To support Pacific COVID-19 preparedness and response efforts, humanitarian and development partners have established a Joint Incident Management Team (IMT). Coordinated by WHO's Division of Pacific Technical Support (DPS), this Joint IMT includes the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT), Pacific Community (SPC), and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF). Through the IMT, close coordination with Ministries of Health across the Pacific is ongoing, as well as with key partners, including the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), International Organization for Migration (IOM), Pacific Island Health Officers’ Association (PIHOA) and United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (US CDC).

**Global situation overview**

As of WHO’s global Situation Report #29, dated 19 February 2020, there were 75,204 confirmed cases of COVID-19. Of these, 74,280 confirmed cases have been identified in China; and 924 confirmed cases have been identified outside China, in 25 countries.

For latest WHO global updates on COVID-19, please refer to:
- [WHO COVID-Situation Reports](#)
- [Novel coronavirus (COVID-19) situation dashboard](#)

**Pacific COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Overview**

As of 19 February 2020, there are no confirmed cases of COVID-19 reported in the Pacific.

**Key achievements:**
- As of 19 February 2020, 105 requests for assistance related to COVID-19 have been received from 16 Pacific Island Countries and Areas (PICs). All requests are tracked by the joint IMT and addressed as quickly as possible. To date, 59% of requests have been addressed.
- Deployment of 12 technical specialists to 11 PICs, to support in a range of technical and operational areas including incident management, infection prevention and control (IPC), case management, points of entry measures and surveillance/epidemiology.
- A basic initial package of personal protective equipment (PPE) has been dispatched to several PICs, with additional countries/areas due to receive supplies in the coming weeks.
- WHO and UNICEF signed a Memorandum of Understanding to coordinate additional procurement of PPE and laboratory supplies using local and international suppliers.
- Close coordination is underway with humanitarian and development partners, including twice-weekly coordination meetings and publication of a weekly situation report (sitrep), to leverage networks and resources for improved country support.

**Priority Actions:**

In addition to responding to country requests for support/assistance, the following priority actions for Pacific preparedness and response been identified and are being actioned:
- Procurement, and storage of additional PPE and laboratory supplies, and dispatch of these supplies to all PICs with current stock-outs of critical items.

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1 WHO use only officially confirmed data which may differ from data published on other sources.
• Additional human resource deployments to PICs in a range of technical and operational fields, including provision of technical support and training in case management, IPC, surveillance and risk communication.
• Development of a Pacific Toolkit for COVID-19 preparedness and response including preparing for cases, managing suspected patients at points of entry, isolation and quarantine at healthcare facilities, infection prevention and control (IPC) protocols, laboratory preparedness, and the rational use of PPE.
• Development of a regional risk communication package for PICs to adapt and implement at the national level.

Table 1: Completed, current, and planned deployments of technical support to PICs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Completed Deployments</th>
<th>Current Deployments</th>
<th>Planned/Future Deployments</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Kiribati (PoE, IPC, case management, logistics and surveillance)</td>
<td>• Nauru (preparedness &amp; response planning, and a COVID-19 simulation exercise)</td>
<td>• American Samoa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Federated States of Micronesia (PoE, preparedness &amp; response planning)</td>
<td>• Solomon Islands (risk communication)</td>
<td>• Kiribati</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Palau (PoE, preparedness &amp; response planning)</td>
<td>• Tuvalu (preparedness &amp; response planning, case management, and IPC)</td>
<td>• Republic of the Marshall Islands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Solomon Islands (PoE, preparedness &amp; response planning)</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Federated States of Micronesia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Tonga (preparedness &amp; response planning, isolation &amp; quarantine, and epidemiology/surveillance)</td>
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<td>• Samoa</td>
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<td>• Solomon Islands</td>
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<td>• Tokelau</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Joint IMT – WHO/DPS</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

A joint action tracker has been established to coordinate and act upon country requests for support related to COVID-19. To date, 105 requests have been received and 59% of all requests have been fulfilled, while actions on others are ongoing. An overview of requests is presented below. In addition to managing a range of country requests, the Joint IMT is also reaching out proactively to offer timely support and technical guidance in a range of areas.
Table 2. Technical and Operational Preparedness Support Provided to PICs (non-exhaustive)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technical Area</th>
<th>Support Provided</th>
</tr>
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| Laboratory                        | • WHO and SPC are working together to ensure all PICs have a basic package of supplies and appropriate guidance for specimen collection, transport, packaging, and shipping.  
• WHO and SPC have mapped the referral pathways and requirements for sample collection, transport, and testing with five laboratories in the region. |
| Supplies and Logistics             | • WHO dispatched initial PPE kits to seven PICs, each including 200 goggles, 7000 gloves, 405 N95 masks, 12,700 surgical masks, and 200 surgical gowns.  
• WHO has arranged for PPE kits to be dispatched to five additional PICs this week.  
• No-touch thermometers are being dispatched. |
| Risk Communications               | • WHO provided support to one PIC to develop standardised SMS alerts.  
• Deployment of three technical specialists to provide ongoing risk communications support to six PICs.  
• WHO, in collaboration with partners, is working to develop a Pacific regional package of risk communication products and materials that can be adapted for country use. |
| Infection Prevention and Control  | • WHO has supported six PICs with advice and training for quarantine and isolation, as well as on the proper use of PPE.                                                                                          |
| Point of Entry                    | • WHO has supported the revision of travel advisories for five PICs.  
• WHO has supported PoE screening training for two PICs, including border screening, use of no-touch thermometers, and isolation.                                                                             |
| Case Management                   | • WHO has supported six PICs to identify appropriate quarantine facilities and develop protocols for the management of suspected cases and/or contacts.  
• WHO supported the Fiji MHMS to conduct a two-day training for COVID-19 case management, IPC, risk communication, and surveillance.                                                                     |
| Surveillance                      | • WHO has been reinforcing surveillance practices at sentinel sites and strengthening surveillance for severe acute respiratory infection (SARI) in four PICs.  
• WHO has supported surveillance training for three PICs including the application of WHO case definitions and for SARI surveillance.                                                                   |
Additional WHO Updates:

- WHO is developing a Pacific Toolkit for COVID-19 preparedness including specific Pacific-adapted guidance on preparing for cases, managing suspected patients at points of entry, isolation and quarantine measures, infection prevention and control (IPC) protocols, laboratory preparedness, and the rational use of PPE.
- WHO facilitates weekly coordination calls with Pacific Health Ministers and the Regional Director of the WHO Western Pacific Region.

Partner Updates (listed alphabetically):

Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)

- DFAT is continuing to work on sourcing additional technical assistance and supplies with WHO and partners and is also providing COVID-19 preparedness support to Timor-Leste and Papua New Guinea.
- Australia has commissioned the University of Melbourne to develop mathematical models for COVID-19 using low, medium, and high severity scenarios and will share the results of modelling for PICs when they are being developed. This will be a framing analysis, based on modelling of transmission scenarios and the likely impact based on population size, strength of the health system, and interventions such as social distancing.
- Australia is supporting efforts to develop a vaccine for COVID-19, including rapid technology through the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI). Funding was announced this week for an open grant opportunity to develop a coronavirus vaccine, as well as funds for the Doherty Institute, CSIRO, and the University of Queensland to extend current research and development.

International Federation for the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)

- Providing copies of health promotion materials in languages of choice for all 11 National Societies including for the Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.
- National societies are coordinating with their respective health authorities on how IFRC can provide support.
- Cook Islands National Society are organizing a community awareness raising and health promotion trip alongside the Ministry of Health.
- Palau National Society are planning activities around hand hygiene and health promotion.
- Samoa National Society are strengthening hygiene promotion activities with volunteers through their youth peer networks.

New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT)

- Providing consular assistance to those affected by COVID-19, including addressing requests for assistance from Cook Islands, Niue, and Tokelau.
- 48 Pacific and Timor-Leste nationals who were evacuated on an Air New Zealand flight from Wuhan, and quarantined in Auckland, were released on 19 February.
- Disseminating the Ministry of Health’s daily situation report to PICs.
• New Zealand Government is finalising a contract with the Institute of Environmental Science and Research Ltd. (ESR) for COVID-19 testing. Once this arrangement is in place, countries in the South Pacific will be able to transport samples to ESR’s Auckland Laboratory for testing and will not be charged (up to a limited quantity).
• Engaging with France and Australia through the FRANZ partnership to discuss bilateral donor coordination for COVID-19.
• The New Zealand Ministry of Health is providing an official letter requesting that New Zealand based suppliers assist in supplying PPE to the WHO and UNICEF.

The Pacific Community (SPC)
• Conducting laboratory needs assessments with PICs.
• Maintaining rapid communication arrangements with the Pacific Public Health Surveillance Network (PPHSN) for the establishment of laboratories for COVID-19 confirmatory testing.
• Working with WHO to provide guidance for the processing and shipment of samples.