

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)

Papua New Guinea Situation Report 15



4 April 2020

*This Health Situation Report on coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is issued by the PNG National Department of Health (NDoH) **ONCE a WEEK**. This Report is not comprehensive and covers information that we have as of reporting date.*

HIGHLIGHTS

- ☐ Papua New Guinea reported **one imported case of COVID-19**, to date.
- ☐ Following the first case, 156 contacts in 15 provinces have been identified and been monitored.
- ☐ The National Department of Health (NDOH), with the support from WHO and other partners, scaled up the laboratory testing capacity and the preparedness for pre-triaging, isolation and critical care for COVID-19 patients in support of the Provincial Health Authorities (PHAs) in all 22 provinces.
- ☐ On 23 March, National Security Coordination Centre was set up at Morauta Haus, consisting of multi-sector agency taskforces including one for health which is led by NDOH.
- ☐ On 26 March, PNG declared a State of Emergency for COVID-19 for a period of 14 days, from 23 March – 6 April 2020. The Police Commissioner was appointed as the Emergency Controller.
- ☐ On 2 April 2020, the National Parliament extended the State of Emergency for two months.
- ☐ The current testing capacity at the Institute of Medical Research (IMR) is at 300 tests per day. On 1 April, the University of PNG Medical School Laboratory started testing aimed at improving the capacity to test additional 200 samples a day.
- ☐ All 22 provinces have completed their Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan for COVID-19 and have scaled up preparation, especially in surveillance and rapid response, communication to the public and communities.
- ☐ NDOH disbursed K200,000 to the provinces for use in the COVID-19 response preparations. Personal protective equipment (PPE), testing kits, communication materials and other supplies were deployed to the provinces.
- ☐ Series of online coordination meetings were held: Health Cluster on 30 March 2020; Council of Churches on 31 March 2020; and Donor Partners on 3 April 2020.
- ☐ COVID Hotline **1800200** continues to be operational, receiving about 2,000 calls per day from all provinces of the country.

GLOBAL SITUATION IN NUMBERS

The numbers are based on WHO Situation Report as of 3 April 2020.

**Globally: 972,303 confirmed cases
50,322 deaths**

**Western Pacific Region:
108 930 confirmed cases
3760 deaths**

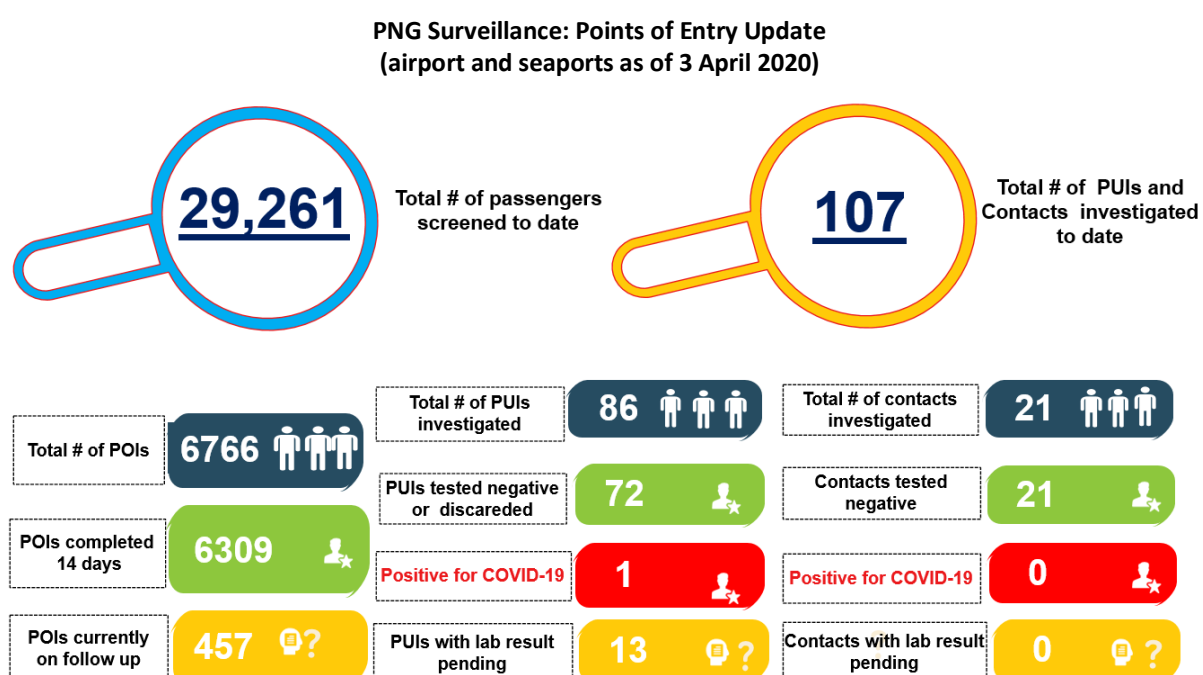
Countries/territories/areas affected: 207

Risk assessment: VERY HIGH (globally)

**Papua New Guinea:
1 imported case of COVID-19**

SURVEILLANCE AND POINTS OF ENTRY

- ❑ As of 3 April, a total of **29,261** inbound passengers were screened at the Jacksons International Airport and seaport in Port Moresby. A total of **6,766** were identified as 'persons of interest' who are being monitored regularly by the Surveillance Team.
- ❑ Of the **6,766** persons of interest, 6,309 (93%) have completed the 14-day follow-up period, while 457 are still on active monitoring. Majority of those monitored are in Port Moresby.
- ❑ There have been **107** persons investigated by the Rapid Response Team: 1 tested positive for COVID-19, 93 tested negative while 13 samples are still pending result.
- ❑ As of 3 April, the updates from the surveillance, points of entry and laboratory clusters are summarized below.



- ❑ The current testing capacity at IMR is at 300 tests per day. On 1 April, the University of PNG Medical School Laboratory started testing aimed at improving the capacity to test additional 200 samples a day.
- ❑ The COVID-19 Hotline **1800200** receives an average of 2,000 calls per day from all provinces of the country. To date, there have been more than 35,000 calls made through the hotline.
- ❑ People with cold and flu symptoms are continuously being advised to call the tollfree number 1800 2000 to report. If they meet the case definition of COVID-19 the Rapid Response Team will go their location and have them screened and tested.



NDOH trained staff of the NCD PHA in sample collection.

CLINICAL MANAGEMENT and INFECTION PREVENTION AND CONTROL

- ❑ All provinces are ramping up the establishment of pre-triaging areas. In the National Capital District (NCD), the Rita Flynn Complex as a Pre-Triaging Clinic will be operational next week.



Rita Flynn Complex in NCD

- ❑ An isolation ward of 8 beds is ready at the Port Moresby General Hospital (PMGH). Nurses and doctors involved in the response have received training and have personal protective equipment (PPE) in stock.
- ❑ Based on the PNG Health Service Profile, there are 741 health facilities with 5,400 hospital beds, more than 50 Intensive Care Unit (ICU) beds and 9147 health workers (medical doctors, Health Extension Officers, nurses and CHWs). Most provinces do not have quarantine facilities nor isolation wards. The number of functional ICU facilities is inadequate.
- ❑ PPEs for isolation wards across the country is being rolled out. However, **the issue of PPE supplies for the nation remains to be a concern.** The call for assistance from business houses, corporate entities, and our stakeholders to support still exists.

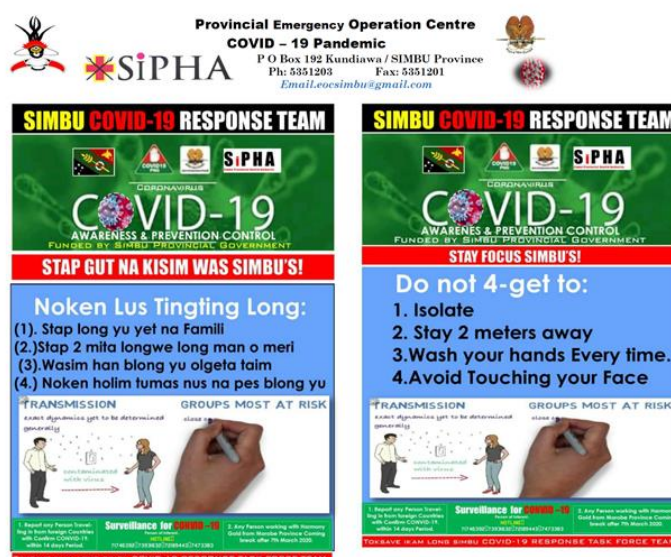


More than 10 health workers were trained by anesthetists for intubation at the Port Moresby General Hospital

COMMUNICATION AND SOCIAL MOBILIZATION

- ❑ A national communication plan focusing on risk communication and community engagement is being implemented and has guided the communications planning of the 22 provinces.
- ❑ A cross sectoral Risk Communication and Community Engagement plan addressing the impact of COVID-19 crisis on children and families has been developed to address public anxiety, build trust and facilitate community participation.

- ❑ National WASH Communication plan development has been supported and finalized. UNICEF is also collaborating in development of the communication plan for the WASH Cluster.
- ❑ Information, education and communication (IEC) materials on prevention messages (English, Tok Pisin, Motu and Enga) have been developed jointly by NDOH and WHO and have been made available online through the NDOH Facebook page. UNICEF printed 100,000 A2 format posters and distributed to 22 provinces to inform about the COVID-19 transmission routes, prevention and protection measures.
- ❑ New messaging on betel nut chewing and smoking and effects related to COVID-19 have been developed for dissemination.
- ❑ Series of partner meetings were held to enhance public communication: Government and partners met on 31 March 2020 to coordinate messaging and efforts on awareness and on 1 April 2020 with the Council of Churches to ramp up church engagement for awareness and increasing behavior practices.
- ❑ Radio broadcasts on NBC and FM100 continue with awareness messaging. Regular COVID-19 updates are regularly aired on television (NBC and eMTV).
- ❑ All 22 provinces have heightened communication to the public and communities through regular messaging on provincial radio and mobile awareness campaigns.



Communication materials from Simbu Province

LOGISTICS and SUPPLIES

- ❑ Personal protective equipment (PPE) and other supplies have been dispatched to the provinces. UNICEF and WHO providing technical support to the NEOC and in providing coordination for PPE procurement and distribution to frontline workers nationally.
- ❑ UNICEF has procured and are ready for distribution throughout all provinces 500 WASH and Dignity Kits; while 2,380 litres of hand wash and hand sanitizer have been ordered -- delivery is awaited soon.
- ❑ 55 tents for pre-triage screening has been procured: 6 tents already set up in 5 locations in NCD (6 x 72 sqm), 24 will be distributed to all other province from Lae this week, and the remaining 25 to be delivered next week.
- ❑ More than 1200 items of tent equipment ordered (including chairs, tables, waste bins etc). Military and Police will be in charge of setting up the tents. Distribution of balance 8 x 72 sqm and 27 x 42 sqm are being compiled.



UPDATE FROM THE PROVINCES

Enga

- ❑ An Inter-Sectoral Provincial Response Task Force on COVID-19 has been formed, and the coordination is done through the Provincial Emergency Operations Center (PEOC) for the Health Sector Response. Daily briefing is done between police Commander and Director Public Health.
- ❑ The Task Force has strong support and leadership from the Provincial Administration and Provincial Government. The Honorable Governor Chief Sir Peter Ipatas is taking ownership and carrying out awareness programs and checking points of entry himself.
- ❑ Enga Provincial Emergency and Preparedness plan for COVID-2019 has been developed and costed.
- ❑ Working closely with the Security Personnel (PNGRC and PNGDF), the Task Force has set up check point at the borders (Hagen-Enga, Southern Highlands-Enga, Porgera check point).
- ❑ Surveillance and entry points were established at the land border check point between Western highland and Enga (March 2020) Southern Highlands and Enga (28 March 2020). Measures are implemented to screen people, good and vehicle movement (surveillance medical checks). Southern Highlands and Enga PHAs partnering and both teams working together at the Southern Highlands-Enga border.
- ❑ The response team is in place, however, training is pending until 2nd week of April 2020. Enga does not have gazetted quarantine officers, but the province has adequate number of qualified Environmental Health Officers in the province that can be gazetted and certified.

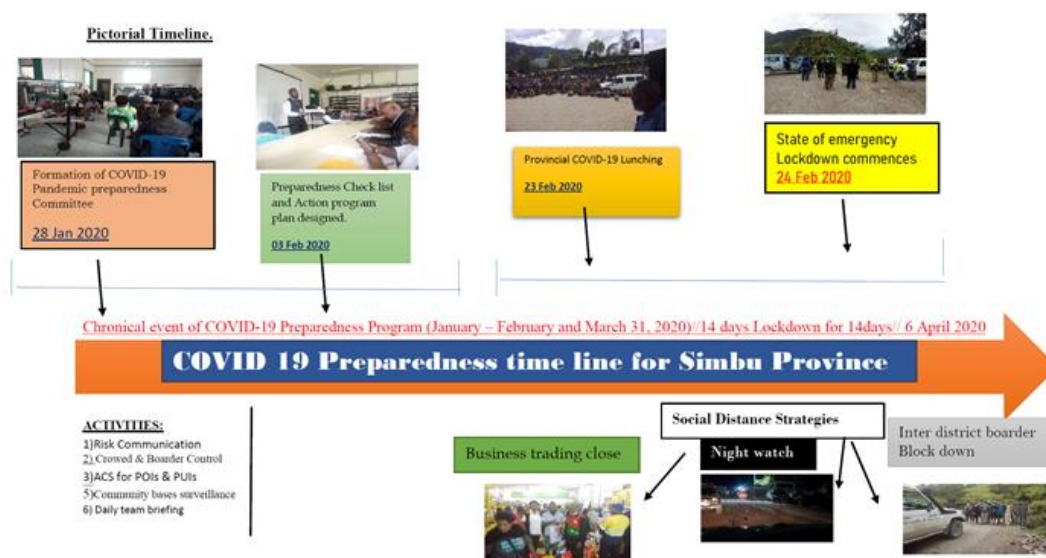


Honorable Chief Sir Peter Ipatas carrying out awareness with PEOC Team to students at Enga College of Nursing & Goroka University, Enga Campus

- ❑ COVID-19 Hotlines have been established in EPHA Provincial Headquarters and in all (six) 6 Districts. The Provincial hotlines are: (+ 675) 72114043/ 71668503/ 70226048.
- ❑ PPEs have been received. These would be used for training and some for points of entry. Enga needs more.
- ❑ Quarantine spaces have been identified in Wapenamanda and Kandep close to the POE. Quarantine space for Wabag and other districts still need to be identified. Isolation Units, and pre-triage sections yet to be set up in Enga General hospital and the district hospitals.
- ❑ Communication plan is in place and it is easy to carry out awareness in 2 languages (Pidgin and Enga), and English where and whenever the need arises. The province is aggressively carrying out awareness and education.
- ❑ Local Government and Council Wards are taking ownership of the awareness campaigns, such as in Ambum Council. Porgera Joint Venture is also embarking on massive community awareness on COVID-19 in Porgera District and providing support where needed in the valley.
- ❑ The province is also preparing for the impact of the COVID-19 on health workers and community members' mental health including children's and elderly mental health. This would assist in mental health and psychological resilience during the COVID-19.

Simbu

- ❑ Pictorial timeline on the COVID-19 preparedness work in Simbu Province.



Morobe

- ❑ There are 32-bed isolation facility in Lae and the province is working on additional 32 more beds in the coming weeks.
- ❑ ANGAU Hospital has a 5-bed clinical isolation facility set up.
- ❑ Lots of community awareness, including training of the police, military, councillors, UNITECH Volunteers, etc.
- ❑ Information materials have been printed: 8,000 pamphlet in Tok Pisin have been sent to the Districts, radio alerts for Morobe and TOLEC running advertisements on their information channel are ongoing.
- ❑ Public advisories on physical distancing and management of people's movement have also been issued to the residents of Morobe Province.

Southern Highlands Province

- ❑ Provincial COVID-19 Taskforce is in place, with Subcommittees at Districts established to be headed by DDA CEOs. These subcommittees facilitate effective communication & coordination and channeling of resources.
- ❑ The Provincial COVID-19 Emergency Response Plan is being updated and will be shared soonest.
- ❑ The key focus areas would be on surveillance at entry points where community support is needed. Both security personnel & health workers are to be stationed with proper PPEs.
- ❑ The province is building capacities at Mendi Hospital & each districts to cater for those who come in sick or with symptoms of COVID-19 for quarantine & isolation. Districts were tasks to identify the facilities which can be used for that purpose.
- ❑ Awareness & training are ongoing in each district. Emphasis on hygiene/ sanitation, hand washing, physical distancing, and isolation.



West New Britain

- ❑ A fully costed Emergency Response Plan has been prepared for submission.
- ❑ There are 7 samples sent for testing on 1 April 2020 and awaiting laboratory result.

East New Britain

- ❑ The province is requesting training materials to be sent to provinces as they will not accept in-bound travelers if not quarantined for 14 days. The province is concerned about 100% medical kits not distributed by logistic company to Pomio district (Telemu16).
- ❑ The province is preparing Nonga hospital lab to have PCR testing for COVID-19. PPE boxes have been sent to the province.

New Ireland Province

- ❑ The PEOC already started training for both districts.
- ❑ The province has developed daily sitreps, which they will share for wider circulation soon.
- ❑ There 6 persons of interest identified which they are adding to the national surveillance list.

Manus

- ❑ Preparing for awareness to the outer Western islands that have been having international tourist yachts visiting these islands.
- ❑ Immigration/Customs/Police need to tighten border patrols, this could also apply to logging ships in other provinces like ENB, WNB, NIP and AROB

New Materials on COVID-19

Does chewing betel nut have an effect on COVID-19?



Chewing betel nut, also known as areca, **does not** protect against COVID-19. In fact, chewing betel nut causes cancer and increases the risk of cardiovascular diseases – both of which increase the risk of severe COVID-19. Spitting spreads droplets which transmit diseases including COVID-19.

#COVID19
March 2020

NATIONAL DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
World Health Organization
Representative Office
for Papua New Guinea

**SAY NO TO TOBACCO
IN THE TIME OF COVID-19...
AND ALWAYS!**

Smoking makes you more vulnerable to COVID-19.



Increased risk of serious illness due to unhealthy lungs

Higher chance of transmission from hand to mouth

So, stop smoking and give your lungs a chance!

#COVID19
March 2020

NATIONAL DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
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These advisories are available online. For any new information and updates, check out the links below:

NDOH Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/PNGNDOH/>

WHO Papua New Guinea Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/WHOPapuaNewGuinea/>

WHO Website: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/>

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