

UNITED NATIONS' SUPPORT TO THE COVID-19 PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Updated: 31 August 2020



The United Nations in Papua New Guinea has been supporting national efforts to prepare for, respond to, and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes:

- [Health emergency and humanitarian coordination](#)
- [Clinical management and health procurement](#)
- [Risk communications and community engagement](#)
- [Protection and secondary impacts](#)
- [Socio-economic impact and recovery](#)

UN agencies have secured funding from Australia, India, Japan, New Zealand, United States and the World Bank. The UN is also engaging with donors to re-programme funding where relevant.

The UN's support increasingly involves impact assessments, recovery planning and action to enable the hardest hit and most vulnerable segments of society to recover from the profound socio-economic impact that has resulted from global value chain disruptions and lock downs.

The weekly [COVID-19 National situation report](#) is jointly published by NDOH and WHO.

Health Emergency and Humanitarian Coordination

- WHO provides technical, operational and capacity-building support to the National Department of Health (NDoH) and national leadership through the National Control Centre (NCC) and at the local levels through the Provincial Emergency Operations Centers (PEOCs). This includes the implementation of its national emergency preparedness and response plan, national communications plan, training and technical support on surveillance, laboratory, quarantine monitoring, infection prevention and control (IPC), clinical management, logistics and supplies management, and partner coordination for the health sector.



Figure 1: WHO delivers to NCC its seventh batch of COVID-19 donation comprised of PPEs, UTMs, RNA extraction kits and GeneXpert cartridges.

- The UN, as co-chair of the Disaster Management Team (DMT) with Government, is leading the DMT's implementation of a

multi-sectoral plan to support the national response. The DMT brings together NGOs, church leaders and donor partners to share information and coordinate international humanitarian assistance for COVID-19 to Papua New Guinea.

- The UN is providing capacity support embedded with the NCC's Joint Agency Task Force for overall coordination (WHO, UNDP) logistics/procurement (WHO, UNICEF, UNOPS), information management (IOM), protection (UN Women, UNICEF and UNFPA) and communications/media (WHO, UN RCO). Additionally, it has dedicated focal points from UNDP, UN Women and the UN RCO to track international assistance, liaise with the National Capital District and Bougainville Response Teams.
- WHO supported the development of the National Control Centre (NCC) Operational Blueprint for COVID-19 comprising of: (1) a risk assessment framework; (2) implementation details of multi-sectoral measures; and, (3) NCC framework for operations and support to provinces. WHO is also supporting the ongoing review and updating of the National COVID-19 Emergency Response Plan first developed in February 2020 and updated in March 2020.
- WHO supported the establishment of an 'epidemiological Intelligence Working Group' for NCC surveillance operation, co-chaired by NDoH and WHO. The group consists of members from NDoH, WHO, CPHL, ADB, Pacific HR and IMR. The main objective of this working group is to establish a coordinated and collaborative approach to collection, analysis and interpretation of COVID-19 surveillance data to inform COVID-19 response and decision making. Daily surveillance updates supported by WHO informs NDoH and Provincial Health Authorities (PHAs).
- At the request of the Autonomous Bougainville Government, the UN is providing support to the Ministerial Taskforce on COVID-19 and to the Department of Health Emergency Response Team. UN Women is providing technical support to the ABG, through the Women Peace and Security working group supporting women's decision making in the emergency response.

Clinical Management and Health Procurement

- UNOPS is procuring emergency medical supplies, a mobile laboratory and laboratory equipment, and 25,000 test kits. UNOPS is also providing logistical support for the safe transportation of lab specimens for COVID-19 testing, following the guidance of WHO. As of 24 August 2020, UNOPS has delivered 2 polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) equipment and generic COVID-19 lab test kits, reagents, equipment and consumables, compatible with PCR machines.
- WHO has provided training to PHAs on case management and infection prevention and control (IPC), supported by NDoH.

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PHAs have strengthened health facility and workforce readiness, with ongoing efforts being accelerated in response to potential community transmission. As of 30 June, 4,127 health care workers have been trained in surveillance, case management, infection prevention and control and risk communication and community engagement.

- In May and June, WHO delivered 36 GeneXpert cartridges to NDoH. WHO also helped in the procurement of 380 more GeneXpert cartridges, and more than 1,900 kg of (PPE) to the NDoH. The 163 boxes of PPE included face masks, face shields, goggles, gloves and gowns for use by health workers at the District health facilities. In the last few weeks, 46 cartons of masks have already been dispatched to the 22 provinces of the country.
- WHO supported the development of several national policies, strategies and tools used in COVID-19 response, including enhanced testing strategy, sample collection package, contact tracing package, provincial reporting indicators, new case investigation form, National IPC Policy 2020, and National Guidelines on IPC in the context of COVID-19 in healthcare settings.
- WHO, in partnership with NDOH and NCDPHA, provided training to Papua New Guinea Defence Force on COVID-19 epidemiology, IPC, case investigation form completion and sample collection techniques as surge capacity for enhanced facility-based and community-based testing in the National Capital District.
- WHO and NDoH have partnered with the Australian Government (DFAT) to develop an essential online training program designed for both clinical and administrative staff across the country. The training offers practical resources covering topics such as infection control, clinical management, critical care during COVID-19, diagnostics and testing. The entire platform can be accessed at <https://cohhelp.learnbook.com.au>.
- In August, WHO handed over to NCC its seventh and eighth batches of COVID-19 donation which included PPEs (9000 gowns, 10000 gloves, 64600 face shields, 12200 goggles, 210000 surgical masks, 500 FFP2 masks and 36000 KN95 respirators), 100 oxygen concentrators, 10000 UTMs, 10000 nasopharyngeal swabs, 18500 RNA extraction kits, and 5690 GeneXpert cartridges. The cartridges were obtained with support from the Governments of Australia (DFAT) and New Zealand (MFAT). WHO also donated oxygen cylinders to Rita Flynn Facility, a total of 2208 litres of alcohol hand sanitisers (to provincial hospitals, selected NCD urban clinics and Rita Flynn Facility), and two microcentrifuge machines to Central Public Health Laboratory.
- The UN delivered procured medical equipment and PPEs under the Pacific Humanitarian Pathway Initiative, a regional coordination platform established by eighteen countries of the Pacific Islands Forum to facilitate the timely and rapid movement of medical and humanitarian assistance across the Pacific. This is supported by the Pacific Islands Forum

Secretariat, the UN World Food Programme Pacific Office, the Government of Australia and Australian High Commissions in Suva and Port Moresby, Fiji Airways, Air Niugini, National Airports Corporation, PNG COVID-19 National Control Centre, WHO and UNICEF.

- UNICEF is supporting the National Department of Health to procure and distribute personal protective equipment (PPEs) to all provinces. As of 17 August, a total of 631,000 PPE has already been distributed to Provincial Health Authorities protect frontline healthcare workers across the country.
- UNICEF has supported waste management by procuring nice high combustion incinerators for fulfilling the need of highly infectious medical waste disposal capacities in selected provinces.



Figure 2: UNICEF has provided PPE to frontline health workers across PNG. These health workers prepare for a simulation at an isolation facility designed with support from WHO, UNDP, UNICEF, and IOM.

- On 20 June, PNG's health system received six ventilators through collaborative efforts of UNICEF and UNDP. These are the first batch of 30 ventilators (20 procured by UNDP, 10 by UNICEF) scheduled to be delivered to PNG.
- UNDP will support health system strengthening by upgrading existing ambulances and procuring additional ones, also to be used in the provinces. This will dramatically increase the capacity of national and provincial health services for first line respondents. PPE for non-health frontline personnel will also be procured.
- United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) is procuring equipment and various laboratory consumables for isolation facilities and installation in 21 provinces, 10 mobile quarantine units and equipping them for the priority provinces identified by the Government. It will refurbish the Port Moresby General Hospital isolation unit and provide 2 Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) machines for the Institute for Medical Research COVID-19 testing laboratory in Goroka. UNOPS has also been requested by NDoH to source additional PPE.
- UNICEF, World Food Programme and UNFPA have provided to date, a total of 34 tents for use by the National Capital District

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and provincial authorities to supplement facilities for triaging, quarantining and isolating patients.

- Through the NDOH-UNICEF PNG COVID-19 Emergency Response Project (with World Bank financing), 3,000 front line health workers and program managers in district and sub-district health facilities across the seven highlands provinces will receive essential COVID-19 preparedness and response training in the areas of Infection, Protection and Control; Case Management and Testing; Surveillance and Contact Tracing and Risk Communication and Community Engagement.
- UNFPA will provide integrated trainings to frontline health workers on COVID-19 prevention and risk mitigation, Sexual Reproductive Health (SRH) and Gender Based Violence in Emergencies/Minimum Initial Service Package (GBViE/MISP).
- UN Women has delivered water and hygiene equipment to Gordons, Boroko, Koki and Gerehu markets in NCD. This includes 23 hand soap dispensers, 1500 alcohol based sanitizers, 100 boxes of masks, 50 litres of hand Hygiene spray and 10 infra-red body thermometers.



Figure 3: UN Women staff and volunteers deliver hygiene kits to Gordons Market.

Risk Communications and Community Engagement

The Humanitarian Coordination Group brings together UN, NGO and church partners to coordinate, disseminate and amplify risk communication and community engagement in close coordination with the NEOC and Government partners.

WHO supported the development of Niupela Pasin (New Normal), a community engagement and behaviour change package launched in July 2020 by the Prime Minister Hon James Marape. Together with NDOH and other partners, WHO supported training on risk communication and Niupela Pasin for community mobilisers from various NGOs and faith-based organisations.

- NDOH-WHO teams were deployed to West Sepik, East Sepik and Enga to provide on-the-ground support in the roll out of the Niupela Pasin by conducting information sessions at schools, business establishments and offices on hand hygiene and other preventative measures.
- WHO, together with NDoH, has delivered online training on risk communications and community engagement in Hela, Bougainville and Madang, with on-site training completed in target provinces including NCD, West Sepik, Western and East New Britain.
- WHO developed key messages and communication products, including package of infographics for healthcare facilities, healthcare workers and the general public, and supported production and distribution of information products on proper wearing of PPEs, home and travel quarantine, preparation and use of bleach as disinfectant, and pregnancy, breastfeeding, maternal and child health, and addressing stigma and discrimination. WHO also supported the development of public service announcements for TV and radio to encourage testing and behaviour change in line with Niupela Pasin. These information products are translated into tok pisin. Information products were also developed for persons with disability.
- WHO continues to work with the Council of Churches and other partners in the Health Cluster in sharing information products for use in community engagement.
- IOM is participating in provincial level task force planning on COVID-19 and is supporting Provincial level authorities to deliver messaging to local communities.



Figure 4: IOM works with Red Cross and Provincial Health Authority on information campaign in Lae, Morobe.

- A media campaign, facilitated by UNICEF and NDoH, building awareness and raising the risk perception on COVID-19, is broadcasting key behavior change messages over 800 times per month on 4 major media channels (NBC TV, Wantok Radio Light, Radio Maria and FM100).
- UNICEF has distributed nationwide 100,000 posters on COVID-19 transmission routes, prevention and protection measures and supported school awareness and hygiene

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promotion campaign that reached 85,000 students in 82 elementary, primary, secondary, national high and technical schools in NCD.

- UNHCR has been engaging with the Government of Papua New Guinea and sharing key messages on COVID-19 with asylum seekers and refugees.
- UNICEF supported community mobilisers in Wakunai District, Bougainville, to provide handwashing demonstrations and instructions on how residents can make tippy taps.



Figure 5: Community Mobilisers in Wakunai, Bougainville, demonstrate handwashing.

- UN Women conducted awareness raising at Koki and Sabama markets in Port Moresby. The main topics covered were how COVID – 19 is spread, symptoms of COVID – 19, and how to prevent and reduce infection of COVID – 19. Three hundred and ninety nine people (136 male, 263 female) were trained including market vendor association reps and market management staff. 200 COVID -- 19 posters were also distributed which included key infection control and hygiene etiquette messaging. The posters target populations with lower literacy levels in three different national languages.
- UN Women has conducted market assessment in 3 districts, Kimbe, Alotau and Wewak. Knowledge levels about COVID – 19 were very low whereby 20% were not aware of the symptoms and how COVID 19 is prevented. The assessment noted that market vendors believed in traditional and unproven methods of treating COVID – 19 such as lemon, ginger, garlic and hot weather. UN Women has utilized these survey findings to inform how we create and distribute IEC materials for COVID19 prevention.
- From 17-20 August, the GYPI team in the Southern Highlands conducted a training workshop on COVID-19 and face to face community awareness raising in Mendi. The training was targeted at 15 community mobilizers from 6 Learning and Empowerment Centres across Southern Highlands Province.



Figure 6: UN Women volunteers conduct rapid assessment on needs of market vendors in Port Moresby.

- UNRCO has assisted in creating interactive voice response for the national COVID-19 hotline, enabling call centre staff to respond more efficiently.

Protection and Secondary Impacts

Recognizing that this is broader than just a health emergency and that many aspects of peoples' lives are impacted by COVID-19, the UN is also monitoring and preparing to respond to secondary impacts.

UN Women, UNDP, UNAIDS, OHCHR and UNFPA have been engaging with National Capital District and national and provincial partners on protection concerns for high-risk populations, including people living with TB or HIV, people living with disabilities, displaced persons and on matters such as sexual and gender-based violence (GBV).

Secondary Health Impacts

- As WHO supports the Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) as an essential health service during COVID-19 pandemic, a mitigation strategy was developed for catching up with the routine immunization and intensifying the efforts for prioritizing thirteen provinces to cover 70% of the target population in the country. A team of WHO STOP consultants, in collaboration with US CDC, supports the implementation of the programme in target provinces.

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Figure 7: Mothers in East Sepik practice physical distancing in health facilities when they come for their children's immunization (WHO)

- UNFPA has delivered maternal and antenatal health training to frontline workers in North Fly, Western Province. The training included COVID-19 infection prevention within health centres.
- UNFPA has distributed RH Clean Delivery Kits and supplies to support border communities in Western Province to conduct safe deliveries of babies. Additionally, the agency has distributed dignity kits to 46 women at the Refugee Transit Camp in Kiunga.



Figure 8: Health workers participating in UNFPA training on maternal health services practice proper hand washing to prevent COVID-19 infection in health care centres in North Fly, Western Province.

Gender-Based Violence

- UNFPA has provided Dignity Kits and PPEs to GBV survivors via Family Support Centres. Moreover, to ensure key essential health services on SRH and GBV (Family Support Centre) have been supported so that these are operational during the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- UNDP is ensuring gender-based violence services continue by supporting safe houses to remain open and critical policing functions to continue under the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary. These efforts also include supporting members of Parliament to advocate against gender-based violence nationally and in their electorates.
- UNDP has also provided grants to local NGOs to enable them to continue to run safe-houses and other essential services for

victims of gender-based violence, and family and sexual violence.

- UN Women has provided financial support to the ChildFund 1-Tok Kaunsellin Line to enable them to expand their service rapidly in response to COVID19 and subsequent increase call rates in GBV and Child Protection calls. The service has added 6 new counsellors to their team. Call rates to the hotline increased from 606 calls in March to 1826 in May. The helpline is a crucial access point for survivors as it provides a free nationwide crisis support service.
- UN Women, in collaboration with Spotlight Initiative, is providing 13 safe houses and Family Support Centres around the country with K100 000 worth of vouchers. The vouchers cover Food and Hygiene equipment items. UN Women also provided these services with PPE, including 1300 N95 face masks, 39 infra-red thermometers, 156 5 litre alcohol based sanitiser, 600 packs of paracetamol, amoxicillin and vitamins. 390 bars of medicated soap, 1300 gloves. UN Women is also providing transport vouchers for front line GBV services so clients can access services.
- UN Women, under the *Women Make the Change* Project, delivered workshops for 21 women candidates with a session on COVID-19 in Arawa Bougainville from the 23rd to the 24th June 2020. The COVID-19 information session included prevention, infection control & safety measures to follow during election activities and campaigning.
- In the Autonomous Region of Bougainville, the RCO and UN Women are supporting the Women, Peace and Security Technical Working Group on gender-specific policy implications. With UN Women, the Liaison Officer made a presentation on Gender-Sensitive Responses to COVID-19: Opportunities for Parliament in a time of crisis, urging Members of the House of Representatives to take action to ensure that emergency legislation, relief packages and budgets respond to known gender policy implications, rectifying any sources of known gender discrimination.



Figure 9: UN Women conducts training with women in Port Moresby.

Child Protection

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The Government's approval of the National Child Protection in Emergency Preparedness and Response Strategy in May 2020, which was developed with UNICEF support, has strengthened the operational framework for the protection of children during emergencies, including COVID-19.

- A total of 4,300 grade 12 students were able to sit for their first national examinations on 17 August, supported by 400 teachers and examination supervisors because each received face masks from NDoE, through support provided by UNICEF. UNICEF procured 30,000 face masks and 450 infra thermometer guns to help students, teachers and examination supervisors observe health measures during the exam.
- To ensure schools open safely, 1500 copies of 'Key Messages and Actions for COVID-19 Prevention and Control in Schools', containing easy to follow checklist have been provided to the NDoE for circulation in schools. In addition, daily TV and radio broadcasts of lessons for primary and secondary schools are still provided to ensure continuity of learning.
- More than 66,000 students in 44 Port Moresby schools are already benefitting from improved WASH interventions facilitated by UNICEF. All these schools have formed hygiene clubs and trained hygiene coordinators to reinforce their schools' implementation of hygiene promotion activities. Students have also been engaged in student-led hygiene promotion activities and WASH committees to sustain promotion of hygiene practice.
- 5000 young people from all over PNG received information on how to create a violence free environment for children at home at the time of lockdowns and limited social interactions through participating in UNICEF U-Report data collection project,
- Over 500 people including children, adolescents and adults at risk of violence and other distress received counselling support through the 1 Tok Kanselin Helpim Lain – a ChildFund helpline service that is being facilitated through an ongoing UNICEF-ChildFund partnership.
- 300 families in NCD affected by COVID19 received dignity kits to ensure immediate hygiene needs of the most vulnerable children are met.
- UNICEF will complement ongoing water and sanitation work in 300 vulnerable communities in four districts of Goroka, Mt Hagen Central, Nawaeb and Central Bougainville by providing clean water to 2,045 households and hygiene kits to 1,410 households to help prevent disease spread.

People Living with HIV (PLHIV)

- UNAIDS has established a COVID-19 Response Centre for people living with HIV (PLHIV) and other key populations and has created a [Facebook page](#) to act as a hub for sharing information virtually and is surveying people living with HIV, mapping key clinics, monitoring antiretroviral drug supplies,

and is exploring establishing a national hotline for PLHIV on HIV treatment. It is also working with NDoH and other partners on a HIV treatment supply chain focusing on key treatment hubs throughout the country ensuring an immediate re-supply of stock in the coming week. This is crucial for ensuring treatment continuity and reducing the strain on health facilities.

Food Security

- FAO is monitoring food security impacts from both COVID-19 and African Swine Fever in the Highlands and Fall Armyworm in Western and West Sepik (Sandaun) provinces.
- In August, UN Women collaborated with FAO and NAQIA



Figure 10: UN Women incorporated information on ASF into COVID information sessions in Mendi.

incorporate a session on African Swine Fever into COVID-19 awareness trainings in Mendi.

Displacement

- IOM is monitoring displacement related to COVID-19 and response measures in the 16 provinces where IOM is active.

Stigma

- RCO, UNICEF, WHO and UNAIDS partnered with the State of Emergency Controller to deliver a dialogue with media editors on responsible reporting for COVID-19.

Socio-Economic Impact and Recovery

UNDP in collaboration with RCO has completed the overall UN Socio-economic Impact Assessment for Papua New Guinea of the COVID-19 crisis in partnership with the entire UN Country Team. Government, development partners and International Financial Institutions also provided inputs. The report will be presented to the Government and development partners for discussion. The impact assessment is based on surveys conducted by UNDP which have reached over 6,000 households and more than 3,000 Micro, Small, and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs), providing in-depth disaggregated data on the impacts on all districts and provinces of Papua New Guinea.

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Figure 11 Vendors from Alotau Market following UN Women training on screen printing and mask sewing.

In August, UN Women's Safe and Prosperous Districts Program conducted training with female market vendors in Alotau. Training included skill building so that vendors can diversify their income earning activities in the context of market closures and formal job losses during COVID-19. New skills included screen printing, mask sewing, and shopping bag sewing.