

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 31 January 2021 (12:00 pm), there have been 895 COVID-19 cases and nine COVID-19 deaths reported in Papua New Guinea. From the period of 1 to 7 February, there have been 28 new cases: 15 from West New Britain, 7 from Western Province, 3 from the National Capital District, 1 from New Ireland, 1 from Central Province, and the first case from Madang. The total number of provinces that have reported COVID-19 cases to date is seventeen.
- ❑ An Infection Prevention & Control (IPC) workshop was held in NCD over 3 days and included presentations from experts and a review of the IPC guidelines. Another workshop will be held in Lae this week.
- ❑ Antigen Rapid Diagnostic Test (AgRDT) validation training sessions were conducted in Morobe and Western Highlands Provinces.
- ❑ Analysis of country of origin and port of departure of all incoming passengers to PNG over the past 6 months to help inform the whole genome sequencing analyses has been completed.
- ❑ First media conference for 2021 on COVID-19 Response to be held by NDOH on Monday 08th February.
- ❑ There has been an increase in simple cough, pneumonia, and suspected COVID-19 cases in the last two weeks around the country and COVID-19 testing rates of these cases remains low.

Table 1. COVID-19 IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA¹

	New Cases (1 to 7 February 2021)	Cumulative Total
National Capital District	3	371
Western	7	221
West New Britain	15	194
East New Britain	0	30
New Ireland	1	22
Eastern Highlands	0	13
Central	1	11
Western Highlands	0	10
Morobe	0	9
East Sepik	0	3
Enga	0	3
Milne Bay	0	2
West Sepik	0	2
AROB	0	1
Hela	0	1
Madang	1	1
Southern Highlands	0	1
TOTAL	28	895

¹ As of 07/02/2021, 12:00 pm, PNG time

Table 2. COVID-19 GLOBAL AND REGIONAL UPDATE²

	Confirmed Cases	Deaths
Global	104 956 439	2 290 488
Western Pacific	1 473 409	25 719

² WHO COVID-19 Dashboard as of 07/02/2021, 1:03 pm CET

Summary of activities and Upcoming Priorities

- ❑ **Surveillance:** A review of the learnings of the Antigen Rapid Diagnostic Test (AgRDT) validation training across five provinces will be conducted to inform preparation of the overall AgRDT implementation training package. Epidemiological analyses including incoming passenger and contact tracing data will continue to support the whole genome sequencing (WGS) conducted by national reference labs in Singapore and Australia for COVID-19 cases from PNG. The results of the healthcare worker survey about barriers and enablers to swabbing will be presented to the Health Operations meeting and the report will be finalised based on feedback received.

- ❑ **Quarantine:** The number of persons in quarantine (PUQ) has exceeded 1,000 since last weekend. Average numbers had been around 350-650 PUQs at all quarantine sites. Monitoring is continuing daily by all 8 Monitors from Monday to Friday and a skeleton staff on the weekends and there have been no reported case of PUQs with COVID-19 symptoms since September 2020. TrakPro Company has been engaged by the PNG Government to assist the Monitoring team and the PNG COVID-19 National Control Centre (NCC) in ensuring Compliance & deterrence.
- ❑ **Laboratory:** Antigen RDT Validation Training has now been completed for all the 6 identified provinces of National Capital District, Western Province, Western Highlands Province, Morobe, East New Britain and West New Britain. The Laboratory team is developing a plan to train all CPHL laboratory staff on maintenance of biosafety cabinets (BSC). UNICEF will provide funds for the BSC training and the list of participants is currently being finalised. Additional genomic sequencing has also been conducted by NPHL Singapore and NPHL will prepare to upload the sequences to GISAD.
- ❑ **Case Management and Infection Prevention and Control:** an IPC workshop will be held in Lae, Morobe on 9th – 11th February. The workshop will include presentations from experts in the area and participated in a review of the IPC guidelines.
- ❑ **Risk Communication & Non-Pharmaceutical Interventions (NPIs):** First media conference for 2021 on COVID-19 Response to be held by NDOH this week. The team will also be focusing on the finalization and release of new FAQ infographics / communication products for COVID-19 as well as finalization of the report on the survey on knowledge, attitudes, perceptions and practices on COVID-19 February.
- ❑ **COVAX/Vaccine Planning & Introduction:** Refinement of the National Deployment Vaccine Program (NDVP) will continue this week.
- ❑ **Logistics and Supplies:** Logistics will focus this week on the distribution plan for dispatching WHO Biomedical bundles (Oxygen Concentrators and accessories) to 12 provinces. Preparation activities will continue with the National COVID-19 Store and training will also continue for 3 CPHL officers operating the CPHL store.

Transmission Assessment

Given the low rates of testing nationally, it is difficult to assess the current level of transmission at a sub-national or provincial level with any degree of certainty. Provincial testing rates from March 2020 to January 2021 range from fewer than 4 tests per 100,000 population to over 3,700 tests per 100,000 population. The number of confirmed cases tends to be higher in provinces which report doing more testing. Provinces with higher testing rates tend to have tighter border controls (e.g. testing at airports or other points of entry) and often have increased presence of private companies such as mine sites which may require all incoming workers to be tested for COVID-19 through private testing facilities.

Currently West New Britain (WNB), 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. New Ireland Province and Western Province remain in Stage 2, localised community transmission. Morobe Province is in Stage 1, with all recent cases linked to domestic travel. Seventeen out of 22 provinces, including the Autonomous Region of Bougainville, have reported at least one COVID-19 case since March 2020. However, current rates of testing are inadequate to make a more detailed sub-national transmission assessment within these remaining areas.

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

Epi Update COVID-19

Tests	Cases	Deaths	ICU Admissions
313	28	0	0
NAT Tests past 7 days	New cases past 7 days	Deaths past 7 days	ICU Admissions past 7 days
44863	895	9	9
Cumulative NAT Tests	Cumulative Cases	Cumulative Deaths	Cumulative ICU Admissions
0	28	unknown*	unknown*
Imported Cases in past 28 days	Cases in past 7 days with no link	Active Clusters in the past 7 days	Active clusters with >3 generations

*Case investigation ongoing

Epidemiology

Figure 1. Epidemiological curve of COVID-19 cases in Papua New Guinea, 15 March 2020 to 7 February 2021

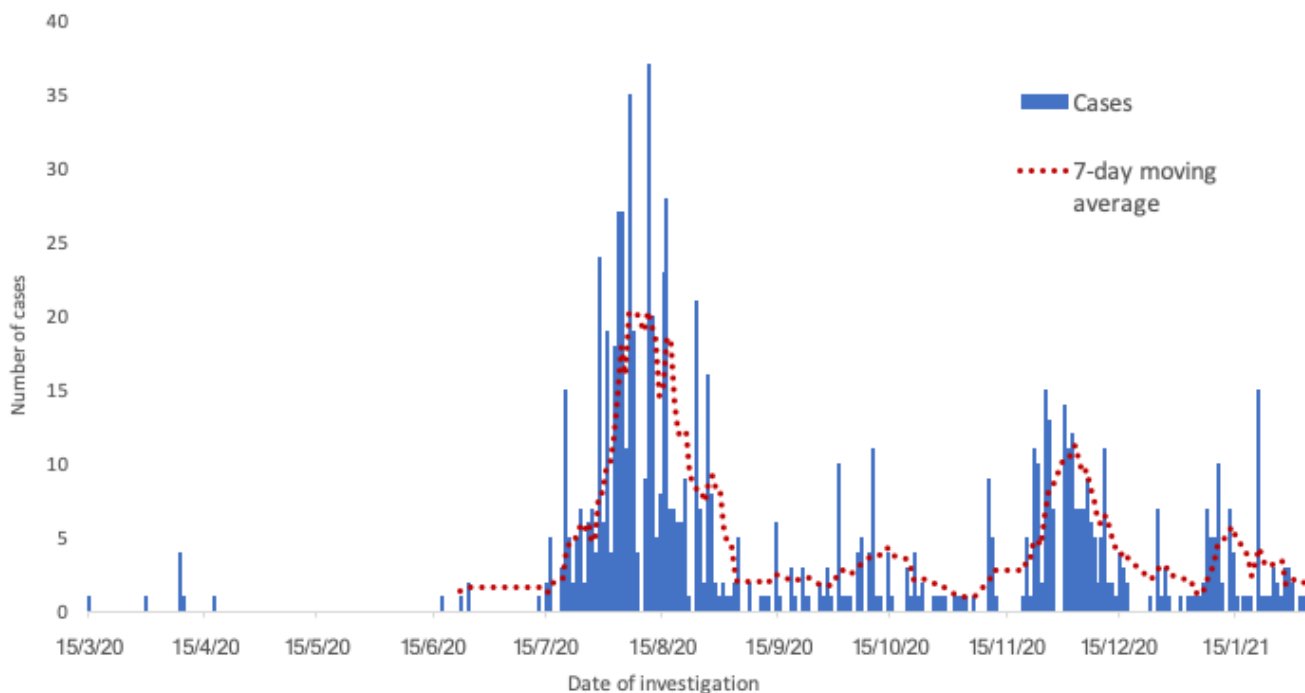
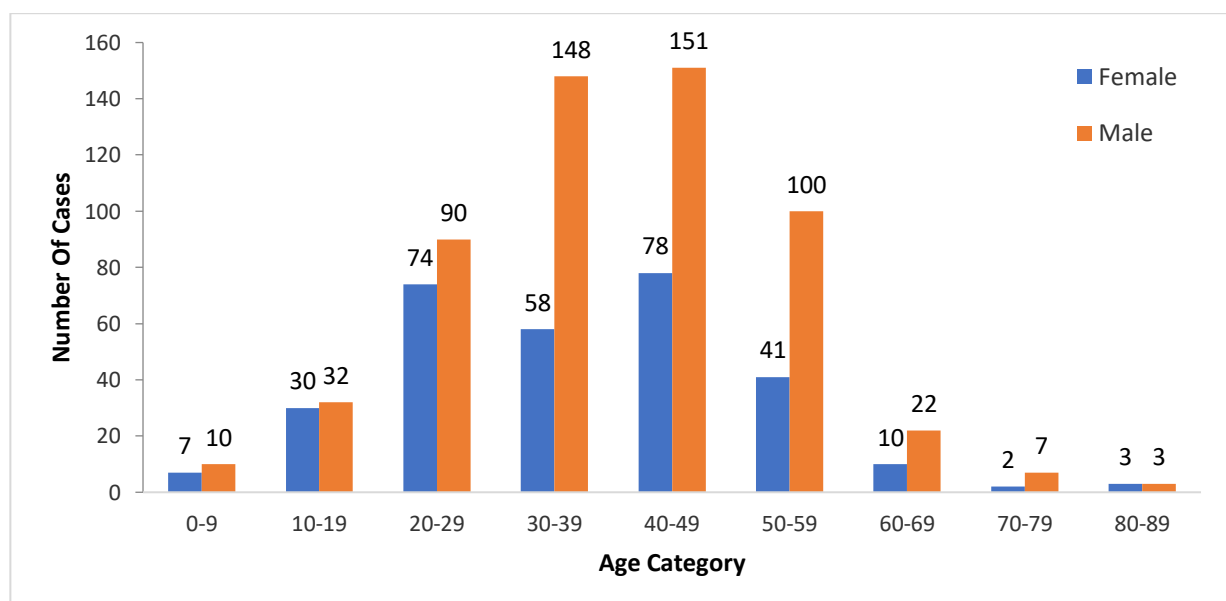


Figure 2. COVID-19 cases by age-group and sex in Papua New Guinea, 15 March 2020 to 7 February 2021



- For the period of 01 to 07 February, the COVID-19 National Hotline received 2,970 calls. Of these, 33 (about 1.11%) were health-related calls. 26 of these were referred to Rapid Response Team/PHA. As of 07 February, the hotline had received a total of 163,797 calls. Of these, 5,060 (3.1%) were health-related calls. A total of 1,758 calls to date have been referred to Rapid Response Team/PHAs.
- Papua Province in Indonesia is continuously reporting COVID-19 cases in areas that border Sandaun and Western Provinces. While the border is officially closed, traditional border crossing continues, and the threat of case importation remains high. As of 6 February 2021, Papua Province has reported a total of 6,824 confirmed cases and 142 deaths among people who confirmed to have COVID-19 by RT-PCR (data from <https://dinkes.papuabaratprov.go.id/>).

Table 3. Persons Screened by Point of Entry

Total Number of Travelers Screened before SOE (until 22 March)	29,387	
Total Number of Travelers Screened during SOE (23 March – 16 June)	3,788	
Total Number of Travelers Screened after SOE (17 June – 17 January)	Air	13,663
	Sea	671
	Land	6
	Total	14,330

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.

New Guinea Islands

- ☐ AROB district training was conducted with 25 health care workers from 2-4th Feb for Central Bougainville. Good coordination and partnership observed between Partners and AROB PHA.
- ☐ WNB PHA have submitted progressive report of activities especially covering the detection of surge in COVID-19 cases and the provincial lockdown. The report covered 22nd Dec, 2020-22nd Jan, 2021.
- ☐ ENB- have been providing COVID-19 daily sitreps for last 14 months. Currently 3 positive cases in home-isolation under close monitoring and contact tracing has been completed.

Southern

- ☐ Ag-RDT validation is occurring in 7 out of the 10 facilities selected in the National Capital District rollout.
- ☐ Oro province have requested UTMs and are planning to start specimen collection in 4 selected facilities.
- ☐ Tabubil in Western Province have detected 8 new positives during the week and have isolated all 8 cases. Contract tracing and risk communication activities in the communities are currently underway.

Momase

- ☐ Ag-RDT training was provided to 16 health care workers in Morobe on 4th February when a Provincial Coordination Committee (PCC) meeting was also held.
- ☐ 1 positive case was detected by geneX testing in Madang during the week, and a PCC meeting was held there on 5th February.
- ☐ Work has progressed in West Sepik to integrate RCCE activities with other health community outreach programs.

COVID-19 Prevention and Control

- ☐ An Infection Prevention & Control (IPC) workshop was held in NCD over 3 days from 2-4 days last. There were 35 delegates from across PNG including members of the IPC technical working group. Over 3 days the attendees who were largely IPC focal points had presentations from experts in the area and participated in a review of the IPC guidelines. A second workshop will be held in Lae next week.
- ☐ Antigen rapid diagnostic test (AgRDT) validation training was conducted with 15 healthcare workers in Morobe and 13 health care workers Western Highlands Province this week. This included one day of theoretical sessions (using Personal Protective Equipment, how the antigen test works, procedures after conducting the test) and one day of practical implementation at a local clinic, supporting the healthcare workers to test members of the public presenting with COVID-19 symptoms. The training was supported by respective Provincial Health Authorities.
- ☐ Rapid Response Team (RRT) accreditation training and plan has begun to be developed, in conjunction with Hunter New England Health, who currently support the PNG Field Epidemiology Training Program (FETP).
- ☐ A training schedule and course content for the 2021 FETP (intermediate and advanced) is currently being developed by WHO.

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

- ☐ The Prime Minister's Breakfast on 4th February has been a priority Niupela Pasin activity this week and was highly successful in terms of compliance to the Niupela Pasin Measures.
- ☐ Strong adherence to all the measures was observed from temperature checks, to mask wearing, hand washing/hand sanitising and social distancing which were monitored using a newly developed monitoring tool.
- ☐ Guest Speakers who spoke at the event including the Prime Minister had incorporated Niupela Pasin into their speeches as the new way of conducting business going forward.
- ☐ RCCE team also joined the first regional webinar on RCCE for COVID-19 Vaccines. This will be a weekly 6 part-series webinar held virtually at the WHO country office to guide planning for when PNG receives its first vaccines. RCCE participants included NDoH, WHO, UNICEF and Red Cross.

Logistics and Supplies

- ☐ WHO Biomedical bundle (Oxygen Concentrators and accessories) for East New Britain, Western Province-Kiunga & Western Province-Daru were consigned and made ready for uplift to the provinces.
- ☐ Hand Sanitizers were distributed through public private partnership (PPP) with development partners, public and private entities and included:
 - x33,600 bottles to 22 provinces via air freight
 - x3000 bottles to the 4 Oil Palms provinces of MBP, Oro, WNB, NIP
 - x7,000 bottles via sea freight to the Momase & Highlands regions.
- ☐ WHO Biomedical bundle (Oxygen Concentrators and accessories) for East New Britain, Western Province-Kiunga & Western Province-Daru were consigned and made ready for uplift to the provinces.
- ☐ Oxygen Vents & consumables were also distributed to West New Britain, East New Britain, Kiunga and Daru.

Funding and Expenditure

- Below is a summary of COVID-19 funding and expenditure as of 31 December 2020. The tables below pertain only to funds that were held and transacted through the NDOH Health Services Improvement Program (HSIP) Trust Account, thus not comprehensive to cover all COVID-19 support made available through other modalities (e.g., funding through UN Agencies, etc.). Under the HSIP Trust Account, the total available funds from all sources are PGK 41,051,001.

Table: COVID-19 Funding and Expenditure Summary by Fund Source as of 31 December 2020

No.	Funding Source	Initial Amount (PGK)	YTD Expend (PGK)	O/S Commitments (PGK)	Balance Available (PGK)
1	GoPNG NDoH 2019 HIV/AIDS Reprogrammed Funds	3,299,651	3,204,994	94,657	-
2	GoPNG COVID-19 Funds 2020 from Treasury 2020	43,300,000	36,602,015	6,697,985	-
3	GoPNG COVID-19 Funds 2020 from Treasury (NOC)	2,000,000	1,999,793	207	-
4	GoPNG New COVID-19 Funds 2020 for PHAs	37,000,000	20,600,000	1,100,000	15,300,000
5	GoPNG New COVID-19 Funds for NDOH Clusters	28,000,000	4,629,980	1,566,177	21,803,844
6	GoPNG COVID-19 Funds 2020 from Treasury (NCC)	2,000,000	1,039,342		960,658
7	DFAT Emergency COVID-19 Funding	24,800,967	19,250,000	3,348,122	2,202,845
8	UNICEF Contribution to COVID-19	368,480	367,971	-	509

9	WHO COVID-19 Surveillance Funds (for 22 Provinces)	634,240	634,240	-	-
10	Private Sponsors	1,181,001	1,108,500	-	72,501
11	New Zealand Government	6,298,800	6,001,901	-	296,899
12	UNFPA Support to COVID-19 Emergency Response	549,580	135,835	-	413,745
13	Incentive Funds for Risk Communication Support in WNB	156,171	156,171	-	-
Total Funds in HSIP		149,588, 889	95,730,741	12,807,148	41,051,001

ANNEX D – Photos



Photo 1 & 2:
Antigen rapid diagnostic test (AgRDT) validation training with healthcare workers in Morobe.



Photo 3:
Antigen rapid diagnostic test (AgRDT) validation training with healthcare workers in Western Highlands Province.



Photo 4:
Antigen rapid diagnostic test (AgRDT) validation training with healthcare workers in Western Highlands Province.



Photo 5:
Construction on partition for new PCR laboratory at Angau.

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