWAM with a recent history of travel to the Western province. All Garuda and MV YWAM cases were reported to have received full or 1st dose vaccination.
- ❑ There is an epidemiological linkage between cases from Western province and West Sepik and between cases from Western province and NCD.
- ❑ The epidemic curve continued to show a marked decline in the trend which is consistent with the observed declining trend of ILI/SARI and respiratory illnesses, reported from Health facilities daily, and a declining testing positivity. However, within the context of delayed and/or under reporting, overall low testing coverage and limited contact tracing activities, positivity rate must be interpreted with caution.
- ❑ Based on the current available data, it is believed that community transmission of COVID-19 is occurring in PNG. Western, West Sepik, NCD and Madang provinces appeared to be in stage 3 widespread community transmission while the rest of the other provinces appeared to have localised community transmission (stage 2).

Laboratory:

- ❑ The Lab team have reviewed sample collection SOP to incorporate Ag-RDT sample collection and Whole Genome Sequencing and will share with provinces in coming days.
- ❑ Drew up schedules for private testing facilities that are not reporting testing line list around the country to follow up.
- ❑ Whole genomic sequencing – 1240 (Ok Tedi), 543 (CPHL) and 95 (PNGIMR) positive samples have been sent for genomic sequencing so far, out of that 31 samples have been identified as delta variant of concern (VOC) between 7th June-12th August. Of which, 22 were nationals from Ok Tedi batch, 7 were from a logging ship that came into Port Moresby, 1 Myanmar traveller into Pom and 1 national from Madang were detected. 9 main clusters of the delta variant are detected from the PNG sequencing and details of these clusters will be provided in the surveillance updates in coming days.
- ❑ Important to note is all samples which passed 30 CT values continue to fail the quality checks for genomic sequencing, hence were discarded. Provinces/labs are urged to submit samples that meet the WGS criteria to yield required results.

COVID-19 Hotline:

- ❑ As of 29th August, hotline has received a cumulative total of 278,974 calls. Of these, 6,518 (2.3%) were health-related calls. A total of 2757 calls to date have been referred to Rapid Response Team/PHAs.

- ❑ For the reporting period of 23rd – 29th August, the COVID-19 National Hotline received 1876 calls. Of these, 19 (about 1.01%) were health-related calls. 13 of these were referred to the Rapid Response Team/PHA.
- ❑ 3 Callers experiencing Adverse Effects Following Immunization (AEFI) called into the hotline seeking information and support.

Clinical Management (CM):

- ❑ A National Ventilator Workshop in response to COVID eventuated over 3 days in NCD facilitated by PNGSA (PNG Society of Anaesthesia) in partnership with PMGH, UNICEF, FHI360 and other stakeholders. The workshop was designed to familiarize participants with basic knowledge and skills in critical care to understand the importance of planning, teamwork and commitment towards care of ventilated patients and to contextualised settings in absence of a full-time Physician Anaesthesiologist, Intensivist or dedicated doctor in this specialty.
- ❑ There have been six (6) Workshops held, involving 16 PHAs and hospitals throughout the country with a total of 112 trained personnel including 10 non-Anaesthesia SMOs, 33 MOs, 49 NOs, 1 HEO, and 2 ASOs.
- ❑ The training team are prepared to further support PHAs, ICU attachments, modular activities and courses, virtual support and virtual troubleshooting sessions with these trained Instructors, nursing care and Biomed assistance. The participants may be called upon as teams to assist with decision making towards ventilating a patient, committed care, and then weaning, plus reporting on progress and results of ventilated patients regardless of outcome.
- ❑ The team appreciated World Bank, WHO and other donors and development partners who had supported the workshop and PNGSA with the procurement of ventilators plus the additional bedside devices and supportive equipment like the Oxygen concentrators.

Risk Communication & Community Engagement

- ❑ The one day National 'train the trainer' was completed on the 27th August for for trainers of trainers and partners engaged in Risk communication and community engagement on vaccine, epi and national health promotion officers to support Phase II of the vaccine roll out to the first 6 priority provinces - commencing 6 September. Teams will be mobilised to the 6 priority provinces of Western, West Sepik, East Sepik, Madang, Manus and ARoB for a 10-day comprehensive program focused on training, planning and execution of critical advocacy and demand creation activities.
- ❑ Social listening: Key partners are invited to join the social listening sub-task group under the RCCE Cluster to improve coordination of social listening including response.
- ❑ Vaccine community engagement tools in final development, FAQs information for health workers and a guide to facilitating community discussions in review stages.

Niupela Pasin (NP):

- ❑ Niupela Pasin team this week assessed 10 events and meetings in NCD while 17 event approvals were granted on commitment to strictly observe NP. Events ranged from church activities, student activities, government functions and sports events across the country with strict observations of Niupela Pasin which mandatory mask wearing, temperature checks, hand sanitizing and observing social distancing.

- ❑ Sporting events were approved with reduced numbers of spectators. 4 sporting organisations submitted COVID-19 Standard Operating Procedures for games and programs to commence were reviewed and approved by the team.

Logistics and Supplies:

- ❑ Supplied 2 tonnes of COVID-19 supplies of PPEs dispatched to 3 consignees from Manus, Western and City Pharmacy Holding Ltd was the only non-health facility supplied with lab consumables this week.
- ❑ UNOPs has supported the distribution of N95 masks the agency procured and donated to NCC last month.
- ❑ mSupply integration: The team visited West New Britain province and has successfully integrated COVID-19 PPE details integrated into the Provincial Medical Store (PMS). Integration included rearrangement of stock, stock take and update of PPEs into the system, training. Basic supply chaining management training was also provided.

Quarantine & Point of Entry:

- ❑ As of 29th August, there were 260 people under quarantine (PUQ) of which 28 were in home quarantine, 181 in hotels, 30 in company sites and 17 in organizational apartments.
- ❑ There were no reported COVID-19 cases of international travellers during the reporting period. Investigation and contact tracing are being carried out on these passengers and moved into isolation.

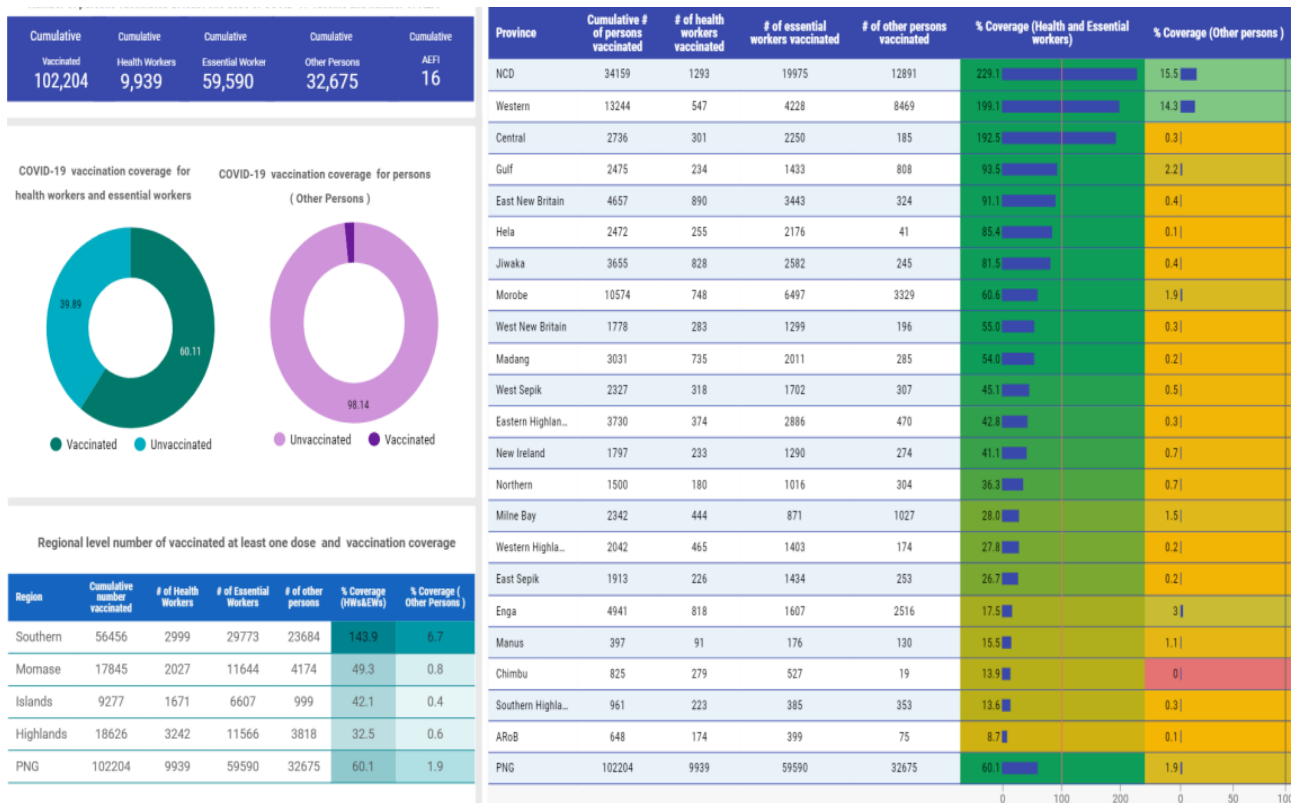
Table 3. Persons Screened by Point of Entry

Total Number of Travelers Screened before SOE (Until 22 March 2020)	29,387	
Total Number of Travelers Screened during SOE (23 March 2020 – 16 June 2020)	3,788	
Total Number of Travelers Screened after SOE (17 June 2020 – 29 August 2021)	Air	26,197
	Sea	1226
	Land	6

National Vaccination Rollout

- ❑ As of 29th August 2021, over 102,204 people has been vaccinated at least for one dose in PNG. This includes 9,939 health workers and 59,590 essential workers and 32,675 people over the ages of 18 including those with comorbidities.
- ❑ Over 60.11% vaccination coverage of health care workers and other essential workers across the country.
- ❑ Almost 32,240 people are fully vaccinated having received their 2nd dose of COVID-19 vaccine.
- ❑ There are 190 sites offering vaccination across PNG.

Figure 1. Cumulative number of persons vaccinated by region and province 29th August, 2021



National, Provincial and Partners Health Response

- The Pandemic Response Coordination Group and the Health Operations Team continue to meet regularly at the National Control Centre.
- A new Health Cluster Coordinator supported through WHO has started work on coordination of health partners alongside NDoH, NCC and PHA's as Phase 2 of the vaccine rollout begins.
- The Health Cluster Coordinator will begin reaching out to partners within the 6 provinces (East Sepik, West Sepik, Manus, Western, Madang and the Autonomous Region of Bougainville) initially targeted for the rollout of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine to note and detail their ability to assist in the vaccine rollout, deliver vaccinations, advocacy and the minimising of vaccine hesitancy is also of high importance.
- 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 9 out of 22 provinces in the previous seven days. Central, Chimbu, EHP, Enga, ESP, Gulf, Hela, Madang, Morobe, New Ireland, Northern (Oro), SHP and WNB provinces did not report in the past seven days.

More than half of the new cases (active) reported in the past seven days were from two boarder provinces (Western and West Sepik) and provinces with international ports including the NCD, ENBP and the AROB. Based on the data, there appears to be an epidemiological linkage between cases from Western Province and West Sepik and the National Capital District. This could also suggest possible risk for delta transmission between these provinces.

Given that NCD and Western province accounted for highest number of COVID-19 cases reported during the 2020 August surge, with the emergence of delta variant in these provinces, the risk for widespread community transmission in the country as a whole cannot be under estimated.

While the epidemic curve continues to show a marked decline in the trend with declining positivity, in the context of delayed or under reporting, overall low testing and limited contact tracing, the trend and positivity must be interpreted with caution.

With low level of confidence based on the available data, it is believed that community transmission of COVID-19 is occurring in much of PNG. Western, WSP, NCD and Madang provinces would appear to be in stage 3 widespread community transmission while all other provinces in PNG would appear to have localised community transmission (stage 2).

Challenges around obtaining swabbing, testing, reporting data and contact tracing are still observed. Strategies are currently being explored to improve and strengthen current responses including ramping up active surveillance and enhance testing in order to establish the extent of Delta transmission in the country. Increasing vaccination coverage to high risk/ vulnerable population with priorities on frontline health workers, persons over the ages of 45yrs and persons with underlying medical conditions, including, re-enforcing maintenance of the new normal practices even after vaccination, are also part of the national strategies to the current responses.

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

Epidemiology

Figure 2. Epidemiological curve of total COVID-19 cases in Papua New Guinea as at 29th August, 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.

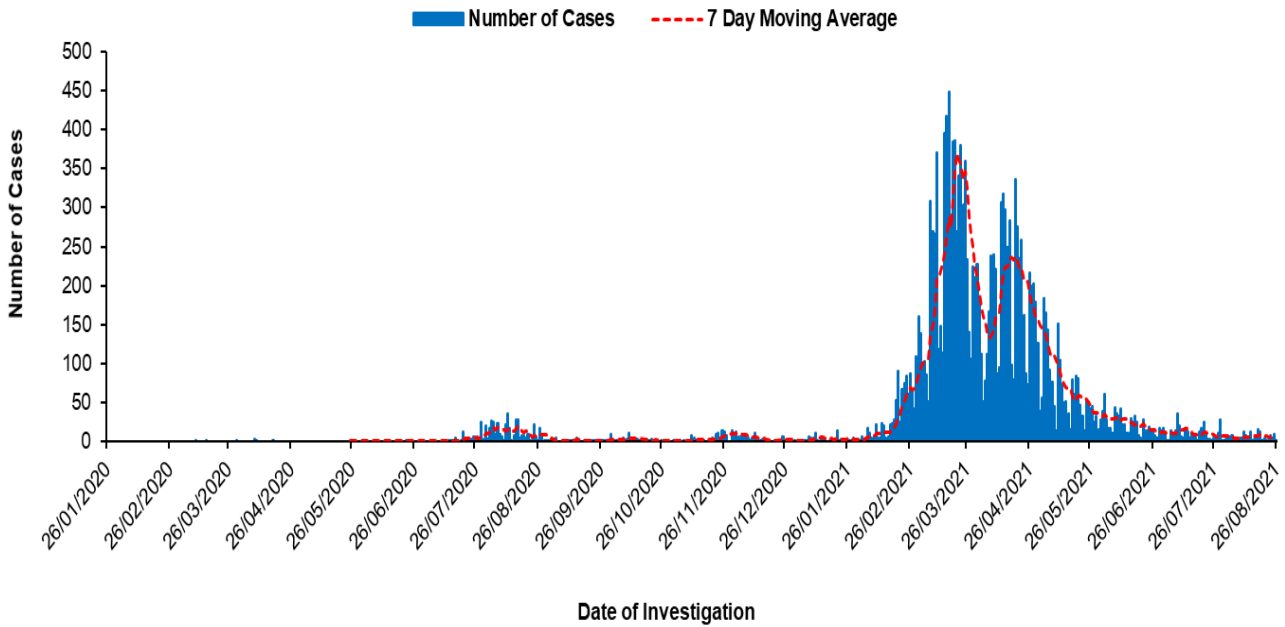
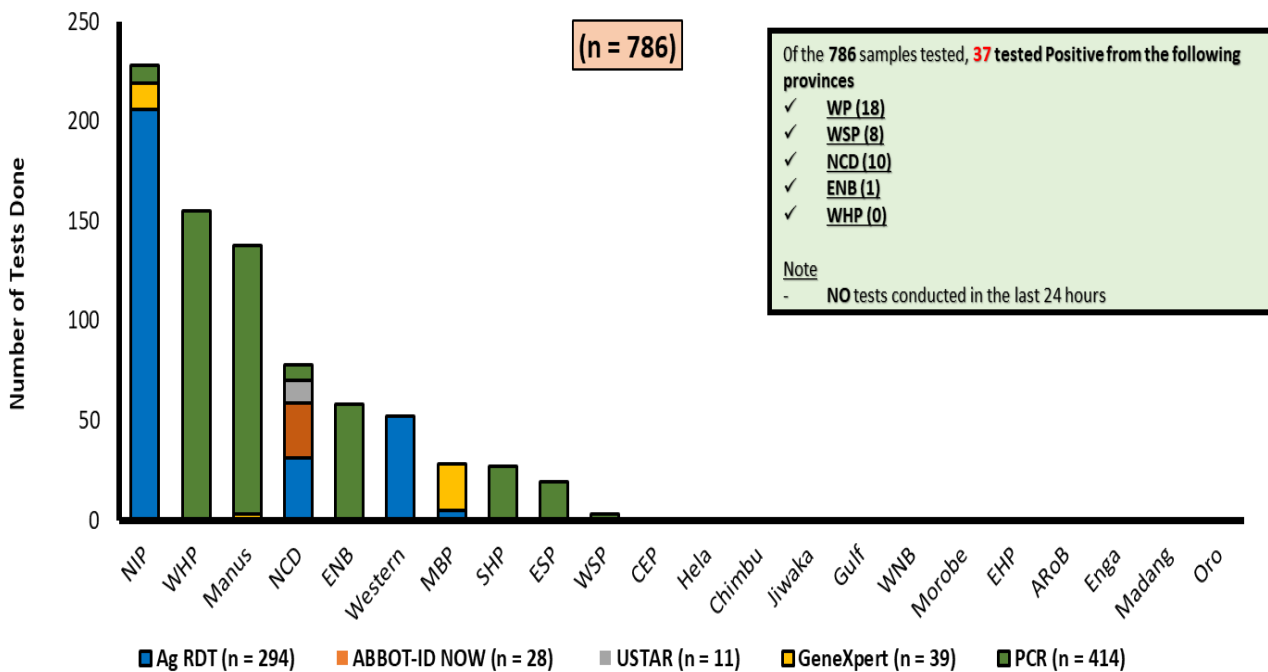


Figure 3: Tests done in the last 7 days, 23rd August to 29th August 2021



ANNEX A – Photos

Photo 1: Mr Lionel Melville, representing Rotary President, Sr Nalu, NCD PHA Vaccination Program Coordinator, Dr Daoni Esorom, Deputy Controller and Mr Sim Chamadia, Big Rooster General Manager during the launching of free Giveaway Big Rooster food vouchers for vaccinated clients.



Photo 2: Opening remarks by Dr Melinda Susapu during the Risk Communication TOT training in NCD



Photo 3: Providing basic training to Kimbe Lab manager on how to use stock card to monitor COVID-19 Lab items

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