

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

Situation Summary and Highlights

- ❑ As of 11 April 2021 (12:00 pm), there have been 8602 COVID-19 cases and 69 COVID-19 deaths reported in Papua New Guinea. From the period of 05 to 11 April, there were 1565 new cases and 8 new deaths reported.
- ❑ Due to logistical difficulties, lengthy test turnaround time, public holidays, clinic shutdowns, and low testing capacity in PNG, there have been delays in swabbing, testing, and reporting of results, thus the number of cases reported in the last week is an under-representation of the situation that is occurring.
- ❑ The total number of provinces that have reported COVID-19 cases to date is twenty-one. Only Manus Province has not reported cases to date.
- ❑ 132,000 doses of the AstraZeneca Vaccine are expected to arrive in PNG on Tuesday 13 March through the COVAX facility.
- ❑ Following a request by the Government of PNG on 19 March for international Emergency Medical Teams (EMTs) to deploy, several teams have now arrived in PNG.

Table 1. Newly reported COVID-19 cases in PNG¹

	New Cases (05-11 April 2021)	Cumulative Total
AROB	22	127
Central	13	105
East New Britain	93	317
East Sepik	12	84
Eastern Highlands	77	374
Enga	15	68
Gulf	0	13
Hela	3	26
Jiwaka	19	52
Madang	16	87
Milne Bay	1	14
Morobe	121	401
National Capital District	519	3516
New Ireland	1	89
Northern (Oro)	3	3
Simbu	43	108
Southern Highlands	3	69
West New Britain	23	237
West Sepik	31	356
Western ²	390	2244
Western Highlands	160	312
TOTAL	1565	8602

¹ As of 11/04/2021, 12:00 pm, PNG time
² 1960 cases (87%) from North Fly; 2 cases Middle Fly; 32 cases South Fly; 250 have no district stated

Summary of Activities and Upcoming Priorities

Surveillance:

- ❑ Training was provided last week to 5 staff from UNDP who have volunteered to assist the NCDPHA with contact tracing for up to 20 hours per week.
- ❑ The team have also been working with PHAs to ensure timely and accurate reporting of all cases at the national level, and ongoing cleaning of national line list to reflect new information received.
- ❑ Validation of antigen rapid diagnostic tests (AgRDT) continues, with the Institute of Medical Research in Goroka conducting additional testing and validation.
- ❑ This week the team continues to work with partners to ensure the GoData system is complete and ready for use by provincial surveillance teams and laboratories.

Note: Due to additional data cleaning, provincial case numbers may not add up from last week.

Table 2. COVID-19 GLOBAL AND REGIONAL UPDATE²

	Confirmed Cases	Deaths
Global	135 446 538	2 927 922
Western Pacific	2 095 750	33 708

² WHO COVID-19 Dashboard as of 12/04/2021, 10:29 CEST

Quarantine & Port of Entry:

- 303 passengers were screened at POE over the last 7 days.
- As of 11 April, there were 394 people under quarantine (PUQ) of which 42 were in home quarantine, 312 in hotels, 24 in company sites and 16 in managed apartments.
- Quarantine numbers are now at their lowest since June 2020 due to travellers cancelling travel in relation to the Spike in COVID-19 in Numbers as well the current ban on fly in fly out personnel in the resources sector.
- There were no reported cases of symptomatic PUQs in this reporting period.

Laboratory:

- Last week the Laboratory team held a series of planning meetings aimed at developing strategies to improve the turnaround time for testing and release of results.
- Meetings were also held around improving the distribution of lab commodities including the development of a procurement plan for consumable products to enable continued PCR testing at provincial level.
- Plans are also being developed to deploy 2 mobile laboratories which can process 3000 samples per day.

Clinical Management and Infection Prevention and Control:

- Last week the team finalised the development of a Home Isolation Guideline and Isolation Facility SOP which are both now ready for distribution.
- IPC and Clinical Management (CM) training was provided for Gerheu and Paradise Hospitals, and training for safe handling for deceased repatriations was conducted with Air Niugini frontline staff.
- A technical working group has been formed with the Department of Correctional Services, ICRC, NDOH and NCC to look at clinical pathways for COVID-19 outbreaks in prisons.
- The CM team is working together with the Logistics team to look at oxygen supply and distribution to hospitals and the bottlenecks that affect its effective distribution.
- A concept note is also being developed for the establishment of self-contained PSA containerised oxygen plants in Port Moresby and key regions

Risk Communication & Non-Pharmaceutical Interventions (NPIs):

- Communications Messaging for roll out of Vaccine mass media campaign is being finalized for approval for IEC materials for distribution including posters, brochure and quote cards, as well as a Q&A on Vaccine Safety which will be published in on Monday 22nd April's Post Courier.
- Team is also working on strategy for International Immunisation Week, for which the communications approach has been finalised and includes mass media and community-based approaches. The 60 second script will be adapted into multiple tools targeting different audiences, including community IEC materials.
- Interviews have continued for the COVID-19 Champion initiative which will feature on EMTV and TV1 with the latest champion Dr Daoni, Incident Manager of NCC.
- Team commenced advocacy for vaccine rollout with NDoH Health Promotion team leading sessions with the Nurses Union and Correctional Services on vaccine rollout and safety.
- Next week the team will focus on finalising vaccine media campaign including developing community-based approaches together with dissemination of key campaign messages and tools

- The team will also be working to identify, and map current communications activities being undertaken by key sectors of public, private and NGO sectors to inform improved coordination and strengthen communications efforts.
- A social listening cell is also being established to monitor misinformation.

Niuplea Pasin

- The Niuplea Pasin team continue to Provincial Enforcement of Measures through ongoing collaboration with Police, National Capital District Commission, National Road Safety Authority and other relevant stakeholders.
- Police Posts have been established in all main bus stops and marketplaces to monitor and enforce Niuplea Pasin Measures (Gordons, Waigani, Manu, Boroko, Gerehu and 9 Mile).
- Business Houses continue to enforce the Niuplea Pasin Measures in their respective settings with “No Mask No Entry or Service” being the major measure enforced, as well as hand wash and social distancing.
- Reporting Checklist was provided to enforcement authorities, business council representatives and provincial focal leads to report on compliance of Niuplea Pasin measures however completed reports are yet to be received from provinces.
- The Port Moresby Northwest by elections have been considered a high risk event therefore a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) on Elections during Covid 19 pandemic has been developed. The SOP was developed in Consultation with the Electoral Commission, Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary and the National Control Centre. This Draft SOP is now Pending endorsement from the National Pandemic Controller.
- A meeting was with representatives from the Chinese and Bangladesh Business Community to give notice to the Chinese and Bangladesh Community to ensure their compliance of the Niuplea Pasin Measures in their respective settings.
- Follow-up monitoring visits to those business sites will be conducted next week.

COVAX/Vaccine Planning & Introduction:

- 132,000 doses of the AstraZeneca Vaccine are expected to arrive in PNG on Tuesday 13 March through the COVAX facility.
- Vaccination of NCD health care workers is continuing with a total of 1081 persons having been vaccinated to date.
- The National Technical Working Group meetings continue weekly to progress planning for National roll out.

Logistics and Supplies:

- Last week the team completed the loading of hand sanitizers to Bismarck Containers for all Highlands provinces and Morobe. The items will be shipped by sea then by truck to consignees.
- 2,000 UTMs were dispatched to Rita Flynn and PNGIMR Goroka.
- Donated biomedical supplies from the UK Government have partially arrived and the team is following up to expedite shipping of the remaining items.
- Controller approval was granted for waste area and management project and the team is currently coordinating with CEPA for Emergency Authorization to implement the project.
- Next week the team will Continue to dispatch PPE and Lab items to provinces and will continue actively communicating with to confirm the first 4 sites waste management.

Transmission Assessment

There are currently surges occurring in several provinces across PNG, with 20 out of 22 provinces reporting cases in the previous seven days. This includes the first cases reported from Northern (Oro) Province. There have been extended delays in swabbing, sending samples for testing, and receipt of results from laboratories, which means that even people meeting the case definition for COVID-19 testing are not always able to be swabbed and receive their test results in a timely manner. In addition, large-scale population-level testing remains low across most of PNG. As such, test positivity is high, with some laboratories reporting over of 30% of tests returning positive results.

Twenty-one out of 22 provinces, including Autonomous Region of Bougainville (AROB) have reported at least one COVID-19 case since March 2020. However, due to testing limitations and inadequate staffing to conduct thorough contact tracing for all cases, the ability to conduct provincial transmission assessments is somewhat limited. Community transmission is occurring throughout much of PNG, including AROB, East New Britain, Eastern Highlands, Jiwaka, Morobe, National Capital District (NCD), Simbu, West New Britain, Western, and Western Highlands.

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

Epidemiology

Figure 1. Epidemiological curve of COVID-19 cases in Papua New Guinea, 15 March 2020 to 11 April 2021

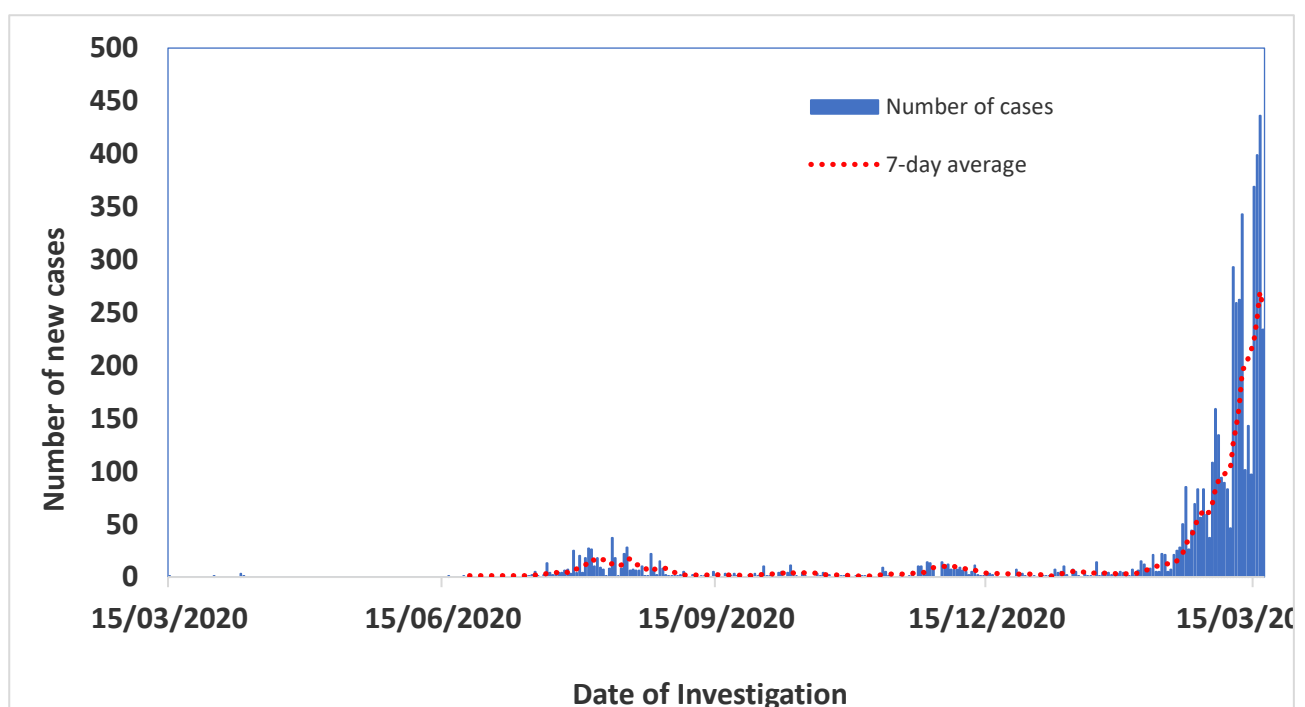


Figure 2. Percentage age distribution of COVID-19 cases (65% male, n=4437), 15 March 2020 to 11 April 2021

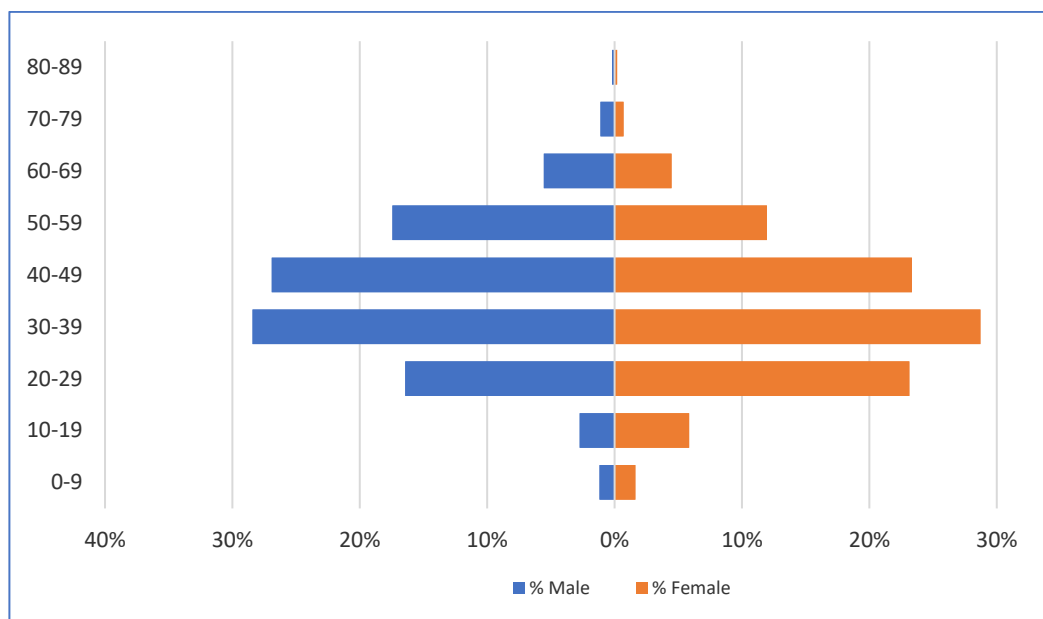


Table 4. Persons Screened by Point of Entry

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 – 10 April 2021)	Air	17,661
	Sea	671
	Land	6
	Total	18,318

COVID-19 Hotline

- For the period of 5 April to 11 April, the COVID-19 National Hotline received 6500 calls. Of these, 56 (about 0.89%) were health-related calls. 22 of these were referred to the Rapid Response Team/PHA.
- As of 11 April, the hotline had received a total of 208,964 calls. Of these, 5,743 (2.7%) were health-related calls. A total of 2244 calls to date have been referred to Rapid Response Team/PHAs.
- The hotline is receiving an increase in the numbers of call relating to questions about the vaccine rollout and vaccine safety.

Strategic Approach

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.
- ❑ Focus continues to be on supporting PHAs with Surveillance, Clinical Management and Testing.

Emergency Medical Teams (EMTs)

- ❑ Following a request by the Government of PNG on 19 March for international Emergency Medical Teams (EMTs) to deploy, several teams have now arrived in PNG.
- ❑ The Australia Medical Assistance Team (AUSMAT) forward team arrived in PNG on 23 March, and their 19-person Bravo (second) rotation arrived on 9 April.
- ❑ US-based Team Rubicon's seven-person EMT arrived in PNG on 8 April and deployed to the Western Highlands on 10 April for a six-week deployment.
- ❑ German EMT Johanniter will arrive on 13 April and will work alongside St John Ambulance in Taurama Aquatic Centre.
- ❑ Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF - Doctors without Borders) is also scaling up their support for the Rita Flynn isolation facility in Port Moresby.
- ❑ In total, over 40 doctors, nurses, allied health professionals and logisticians are being mobilized to support PNG's COVID response.
- ❑ All EMT staff/volunteers are licensed, and they are responsible for providing the same high standards of care that they would provide in their normal work in their home countries. All are highly experienced and trained, and all have also been vaccinated against COVID-19.
- ❑ EMTs will work alongside PNG health workers in PNG's hospitals and come at no cost to Papua New Guinea. An EMT Coordination Cell (EMTCC) has been established in the National Control Centre to facilitate EMT mobilisation, tasking and deployments. The EMTCC is jointly led by the National Department of Health and WHO.

ANNEX A – Photos



Photo 1: Team Rubicon EMT arriving from the USA.



Photo 2-3: Contact Tracing Training for UNDP staff to support NCD PHA.

For more information about this Situation Report, contact:

Dr Daoni Esorom
Incident Manager – COVID-19
National Department of Health
Email: daoniesorom@gmail.com; Mobile: +675-72313983

Greg Cameron
Information & Planning Pillar Lead
National Control Centre / UN RCO
Email: greg.cameron@undp.org