



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 31 October, PNG has officially reported a cumulative total of 29,813 confirmed cases of COVID-19, including 370 COVID-19 deaths.
- In the last seven days, a total of 1,941 new cases were reported including 36 known deaths.
- United Kingdom Emergency Medical Team have arrived in country on 24 October, 2021 and have been deployed to Western Highlands Province.
- Local PNG National EMT teams returned home after over 24 days deployment in Goroka and Mt Hagen.
- As of 31 October 2021, over 242,693 people have been vaccinated with at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine in PNG. Over 167,654 people are fully vaccinated. This is 9% of the 20% target for 2021 Phase I COVID-19 vaccinations.

Table 1. Reported COVID-19 cases in PNG¹ (25 – 31 Oct 2021)

Province	New Cases	Deaths
AROB	18	
Central	58	
ENB	92	
ES	83	
EH	133	2
Enga	47	
Gulf	21	
Hela	54	
Jiwaka	26	4
Madang	121	12
Manus	13	1
Milne Bay	179	
Morobe	192	1
NCD	534	2
NI	2	1
Northern	0	
Simbu	4	1
SH	185	
WNB	0	
WS	16	
Western	22	3
WH	118	9
TOTAL	1918	36

¹ As of 31/10/2021, 12:00 pm, PNG time

Cluster Updates & Priorities

*Surveillance:

- In last seven days, a total of 1,941 new COVID-19 cases were reported including 36 new deaths. The cumulative number of cases is now at 29,813 with 370 known deaths.
- Over 80% of the cases were reported to have been tested in the last 14 days indicative of active (ongoing) transmission in the reporting provinces.
- The average monthly test positivity has increased to 7% from 5% in last few months, with over 50% test positivity in the month of October. With overall low testing rates and delayed reporting of testing by private facilities and PHAs including non-reporting of RDTs by most or all facilities, this should be interpreted with caution.
- This week, the joint WHO/NCC mission team returned from the Highlands. 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.

Clinical Management and Infection Prevention Control:

- An emergency medical team from United Kingdom (UK-MED) has arrived in country to assist in the current surges upon the request of the PNG Government. The 10-men team consisted of Intensive Care Unit specialists, Emergency Department specialists, paramedics and nurses.
- The team's first deployment was to Western Highlands this week to support in the current surge for six weeks. They will assist PHA with ongoing COVID-19 response activities whilst building capacity in case management and infection prevention and control (IPC) within the province.

Table 2. COVID-19 GLOBAL AND REGIONAL UPDATE^{2b}

	Confirmed Cases	Deaths
Global	247 968 227	5 020 204
Western Pacific	9 513 516	130 962

² WHO COVID-19 Dashboard as of 4/11/2021, 22:45 CEST

- The AUSMAT team have visited Western Highlands, Morobe, Eastern Highlands and Central provinces as part of their mission to gather information on the areas of COVID-19 response requiring support.
- NCC clinical management and logistics teams worked with AUSMAT to deploy pre-packaged emergency kits consisting of medical equipment, PPE, consumables and medication to surge provinces.
- WHO Clinical and IPC team assisted correctional services in designing multi-disease isolation facilities.

Emergency Medical Team:

- The third wave across the country has presented many challenges across all aspects of health care provision. The National EMT has been assisting the clinical cluster in a few key milestones over this period.
- Apart from successful surge deployments, the team has also participated in the development of the National Oxygen Policy, Strategy and Delivery, worked with the logistics team and AUSMAT in sending out needed supplies to surge provinces quickly and addressed the ongoing challenge on collating the National Clinical Data Collection.
- The team's response is dependent on regularly updated data on Clinical Capacity and current burden coupled with outbreak modelling in order to enable the team to be more proactive in assisting PHAs.
- The PNG EMT Coordination Cell (EMTCC) welcomed two international partners AUSMAT and UK-MED to PNG while local PNG National EMT teams were also welcomed back from Goroka and Mt Hagen after being deployed for over 24 days.

Risk Communication and Community Engagement:

- Increasing perceived risk to drive demand over last weeks. Increased cases and corresponding deaths linked to current surge have led to increased vaccination and equally misinformation and anti-vaccination activity.
- Initiated planning on 40 days until Christmas Vaccination campaign through community awareness, church advocacy and Private Sector Mobile Vaccine Units (MVUs).
- Continued to track comments on institution/organization social media pages, feedback from community engagement, media monitoring and 'Dark social' monitoring of key groups. Compiling insights and responding through social media wraps.
- The RCCE cluster supported by WHO presented a social media tracking tool to handle the constant misinformation being spread through various channels.

Niupela Pasin:

- Total of 17 event requests and special requests were received by Niupela Pasin team this week. Two funeral/hauskrai requests and 2 wedding ceremonies were amongst the 15 grantees with clear promotion and adherence plans on NPIs/public health, social measures (PHSM) including 5 approved SOPs in place.
- The team also provided technical guidance on the development of Niupela Pasin Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for different events for PNG Tourism & Promotion Authority – Tourism Week and Electoral Commission Enrolment COVID-19 Mitigation this week.
- Initiated NPIs including vaccine advocacy to stakeholders this week. Meanwhile, provincial distribution plan for IEC materials was completed and shared with Logistics cluster to implement.
- Communication with provinces continued on revival of provincial RCCE/NP revival and rollout of Niupela Pasin next week. Conducted zoom meetings with Highlands and Momase regions with attendance of Eastern Highlands, Enga, Western Highlands, West Sepik and Madang provinces.

Logistics and Supplies:

- Approximately 15 tonnes of COVID-19 supplies, mostly PPE and laboratory items, were dispatched to the 18 consignees.

- AUSMAT supported by distributing surge kits consisting mainly of surge kits mainly PPEs to Southern Highlands, Enga, Western Highlands, Jiwaka, Simbu, Eastern Highlands, Morobe and Madang provinces. The uplift into provinces was coordinated by the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF).
- Continued receipt of outstanding donations from ADB and Global Fund at the Napa Napa Warehouse.
- Continued casual support by WHO to assist with warehousing tasks.
- Acknowledgement on industrial support by private and business house;
 - Gulf PPEs delivered by Native Industries
 - Transportation of PPE and additional warehouse casuls by Oil Search Ltd
 - Sea shipment arrangement by Bismark Maritime
 - Additional Napa Napa warehouse space donated by AES
 - Napa Napa warehouse equipment and consumables donated by Exxon

Figure 1: NCC COVID 19 PPE Stock on Hand as of 29 October, 2021

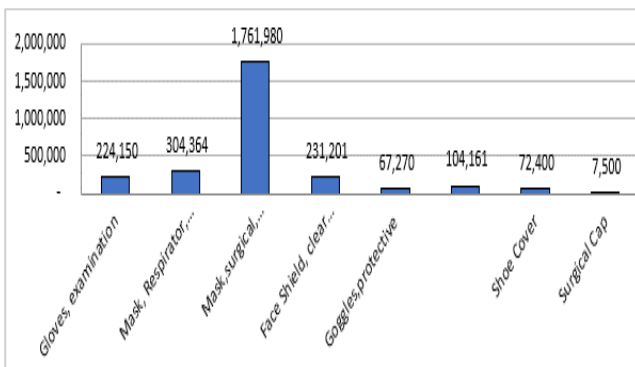
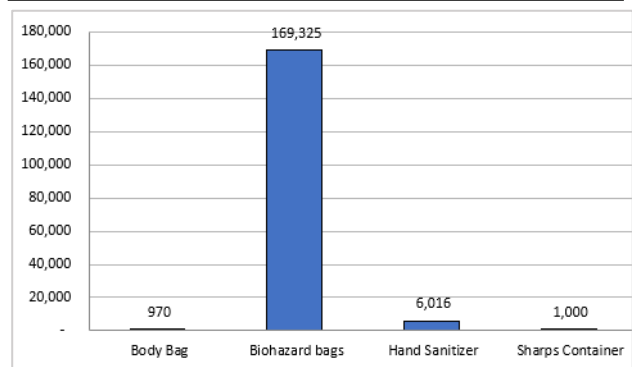


Figure 2: NCC COVID 19 IPC Stock on Hand as of 29 October, 2021



Quarantine & Points of Entry:

- As of 31 October, there were 682 people under quarantine (PUQ) of whom 104 were in home quarantine, 384 in quarantine hotels, 158 in company sites and 36 in organizational apartments.
- There was one reported COVID-19 case in international travellers during the reporting period. Investigation and contact tracing are being carried out and this traveller is in 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 – 16 June 2020)	3,788	
Total Number of Travelers Screened after SOE (17 June 2020 – 31 October 2021)	Air	30,963
	Sea	1,309
	Land	6

National Vaccination Rollout

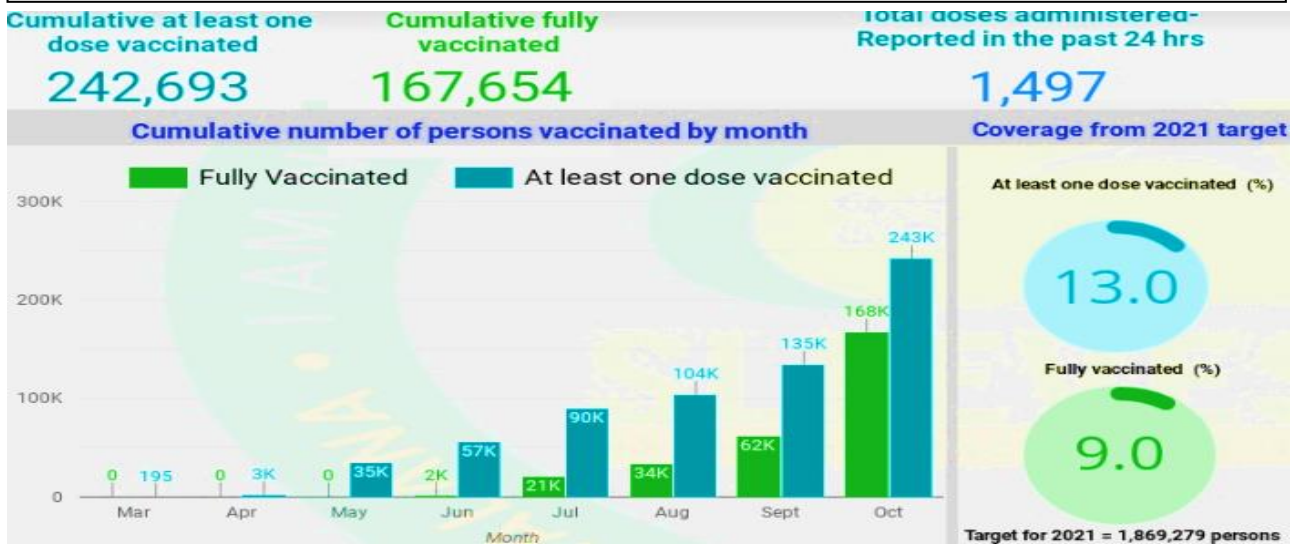
- As of 31 October 2021, 242,693 people have been vaccinated against COVID-19 with at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine. Over 167,654 people are fully vaccinated. This is 9% of the 20% target population for 2021 phase I target for COVID-19 vaccinations.

Figure 3: Vaccine distribution and balance summary as of 31 October, 2021

Type of vaccine	Doses Distributed	Doses administered	Balance
Astrazeneca	342,790	217,544	34,980
Johnson and Johnson (JJ)	291,350	87,956	111,940
Sinopharm	42,756	16,891	29,504

- Both Johnson & Johnson and Sinopharm vaccines are now available throughout PNG in every province of the country. Over 85,000 people have received the J&J vaccine, while over 15,000 doses of Sinopharm vaccine have been administered and over 216,000 doses of AZ vaccine administered.

Figure 4: PNG COVID-19 Vaccination cumulative number and coverage of persons vaccinated as of 31 October 2021



National and Provincial Health Update

- The Pandemic Response Coordination Group and the Health Operations Team continued to meet regularly at the National Control Centre.
- Police Commissioner and Controller of the National Pandemic Response Mr David Manning welcomed UK EMT on behalf of the PNG Government, saying PNG is facing significant challenges in the current COVID-19 pandemic and was grateful for the support from the British Government. Mr Manning said the UK EMT team was assigned to Western Highlands because of the dire situation in that province, but the situation in other provinces were also being monitored and help will be sent if needed.
- He also acknowledged the presence of the Australian Assistance Medical Team (AUSMAT) in the country.
- He said PNG has its own domestic EMT that has been responding to the surges in the provinces in the past two months but has its limitations thus the government sought help from its foreign friends, including the British Government.
- Under the National Pandemic Act 2020, the Controller has issued a number of measures aimed at mitigating the spread of the COVID-19 virus. One such measure includes the ban of gatherings of more than 20 persons. Any planned protest march is therefore not approved and against the efforts of the PNG government in stopping the spread of the virus.
- Full details of all containment measures can be found at www.covid19.info.gov.pg.

Partner Coordination Activities

- The most recent Health Cluster meeting was held on the 26th of October. Please email 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.
- The RCCE cluster supported by WHO presented a social media tracking tool to handle the constant misinformation being spread through various channels.

- A partner mapping tool has been created by WHO and UNOCHA and is being 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.
- Partners have been advised that there will be a shared document created for direct updates for health cluster members to update each week. This has been shared post the Health Cluster meeting on the 26th October.
- 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 who can assist in facilitating this.

Transmission Assessment

While the epidemic curve shows an increasing trend with a peak as high as that observed in the last surge (March/April 2021), more than 85% of the provinces (13/22), appear to show declining trend in the number of cases diagnosed between in week 42 compared to week 41.

When you look a week back - to allow a week for reporting to come in... not so many provinces are in decline. The decline seen in some provinces from last week is likely a reflection of the delayed reporting bias. Even with the caveat it could be misleading to use last week's data - What do you think? Suggest adding this at the start of the TSA:

In order to allow for delayed reporting and a current data entry backlog, we have conducted the transmission assessment based on cases diagnosed in week 42 (18-26 October, 2021).

MOMASE REGION

- East Sepik, West Sepik and Morobe have shown a decline in case numbers between weeks 41 and 42. While Morobe and Madang cases remained high (> 100 per week). Morobe and Madang are still considered to be in stage three (widespread) community transmission and East and West Sepik in stage two (localised spread).

HIGHLANDS REGION

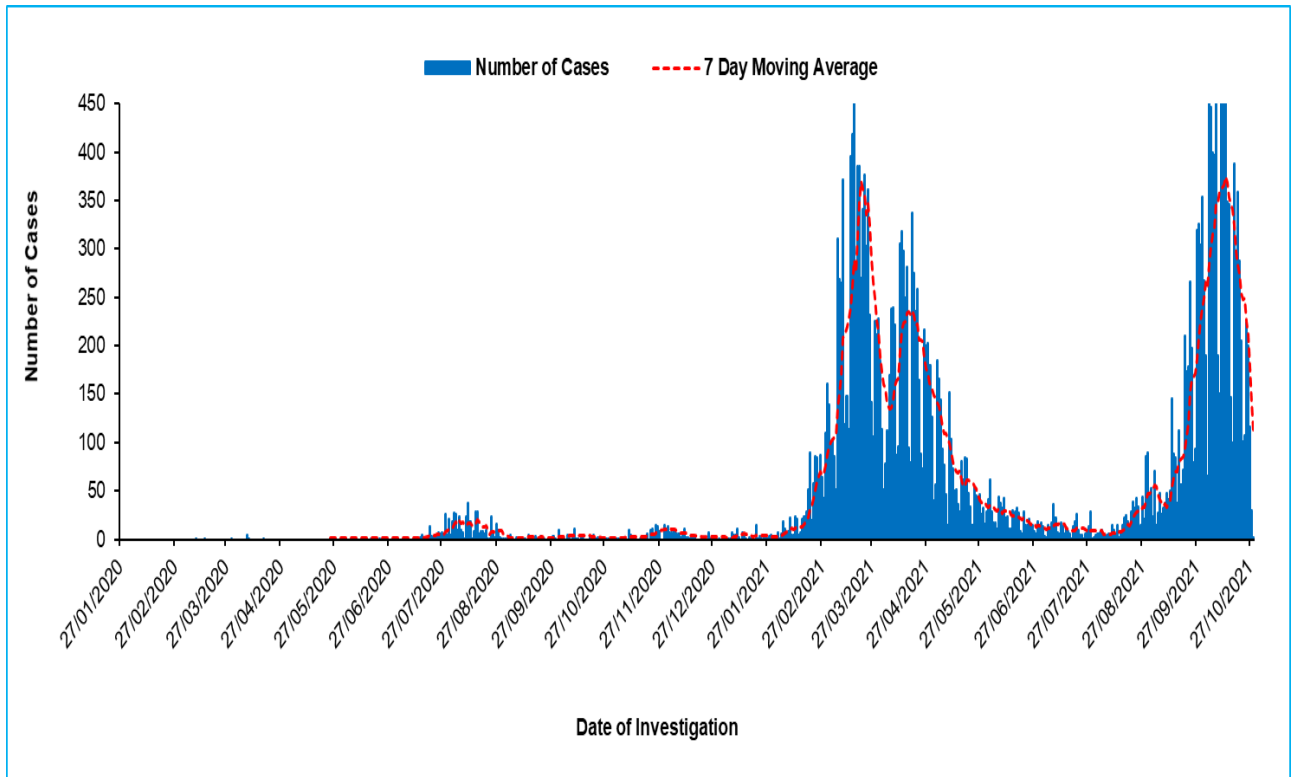
- EHP, WHP, Chimbu, Enga and Hela provinces show declining trends in the number of cases per week over several weeks after a notable surge in the preceding weeks, while the trend in cases for SHP, and Jiwaka provinces have been steady over several weeks to 25th October. All appear to be in wide spread (stage 3) community transmission and are still considered high risk in view of delayed reporting and unknown testing rates. In addition, COVID -19 hospital occupancy remains high (>70%) in Hela.

SOUTHERN REGION

- Western province was in stage 3 community transmission with surges in delta cases, now shows a significant reduction in the trend of cases over the three weeks to 25th October. WP accounted for 1% of cases reported in the last seven days and is considered to be in stage 2 community transmission.
- Milne Bay province, on the other hand, a low-risk province in last 14 days, appears to be in stage 3 community transmission now. However, unlike last week, it is now showing a decrease in the number of cases. This must be interpreted with caution due to delayed reporting and low testing rates observed in the province.
- NCD is showing a decrease in the number of cases diagnosed in week 42 (803) compared to week 41 (621) and in the context of increased testing but it may be too early to be interpreted and is still considered to be in stage 3 (wide spread) community transmission.
- Central province has seen a 50% increase in number of cases diagnosed in the week 42 compared to week 41 and given its proximity to NCD among other risk factors, it remains in stage 3 transmission.
- Gulf province was not reporting until the last few weeks. It is still considered to be in stage 2 transmission trends in influenza-like-illness.
- Northern (Oro) province is considered high risk and in stage 3 transmission given unofficial reports of increased cases and deaths (no formal reports have been received for 6 months, until 14 days ago, only 1 case was reported)

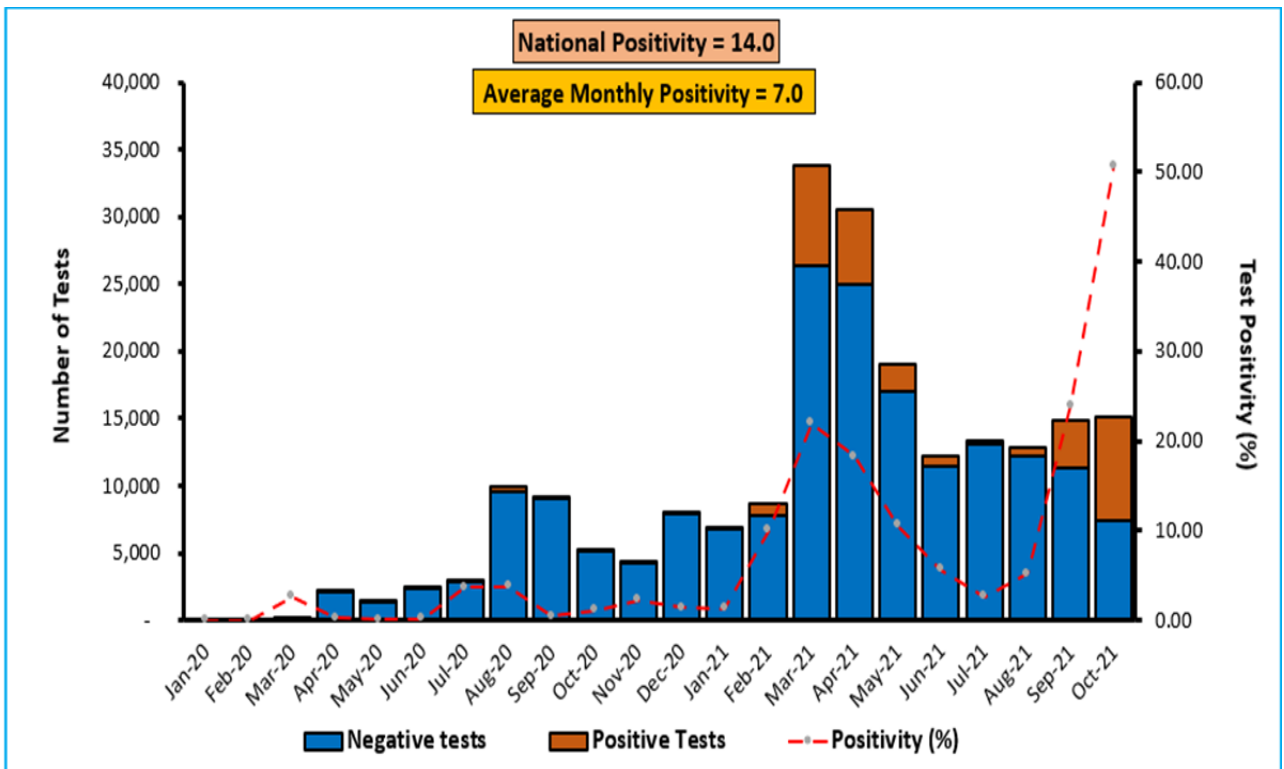
Epidemiology

Figure 5. Epidemiological curve of total COVID-19 cases in Papua New Guinea as of 31 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 6: Positivity and testing trend from 22 Jan 2020 - 31 October 2021



ANNEX – Photos

Photo 1: A group picture of the six members of the team with PNG EMT lead Dr Nou, Deputy lead Dr Kapua and the United Kingdom High Commissioner to PNG Keith Scott



Photo 2: EMT in ward round in COVID area in Goroka Provincial Hospital Emergency



Photo 3: AUSMAT, Clinical, Logistics and RAA loading PPE Surge kits being loaded bound for surge provinces

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