



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 17 October, PNG has officially reported a cumulative total of 25,068 confirmed cases of COVID-19, including 309 COVID-19 deaths.
- ❑ In the last seven days, a total of 1,976 cases including 57 deaths were reported from 20 provinces: a 300% increase in the number of reported deaths.
- ❑ Based on available regional data, Morobe, Madang, Enga, Eastern Highlands, Western Highlands, Hela, Southern Highlands, NCD, Central, Milne Bay and Oro are categorised to be in stage 3 (widespread community transmission) while Manus, East Sepik, West Sepik, Western, East New Britain and West New Britain are in stage 2 (localised community transmission) and Gulf, New Ireland provinces and Autonomous Region of Bougainville are in stage 1 (sporadic cases).
- ❑ As of 17 October 2021, over 187,138 people have been vaccinated with at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine in PNG. Over 109,549 people are fully vaccinated. This is 5.9% of the 20% phase one target population for 2021 for COVID-19 vaccinations.

### Cluster Updates & Priorities

#### \*Surveillance:

- ❑ Of the 1,976 cases reported this week, NCD (27%) accounted for the highest number of cases, followed by WHP (17%), EHP (14%), Simbu (7%), Morobe (7%), SHP (4%), Central (4%) among others as shown in Table 1.
- ❑ More than 90% of these cases were reported to have been tested or died in the last 21 days indicating active (ongoing) community transmission in the provinces reporting cases. COVID-19 deaths were reported from six provinces this week, with the highest number of deaths reported from EHP and NCD (Table 1).
- ❑ The epidemic curve shows a notable upward trend in cases similar to that observed during the second surge (March – April). Testing increased from July - September with 25% test positivity in September.
- ❑ This week, the joint mission NDoH and WHO Highlands trip progressed to Jiwaka and Enga provinces. In Jiwaka, the team visited the provincial hospital (Kujip), several health centres and the Provincial Health Authority. The trip has proven useful in gaining a real picture of the epidemic on the ground and as an opportunity to strengthen surveillance.

\* Cases are only reported upon receipt of CIFs and death certificates hence the figures reported may not be reflective on the current situation in the provinces.

**Table 1. Reported COVID-19 cases in PNG<sup>1</sup>  
(11 – 17 Oct 2021)**

Province	New Cases	Deaths	Cumulative Delta Cases	Cumulative Total
AROB	6			458
Central	80		3	442
ENB	33			1368
ES	9			351
EH	244	24	1	1590
Enga	43			737
Gulf	3			139
Hela	28		1	315
Jiwaka	53	4		287
Madang	71			725
Manus	4		2	532
Milne Bay	50			352
Morobe	129	5	18	1803
NCD	511	15	73	6781
NI	4	1	1	600
Northern	0			197
Simbu	143		1	453
SH	82	1		452
WNB	47			1127
WS	16	2	56	711
Western	22	4	31	3555
WH	341	1	2	2093
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1919</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>192</b>	<b>25068</b>

<sup>1</sup> As of 17/10/2021, 12:00 pm, PNG time

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

	Confirmed Cases	Deaths
Global	241 411 380	4 912 112
Western Pacific	9 140 020	125 113

<sup>2</sup> WHO COVID-19 Dashboard as of 17/10/2021, 22:45 CEST

### **Laboratory:**

- The Laboratory Cluster continued its support to the provinces by monitoring lab stocks and commodities supplied; to date a total of 193,350 UTMs, 67,670 GeneXpert cartridges and 140,825 AgRDTs have been distributed nationwide in efforts to improve testing capacities and encourage increased testing in the provinces.
- As of 13 October, 6,026 samples have been sent to Doherty Institute in Melbourne for whole genome sequencing. The Delta Variant of Concern was sequenced from 614 samples to date. Provinces are encouraged to follow the WGS sampling protocol for specimen selection and referral.
- The four regional PCR labs (Angau, Nonga, Mt Hagen & Goroka) are in final stages of completion.

### **Clinical Management:**

- The Clinical Management Cluster has received information via clinical dashboards created and populated by PHAs. To ensure national data standardisation, the NCC clinical team is a user-friendly, standardised dashboard in collaboration with the PHAs for the uniform reporting of clinical indicators in daily reports. The dashboard will include severity and health facility utilisation data, the status of main medical equipment and usage of consumables.
- The Clinical Management Cluster would like to thank the PHAs and hospitals for taking the critically important initiative of sharing their dashboards regularly with NCC.

### **Risk Communication & Community Engagement (RCCE):**

- A National Church Advocacy Strategy to rollout vaccine at community level commenced in the National Capital District with a special advocacy and vaccination launch at the St Charles Luwanga Catholic Church in Gerehu. Advocacy through the collaborating church leadership and congregation resulted in a positive uptake of 175 people vaccinated.
- Community-based advocacy and social mobilization integrated with and followed by mobile vaccine units arriving in communities continued to report positive results from within the faith-based sector in many provinces.
- National TOT trainings for Momase and Highlands Regions has been deferred due to the current surge in both regions. The RCCE teams in these provinces focused on surge response and key messaging needs related to the surge.
- Phase two vaccine roll out of the national vaccination program was completed in Morobe. WHO provided ground support in the creation of key RCCE content and interviews with local champions for advocacy in provincial communications.
- Key lessons learnt from the missions have continuously informed Advocacy Communication and Social Mobilisation approaches and RCCE demand creation on the ground.
- The NDoH Health Promotion Team has supported provinces in coordinating urgent restocking of IEC materials as demand for vaccination increases in provinces.
- The RCCE surge plan mass media implementation continued with content focused on the human story and frontline impact of COVID-19 for survivors and their families together with key vaccination facts to address myths and misinformation being pushed out via mass media this week.
- Provincial vaccination campaigns continued to be supported and promoted via social media on the NDoH page.
- The RCCE Cluster continued to work with the surveillance and clinical teams to support data for key messaging.
- Under the newly established COVID-19 Vaccine Ministerial Taskforce, the RCCE Cluster lead in collaboration with WHO and other partners, has contributed to the development of key strategies for scaling up vaccination across the country including a targeted Health Care Worker, Community, Church, Private and Public sectors vaccine advocacy that focuses on an integrated approach to demand creation and vaccine access via Mobile Vaccine Units. Galvanising national support for vaccination targets with the establishment of a Tripartite Declaration Statement that will support a commitment from national leadership and provincial Governors on vaccination targets is a key focus area.

- ❑ The new RCCE content developed includes flash cards for community awareness activities and frequently asked questions (FAQs) about vaccines, are currently in their clearance process. ‘Vax facts’ social media tiles that respond to the key rumours and concerns detected through social listening are being pushed out via social media with the aim of building a sense of social norms around vaccination and increasing the visibility of vaccine campaign.
- ❑ NDoH and WHO teams also continued to assist WNBPHA in its vaccine rollout activities. There has been significant vaccine uptake from business houses within the province. These activities are continuing.

### Niupela Pasin:

- ❑ The Niupela Pasin team approved eight events promoting adherence with NPIs/public health and social measures (PHSM) this week for various activities in NCD.
- ❑ 250 Niupela Pasin IEC posters were distributed this week, while IEC materials for schools and advocacy awareness sessions for stakeholders will be sent next week.
- ❑ The team also provided technical guidance on the development of Niupela Pasin Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for different events to seven organisations from public and private sectors including faith based organisations.

### Logistics and Supplies:

- ❑ Approximately 4.5 tonnes of COVID-19 supplies, mostly PPE and laboratory items, were dispatched to Gulf, Southern Highlands, Morobe, National Capital District, Eastern Highlands, Western Highlands, Milne Bay, East New Britain, Enga, Simbu and Madang provinces. Other facilities/organizations supplied were the YWAM Medical Ship, Rita Flynn, MAF, Hohola United Church, PNG Forest Authority, PNG Defence Force, National Control Centre and Port Moresby General Hospital.
- ❑ Most of the outstanding donations from DFAT, Global Fund and WHO were receipted this week as the new AES warehouse comes into full operation.
- ❑ The Logistics Cluster continued to strengthen and maintained communications especially with current surge provinces on lab commodity tracking and reporting.
- ❑ All 23 PHA incinerators are on shore; 13 in POM and 10 in Lae for shipping to the provinces as soon as assessments are completed.
- ❑ mSupply integration of COVID-19 commodities is delayed due to the surge response.

### Quarantine & Points of Entry:

- ❑ As of 17 October, there were 820 people under quarantine (PUQ) of which 191 were in home quarantine, 469 in hotels, 104 in company sites and 56 in organizational apartments.
- ❑ There was one 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 – 2 October 2021)	Air	29,845
	Sea	1,309
	Land	6

## National Vaccination Rollout

- ❑ As of 17 October 2021, over 187,138 people have been vaccinated with at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine. Over 109,549 people are fully vaccinated. This is 5.9% of the 20% target population for 2021 phase I target for COVID-19 vaccinations.
- ❑ The Johnson and Johnson vaccine is now available throughout PNG in every province of the country. Over 36,000 people have received the J & J vaccine.

**Table 4.** PNG COVID-19 Vaccination cumulative number and coverage of persons vaccinated by category as of 17 October 2021

Category	At least one dose received	Fully vaccinated
Health Worker	12560	6472
45 years and above	61289	39483
Persons with comorbidity	4455	2373
Cumulative	187138	109549

## National and Provincial Health Update

- ❑ The Pandemic Response Coordination Group and the Health Operations Team continue to meet regularly at the National Control Centre.
- ❑ "The best thing that each and every one of us can do is get vaccinated without delay" said Vice minister for Bougainville Affairs and Regional Member for Bougainville Hon. Peter Tsiamalili who made an urgent appeal to the people of Bougainville to unite behind the Regional COVID-19 Vaccination drive as COVID-19 case numbers continue to increase in the country.
- ❑ Central PHA CEO, Dr James Amini called on all people of Central Province to take the vaccine for better protection alongside the Niupela Pasin measures during the launch of the Vaccination Rollout for Central Province, 16 October in Gaire village. Community leaders took the lead in receiving their COVID-19 vaccinations followed by 151 villagers who also got vaccinated.
- ❑ The launch comes after the main church in the village, the Gaire United Reform Church, took the initiative to invite the Vaccine Taskforce team and the Central PHA to come to their village to vaccinate their people. Rev. Roger Josephs, General Secretary for the PNG Council of Churches applauded this move, encouraging other churches to take the lead for their people's well-being.
- ❑ Full details of all containment measures can be found at [www.covid19.info.gov.pg](http://www.covid19.info.gov.pg)

## Partner Coordination Activities

- ❑ The Health Cluster met on the 12<sup>th</sup> of October with an insightful presentation from Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF) regarding their work in the more remote areas of the country.
- ❑ The Cluster was also briefed by the Ministerial Vaccine Taskforce on their intentions for province wide partner coordination regarding the support to PHA's through implementing partners.
- ❑ The next Health Cluster meeting will be held on the 26<sup>th</sup> of October. Please email [osheaj@who.int](mailto:osheaj@who.int) if you or your organisation wishes to join the cluster meetings and present activities. These meetings are strategic and are used to align all partner activities.
- ❑ A partner mapping tool is being created by WHO and UNOCHA and will be trialled before rolling out to all clusters. This tool is to provide decision makers with up-to-date information regarding partner capacity across the country.
- ❑ Currently, NCDPHA, WNBPHA and WPHA have expressed interest or are holding weekly partner coordination meetings via zoom. If PHA's wish to engage in similar meetings, please contact [osheaj@who.int](mailto:osheaj@who.int) who can assist in facilitating this.

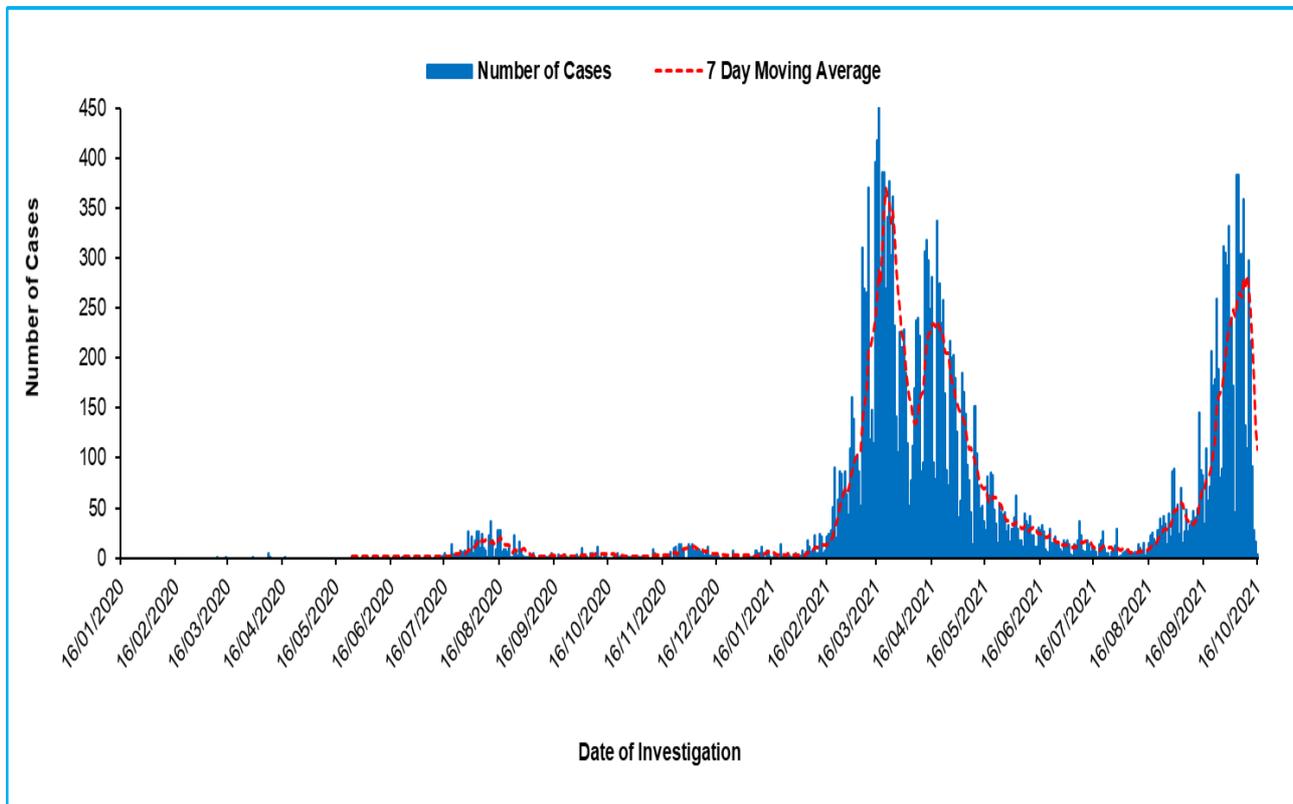
## Transmission Assessment

- Factors considered in the transmission stage assessment include: the number of newly diagnosed cases and deaths; epidemic trend, testing rates, hospital capacity and bed utilisation, contact tracing effectiveness and epidemiological trends in ILI and SARI presentations.
- Currently COVID-19 cases are being reported from across PNG, with cases reported from 21 out of 22 provinces in the previous seven days. NCD accounted for the highest number of cases, followed by WHP, EHP, Simbu, Morobe, SHP, Central and Madang, among others.
- Over 90% of the cases reported in the last 7 days were diagnosed in the last 7-14 days, consistent with active (ongoing) community transmission in provinces reporting cases.
- The average test positivity of **25%** in September (based on data contributed by several provinces) demonstrates widespread community transmission. Increasing test positivity also observed in the last 7 days in several provinces.
- The epidemic curve shows an increasing trend with a peak already as high as that observed in the last surge (March/April\_2021).
- Based on the available regional data of each province (slides), the following provinces are in stage 3 (widespread community transmission): two Momase region provinces (Morobe & Madang), all seven Highlands provinces (Enga, EHP, WHP, Hela, Southern Highlands), NCD, Central, Milne Bay and Oro provinces. Oro is considered stage 3 (high risk) despite not reporting cases with that assessment based on verbal updates from the province.
- In stage 2 (localised community transmission) are Manus, ESP, WSP, Western, ENB and WNB Provinces. ESP, SP and Western provinces appear to have experienced the epidemic peak with case numbers and hospitalisations decreasing
- Gulf, AROB and New Ireland provinces are classified as stage 1 (sporadic cases).
- Challenges around obtaining swabbing, testing, contact tracing, and reporting data are still observed. Strategies currently being explored to improve and strengthen situational awareness include ramping up active surveillance and enhancing testing 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.
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Additional information about transmission classification can be found on the WHO Western Pacific Regional Office (WPRO) COVID-19 transmission stage dashboard at [bit.ly/WPRODashboard](https://bit.ly/WPRODashboard)

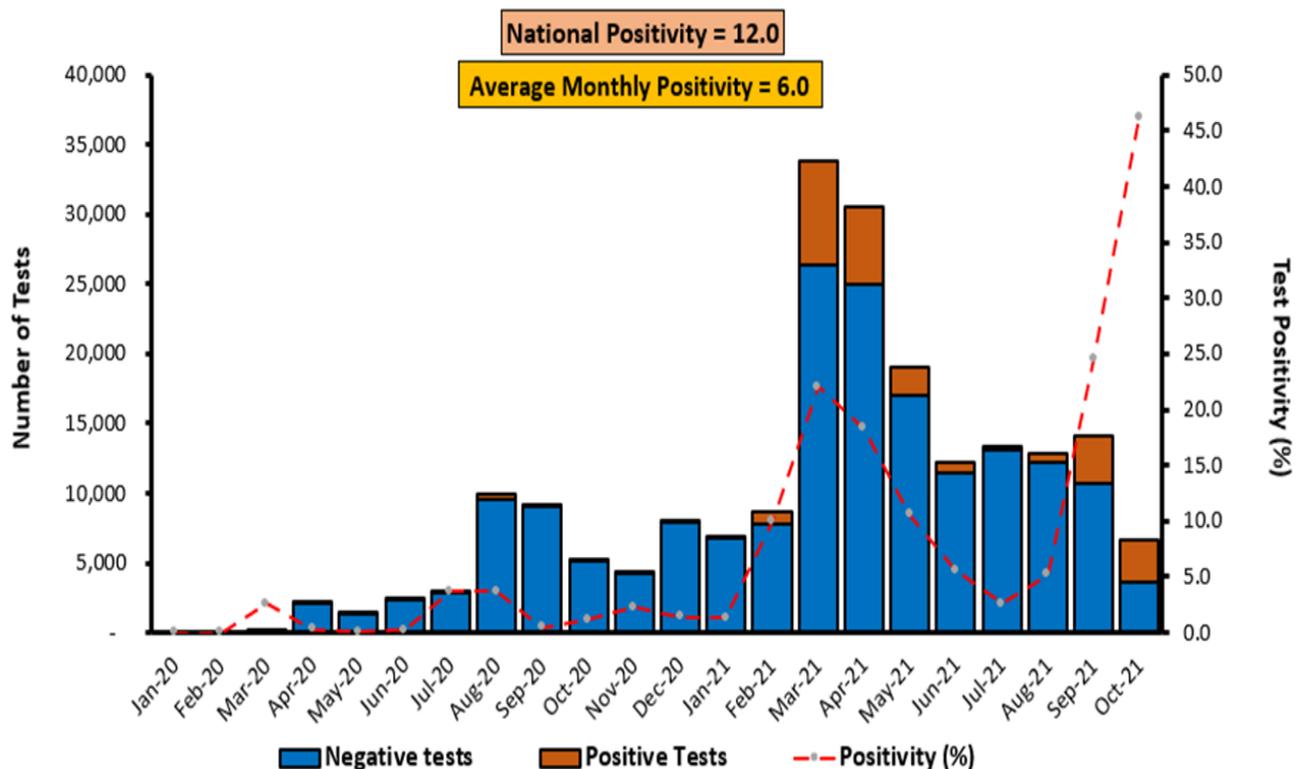
## Epidemiology

**Figure 2.** Epidemiological curve of total COVID-19 cases in Papua New Guinea as of 17 October 2021



Please note: The true extent of the trend must be interpreted with caution as there are delays in receiving and reporting results from provinces.

**Figure 3:** Positivity and testing trend from 22 Jan 2020 - 17 October 2021



## ANNEX – Photos

**Photo 1:** Vaccination drive in Gaire village in Central Province jointly by Central Province PHA and Gaire United Reform Church team.



**Photo 2:** AES Warehouse in full swing. Logistics team hard at work on setting up and stocking the new site.

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