

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 22nd August 2021 (12:00 pm), a cumulative total of 17,926 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 192 COVID-19 deaths were reported in Papua New Guinea (PNG).
- ❑ From the period of 16th August – 22nd August, there were 96 newly confirmed COVID-19 cases reported with zero deaths.
- ❑ 19 new Delta Variant cases detected in North Fly, Western province bringing the cumulative total to 30 cases. There's no detection of any other variant of concern in the country apart from Delta.
- ❑ Over 99,401 people has received at least one dose of vaccine and 58.17% vaccination coverage of health care workers and other essential workers across the country as of 22nd August.
- ❑ Over 30,095 people received their 2nd dose of the COVID-19 AstraZeneca Vaccine.
- ❑ A joint delegation from NCC and WHO visited Morobe province this week and met with Morobe Provincial Health Authority. The team provided appropriate technical support and guidance at several targeted facilities including isolation facilities.
- ❑ National Control Centre to take action against Indian High Commission and others on repatriation flight deception

Table 1. Newly reported COVID-19 cases in PNG¹

| | New Cases (16 August to 22 August 2021) | Cumulative Total |
|---------------------------|--|---------------------|
| AROB | 0 | 445 |
| Central | 3 | 279 |
| East New Britain | 0 | 753 |
| East Sepik | 0 | 1215 |
| Eastern Highlands | 0 | 293 |
| Enga | 0 | 257 |
| Gulf | 0 | 133 |
| Hela | 0 | 189 |
| Jiwaka | 0 | 163 |
| Madang | 8 | 509 |
| Manus | 0 | 516 |
| Milne Bay | 0 | 239 |
| Morobe | 5 | 1291 |
| National Capital District | 16 | 5298 |
| New Ireland | 0 | 583 |
| Northern (Oro) | 0 | 196 |
| Simbu | 0 | 217 |
| Southern Highlands | 0 | 276 |
| West New Britain | 0 | 2434 |
| West Sepik | 22 | 1081 |
| Western | 39 | 1026 |
| Western Highlands | 4 | 533 |
| TOTAL | 97 | 17926 |

¹ As of 22/08/2021, 12:00 pm, PNG time

Pillar Updates & Priorities

Surveillance:

- ❑ As of 22nd August, a total of 1 newly confirmed COVID case and 0 deaths reported while the cumulative cases are 17,926 and 192 deaths with case fatality rate of 1%. There are 132 active cases and 17,602 cases have recovered.
- ❑ In the last seven days, a total of 97 cases were reported from nine provinces, an increase of 50% compared to previous week. Contact tracing activities was carried out for the seven (7) close contacts of the two positive cases detected this week in Western Highlands province. All seven close contacts were tested and results turned out negative.

Table 2. COVID-19 GLOBAL AND REGIONAL UPDATE²

| | Confirmed Cases | Deaths |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------|
| Global | 213 050 725 | 4 448 352 |
| Western Pacific | 6 064 157 | 84 364 |

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

- ❑ The border provinces Western and West Sepik accounted for the highest number of cases at 63% followed by NCD at 16% and the rest of the provinces as shown in Table 1 above.
- ❑ Among all cases reported in the last seven days from Western Province, about 50% (20/39) were identified as delta variant cases. The new cumulative number of delta cases is now at 30 as of 22nd August. 23% (7/30) of the total delta cases were imported while the rest 77% (23/30) have now been concluded to have been acquired through local transmission.
- ❑ Phylogenetic analysis has shown possible genetic linkage between delta cases in Western province and Indonesia, a similar finding to cases of the Indonesian Grand Tajima ship and the Madang case, as reported last week. This preliminary data indicates high possibility of cross border importation of the Delta strain.
- ❑ The median age (of all local delta cases) is 37 years with an age range between (21-66 years) where majority are males constituting 67% of the total local cases and health care workers accounted for 5% of the total local cases. It has been reported 100% recovery rates of all local delta cases although 70% of the cases are still classified as active cases (diagnosed in the last 21 days).
- ❑ 80% (24/30) of the delta cases were unvaccinated while 1st and 2nd dose vaccination were 10% each respectively. All 122 close contacts of the 22 Delta cases this were actively contacted and followed up. They were all asymptomatic cases.
- ❑ With low level of testing through-out the country, hence limited available data, it is believed that community transmission of COVID-19 is occurring in much of PNG. Western, NCD and Madang provinces would appear to be in stage 3 widespread community transmission while all other provinces in PNG would appear to have stage 2 localised community transmission.
- ❑ The epidemic curve continues to show a marked decline in the trend and is consistent with the observed declining trend of ILI/SARI and respiratory illnesses and a declining testing positivity. However, in the context of delayed or under reporting, overall low testing and limited contact tracing activities, positivity must be interpreted with caution.

Laboratory:

- ❑ For the week, 167 samples were collected and tested in the provinces, of which 138 samples were tested using Ag RDT. Of the samples tested this week, 17 were positive for COVID-19 (11 positives from Western Province and 6 positives from NCD). 54 samples from NCD tested using GeneXpert at CPHL while 823 samples were shipped to Goroka PNGIMR to test using RT PCR.
- ❑ Provinces are urged to report all COVID-19 testing carried out in province regardless of the testing platforms nor results and include private clinics.

COVID-19 Hotline:

- ❑ As of 22th August, hotline has received a cumulative total of 276,816 calls. Of these, 6,494 (2.3%) were health-related calls. A total of 2742 calls to date have been referred to Rapid Response Team/PHAs.
- ❑ For the reporting period of 16th August – 22nd August, the COVID-19 National Hotline received 1961 calls. Of these, 31 (about 1.58%) were health-related calls. 24 of these were referred to the Rapid Response Team/PHA.
- ❑ Callers requesting more awareness on different vaccines, especially the most common being administered.

Clinical Management (CM):

- ❑ The joint NCC/WHO Clinical Management team were part of the multi-cluster team from NCC that visited Morobe province and carried out an inspection of the two isolation facilities in the province. The two inspected sites were Sir Ignatius Kilage Stadium and NKW Isolation & Quarantine facility at 11 mile outside Lae city.
- ❑ The team provided mentoring support on COVID-19 Pre-triage, Triage, swabbing, Waste Management in health facilities visited including the Biomedical maintenance and support at Angau Memorial Hospital. They also carried out process reviews on various clinical and IPC protocols including Death Audit, Critical step process and home isolation.

Risk Communication & Community Engagement (RCCE):

- ❑ Advocacy session with field case workers/ peer educators conducted by UNICEF supported by FHI360, WORLD VISION, UNAIDS targeting PLHIV. 22 participants attended with 2 vaccinated after the session an addition 7 made informed decisions to and were to vaccinated.
- ❑ Finalisation of the two-days communications, community engagement and advocacy 'train the trainer' training to support Phase II of the vaccine roll out.
- ❑ RCCE personnel was part of the multi-cluster deployment to Lae for assessment of communications needs regarding the Delta variant. A completed surge and phase 2 vaccine assessment has been reported back to the province.
- ❑ Social listening: key partners including World Vision, Save the Children, DFAT, FHI360, coordinated by WHO and NDoH through the cluster agreed on a way forward to coordinate efforts for a more comprehensive social listening system as well as the mechanisms to make use of the insights gained.
- ❑ Initial meeting held with DFAT, ABC International Development to discuss development of planned Radio Drama series using evidence-based approach applying behaviour change theory to address barriers related to COVID-19 stigma and prevention of vaccine uptake. Channels for delivery to reach rural and remote areas.
- ❑ RCCE team delivered an introductory training to equip national officers with skills and tools to support provincial staff with supporting the development of the communications, community engagement and advocacy activities for the roll out of the Johnston & Johnston vaccine whilst a more detailed training has been planned for next week.

Niupela Pasin (NP):

- ❑ Niupela Pasin team continued to carry out assessments on event requests of more than 30 organizations across the country. The team carried out 6 assessments this week on events and meetings while 74 event approvals were granted on commitment to observe strict NP measures. Events ranged from church activities, student activities, government functions and sports events across the country with strict observations of Niupela Pasin including mandatory mask wearing, temperature checks, hand sanitizing and observing social distancing.

Logistics and Supplies:

- ❑ Supplied 2 tonnes of COVID-19 supplies of lab consumables to 17 consignees across 14 provinces accordingly which are East Sepik, ARoB, Hela, Enga, Western, Manus, New Ireland, West Sepik, Western Highlands, East New Britain, Eastern Highlands, Oro, Simbu

and Jiwaka. City Pharmacy Holding Ltd was the only non-health facility supplied with 6 lab consumables this week.

- Prepared lab items orders for Central, Gulf and NCD. Hela, AROB, NIP, ESP, Western & Central and are awaiting dispatch.
- mSupply integration schedule has been completed for implementation to nine provinces starting next week.

Quarantine & Point of Entry:

- As of 21st August, there were 403 people under quarantine (PUQ) of which 38 were in home quarantine, 289 in hotels, 43 in company sites and 30 in organizational apartments.
- There were 4 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.
- All 114 passengers that had arrived on the Garuda flight from India, via Jarkata, were placed under strict quarantine upon arrival in four designated quarantine facilities in NCD.

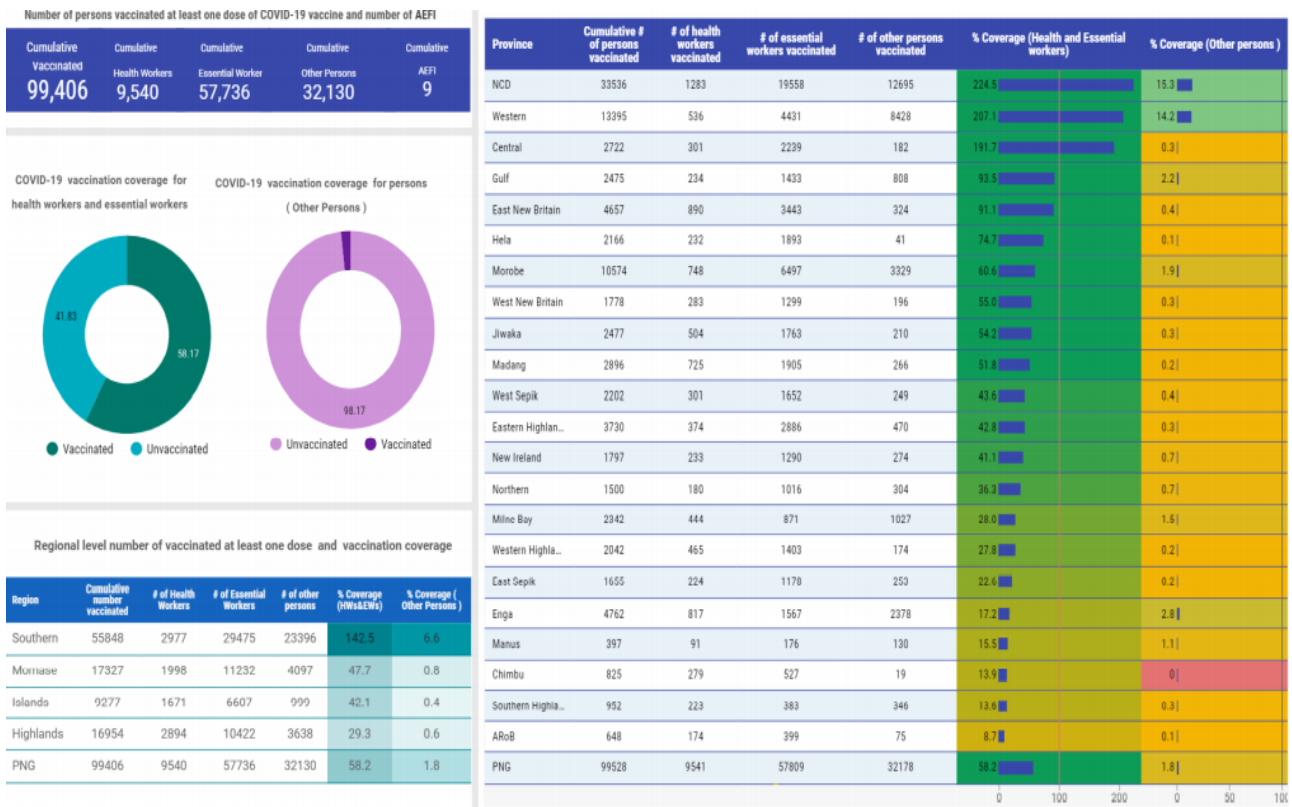
Table 3. Persons Screened by Point of Entry

| | | |
|---|--------|--------|
| 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 – 7 August 2021) | Air | 25,838 |
| | Sea | 1135 |
| | Land | 6 |

National Vaccination Rollout

- As of 22nd August 2021, over 99,406 people has been vaccinated at least for one dose in PNG. This includes 9,540 health workers and 57,736 essential workers and 32,130 people over the ages of 18 including those with comorbidities.
- Over 58.17% vaccination coverage of health care workers and other essential workers across the country.
- Almost 30,095 people are fully vaccinated having received their 2nd dose of COVID-19 vaccine.
- There are 181 sites offering vaccination across PNG.

Figure 1. Cumulative number of persons vaccinated by region and province 22nd August, 2021



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.
- A joint delegation from NCC and WHO visited Morobe this week and met with Morobe Provincial Health Authority at the hospital. The team provided appropriate technical support and guidance at several targeted facilities including isolation and quarantine.
- National Control Centre to take action against Indian High Commission & others on repatriation flight deception
- PNG COVID-19 National Pandemic Response Controller and Police Commissioner David Manning has expressed anger and disappointment at the way in which India's High Commission in Port Moresby deliberately participated in the deception that resulted in unauthorized passengers, including four infected with COVID-19, arriving in Papua New Guinea.
- Controller Manning said the behavior of those involved in the dishonest process compromises the safety and security of Papua New Guinea. The Government of Indonesia will be receiving correspondence from the Department of Foreign Affairs calling on the Ambassador to explain his government's involvement in the scandal. He said these matters pertain to the boarding of Indonesian passengers onto the aircraft, and the actions of Garuda Indonesia as a State-owned airline.
- 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 7 out of 22 provinces in the previous seven days. Chimbu, EHP, ENB, Enga, ESP, Gulf, Hela, Jiwaka, Manus, Milne Bay, New Ireland, Northern Oro, SHP and WNB did not report any cases in the past seven days.

In the past seven days, eleven (11) additional (new) delta cases were reported from the Western Province, bringing the cumulative COVID-19 delta variant cases up to thirty (30) delta cases (8 imported and 22 local cases).

There is no epidemiological transmission linkage between the imported cases and the local cases nor between the local cases of Madang and Western provinces. However, phylogenetic analysis showed possible genetic linkage between delta cases in Western province and Indonesia, a similar finding to cases of the Indonesian Grand Tajima ship and the Madang Delta case, that was reported previously. This indicates a high possibility of cross border importation of the Delta Variant.

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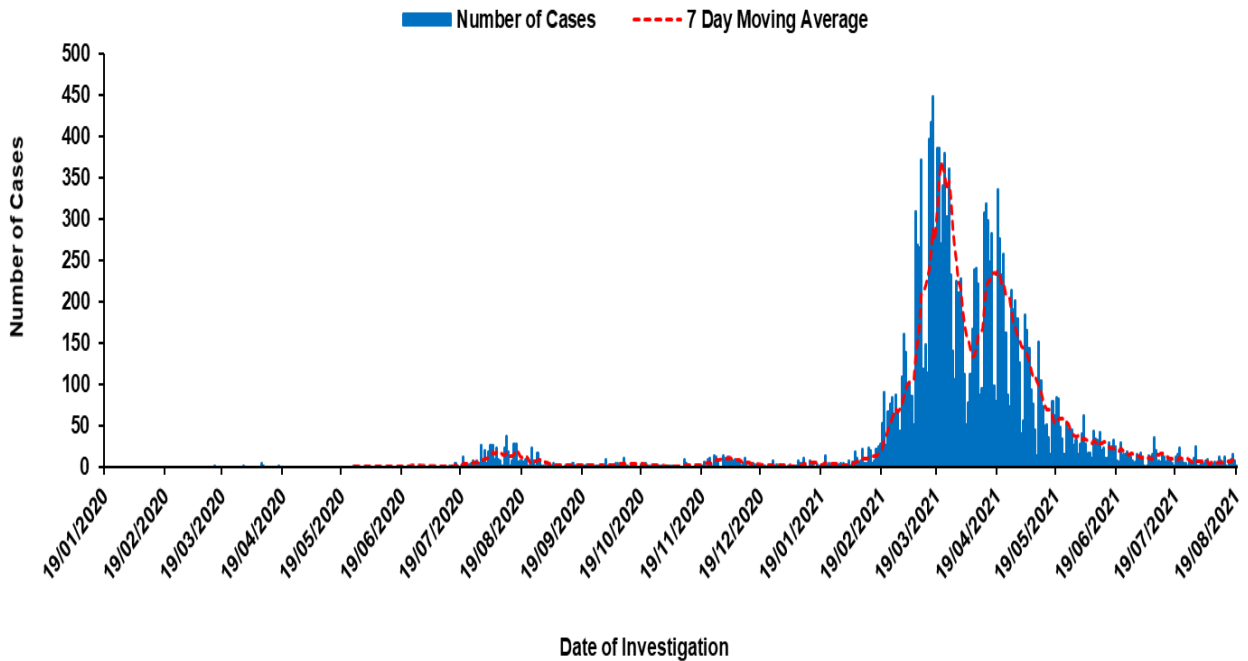
With low level of confidence based on the available data, it is believed that community transmission of COVID-19 is occurring in much of PNG. Western, NCD and Madang provinces would appear to be in stage 3 widespread community transmission while all other provinces in PNG would appear to have localised 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, and re-enforcing maintenance of the new normal practices even after vaccination, are also part of the 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

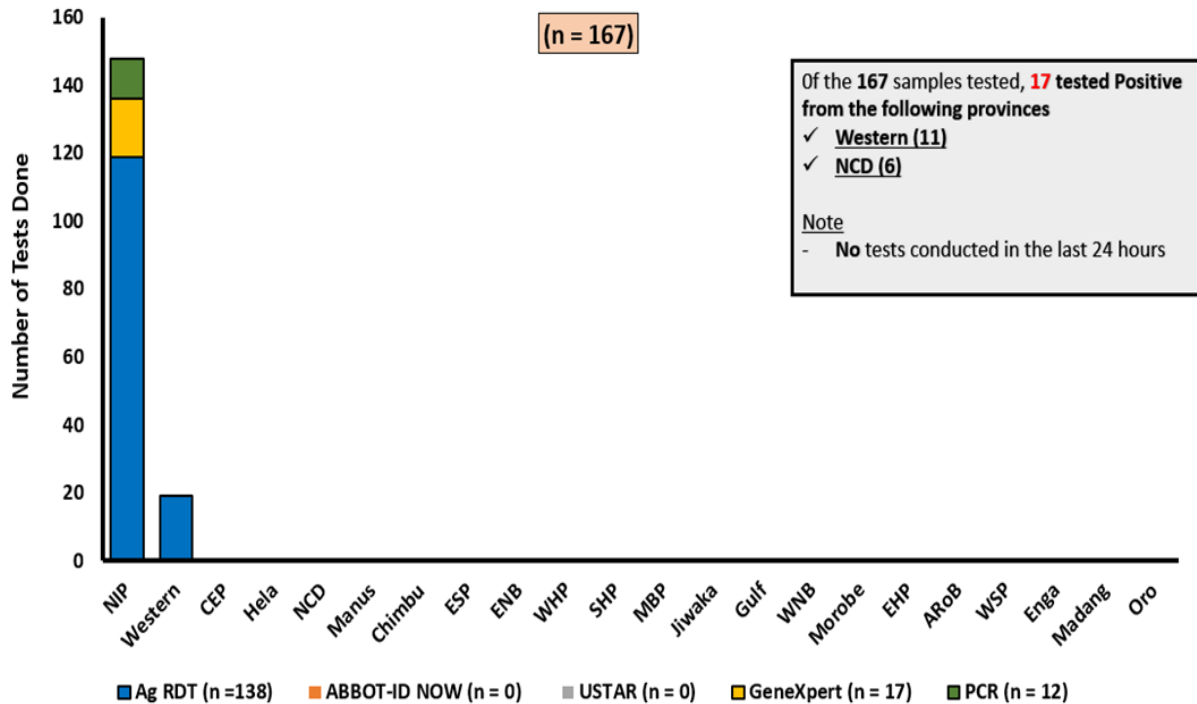
Epidemiology

Figure 2. Epidemiological curve of total COVID-19 cases in Papua New Guinea as at 22nd 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, 16th August to 22nd August 2021



ANNEX A – Photos

Photo 1: Buimo urban clinic staff, this team have done very well in integrating COVID-19 as a program into their routine activities. Regular swabbing and testing through a proper triage and screening with timely reporting to MoPHA



Photo 2: Advocacy session with field case workers/ peer educators



Photo 3: NCC team visiting the NKW quarantine/isolation and testing facility at 11 mile in Lae, Morobe Province



Photo 4: Specimen collection booth at the COVID-19 testing venue at the Sir Ignatius Kilage Stadium, Lae, Morobe Province



Photo 5: Social listening on COVID-19 related and its vaccine

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