



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 27 June 2021 (12:00 pm), there were a cumulative total of 17,192 COVID-19 cases and 174 COVID-19 deaths reported in Papua New Guinea (PNG). From the period of 21 June to 27 June, there were 154 new cases and 1 additional death reported from Manus Province.
- ❑ NCD surveillance officers were amongst the first to receive GoData Training. Provinces are encouraged to immediately utilize GoData to take ownership and manage their COVID response.
- ❑ As of 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2021, a total of 49,822 people have been vaccinated in PNG. This includes 7,348 health workers and 39,274 essential workers and 3,200 people over the ages of 45 with comorbidities.
- ❑ Over 700 people have received their 2<sup>nd</sup> dose of the COVID-19 AstraZeneca Vaccine and thereby fulfilled the criteria for maximum protection offered by the vaccine as of the 27<sup>th</sup> June.
- ❑ Papua New Guinea received 200,000 doses of Sinopharm vaccine on 23<sup>rd</sup> June donated by Chinese Government.
- ❑ Three COVID-19 vaccines approved for use in country are AstraZeneca, Pfizer, for American citizens only, and Sinopharm for Chinese nationals.
- ❑ New PCR lab in Angau Memorial Hospital has kicked off this week with RT-PCR testing under on-site guidance and mentoring by NDOH and WHO counterparts.
- ❑ Key survey and social insight findings from the WHO/WPRO Perceptions and Behaviour Insights Survey and the [COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy in essential workers and the community in Papua New Guinea: an exploratory mixed-methods study](#) was completed by Field Epidemiology Training Program.

**Table 1. Newly reported COVID-19 cases in PNG<sup>1</sup>**

	New Cases (21 to 27 June 2021)	Cumulative Total
AROB	29	435
Central	1	271
East New Britain	5	1181
East Sepik	0	252
Eastern Highlands	11	738
Enga	4	283
Gulf	5	131
Hela	21	168
Jiwaka	2	155
Madang	3	430
Manus	0	479
Milne Bay	14	232
Morobe	1	1191
National Capital District	20	5166
New Ireland	11	545
Northern (Oro)	0	196
Simbu	0	236
Southern Highlands	5	214
West New Britain	1	1021
West Sepik	4	449
Western	2	2393
Western Highlands	15	1031
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>17197</b>

<sup>1</sup> As of 27/06/2021, 12:00 pm, PNG time

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

	Confirmed Cases	Deaths
Global	180 654 652	3 920 463
Western Pacific	3 521 244	54 069

<sup>2</sup> WHO COVID-19 Dashboard as of 28/06/2021, 22:45 CEST

## Pillar Updates & Priorities

### Surveillance:

- The number of newly reported confirmed positive cases have been low and more than half being reported with a two (2) 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%.
- First GoData training workshop was conducted with staff from NCD PHA and National Control Centre (NCC) Surveillance.
- Whole genome sequencing has been completed in Australia for an additional 327 COVID-19 positive samples from PNG. To date, no variants of concern have been identified. One new genomically-linked cluster has been identified, taking the total number of clusters to five (5). These samples are all of the B.1.466.2 lineage and further epidemiologic analysis is underway to link these qualitatively to other known clusters.

### COVID-19 Hotline:

- For the reporting period of 21-27 June, the COVID-19 National Hotline received 3561 calls. Of these, 32 (about 0.90%) were health-related calls. 20 of these were referred to the Rapid Response Team/PHA.
- As of 27<sup>th</sup> June, the hotline had received a total of 257,288 calls. Of these, 6,330 (2.5%) were health-related calls. A total of 2570 calls to date have been referred to Rapid Response Team/PHAs.
- The hotline is receiving a high number of calls from people seeking information around vaccination, vaccination sites in the provinces, vaccine side effects, 2<sup>nd</sup> dose follow-up and vaccination pathways for general public. High number of callers are also following up for certificate of release from quarantine.

### Laboratory:

- The mentoring in the RT-PCR laboratory at Angau Memorial Hospital took place as the laboratory received its first batch of COVID-19 samples to be tested which all came out negative.
- The expected containerised laboratory was reported to have issues with the customs in the country of origin and has not arrived as anticipated.
- Completion of laboratory mapping of all laboratories in country to identify their location and the type of test conducted.
- Training schedule has been finalised with organizations that have requested to carry out Ag-RDT testing after their laboratories have been certified.

### Emergency Medical Teams (EMTs):

- Currently there are no international EMTs in country.
- An initial meeting was held with Team UK-Med, an international team from the UK, on possible provinces for deployment.

### **Clinical Management:**

- ❑ Clinical management referral pathways, review of the isolation strategy and data management were top three (3) priority areas of focus identified during a meeting hosted by National Capital District (NCD) Provincial Health Authority (PHA) for all its health partners in the province.
- ❑ Other areas of focus were the development of scenario-based training package with clinicians from NDOH and completion of guidelines for post mortem swabbing.

### **Infection Prevention and Control (IPC):**

- ❑ The IPC team supported a key meeting with NDOH to discuss the IPC strategy and key areas of support have been identified for the coming 3-6 months. An area of focus will be supporting the launch of the National IPC Policy in August. The team are working towards completing the National IPC Guidelines to be in line with the policy launch.
- ❑ The team focused on developing training material that encompasses scenario-based learning, trialled during the week in a day of training with key health workers from NCDPHA clinics.

### **Risk Communication & Non-Pharmaceutical Interventions (NPIs):**

- ❑ Development of Advocacy, Community Engagement and Social Mobilisation plan to support PHA's and Vaccine Cluster with the low vaccine uptake to increase vaccine demand, reduce vaccine hesitancy and to minimize vaccine wastage in key provinces.
- ❑ Commenced production of approved 'Vaccine Champion' IEC awareness materials which undertook an urgent revision to include changes in eligibility to 18 years and over. Plans to extend distribution to partners, business houses and private sectors as requested. E-copies of all IEC materials including videos of champions have been compiled and link to be shared with respective organizations to improve advocacies.
- ❑ Results from phase 2 of a pilot vaccine mobilisation 'In-App' click through campaign received included key insights from short survey on vaccine hesitancy.
- ❑ Production of short testimonial films featuring leaders of the seven mainline churches under PNG Council of Churches has commenced. This is part of a wider advocacy plan developed by UNICEF to support NCC and NDoH to promote the position of churches on vaccination, sharing widely the signed declaration and key messages all captured within the video.
- ❑ Key survey and social insight findings from the WHO/WPRO Perceptions and Behaviour Insights Survey and the [COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy in essential workers and the community in Papua New Guinea: an exploratory mixed-methods study](#) were completed by the Field Epidemiology team.

### **Logistics and Supplies:**

- ❑ About 1tonne of COVID-19 supplies mainly PPEs were dispatched to Morobe and Manus Provinces. The team continues to process requests for COVID-19 supplies including IPC and lab consumables from provinces weekly.
- ❑ Donations from ADB, DFAT and British American Tobacco 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.

- ❑ Received one (1) portable x-ray machine from UK funded through WHO. Currently stored at the Health Facility Standard Branch while in transit for final destination (where will be the final destination??).

**Quarantine & Point of Entry:**

- ❑ As of 27<sup>th</sup> June, there were 451 people under quarantine (PUQ) of which 90 were in home quarantine, 261 in hotels, 86 in company sites and 20 in apartments.
- ❑ There are no reported COVID-19 cases of international travellers in quarantine during this reporting period, however two (2) COVID-19 positive cases were identified during screening at the Jackson’s International airport for out-bound travellers over the weekend. Investigations and contact tracing are being carried out and the individuals are 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 (18 June 2020 – 26 June 2021)	Air	22,595
	Sea	671
	Land	6

**National Vaccine Rollout**

- ❑ A total of 200, 000 doses of Sinopharm donated by the Chinese Government has arrived in country on 23<sup>rd</sup> June. 20,000 doses will be for Chinese nationals, while the rest is a donation to PNG. Sinopharm vaccine has been officially listed by the World Health Organisation for emergency use on 7th May.
- ❑ A total of 137 vaccination sites have started vaccinations, out of 169 sites planned to provide COVID-19 vaccinations nationwide.
- ❑ As of 25<sup>th</sup> June 2021, a total of 53,354 people has been vaccinated in PNG. This includes 7,519 health workers and 40,228 essential workers and 5,607 people over the ages of 18 including those with comorbidities.
- ❑ 40% vaccination coverage of health care workers and other essential workers across the country.
- ❑ Over 700 people have received their 2<sup>nd</sup> dose of the COVID-19 AstraZeneca Vaccine.

Figure 1. Cumulative number of persons vaccinated by region and province



## National and Provincial Public Health Response

- The Pandemic Response Coordination Group and the Health Operations Team continue to meet on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays at the National Control Centre.
- Western Highlands, East New Britain, West New Britain and Manus have submitted their provincial SITREPs and routine updates. Compliance on regularly reporting from provinces is still very low.

### National Capital District

- NDOH, FHi 360 and WHO technical officers conducted the first GoData training in NCD. A total of 20 surveillance and lab officers from NCD and NCC participated in the training consisting of theory and practical sessions. Overview of the GoData application, data entry portals and a refresher on the updated Case Investigation Forms (CIFs) were all covered during the training.
- This workshop will form a basis for the development of a full training package for provincial GoData training. As part of this workshop the entry of a backlog of CIFs was also initiated at Rita Flynn. The training in NCD was support by NCDPHA partner - FHi360.

- ❑ The clinical management team attended a meeting organised by the NCDPHA for all its health partners. Three main areas of focus going forward are referral pathways within NCD, data management and a review of the isolation strategy within NCD. Other areas of focus are the development of scenario-based training packages with clinicians from NDOH and completion of guidelines for post mortem swabbing.

### **Morobe**

- ❑ Angau Memorial Hospital laboratory is the first provincial laboratory apart from CPHL to initiate RT PCR testing in the province. All local samples for PCR testing in the province can now be PCR tested in Angau, with the intention to support Momase region for testing in the near future. This effort will reduce the turnaround time and improve quality of reporting and management of contact tracing.
- ❑ During a site supervisory visit to an Ag-RDT testing site in Lae, it was inevitably noticed that people were not coming for swabbing. This poses a threat to the provincial response when there is minimum data on the spread of disease in the community.

## **Transmission Assessment**

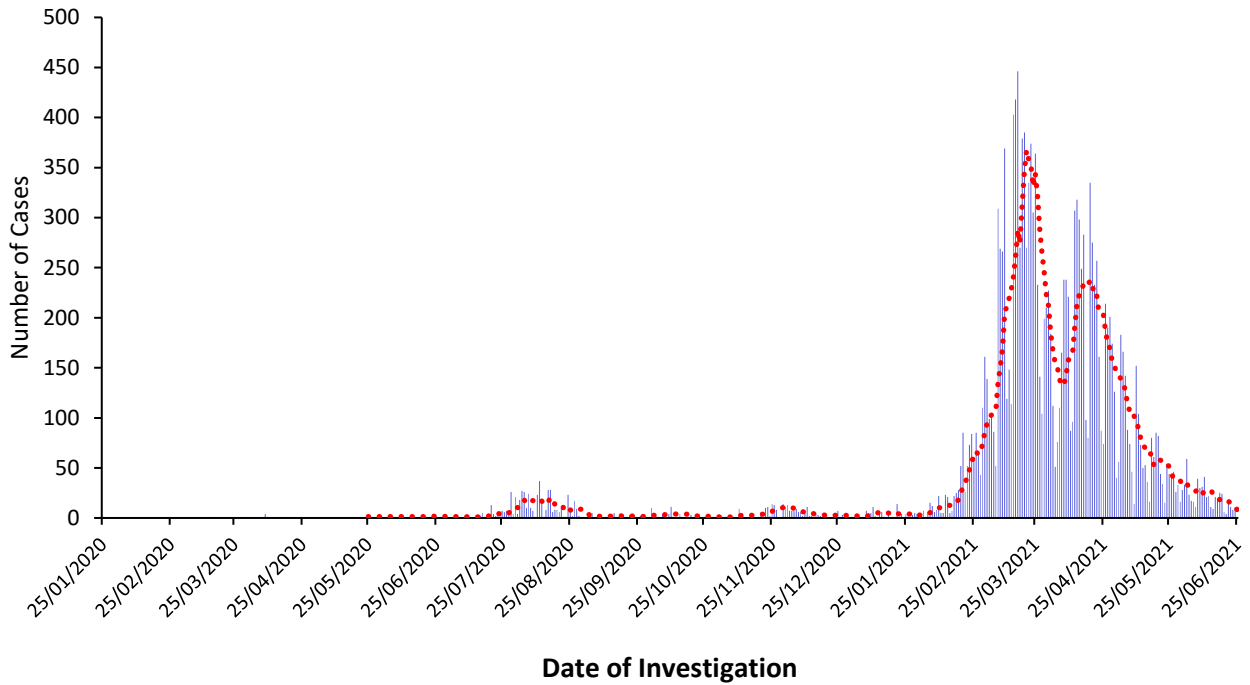
Currently COVID-19 cases are being reported from across PNG, with cases reported from 18 out of 22 provinces in the previous seven days. Northern (Oro), East Sepik, Chimbu and Manus did not report any cases on the past seven days. The epidemic curve, although showing a marked decline in the trend, should 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](https://bit.ly/WPRODashboard)

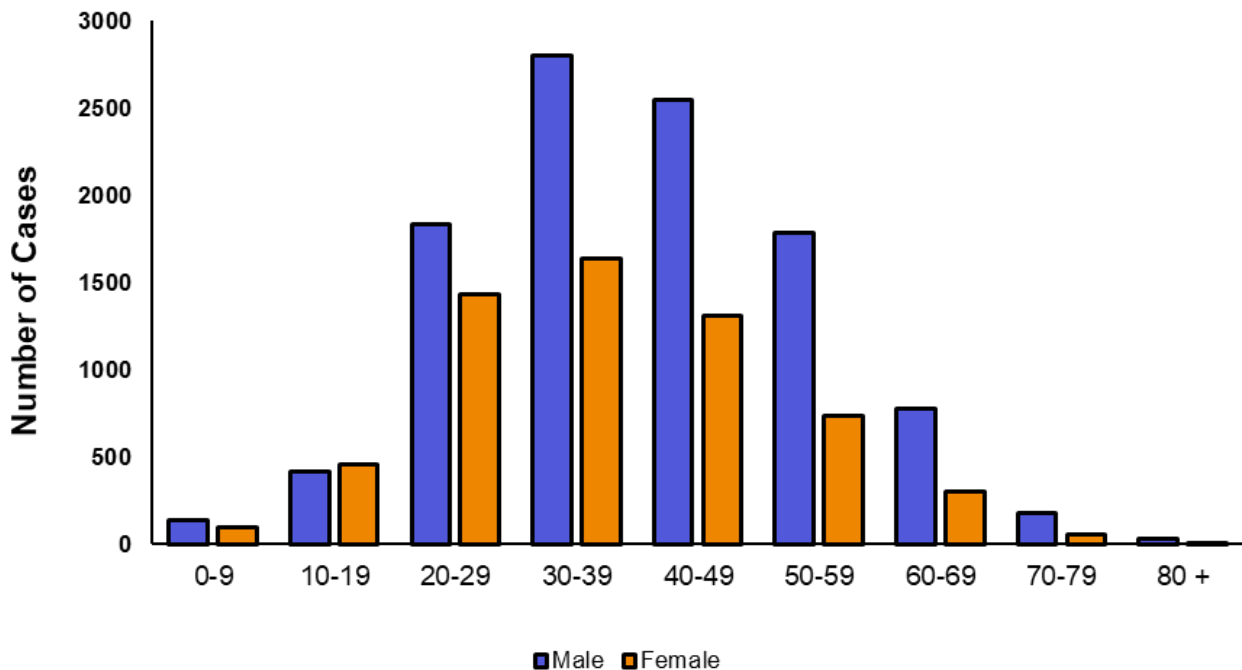
## Epidemiology

**Figure 3. Epidemiological curve of COVID-19 cases in Papua New Guinea, 15 March 2020 to 27 June 2021**



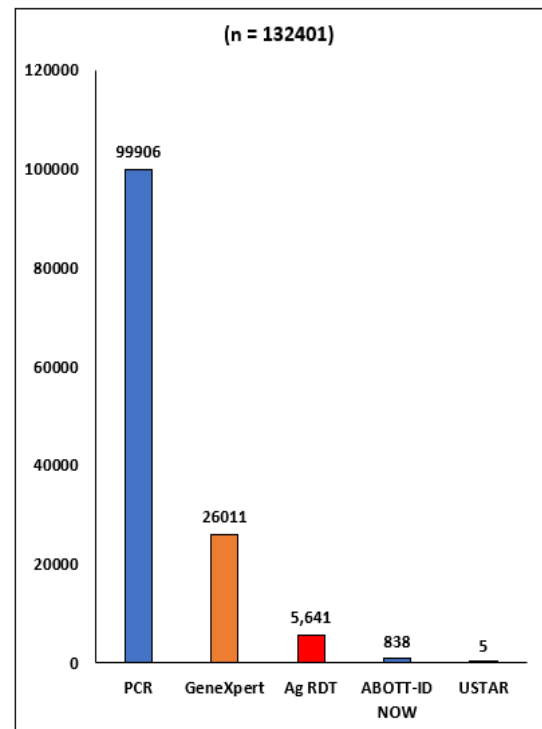
*Please note: The true extent of the decreasing trend must be interpreted with caution as there are delays in receiving and reporting results from provinces.*

**Figure 3: Occurrence of COVID-19 cases according to age and gender as at June 27<sup>th</sup> 2021 (63% male, 36% female and 1% unknown; n=17192)**



**Table 4: Tests done by provinces in the last 7 days (21<sup>st</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> June 21)  
 (n=132 401)**

Provinces	Ag RDT	ABBOT-ID NOW	USTAR	GeneXpert	PCR	Total Tests
NCD	1156	316	5	12245	30011	43,733
Western	22			883	11907	12,812
WNB	476			1099	9891	11,466
Morobe	891			657	5963	7,511
WHP	804			837	5382	7,023
NIP	91			524	6218	6,833
ENB	29			1778	4834	6,641
EHP	90			1104	3551	4,746
SHP	9	44		146	4213	4,412
ARoB	553			795	2743	4,091
Manus	513			203	2482	3,198
Hela		156		648	2050	2,854
WSP				621	1934	2,555
Enga	1			684	1650	2,335
Madang	389			1527	252	2,168
CEP	8	322		28	1697	2,055
ESP	34			403	1404	1,841
MBP	1			562	1085	1,648
Gulf	440			282	509	1,231
Chimbu				596	270	866
Oro				49	724	773
Jiwaka	134			340	201	675
MISSING				0	935	935
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>5,641</b>	<b>838</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>26,011</b>	<b>99,906</b>	<b>132,401</b>





## ANNEX A – Photos

Photo 1: Chinese ambassador to PNG Zeng Fanhua, Minister for National Planning and Monitoring Reinbo Paita and Deputy Controller for the National Pandemic Response Dr Daoni Esorom at the airport beside the containers of the newly arrived Sinopharm vaccine.



Photo 2: Sign and exchange notes on the arrival of the Sinopharm vaccine



Photo 3: Mentoring of trained staff as the new PCR lab takes off in Angau, Lae, Morobe Province



Photo 4: GoData training attended by surveillance officers from NCD PHA and NCC



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