

# COVID-19 IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA: FIRST 100 DAYS OF HEALTH SECTOR PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE

On 31 December 2019, China reported pneumonia of unknown cause detected in Wuhan City, Hubei Province. A novel coronavirus was eventually identified, now called coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). A public health emergency of international concern was declared on 30 January and on 11 March 2020, WHO made the assessment that COVID-19 can be characterized as a pandemic.

## PREPAREDNESS

**27 January**

National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC) for COVID-19 response was activated at NDOH



Enhanced surveillance commenced; hotline operation started few days before the NEOC activation managed by NDOH teams

**28 January**

Health screening started at PNG's Jacksons International Airport and at major seaports in the country.

Institute of Medical Research has started testing; additional laboratory supplies have been ordered

**29 January**

Prime Minister James Marape received a briefing on COVID-19 response from Health Minister, NDOH Secretary and WHO



**1** **30 January** World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC). By this date, there were only 82 confirmed cases reported outside of China in 18 countries.

NDOH-WHO conducted the first joint media conference on COVID-19

Diplomatic Corps and Heads of Development Agencies briefed on COVID-19 preparedness

**2** **31 January** An advisory was sent to all health care facilities on COVID-19 Preparedness

Port Moresby General Hospital (PMGH) allocated 8 beds as isolation ward.

**4** **2 February** Inter-ministerial Committee on COVID-19 was organized by the Prime Minister James Marape, chaired by the Health Minister

**5** **3 February** Minister for Health and HIV/AIDS issued a gazette adding the new coronavirus, MERS and SARS as quarantinable diseases; declaring an epidemic and making health declaration forms mandatory for incoming travellers and appointing PMGH ward as an isolation facility

**6** **4 February** PNG Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan for COVID-19 developed identifying the various scenarios for PNG

**9** **7 February** Communications Plan for COVID-19 developed and started to roll out

**15** **13 February** Initial budget for the Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan was approved for release

**16** **14 February** Papua New Guinea restricted entry to PNG those who have travelled to mainland China unless they have spent 14 consecutive days in a country outside of the designated region.

**21** **19 February** NDOH established the National Coronavirus Task Force

**22** **20 February** WHO donated 300Kg of PPE to NDOH for use by health workers

**30** **28 February** Australia donated 750kg of PPE to NDOH

**37** **6 March** Deputy Prime Minister Davis Steven discussed COVID-19 preparedness with WHO Western Pacific Regional Director Takeshi Kasai via video conference

**51** **20 March** First case of COVID-19 confirmed: Morobe

**50** **19 March** UNICEF donated 500 sets of PPE to NDOH

**44** **13 March** All provinces have a fully activated EOCs, with people identified in key focus areas

**42** **11 March** WHO made the assessment that COVID-19 can be characterized as a pandemic

**53** **22 March** Prime Minister James Marape declared State of Emergency (SOE) and limited movements of people for a period of 14 days

**54** **23 March** Government established 24/7 National Operations Centre (NOC) which is inter-ministerial, inter-agency platform for coordination

Daily media conferences started

COVID-19 Toll-free Hotline 1-800200 activated

**57** **26 March** Government confirmed State of Emergency from 23rd March to 06th April, with the Police Commissioner appointed as Emergency Controller

**61** **30 March** Weekly Health Cluster Online Meeting started. Health cluster has about 30 member-organizations

**72** **10 April** The Rita Flynn Complex in NCD was inaugurated as the pre-triage facility in Port Moresby, with 76 bed capacity

**71** **9 April** Additional Training of Trainers held on infection prevention and control

**68** **6 April** Second case of COVID-19 confirmed: East New Britain

**64** **2 April** State of Emergency extended for 2 months, until 2 June 2020

**63** **1 April** University of PNG Medical School started testing in Port Moresby

**78** **16 April** Five cases of COVID-19 confirmed: Western (3); National Capital District (1); and East New Britain (1)

**83** **21 April** All provinces ramped up the establishment of pre-triage areas and isolation facilities

Emergency Controller announced country's transition to 'New Normal'

**84** **22 April** Eighth case of COVID-19 confirmed: Eastern Highlands

**85** **23 April** Roll out of online training to the provinces on surveillance, clinical management, infection prevention and control and risk communications

**98** **6 May** First batch of cartridges to test for COVID-19 using the GeneXpert® machine turned over to the Central Public Health Laboratory.

**93** **4 May** Minister for Health and HIV/AIDS Jelta Wong checked the isolation facility in Lae, Morobe Province

**91** **1 May** Minister for Health and HIV/AIDS Jelta Wong formally opened a quarantine and treatment facility in East New Britain

**86** **24 April** 4th Edition of the Communications Plan on the new normal developed and circulated

**100** **8 May** 100 Days of PNG's response to the pandemic. 100 days since WHO's declaration of COVID-19 a Public Health Emergency of International Concern.