

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 21 February 2021 (12:00 pm), there have been 1056 COVID-19 cases and ten COVID-19 deaths reported in Papua New Guinea. From the period of 15 to 21 February, there have been 111 new cases: 47 from Western Province, 29 from West Sepik, 23 from the National Capital District, 7 from Madang, and 5 from East New Britain. The total number of provinces that have reported COVID-19 cases to date is seventeen.
- ❑ Daily surveillance updates are being received from approximately 50% of the 22 provinces. These indicate that there has been an increase in the number of reported cases of suspected COVID-19, influenza-like illnesses (ILI) and severe acute respiratory illnesses (SARI) in the last two weeks. Similarly, there has also been a corresponding increase in simple cough and pneumonia cases reported in the last four weeks.
- ❑ The NCC has released a template for a COVID-19 Operational Surge which all PHAs are required to complete for their province by Friday 26<sup>th</sup> February.
- ❑ A team of NDoH and WHO staff will deploy to West Sepik (Sandaun) Sandaun Province on Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> February as the request of the Provincial Health Authority to assist in enacting the provincial Operational Surge Plan in response to increased cases.
- ❑ The National Deployment Vaccine Plan was approved by the Regional Review Committee, satisfying one of the key prerequisites for COVID19 vaccine allocation.

**Table 1. COVID-19 IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA<sup>1</sup>**

	New Cases (15 to 21 February 2021)	Cumulative Total
National Capital District	23	397
Western	47	280
West New Britain	0	194
West Sepik	29	39
East New Britain	5	35
Madang	7	35
New Ireland	0	22
Eastern Highlands	0	13
Central	0	11
Western Highlands	0	10
Morobe	0	9
East Sepik	0	3
Enga	0	3
Milne Bay	0	2
AROB	0	1
Hela	0	1
Southern Highlands	0	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>1056</b>

<sup>1</sup> As of 21/02/2021, 12:00 pm, PNG time

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

	Confirmed Cases	Deaths
Global	110 749 023	2 455 131
Western Pacific	1 576 330	28 220

<sup>2</sup> WHO COVID-19 Dashboard as of 21/02/2021, 4:21 pm CET

## Summary of activities and Upcoming Priorities

### Surveillance:

- ❑ With surges currently occurring in five provinces, the epi and surveillance team are providing support and conducting analyses to highlight the critical nature of the situation that is unfolding across PNG. A team will also be deployed to West Sepik (Sandaun) Province next week to assist with the outbreak, with a large number of healthcare workers currently in isolation or quarantine and not available to work. Antigen rapid diagnostic test (AgRDT) validation

continues, with 5 provinces collecting swabs from symptomatic patients. Other routine tasks such as planning for Rapid Response Team (RRT) accreditation and Field Epidemiology Training Program (FETP) also continue.

#### **Quarantine & Port of Entry:**

- ☐ Persons in Quarantine (PUQ) numbers this week averaged around 650 for the week. Average numbers had been approximately 150 PUQs at all quarantine sites.
- ☐ Monitoring continues daily by all 8 monitors from Monday to Friday and a skeleton staff on the Weekends. Plans are underway to engage Police & Correctional Services Officers to support with the end-to-end passenger quarantine processes from arrival to tracking device set up through to quarantine hotels, facilities and home quarantine sites.
- ☐ Of the 497 incoming passengers received within this reporting period, 73% (359 pax) and utilized the Electronic Health Declaration Form (EHDF). Continued increase in the use of the EHDF will greatly improve POE queue times and reduce manual data entry workloads.

#### **Laboratory:**

- ☐ 1000 samples have been received by the testing site in Brisbane by Wednesday 17th February of which the results are expected shortly.
- ☐ PNG Institute of Medical Research (PNGIMR) are continuing polymerase chain reaction (PCR) testing despite challenges with staffing.
- ☐ External Quality Assurance (EQA) participation by all 24 identified sites for Genexpert and PCR testing has been completed on 15th February and a report is due to be received imminently.
- ☐ This week, the laboratory team at NCC will continue to monitor testing numbers and capacity for laboratory and testing support during the surge in Sandaun and Madang Provinces. CPHL will be called to assist if further support is required in these provinces.

#### **Clinical Management and Infection Prevention and Control:**

- ☐ The NDoH Medical Standards Branch in conjunction with PNGSA (PNG Society of Anaesthesia), Unicef and FHI360 is currently mapping out a training schedule for use of ventilators and ICU. Training of trainers will be prioritised in 2021, with push towards greater PHA engagement as the program progresses.
- ☐ There have been no reports of patients requiring ventilation since January 2021.

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

- ☐ This week the RCCE team will continue to focus on developing messaging for communities on vaccines. Communication products to be tailored for mainstream media and community engagement activities.
- ☐ The NCC RCCE team will continue to support provinces by providing updated and relevant IEC materials as well as providing technical support through training and the development of locally appropriate messages.

#### **COVAX/Vaccine Planning & Introduction:**

- ☐ The National Deployment Vaccine Plan was approved by the Regional Review Committee, satisfying one of the key prerequisites for COVID19 vaccine allocation.
- ☐ The NTWG met to review progress on planning for vaccine deployment and the subcommittee on Resources and Funding will meet to discuss ways to close funding gaps this week.

### Logistics and Supplies:

- ☐ The logistics team will focus this week on the WHO Biomedical Bundle Distribution Plan and dispatching bundles to the provinces of Jiwaka, Southern Highlands, Enga, Hela, Gulf, NCD and Autonomous Region of Bougainville.
- ☐ MSupply (pharmaceutical Logistic Management Information System) integration for COVID-19 Commodities will also continue with the Central Public Health Laboratory, including ongoing training and ongoing improvement of mSupply use for the COVID-19 Surveillance team.
- ☐ On-going training with the NCC National logistic team for the use of mSupply for the Covid-19 Central Store will also continue.
- ☐ The logistics team will also continue to monitor the movement of PPE and lab supplies for provinces with recent surges in positive COVID-19 cases.

### Transmission Assessment

There are currently surges occurring in five provinces (East New Britain, National Capital District, Madang, Western Province, and West Sepik). These outbreaks include a large number of healthcare workers, as well as other key populations of interest, such as people working in closed settings including mine sites. Large-scale population-level testing remains low across most of PNG, with few health facilities swabbing symptomatic patients and reporting test results on a regular basis.

Currently Western Province and the National Capital District (NCD) are in Stage 3, large-scale community transmission, with almost all infections locally acquired and not linked to specific groups or locations. East New Britain, Madang Province, and West Sepik are in Stage 2, localised community transmission. Seventeen out of 22 provinces, including the Autonomous Region of Bougainville, have reported at least one COVID-19 case since March 2020. However, current testing rates are inadequate to make more detailed sub-national transmission assessments within these provinces.

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

### Epi Update COVID-19

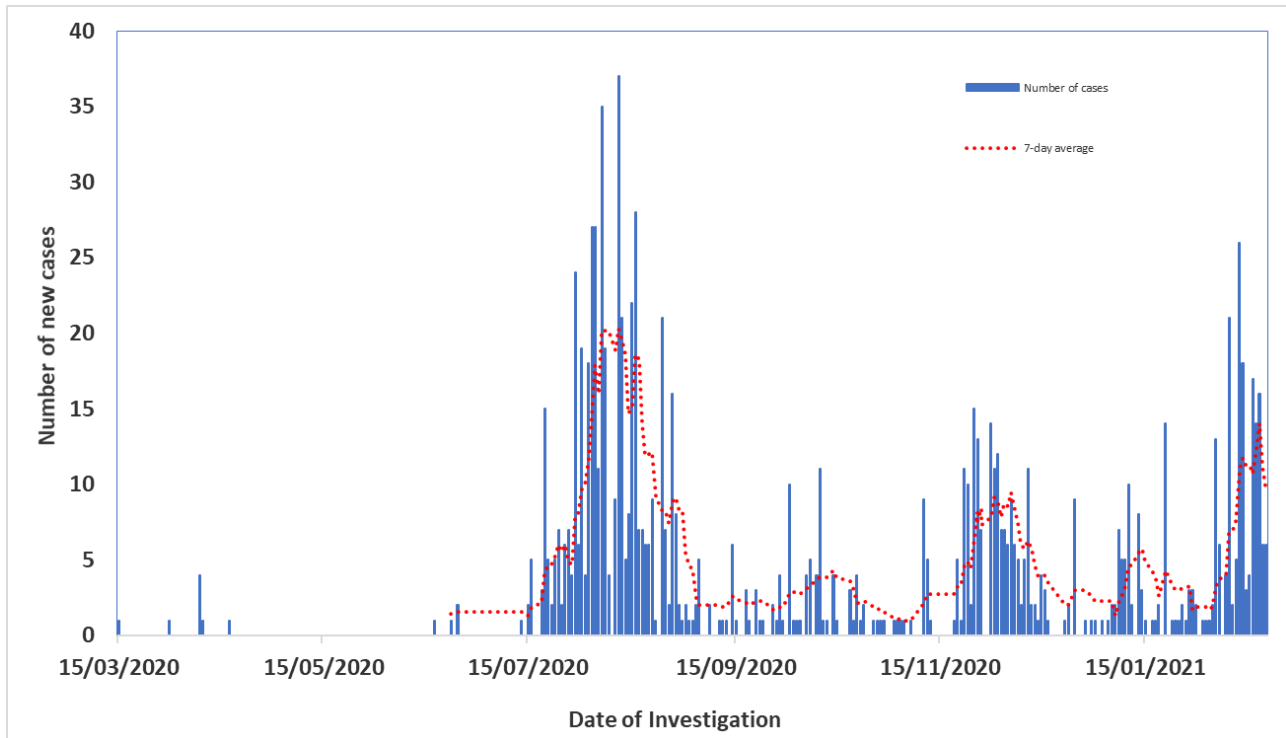
Tests	Cases	Deaths
<b>1521</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>0</b>
NAT Tests past 7 days	New cases past 7 days	Deaths past 7 days
<b>49011</b>	<b>1056</b>	<b>10</b>
Cumulative NAT Tests	Cumulative Cases	Cumulative Deaths

\*Case  
investigation  
ongoing

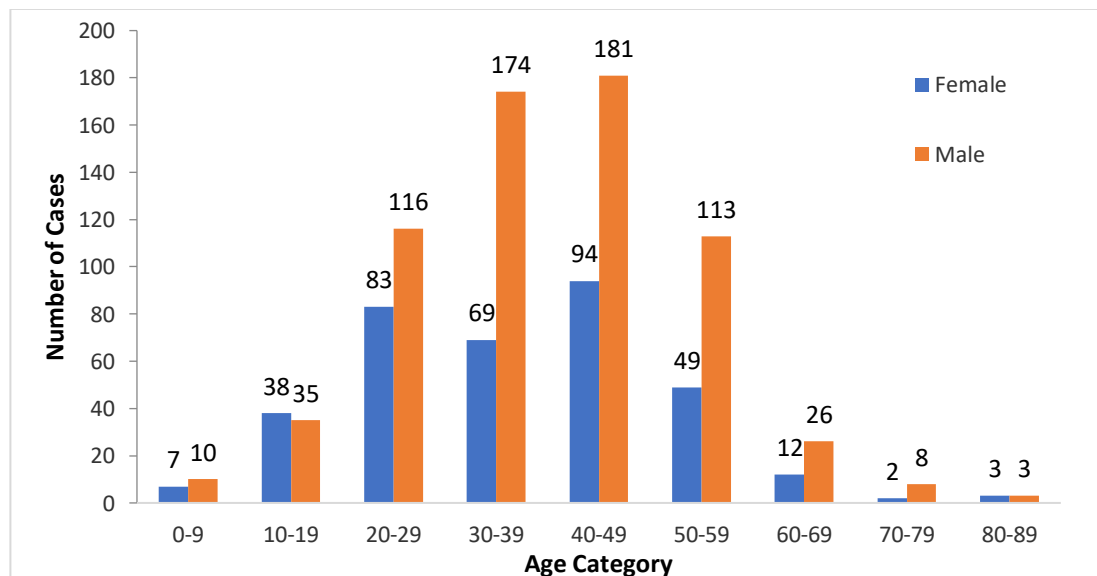
<b>0</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>5*</b>
Imported Cases in past 28 days	Cases in past 7 days with no link	Active Clusters in the past 7 days

## Epidemiology

**Figure 1. Epidemiological curve of COVID-19 cases in Papua New Guinea, 15 March 2020 to 21 February 2021**



**Figure 2. COVID-19 cases by age-group and sex in Papua New Guinea, 15 March 2020 to 21 February 2021**



- For the period of 15 February to 21 February, the COVID-19 National Hotline received 2,878 calls. Of these, 41 (about 1.42%) were health-related calls. 32 of these were referred to Rapid

Response Team/PHA. As of 14 February, the hotline had received a total of 169,847 calls. Of these, 5,126 (3%) were health-related calls. A total of 1,810 calls to date have been referred to Rapid Response Team/PHAs.

**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 – 21 February 2021)	Air	15,278
	Sea	671
	Land	6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>15,9425</b>

**Table 4. GeneXpert and RT-PCR testing data as of 21 February 2021, by province**

Province	GeneXpert tests to date	GX tests per 100,000 population	RT-PCR tests to date	RT-PCR per 100,000 population	Total tests to date
AROB	0	0	719	215	<b>719</b>
Central	0	0	336	106	<b>336</b>
East New Britain	452	120	1862	495	<b>2314</b>
East Sepik	0	0	774	120	<b>774</b>
Eastern Highlands	133	19	1557	217	<b>1690</b>
Enga	0	0	526	109	<b>526</b>
Gulf	34	18	155	82	<b>189</b>
Hela	27	9	1219	404	<b>1246</b>
Jiwaka	30	9	146	44	<b>176</b>
Madang	285	40	205	28	<b>490</b>
Manus	0	0	892	1333	<b>892</b>
Milne Bay	252	73	235	68	<b>487</b>
Morobe	194	21	3352	362	<b>3546</b>
NCD	3081	685	8762	1949	<b>11843</b>
New Ireland	29	14	493	232	<b>522</b>
Northern	0	0	9	4	<b>9</b>
Simbu	59	16	218	58	<b>277</b>
Southern Highlands	22	3	251	39	<b>273</b>
West New Britain	14	4	7419	2128	<b>7433</b>
West Sepik	133	42	713	225	<b>846</b>
Western	23	8	11223	3749	<b>11246</b>
Western Highlands	179	40	1848	417	<b>2027</b>
<i>Missing province</i>	<i>34</i>		<i>2023</i>		<i>2057</i>
<b>Total tests</b>	<b>4981</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>44937</b>	<b>483</b>	<b>49918</b>

## 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.

### Operational COVID-19 Surge Plan

- ☐ The NCC has developed an Operational COVID-19 Surge Plan template has been developed to provide guidance on a range of strategic response activities for provinces to effectively prepare and respond to surges in the health system caused by a COVID-19 outbreak in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Plan is intended to provide guidance on the response to an outbreak in a Province in order to reduce the adverse health impacts on the population and reduce the burden and disruption to health-related services.

### Madang Province

- ☐ A team which included the NDoH and WHO Surveillance Pillar Leads was deployed to Madang Province to assist with their outbreak response. The team were invited by Madang PHA and worked closely with the PA, CEO, and Incident Manager. The visit included meetings with the business council to understand community sentiment and provide updates about the outbreak and response, facilitating procurement of equipment such as a PCR machine and eskies. The team also conducted training for 30 staff on IPC and COVID-19 epidemiology and conducted assessments of laboratories and a university campus.
- ☐ PCC meetings to be held once a month, first PCC meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> Feb at Jais Aben resort attended by govt agencies, business council, MaPHA, NGOs and other partners. Governor Peter Yama gave opening remarks and tasked the MaPHA team and its partners to do their best amidst the current surge in Madang.
- ☐ A weekly meeting on Mondays is being held at the discretion of Madang PA/provincial controller. The business community is very supportive in Madang and have held several meetings previously in support of the MaPHA COVID-19 efforts in response to COVID-19. The business community in Madang have supported some WASH and community awareness activities and are willing and able to do more if coordinated well however there is a need for partner coordination in the province to enhance this engagement.

### Western Highlands Province

- ☐ The Western Highlands Provincial Health Authority is converting the old medical records office at Mt Hagen Hospital into a new laboratory to install a PCR machine to conduct Covid-19 tests. The WHPHA is keen to use this machine in order to carry out immediate contact tracing and surveillance within the same cluster of a Covid-19 positive case to help contain the spread of the virus. Currently all swabs are sent to the Central Pharmacy Health Laboratory (CPHL) in Port Moresby and the Institute of Medical Research (IMR) in Goroka as well as to laboratories in Brisbane and Singapore which take at least 3-4 weeks for the results to return.

### Western province (Tabubil)

- ☐ There continues to be reports of active community transmission which is persistent & a few clusters within the OTML operational areas that are actively managed through quarantine-

isolation and continued proactive contact tracing to ensure the business is protected and all mining operations remains minimally unaffected.

- ☐ Measures currently being implemented to break the C19 infection transmission cycle are;
  - Ongoing Entry Point Surveillance & Random Testing within the OTML Operational areas
  - Contact Tracing
  - Quarantine & Isolation of positive cases
  - Hygiene activities (Cleaning/Disinfection) and IPCs
  - RCCE
- ☐ Most if not all of the positive C19 cases going through their period of quarantine-isolation remain well with none to date developing lower respiratory tract infection.
- ☐ The restock of GeneXpert cartridges have been supported through NCC/NDoH/WHO collaborative partnership.

#### **West Sepik province**

- ☐ while experiencing increase in positive cases in the province, health workers continue COVID-19 awareness and encourage niupla pasin at the health facilities and district health teams are being tasked to provide guidance on IPC practices in their respective health facilities.
- ☐ Surveillance activities such as enhanced surveillance reporting of ILI/SARI at facilities are also reinforced and tentative schedules for specimen collection being drawn up for certain facilities such as Baro, Dapu and St Padua facility due to availability of resources.
- ☐ The district rapid response teams are utilized for this surveillance operation and the cough triage set-up is also emphasized for all health facilities in the province at this time.
- ☐ The provincial team have also identified following issues that affects their operation in response; availability of transport as the main obstacle in operations, shortage of PPEs, UTM's & geneX cartridges at critical sampling times, sample handling, storage and transportation by the SPH lab services also need attention, these are some of the key challenges among others.

#### **East New Britain province**

- ☐ ENB continues to provide daily updates of all enhanced surveillance date of ILI/SARI occurring in the 6 main provincial and district hospitals as well as urban clinics. Provincial Point of Entry (POE) data is also provided daily.

#### **COVID-19 Prevention and Control**

- ☐ Considering current surges in COVID-19 cases across PNG, all provinces have been requested to immediately prepare a Provincial Operational Surge Plan, including an assessment of resources, facilities and capacities. PHAs have been requested to include information on all available resources and capacities within the province including public, private, NGO and faith-based facilities.
- ☐ Additional training to strengthen swabbing efforts in NCD was conducted with the support of NCDPHA, FHI360 and WHO. Five healthcare workers from Vabukori, Gordon's, Badili, St Mary's, Moruata clinic health facilities were trained in swabbing. Seven contact tracers were also trained to assist with Case Investigation Form completion and on Infection Prevention Control (IPC) when working in health facilities.
- ☐ WHO are continuing to work on developing training material for rapid response team (RRT) accreditation program.



### **Antigen Rapid Diagnostic Testing (AgRDT) validation update:**

The AgRDT validation program is aiming to conduct 4000 tests. To date, the estimated number of AgRDT conducted are:

- NCD - 216
- Morobe - 99
- Western Highlands - 21
- East New Britain - 169
- Western Province - 15

### **Communication, Community Engagement and Non-Pharmaceutical Interventions (Social Measures) – NIUPELA PASIN**

- ☐ The first lot of infographics and social media cards on Vaccines completed and distributed to stakeholders on Friday 19th February.
- ☐ The first RCCE Training for Community Mobilizers was held in NCD on Friday 19<sup>th</sup> February and was co-facilitated by NCD Health and FHI360, with RCCE (NDOH, WHO and UNICEF) and Vaccine Pillar Lead. During the training, communication products and FAQs were tested with the community mobilisers.
- ☐ The Niupela Pasin team was in Madang province to provide support to the Province considering the surge in confirmed cases of COVID 19 in the province. The team had successful meetings with the Madang Chamber of Commerce and the Business Council and its members. All Business houses in Madang have agreed to observe and enforce the Niupela Pasin measures in their respective settings. The team provided all IEC materials on Niupela Pasin and SOPs including monitoring and reporting tools for dissemination.
- ☐ Public settings also such as schools, markets, PMVs (land and sea) have also been a focus with strict recommendations to adhere to the Niupela Pasin measures of mask wearing, hand hygiene and social distancing.
- ☐ The team also had an advocacy meeting with the Madang Urban Council Manager on the implementation of Niupela Pasin measures in markets, bus/boat stops and other public settings where people congregate.

### **Logistics and Supplies**

- ☐ WHO Biomedical bundle (Oxygen Concentrators and accessories) for Milne Bay, Manus, Oro, Madang, Western Highlands, Eastern Highlands and Simbu Provinces were consigned to Air Niugini and ready for uplift to the provinces.
- ☐ Work continued with the integration of the mSupply (pharmaceutical Logistic Management Information System) for COVID-19 Commodities, including training of staff at the Central Public Health Laboratory for use of the system for the COVID-19 Surveillance team.
- ☐ Training was also provided on the COVID-19 mSupply Central Store with the NCC Logistics team. The training covered good stock management, adapting good storage practices such as FEFO, product labelling stock take, importance of bin locations and creating customer invoices from the dispatch notes. Staff were also provided with log-in credentials which enables navigating between the different menus in the Covid-19 virtual store created.



## ANNEX D – Photos



Photos 1 & 2: Hagen Hosp PCR Room Refurbishment



Photo 3: Swabbing training in NCD



Photo 4-6: NCC Outbreak response visit to Madang

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