



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 14 February 2021 (12:00 pm), there have been 945 COVID-19 cases and nine COVID-19 deaths reported in Papua New Guinea. From the period of 8 to 14 February, there have been 50 new cases: 27 from Madang, 12 from Western Province, 8 from West Sepik, and 3 from the National Capital District. The total number of provinces that have reported COVID-19 cases to date is seventeen.
- There has been an increase in simple cough, pneumonia and suspected COVID-19 cases in the last four weeks around the country and COVID-19 testing rates of these cases remains low.
- An Infection Prevention & Control (IPC) workshop was held in Lae over 3 days and included presentations from experts and a review of the IPC guidelines.
- The first media conference for 2021 on COVID-19 Response to be held by NDOH on Monday 08th February.
- A joint response team of WHO and NDOH specialist will be deploying to Madang on Tuesday 16th February at the request of the PHA CEO to support provincial staff in implementing their COVID-19 operational surge plan as a result in a rise in cases in the province.

Table 1. COVID-19 IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA¹

	New Cases (8 to 14 February 2021)	Cumulative Total
National Capital District	3	374
Western	12	233
West New Britain	0	194
East New Britain	0	30
Madang	27	28
New Ireland	0	22
Eastern Highlands	0	13
Central	0	11
West Sepik	8	10
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
TOTAL	50	945

¹ As of 15/02/2021, 12:00 pm, PNG time

Table 2. COVID-19 GLOBAL AND REGIONAL UPDATE²

	Confirmed Cases	Deaths
Global	108 153 741	2 381 295
Western Pacific	1 531 366	27 019

² WHO COVID-19 Dashboard as of 14/02/2021, 5:15 pm CET

Summary of activities and Upcoming Priorities

- **Surveillance:** Antigen rapid diagnostic test (AgRDT) validation continues, with 5 provinces collecting swabs from symptomatic patients. Planning for Rapid Response Team (RRT) accreditation training continues to be developed in conjunction with Hunter New England Health. Epidemiological data including country of origin of international arrivals, and de-identified patient data for confirmed cases, were provided to labs in Singapore and Australia to aid whole genome sequencing transmission analyses. Members of the surveillance team will be

part of a group travelling to Madang to assist the PHA in responding to the recent COVID-19 cases.

- ❑ **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.
- ❑ **Laboratory:** CPHL will commence PCR testing on the 15th February. Based on current capacity (personnel, space and manual extraction), approximately 96 samples per day will be processed on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Friday with a total of 288 samples per week. Ag RDT testing will also be conducted in Lae this week at the following sites: Stadium, Malahang, Butiban Clinic, Buimo Clinic, Milfordhaven Clinic, Wampar Clinic, Boana Heath Centre and Mutzing Health Centre. The laboratory team visited Institute of Medical Research (IMR) in Goroka who are experiencing challenges with logistics and storage space. IMR has expressed an interest to access support through the whole genome sequencing laboratory network which is being established for the region for WHO.
- ❑ **Clinical Management and Infection Prevention and Control:** The Clinical Management and Infection Prevention and Control team will be travelling to Madang province this week to support provincial teams with the latest outbreak of cases.
- ❑ **Risk Communication & Non-Pharmaceutical Interventions (NPIs):** The first media conference by NDOH, WHO and UNICEF for 2021 was held last week on PNG's COVID-19 Response and preparations for the COVID-19 vaccines. This week the RCCE team will focus on preparing for further media briefings and a Community Mobilizers training session to be held in NCD which will be co-hosted by FHI360 and WHO. The team is aiming to publish a frequently asked questions flyer (FAQ) on Covid-19 vaccinations for the public.
- ❑ **COVAX/Vaccine Planning & Introduction:** The National Vaccine Deployment Plan was endorsed by the government and submitted to the Partners Platform for review. The NDOH will convene the COVAX National Technical Working Group to focus on refining plans for deployment of a COVID-19 vaccine.
- ❑ **Partner coordination:** Health Cluster continues to be held on next Tuesdays at 1pm. Partner updates or agenda requests can be sent to maalsena@who.int.
- ❑ **Logistics and Supplies:** The logistics team will focus this week on the WHO Biomedical Bundle Distribution Plan and dispatching bundles for 8 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 February 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. West Sepik and Madang Province 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 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
637	50	1	0
NAT Tests past 7 days	New cases past 7 days	Deaths past 7 days	ICU Admissions past 7 days
46956	945	10	9
Cumulative NAT Tests	Cumulative Cases	Cumulative Deaths	Cumulative ICU Admissions
0	12	4*	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 14 February 2021

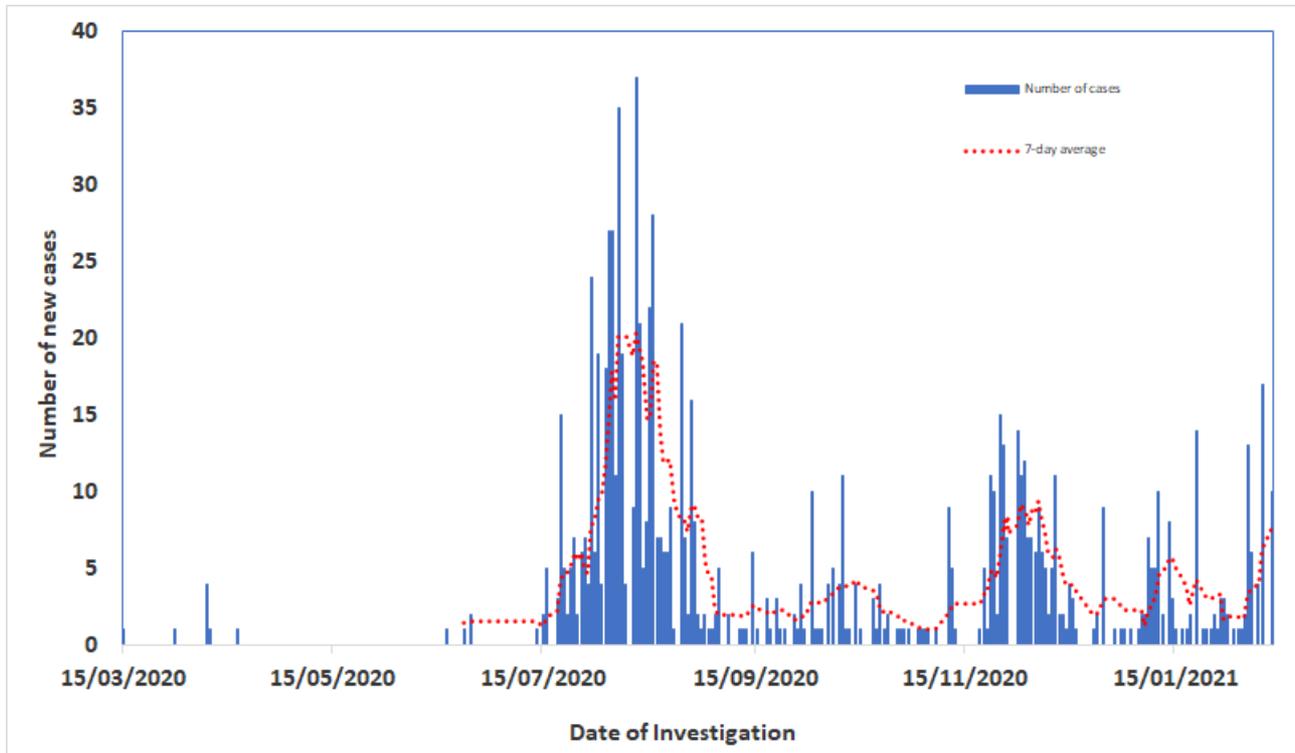
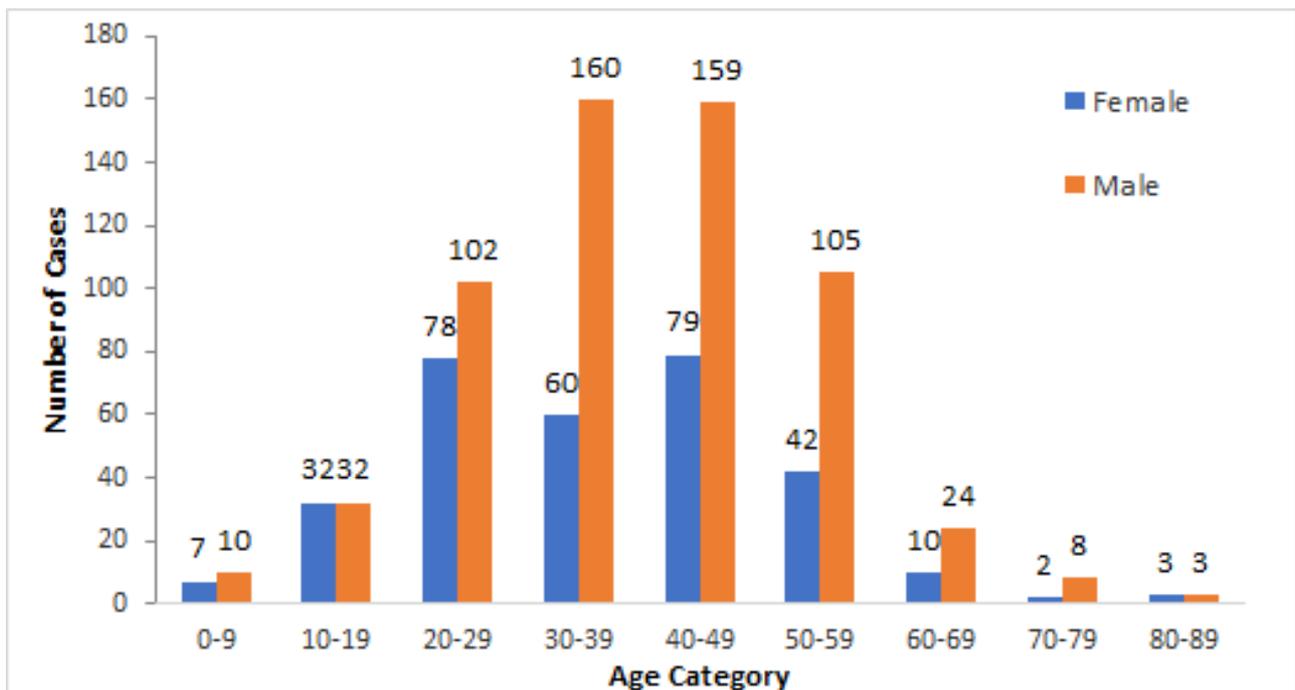


Figure 2. COVID-19 cases by age-group and sex in Papua New Guinea, 15 March 2020 to 14 February 2021



- For the period of 08 February to 14 February, the COVID-19 National Hotline received 3,189 calls. Of these, 25 (about 0.78%) were health-related calls. 20 of these were referred to Rapid Response Team/PHA. As of 14 February, the hotline had received a total of 166,969 calls. Of these, 5,085 (3%) were health-related calls. A total of 1,778 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)	29,387	
Total Number of Travelers Screened during SOE (23 March – 16 June)	3,788	
Total Number of Travelers Screened after SOE (17 June – 14 February)	Air	14,858
	Sea	671
	Land	6
	Total	15,525

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

- Autonomous Region of Bougainville** - South Bougainville Health Care Worker Training was successfully completed with the attendance of 26 participants from Buin, bringing the total for the Province to 50 out of 80 targets set by WVI/UNICEF and AROB PHA. The highlight of the training was the use of Tippy Tap, an innovative approach in storing water in available containers for hand washing.
- It was observed that 90% of the local MPs 1 Million DSIP Grant for COVID-19 was prioritized for Health facilities infrastructural capacity strengthening at Buin (South Bougainville).
- The border between AROB and Solomon is still closed officially. It was reported that people from the outer islands of Solomon who usually freely interact with AROB at this site are experiencing economic hardship because of this.
- Foreign Affairs Officials from Solomon Island have visited AROB to assess and start dialogue on how best to resolve this matter which will involve higher Government level intervention.
- North Region Bougainville district training is deferred due to logistical difficulties to mobilize and bring participants to Buka.
- East New Britain**- ENB PHA through the PCC secretariat and Surveillance and rapid response cluster carried out an assessment of compliance on measures implemented in the province in all 4 of its districts. This assessment targeted especially new normal measures covering 14 protocols developed by the province for business houses, public transport, mask wearing, mass gatherings, meetings, haus kraus, main markets etc, found at least 70% adherence to new normal in the big industrial companies, tourism industry and shops (business sector). Although people are slowly adhering to the new normal, other main

challenges identified from the report are waste management specifically for oil palm company accommodation compounds and access to clean safe water (WASH). This report was submitted to Incident Management on the 5th February and will be shared with rest of NCC.

- Rabaul Urban clinic, Warangoi Rural Hospital, St Mary Hospital, Kerevat Rural Hospital, and Butuwin Urban Clinic continue to do routine surveillance for ILI/SARI and suspected COVID-19.

Southern

- National Capital District**- Ag RDT validation has been completed in 7 out of the 10 facilities selected.
- Oro**- have requested for UTMs and are planning to start specimen collection in 4 selected facilities.
- Western Province**- OTML/Tabubil active surveillance for COVID-19 infection has continued to detect cases daily with ensuing isolation & contact tracing. All active positive cases & those in quarantine are well and asymptomatic with no moderate to severe cases so far.
- Tabubil Hospital COVID-19 Laboratory has run out of GeneXpert cartridges as none can be sought through the OTML suppliers & are requesting support from NCC which is currently being facilitated.

Momase

- Morobe** - Ag-RDT training was provided to 16 Health Care Workers on 4th February. The last provincial coordination committee meeting was last held on 4th February.
- Madang** – The Madang PHA CEO has requested assistance from NCC/NDOH with specific priorities on;
 1. Community Engagement and Awareness in Madang District & Province
 2. Engagement with Business Houses and Stakeholders to observe Niupla Pasin
 3. Surveillance, Contact Tracing and increase swabbing/specimen collection
 4. Entry Points awareness for compulsory facemask adherence to Covid-19 New Normal Protocols
 - The PHA has also requested additional supplies of PPEs, GeneXpert cartridges, and beds for Yagaum isolation ward.

Highlands

- Hela** – The Provincial Emergency Operations Centre (PEOC) were not able to provide COVID-19 updates for the last couple of weeks due to tribal fighting on the ground affecting all other operations in the province.
- Hela has had its first COVID-19 committee meeting earlier this year and are providing POE surveillance for travellers at the Tari domestic airport.
- The Hela PHA has also recruited additional staff trained to increase number of staff able to collect nasopharyngeal specimen.
- Western Highlands Province** - WHP PEOC through its lab cluster continue to update on number of specimens tested by GeneXpert

COVID-19 Prevention and Control

- WHO and NCDPHA co-led a training session for 10 contact tracers and 10 swabbers recruited by FHI360, to assist with the COVID-19 response in clinics in the National Capital District. 1

additional swabber from the Point of Entry team was also trained to assist at the international airport.

- Currently 4 sites clinics in NCD are actively participating in the Ag RDT validation processes. Sites include Morata, Badili, Gordons and Tokara. Taurama barracks, laws Road and Kaugere clinics will open for swabbing once the necessary processes are in place. Bomana Police college and Bomana CIS clinics were selected to be part of the validation processes but will now not be taking part are due to resourcing constraints. The Rita Flynn centre is no longer conducting swabbing except for GeneXpert testing. All these sites in NCD are only catering for symptomatic patients and not for asymptomatic client.
- Other provinces that are also taking part in the Ag RDT validation processes are East New Britain, Western province and Western Highlands.
- Results of the healthcare worker (HCW) survey regarding barriers and enablers to swabbing were presented at Health Ops. 21 of 22 provinces were represented, with a total of 407 HCWs interviewed. Final report to follow.

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

- The first media conference by NDOH, WHO and UNICEF for 2021 was held last week on PNG's COVID-19 Response and preparations for the COVID-19 vaccines. In his statement, Secretary for Health, Dr Osborne Liko advised that a list of vaccine candidates is before the National Executive Council for endorsement
- The Niupela Pasin team has initiated discussions for its school outreach program with the Education Department and will progress this activity once feedback is sought from the Education Department.
- The cluster has also met with FHI 360 who will be a partner in the dissemination of Niupela Pasin messaging through radio and are keen to see this eventuate in the coming weeks.

Logistics and Supplies

- WHO Biomedical bundle (Oxygen Concentrators and accessories) for East Sepik, West Sepik, New Ireland and Morobe Provinces were consigned and ready for uplift to the provinces over the weekend of 13-14 February.
- Installation of a logistics management information system (LMIS) tool, mSupply has commenced at PNG's National Reference Laboratory, Central Public Health Laboratory for all COVID-19 commodities.
- The tool aims to provide:
 1. Stock visibility at site and National Level.
 2. Enables real time supply requisitions to the SCM team.
 3. Ability to generate average monthly consumption (AMC) data thus supports the supply chain management (SCM) team at National level to regulate supplies based on real time data
- CPHL staff underwent mSupply training this week with the long-term plan to have the LMIS tool installed at all COVID-19 facilities within the PHAs.

- ☐ New Oxygen ventilators were received by the provinces of New Ireland, East Sepik, West Sepik & Morobe would receive their Oxygen Ventilators by the end of this month.

DONOR Support

A US\$3M shipment of six 40ft containers has arrived in PNG from The Global Fund and is currently awaiting customs clearance. The support package is valued at USD\$3M which includes the cost to distribute the items as per distribution plan provided by the NCC Health logistics team.

The shipment includes:

- Ten 2450kg incinerators - eight of which have been allocated to Global Fund priority provinces of Madang, Eastern Highlands, Morobe, Enga, NCD, Jiwaka and Simbu.
- Lab Supplies
 - 268 UTM, 100's (Universal Transport Media)
 - 1,489 SARs-COV-2, 01's (Genexpert cartridges)
 - 4,000 Ag-RDT (Pan-Bio), 25's (Antigen Rapid Diagnostic Tests)
- Assorted PPEs & IPC supplies

UTM Distribution Plan (Procured By WHO)

The below table provides an overview of the UTM Distribution Plan. Dispatch of these items has begun and will continue until supplies are all received by provinces.

SN	Province	VTM Required	SN	Province	VTM Required
1	WEST SEPIK	1000	13	MILNE BAY	2000
2	EAST SEPIK	2000	14	NCD	2000
3	MADANG	1000	15	CENTRAL	1000
4	MOROBE	2000	16	GULF	1000
5	EASTERN HIGHLANDS	1000	17	WESTERN – Daru	1000
6	CHIMBU	1000	18	WESTERN – Kiunga	1000
7	JIWAKA	1000	19	WESTERN – Tabubil	1000
8	WESTERN HIGHLANDS	2000	20	MANUS	1000
9	SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS	1000	21	NEW IRELAND	1000
10	ENGA	1000	22	EAST NEW BRITAIN	2000
11	HELA	2000	23	WEST NEW BRITAIN	2000
12	ORO (NORTHERN)	1000	24	AROB	1000
				TOTAL	32,000

ANNEX D – Photos



All photos: FHI360 swabbing training conducted in conjunction with NCD PHA

For more information about this Situation Report, contact:

Dr Daoni Esorom
Incident Manager – COVID-19
National Department of Health
Email: daoniesorom@gmail.com; Mobile: +675-72313983

Greg Cameron
Information & Planning Pillar Lead
National Control Centre / UNRC
Email: greg.cameron@undp.org