

Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Pacific Preparedness & Response

Compiled by:



World Health
Organization
Representative Office
for the South Pacific

Joint External Situation Report #9
26 March 2020

To support Pacific COVID-19 preparedness and response efforts, a Joint Incident Management Team (IMT) was quickly established on 27 January 2020 and has been fully operational since then. Coordinated by WHO, this Joint IMT based in the WHO office in Suva, Fiji, currently includes the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT), the Pacific Community (SPC), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), and the World Food Programme (WFP). 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), the Pacific Island Forum Secretariat, United Nations Development Programme, and the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Pacific COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Overview

- As of 26 March 2020, there are **82 confirmed cases of COVID-19** reported in the Pacific; **French Polynesia** (25), **Guam** (37), **New Caledonia** (14), and **Fiji** (5) and 1 death reported from **Guam**
- 11 countries in the Pacific including PNG have declared a State of Emergency (American Samoa, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Guam, Nauru, Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu)

Global situation overview

As of WHO's Global Situation Report #65, dated 25 March 2020, there were 414,179 confirmed cases of COVID-19, and 18,440 reported deaths. Of these, 81,848 confirmed cases have been identified in China, 69,176 in Italy, 51,914 in the United States of America and 211,241 confirmed cases have been identified in 196 countries and areas.

For latest WHO global updates on COVID-19, please refer to:

- [WHO COVID-Situation Reports](#)
- [Novel coronavirus \(COVID-19\) situation dashboard](#)

Key achievements (19th – 26th March)

- As of 26 March 2020, 273 requests for assistance related to COVID-19 have been received from 18 Pacific Island Countries and Areas (PICs). All requests are tracked by the joint IMT and addressed as quickly as possible. To date, 67% of requests have been addressed and completed and 26% of requests have ongoing support being provided.
- As of the 26 March, the Joint IMT has procured and distributed a total of 328,814 items including 160 bio bottles, 123,300 gloves, 2,289 goggles, 4,215 gowns, 120 hand sanitizers, 10,345 N95 masks, 187,700 surgical masks, 410 swabs and 275 infrared thermometers to 17 PICs including Papua New Guinea.
- To date, the Joint IMT has supported 50 deployments to 16 PICs.

¹ WHO use only officially confirmed data which may differ from data published on other sources.

- An interactive dashboard for comprehensive information sharing across all of the Joint IMT on country requests, technical deployments, logistics, and monitoring and evaluation was developed and is operational.
- A joint action tracker for visualisation of progress is operational.
- WHO staff members have been embedded in the Ministries of Health of Fiji and French Polynesia to support their response efforts.
- In addition to support provided by WHO country offices, three technical specialists are supporting three countries for COVID-19 preparedness and response. These deployments provide support in a range of technical and operational areas including incident management, infection prevention and control (IPC), case management, risk communication, point of entry measures and surveillance.
- Coordination with humanitarian and development partners continues, including daily Joint IMT meetings, weekly partner coordination meetings, publication of a weekly situation report (sitrep), weekly calls with the Regional Director of the WHO Western Pacific Region and the Pacific Health Ministers, and engagement with the Pacific Humanitarian Team cluster leads 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 have been identified and are being actioned:

- Procure, pre-position, and store additional PPE, laboratory supplies, IPC supplies and critical medical supplies and consumables, and dispatch these supplies to PICs with current stock-outs or shortages.
- Develop and source provision kits for use in home-based quarantine and isolation scenarios.
- Develop and source provision kits for emergency telecommunications in support of Health Emergency Operations Centres (HEOCs).
- Coordinate with the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat to facilitate a humanitarian pathway for people and supplies to ensure continuity of movement of COVID-19 samples, development partner support, and medical supplies and equipment, while considering and addressing national safety and security concerns.
- Provide technical support to PICs reporting cases of COVID-19 through in-country and remote modalities.
- Support country readiness to scale up prevention and containment activities upon detection of the first case (first introduction and first cases in new geographical areas within a country), including readiness for intensive contact tracing.

Progress to date

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

Priority area	Current deployments		Planned / future deployments		Completed deployments		
Preparedness, response, and incident management planning	Fiji,	French Polynesia	Cook Samoa,	Islands, Tuvalu	Cook Islands, FSM, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu	Kiribati, Palau,	

Priority area	Current deployments	Planned / future deployments	Completed deployments
Infection prevention and control		American Samoa, Fiji, Samoa, Tuvalu	Cook Islands, FSM, Kiribati, Niue, Samoa, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu
Case management		American Samoa, Fiji, Niue, Samoa, Tuvalu	Cook Islands, Kiribati, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu
Surveillance		Kiribati	FSM, Kiribati, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Tonga
Points of entry		Tuvalu	Cook Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu
Risk communication	Samoa	Kiribati, RMI	FSM, Solomon Islands

A joint action tracker has been established to coordinate and act upon country requests for support related to COVID-19. To date, 273 requests have been received and 67% of all requests have been addressed, while actions on others are ongoing. The categories with the highest number of requests include risk communications, case management, supplies, and incident management. 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. An overview of requests is presented below.



Table 2. Technical and Operational Preparedness Support Provided to PICs (non-exhaustive)

Technical Area	Support Provided
<i>Laboratory</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WHO, SPC and PIHOA are providing ongoing laboratory support for PICs with technical guidance on specimen collection, packaging and shipment, referral pathways for COVID-19 samples, and laboratory consumables and reagents. • WHO, MFAT, DFAT, PIHOA, SPC, and CDC have supported ten countries in referring and shipping laboratory samples for persons under investigation to referral laboratories for COVID-19 testing. • WHO, SPC, PIHOA, MFAT, DFAT, UNICEF and UNDP are collaborating to pre-order GeneXpert cartridges for PICs with stock estimated to be available before end of April 2020.
<i>Supplies and Logistics joint action tracker</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Joint IMT facilitated shipments of gowns, jars of chlorine granules, hand sanitizers, body bags and swabs that have arrived in Fiji. • Five shipments containing bio bottles, swabs, gowns, N95 masks, goggles, gloves and hand sanitizers were sent to Fiji, RMI, Samoa, Tonga and Tuvalu • PPE cargo for FSM, RMI and Palau were re-routed through Singapore due to original route through Nauru being suspended. • The Logistics Dashboard is now available, tracking and visualising supply shipment. • The Joint IMT Logistics pillar met with humanitarian actors, DHL and the clearing agent Williams and Gosling to discuss the movement of supplies and personnel within the Pacific • The Joint IMT is working on the creation and pricing of kits for Health Emergency Operations Centres (HEOCs), medical equipment, WASH, laboratory and home quarantine and/or isolation • The WFP is working with partners and the private sectors to access aircraft to deliver equipment and supplies (and potentially human resources) • Joint IMT is chartering a flight to transport essential supplies to Kiribati. • New Zealand is providing a basic PPE package to Cook Islands, Niue, Samoa, Tokelau and Tonga. • New Zealand Ministry of Health has provided a letter requesting that New Zealand suppliers assist in supplying Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the United Nations International Children's Fund (UNICEF) for the Pacific.
<i>Risk Communications</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued assistance to 20 Pacific Island countries and areas for risk communication and community engagement, including direct support to Ministries. • Released new messages and products on home-based care, self-isolation, and home quarantine.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued development of templated materials to support countries with community outreach and targeted messaging, including flipcharts, presentations, posters and social media package. • Extensive community outreach conducted by Ministries of Health, supported by partners, with a focus on information sharing and facilitating discussions with community partners on how to best prepare for and response to cases, should they occur. • Implementing a Pacific social media campaign promoting social distancing, preventative measures, and other emerging issues. This includes the commencement of the WHO #safehands social media challenge in the Pacific. • Conducted extensive media outreach activities including hosting a webinar for Pacific journalists, and conducting media interviews for TV, radio and print across the Pacific. • Strengthening coordination mechanisms with existing partners such as other UN agencies, SPC, US CDC, IOM, IFRC and local community organizations to harmonize strategy and develop audience-specific content; and further collaboration through UN Communications Group to strengthen internal communications within UN in the Pacific.
<i>Points of Entry</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Six countries have shut borders and suspended all flights except for vessels bringing supplies • In New Zealand, Ministers with Powers to Act have approved two "transit windows" to assist repatriation of foreign nationals. Third country nationals flying to their home country will be able to transit in Auckland International Airport. Health screening for transit passengers is being undertaken.
<i>Health Operations</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Joint IMT health operations team is developing protocols to manage vulnerable groups including patients with NCDs, the elderly, immunocompromised persons and pregnant women • The Joint IMT is also developing operational guidance and working to address specific support needs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — surge capacity management and staff rostering, ethical prioritization regarding rationing of high dependency care, management and continuing essential services, IPC infrastructure and practices — specific areas of support for higher risk countries in clinical care and case management, PPE supplies and rational use, whole scale risk communication support and whole scale preparedness and response — minimum data set, data collection and management — critical WASH infrastructure support — child protection issues, food security issues, lifelines and essential supplies and civil contingency issues. • Providing technical advice on establishing and managing triage and isolation wards in hospitals and health facilities.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting the development and coordination of Health Emergency Operations Centres.
<i>Surveillance</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WHO has deployed two technical specialists to two PICs to strengthen surveillance protocols for COVID-19. WHO is developing surveillance and contact tracing standard operating procedures for rapid response teams to follow for evaluating persons under investigation.
<i>Financing</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Domestic contributions for COVID-19 preparedness and response have been identified by Governments of FSM, PNG, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu

Additional WHO Updates:

- WHO and the UNRCO conducted a whole-of-UN business continuity exercise in Vanuatu.
- WHO is engaging with the World Bank Group and the Asian Development Bank to explore financial support mechanisms for country-level COVID-19 preparedness and response activities.
- WHO continues to facilitate weekly coordination calls with Pacific Health Ministers and the Regional Director of the WHO Western Pacific Region.

Partners' Updates (listed alphabetically):

Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

- Australia Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) has released a total of AUD\$9.15 million to date from its Emergency Fund to support COVID-19 preparedness and response activities.
- DFAT has pledged funding towards the procurement of GeneXpert cartridges and equipment.
- Australia will provide bilateral support for COVID-19 preparedness in Fiji, Papua New Guinea (PNG), Solomon Islands, Timor Leste, Tonga and Vanuatu. Based on requests, this will include information, education and communication materials, PPE for healthcare worker protection, prefabricated modular units for quarantine purposes, technical support and hygiene kits.
- Australia is currently considering further requests for bilateral support, including for technical capacity and advice, PPE, hospital supplies and expansion of quarantine and/or isolation capacity.

International Federation of the Red Cross Red Crescent

- Providing technical support for COVID-19 health promotion to 11 National Societies including those in Fiji, Tonga, Samoa, Cook Islands, Kiribati, Tuvalu, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Palau, FSM and RMI.
- Submitting a Disaster Response Emergency Funding proposal based on updated Emergency Plans of Action, with a particular focus on community awareness raising, risk communications in social media and Information, education and communication material, and logistics requirements.
- COVID-19 community engagement and health promotion workshops have been conducted in Solomon Islands and Kiribati, with additional training scheduled for Vanuatu, Tuvalu and Fiji.
- Established the Emergency Operations Centre at IFRC Suva Office to coordinate support from RCRC Asian Pacific Regional Office in KL, Australian Red Cross and New Zealand Red Cross.

New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT)

- In partnership with WHO, New Zealand has deployed teams to Cook Islands and Niue to support COVID-19 preparedness. New Zealand's Ministry of Health is also providing remote technical advice to Tokelau, Niue and Cook Islands.
- Cook Islands, Samoa and Tonga have utilised the Institute of Environmental Science and Research Ltd (ESR) laboratory testing service for COVID-19.
- Supported the Cook Islands with local level preparedness, releasing up to NZ\$200,000 for medical supplies and additional cold storage for the hospital.
- Provided NZD1M to the Tongan government to support the implementation of their COVID-19 response plan
- Provided up to NZ\$300,000 for the set-up of Fiji's isolation and treatment facilities and establishment of hospital facilities for safe disposal of personal protective equipment
- Provided NZ\$250,000 to support Solomon Islands source a portable x-ray machine allowing for greater identification of COVID-19 related complications.
- Dispatched PPE shipments to Cook Islands, Niue, Samoa and Tokelau
- MFAT has pledged funding towards the procurement of GeneXpert cartridges and equipment.

The Pacific Community (SPC)

- Conducted training in Nauru on laboratory specimen collection, packaging and shipment
- Conducted training in Kiribati on COVID-19 surveillance and outbreak investigation, in addition to IPC assessments and training.
- Provided technical advice and products for case quarantine and isolation to the Asian Development Bank, and Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat.
- Provided technical advice and COVID-19 risk communication materials for use in the education department of Wallis and Futuna completed 18 March
- Conducted COVID-19 orientation for staff in the South Pacific Tourism Organization, Pacific Island Forum Secretariat, Pacific Power Association, and the Oceania Customs Organisation.
- Facilitated the procurement of BD Veritor readers and consumables for influenza A and B testing for 15 PICs.
- In collaboration with WHO, SPC is supporting the testing and shipment of clinical samples for COVID-19 virus testing for cases who fulfil the COVID-19 case definition.
- SPC has pledged funding towards the procurement of GeneXpert cartridges and equipment.

United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF)

- Working in collaboration with WHO, DFAT and MFAT on creating and pricing of kits for Health EOCs, hospitals and home quarantine and/or isolation
- Provided 10 sets of 72 square meter tents to the Fiji NDMO to serve as 'fever centre' or temporary health clinics
- Actively seeking alternative shipping options for delivery and receipt of COVID-19 supplies in addition to following up outstanding orders including an order of 30,000 N95 masks.
- Implemented a community-handwashing campaign in FSM and Kiribati including an orientation on proper handwashing in 39 and 38 schools in FSM's Chuuk and Pohnpei States
- Provided handwashing stations with adequate supply of soap to 43 schools in Chuuk and 54 public areas in Chuuk and Kosrae in FSM, and hospitals in Tarawa and Betio in Kiribati.

- Facilitating an ongoing campaign across all social media platforms focused on preventive actions such as handwashing, facts about COVID-19, guidance for parents and teachers on prevention and control in schools, and #BeKind messages.
- Provided support to Kiribati, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu to develop content of COVID-19 risk communication materials in the local languages with specific support to FSM and Kiribati on developing key messages on COVID-19 for SMS platform reaching approximately 51,000 residents of Kiribati and 25,000 in FSM
- Supported the adaptation of the *Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention and Control in Schools*, developed together with WHO and IFRC, in Fiji and Tonga, with adaptation in FSM and Solomon Islands underway.
- Supported the development of education contingency planning, including plans for communication, safe school operations, continuity of learning and monitoring and evaluation in FSM, Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.
- Disseminated guidance to 14 PICs including a technical note on protection of *Children during Coronavirus Pandemic (v.1)*, a guidance from the *Pacific Humanitarian Protection Cluster Protection Brief on COVID-19* and a one-page guidance on *Helping Children Cope with Stress during COVID-19*.
- Facilitated a training for Social Welfare officers on managing stress and self-care during the COVID-19 pandemic in the Solomon Islands.
- Supported volunteers' community trainings and awareness meetings in Vanuatu and Kiribati to help address concerns and queries from communities and provide orientation on COVID-19.
- Collaborated with UN Women to support the Fiji Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation (MWCPA) in the development of a resource kit for helpline workers to address child protection, gender-based violence, and COVID-19 concerns in communities

World Bank Group (WB)

- Currently processing requests from Fiji, PNG, Samoa and Solomon Islands to access the WB Fast Track COVID-19 Facility (FTCF) and will be prepared as new Investment Project Financing (IPF).
- Supporting Vanuatu to re-structure its catastrophe differed drawdown option (Cat-DDO) for COVID-19
- Increased allocation to Solomon Islands' Development Policy Operation