

COVID-19 in Pacific

Experiences to date, where to from here?

Pacific Update
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Australian
National
University

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Outline

- COVID-19 in the Pacific
- Vaccine update
- Challenges so far
- Considerations for the future

Affiliations & Declaration of Interests

- Deployed/ consult with the World Health Organization & Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network (GOARN)
- Consult with Jhpiego (a John Hopkins Affiliate)
- Member of the Australian Regional Immunisation Alliance
- Presenting in personal capacity

The Australian Regional Immunisation Alliance (ARIA)



ARIA: Australia's leading experts (30+) with a breadth and depth of experience in immunisation and VPDs. Connected to offer greater capacity

Our goal: work collaboratively with governments, global immunisation partners, non-government organisations and other partners to strengthen and to expand immunisation to reduce the impact of VPDs in our region

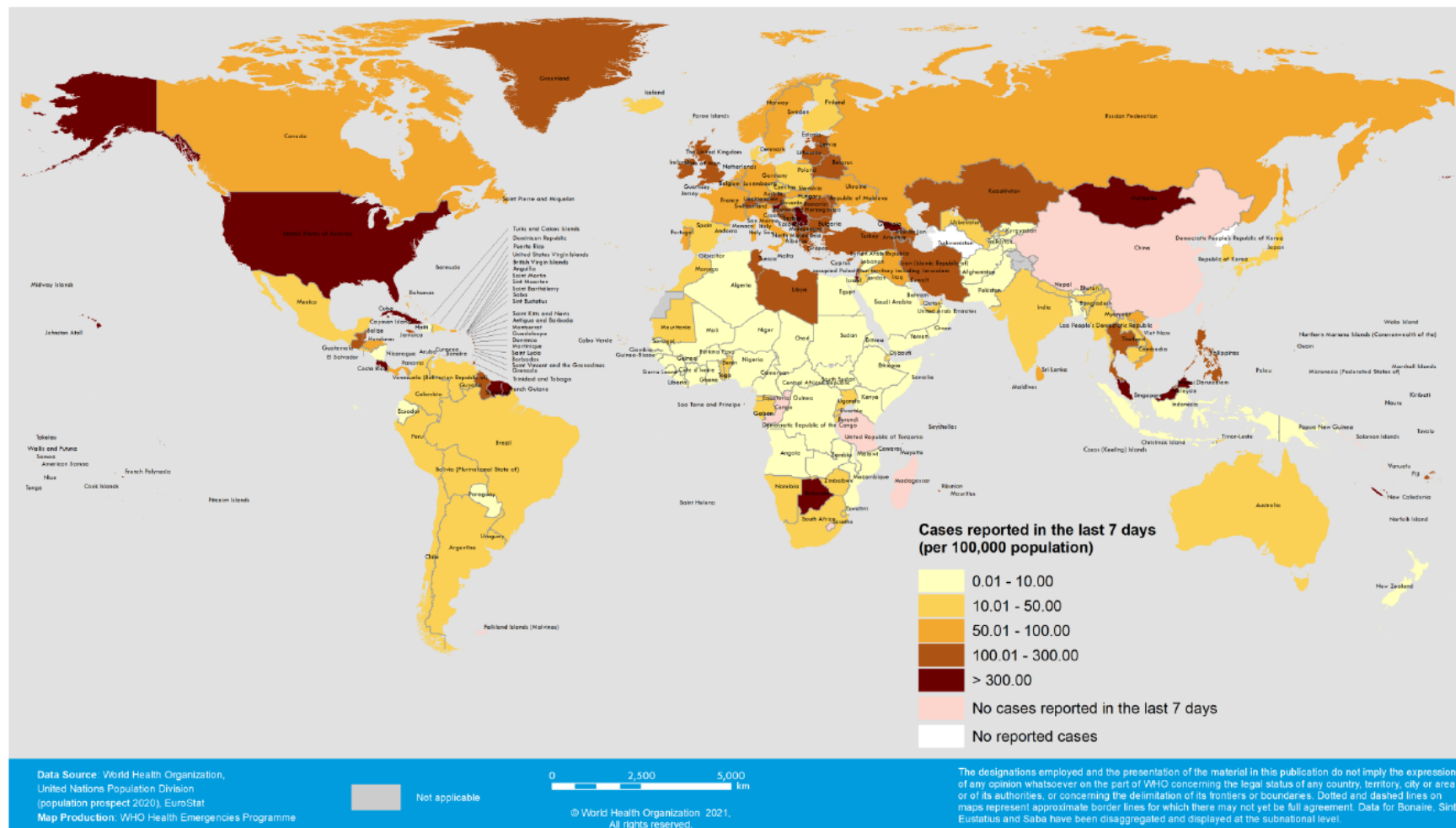
Secretariat and current chair: @NCIRS

Regional Immunisation Support and Engagement:

Funding from the DFAT Indo-Pacific Centre for Health Security, through the Pacific Infectious Disease Prevention (PIDP) Program 2020-2022



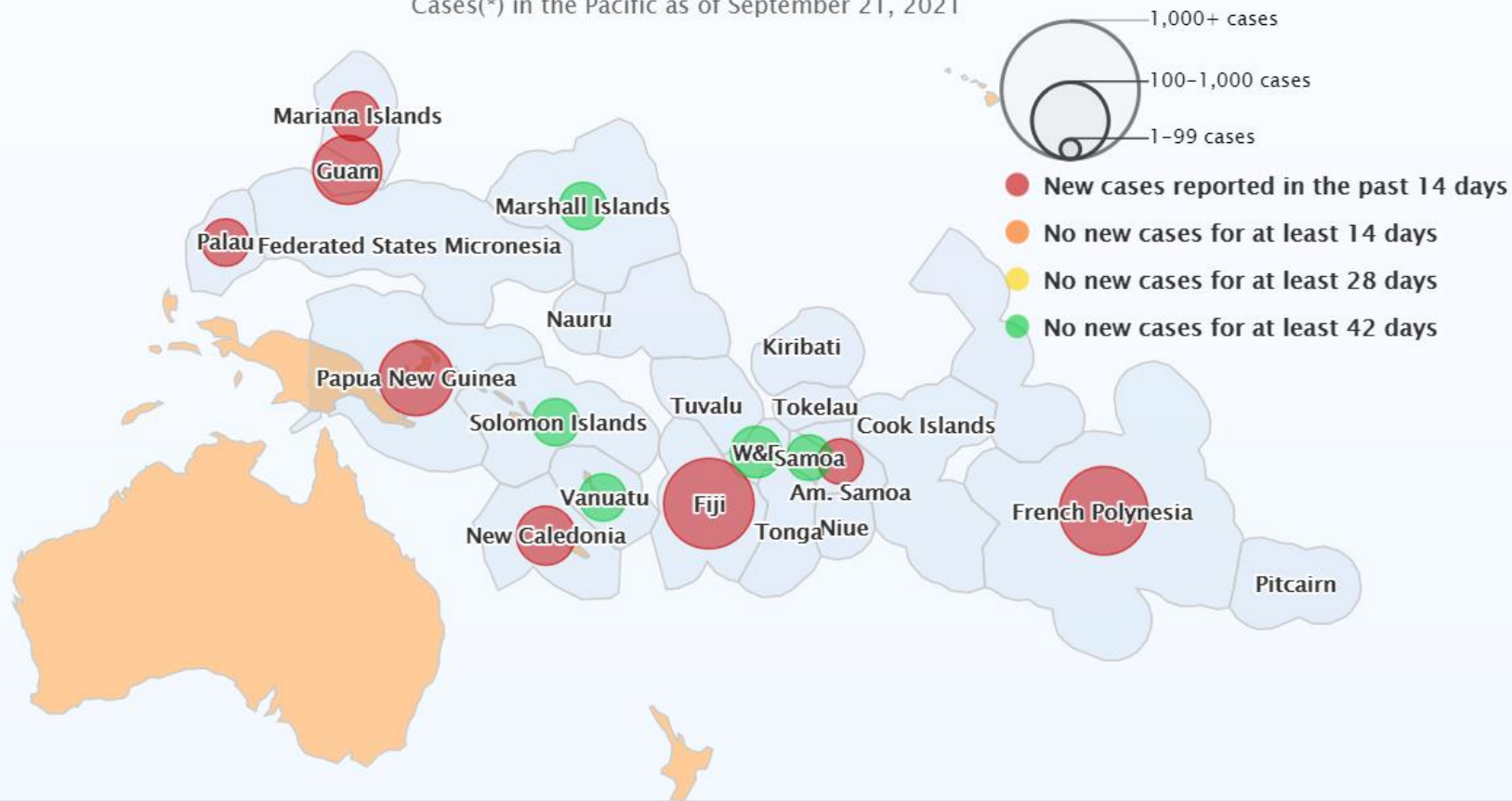
Figure 2. COVID-19 cases per 100 000 population reported by countries, territories and areas, 13 – 19 September 2021**



**See Annex 2: Data, table and figure notes

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

Cases(*) in the Pacific as of September 21, 2021



Preparedness & response pillars



National
Coordination and
Planning



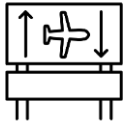
Surveillance, rapid
response & case
investigation



Risk
communication and
engagement



Laboratory
diagnosis



Points of Entry
Border control &
quarantine



Infection prevention
and control



Operations and
logistics



Clinical
management



Vaccination

COVID-19 Preparedness in Pacific Island Countries

Key challenges/ risk assessment, February 2020

- Risk of importation
- Risk of transmission
- Health system capacity to respond
 - Testing
 - Contact tracing
 - Isolation and quarantine
 - Hospital systems
 - Workforce
- Vaccine roll-out

INSIDE DEVELOPMENT | COVID-19

Is the Pacific ready for coron

By **Lisa Cornish** // 28 February 2020

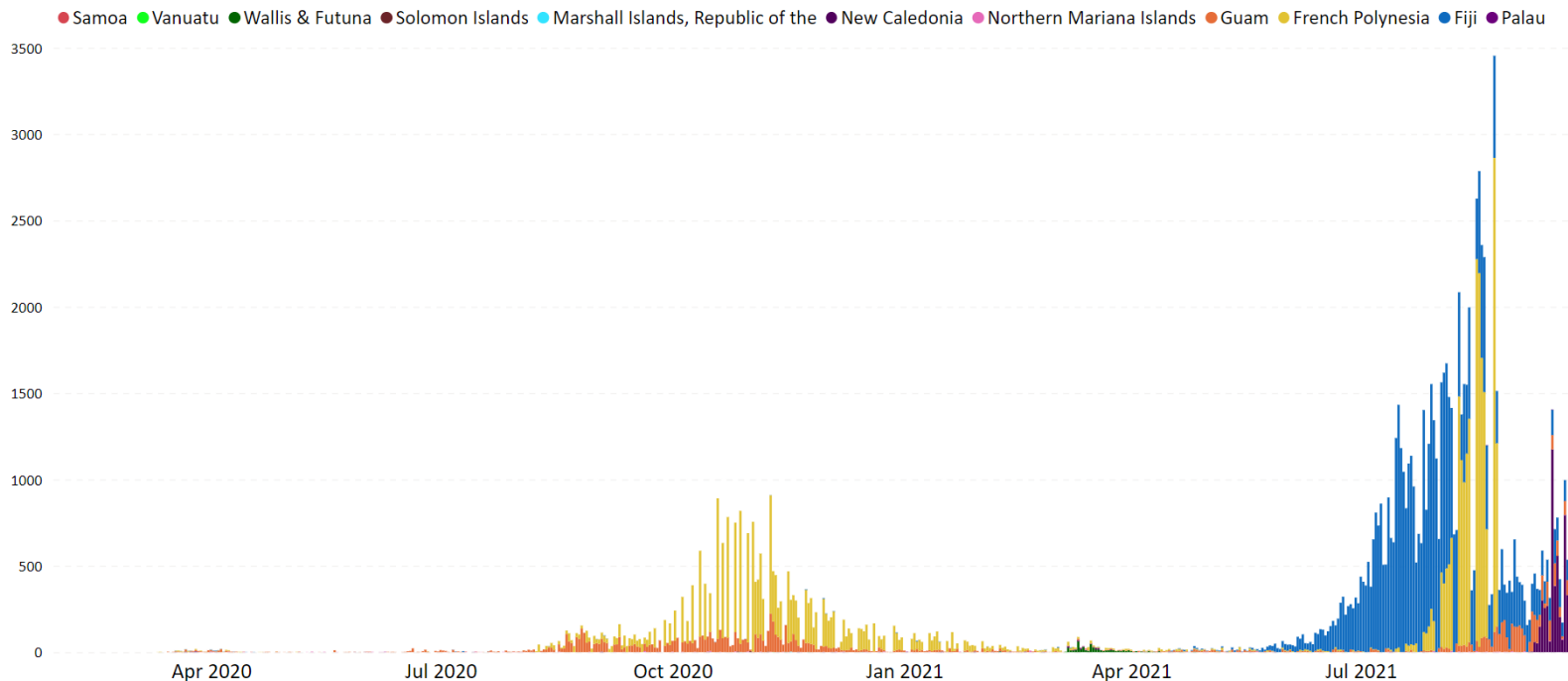
Global Health Trade & Policy SPC WHO East Asia and Pacific



Medical staff at work in a hospital on the Marshall Islands. Photo by: ADB / CC BY-NC-ND



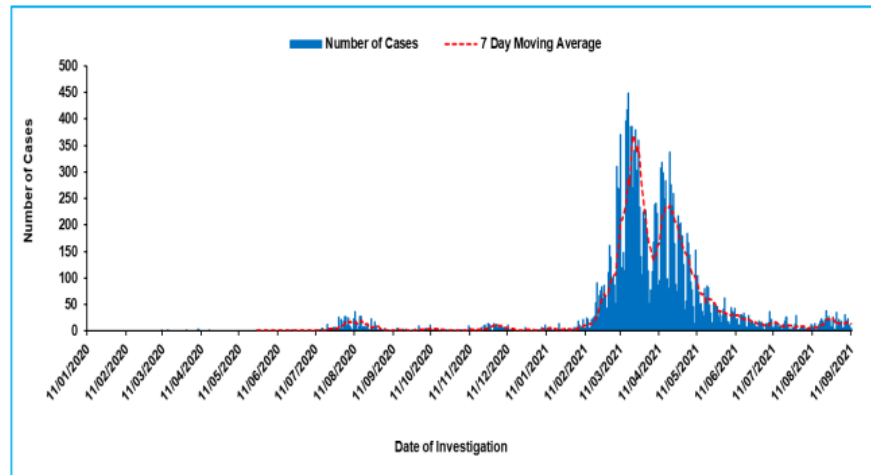
COVID-19 in the Pacific, 22 September 2021



COVID-19 in Papua New Guinea, 12 September 2021

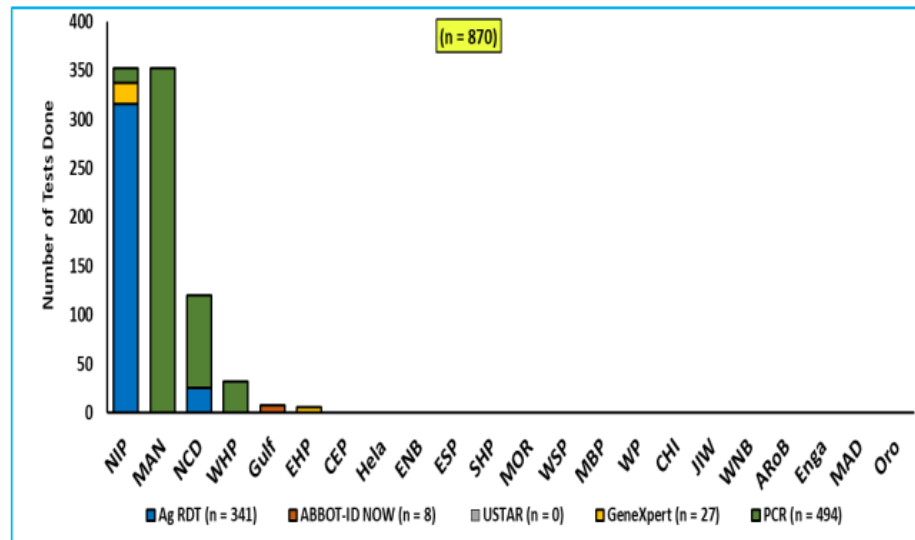
Epidemiology

Figure 3. Epidemiological curve of total COVID-19 cases in Papua New Guinea as at 12th September, 2021



Please note: The true extent of the decreasing trend must be interpreted with caution as there are delays in receiving and reporting results from provinces.

Figure 4: Tests done in the last 7 days, 06th to 12th September 2021

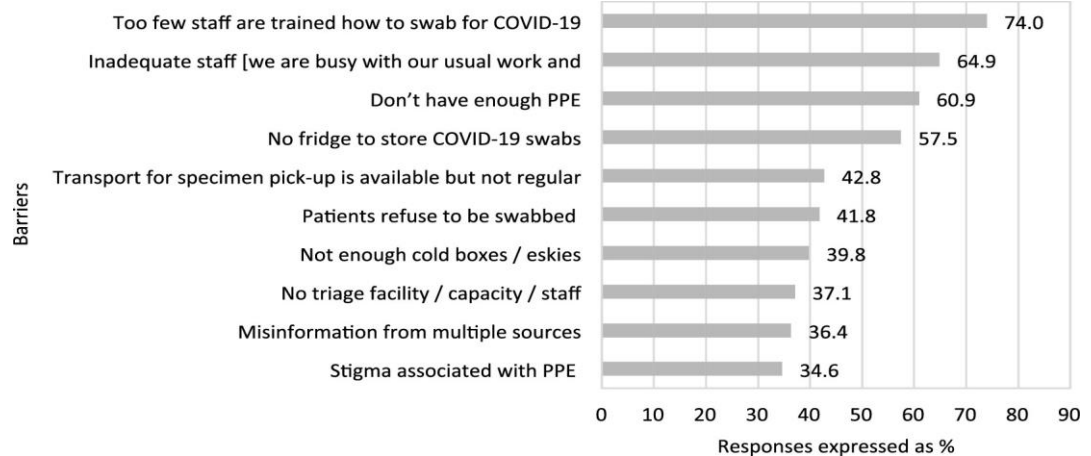


Barriers and enablers experienced by health care workers for testing of COVID-19

COVID-19 training for PNGDF, June 2020



PC: WHO Country Office, Papua New Guinea



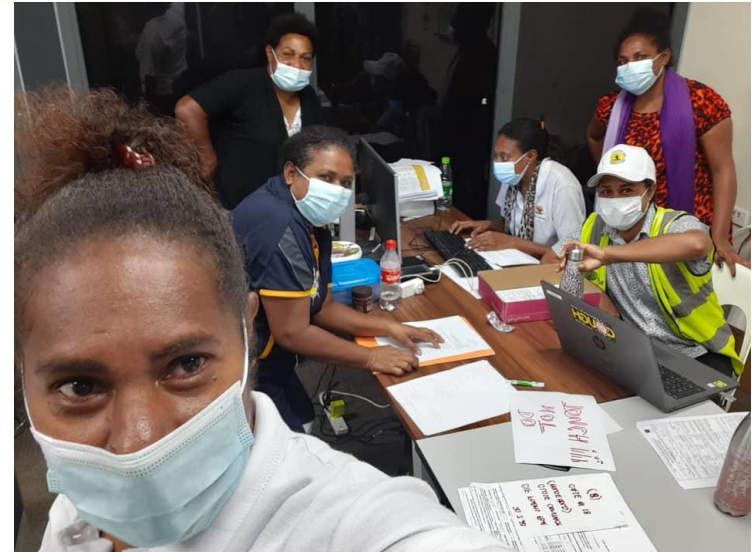
Strategies for prevention & control of COVID-19 in the context of Pacific

Lessons learnt from easing COVID-19 restrictions: an analysis of countries and regions in Asia Pacific and Europe



Emeline Han, Melisa Mei Jin Tan*, Eva Turk, Devi Sridhar, Gabriel M Leung, Kenji Shibuya, Nima Asgari, Juhwan Oh, Alberto L García-Basteiro, Johanna Hanefeld, Alex R Cook, Li Yang Hsu, Yik Ying Teo, David Heymann, Helen Clark, Martin McKee, Helena Legido-Quigley*

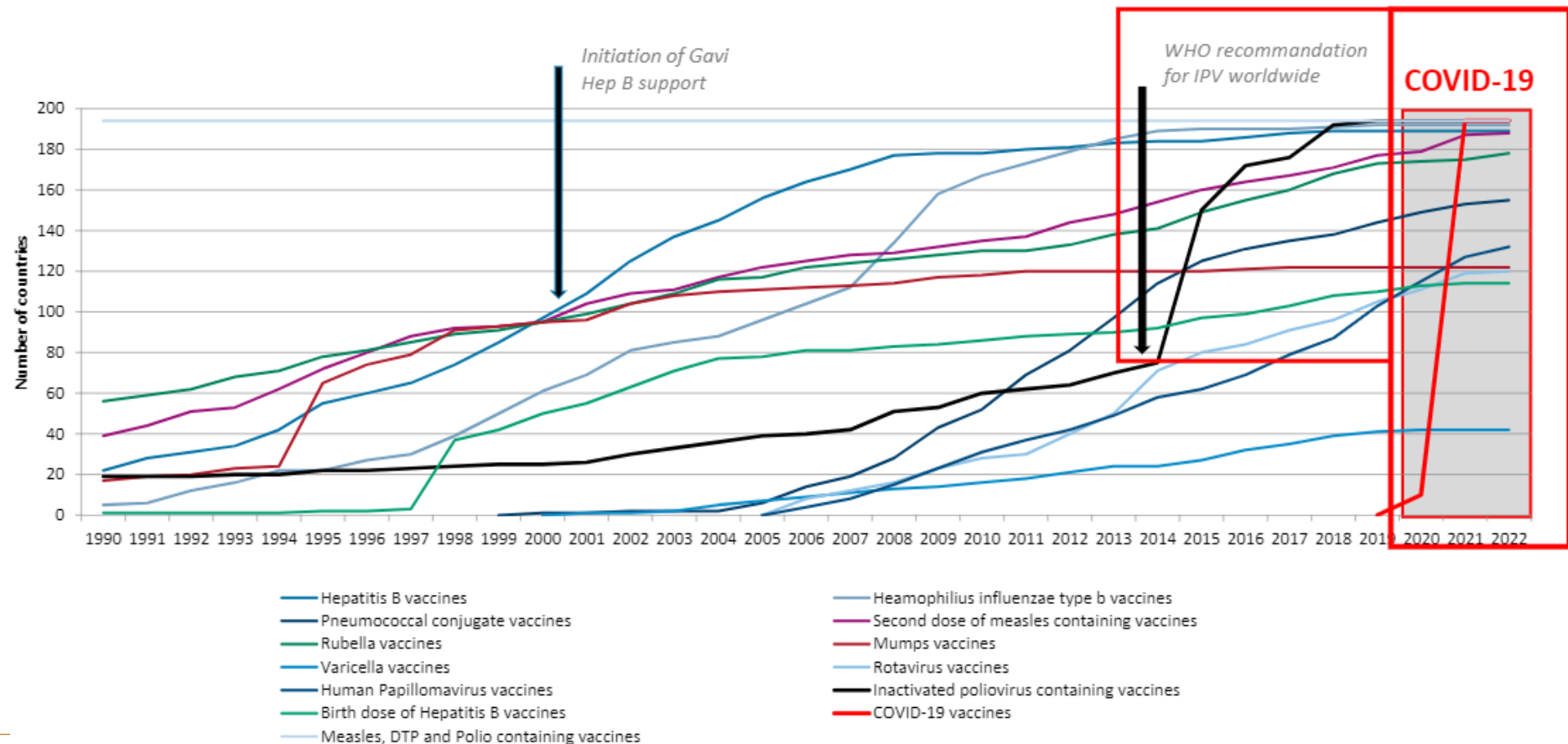
- Border control works
- Mask use is possible
- Health systems can be overwhelmed
 - Workforce
- Surveillance and testing
- Contact tracing and quarantine
 - Multi-generational households
- Public health and social measures
 - Lockdown vs targeted approach
 - When and how to ease the restrictions
 - Social & well-being support



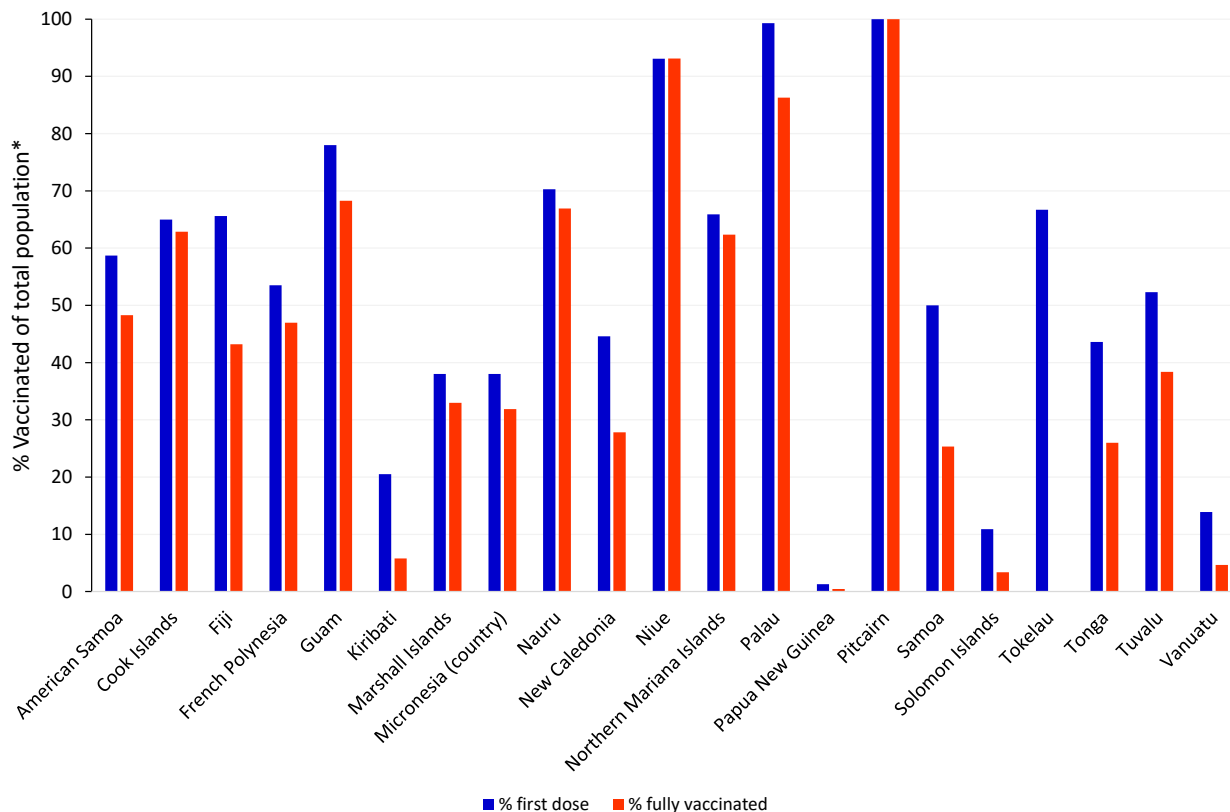
PC: Mary Kaevakore, Papua New Guinea



COVID-19 vaccine introduction, faster than ever before



COVID-19 vaccine roll out, 21 September 2021



*eligible age of vaccination may vary

- Date and vaccine type varies by country.
- Proportions not based on eligible age cohort



COVID-19 vaccine roll-out in the Pacific

- Delayed start as part of the COVAX deliveries (April vs Feb) – 66 days between first HIC and LMIC (Ghana)
- Logistical considerations: greater proportion shipped and expanded regional dose sharing from Australia and New Zealand; to maximise access from logistics of dispersed small island countries (compared with Africa/ Asia – 3% HCWs)
 - An opportunity to vaccinate in the absence of disease
- Community engagement: vaccine uptake, hesitancy and mis-information
- Progress monitoring: coverage and vaccine safety surveillance
- Lessons learnt from the recent measles outbreak

Health

Tonga's extra doses, means more can get vaccinated

Thursday, April 29, 2021 - 18:49. Updated on Friday, April 30, 2021 - 09:50.

Thursday, April 29, 2021 - 18:49

Tonga's precious supply of covid vaccine can now be extended to thousands more people thanks to the skills of the Tongan nurses, who have the first batch received this month. People aged 35 years and over can now be vaccinated with the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine. By Eleano



Government of Samoa

PICTORIAL - COVID-19 MASS VACCINATION CAMPAIGN 2021.

The Public Service workforce went out in force to roll out the COVID-19 Mass Vaccine Campaign approved by Cabinet mobilizing hundreds of public servants to go out to and homes in Upolu and Savai'i. Cabinet also visited several locations to encourage heed the Government's call for universal support to protect Samoa from the deadly Campaign is for 2 days, September 23rd-24th.



Samoa measles outbreak: families fly red flags to request vaccinations

Workers told to stay home during two-day drive to control virus that has killed 62 people



DETERMINANTS OF COVID-19 VACCINE HESITANCY IN FIJI



PACIFIC / FIJI

Supported by the Commonwealth Foundation under the "Strengthening Citizen Engagement in COVID-19 Policy and Decision-making" Project



Better understanding of Covid-19 vaccine hesitancy in Fiji needed for succesful youth roll out - Study

7:45 pm on 6 September 2021

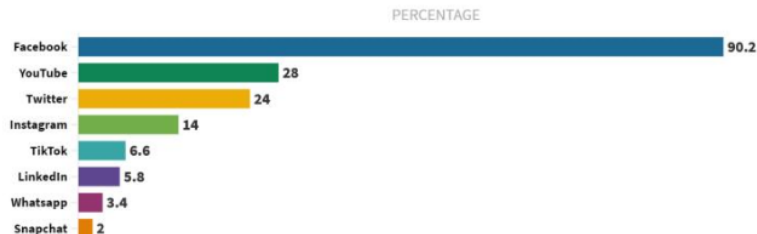


Christine Rovo, RNZ Pacific Journalist
✉ christine.rovoi@rnz.co.nz





A civil society group in Fiji say the success of a Covid-19 vaccine rollout to Fijians und understanding of the reasons for hesitancy in Fiji.



Fig 19: Social media platforms used for COVID-19 related news



Emerging issues around policy & regulation

	 Mix & match	 Variants of concern	 Cold chain	 Safety
Key question	Can different vaccines be used to administer 1 st and 2 nd doses?	Are existing vaccines also effective against variants of concern – esp. Delta?	Can mRNA vaccines also be stored under more flexible storage conditions?	What implications do cases of TTS ¹ and Myocarditis for vaccine risk considerations?

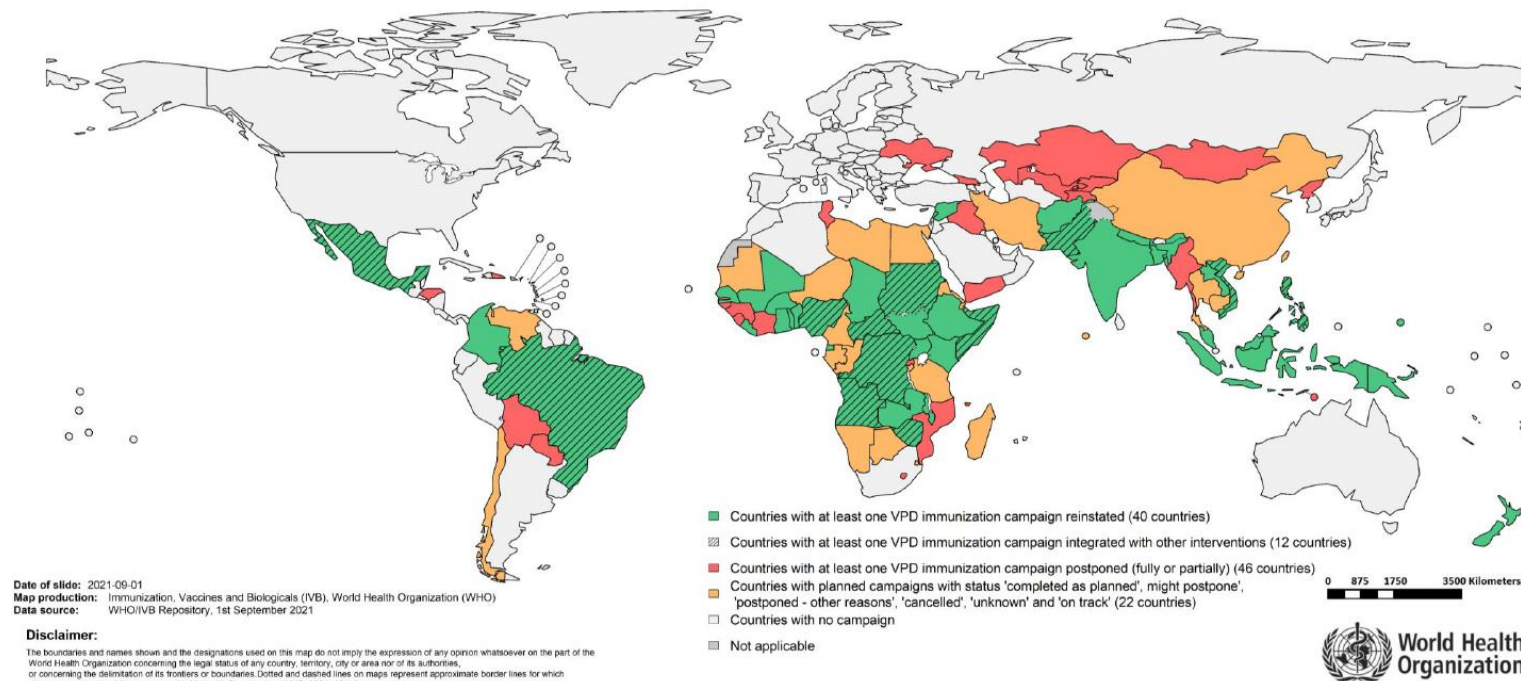
Breakthrough disease, boosters

What is the implication of breakthrough infections on severe outcome, long COVID19
Who needs a booster and when



VPD integrated campaigns postponed due to COVID-19: 46 countries with at least one VPD campaign postponed, 1st September 2021

Angola, Brazil, CAR, DR Congo, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Somalia, Sudan, Viet Nam and Zimbabwe have re-instated campaigns with multi-antigens.



Where to from here?

- Public health response is complex and requires sub-regional, country-specific, multi-sectoral approach: **agility across policy and implementation will be critical**
- Vaccinate rapidly to ensure reduced morbidity and mortality
- Prepare for importation of COVID-19 in countries (endemicity), Delta strain likely to arrive in most countries
- Contact tracing and quarantine in vaccinated populations
- Booster doses and paediatric doses
- Vaccine registration and recall for additional doses
- Protecting the health system, and plan for interruption of routine immunisation and health services
- Scale-up in the context of plateauing uptake; accounting for misinformation – community engagement
- Learn and document lessons from the roll-out of COVID19 vaccines for integration, strengthen the health system



Conclusions

- COVID-19 vaccines work but their inclusion into public health response measures requires creative solutions to ensure accelerated and equitable delivery
- Non-pharmaceutical interventions will be an integral part of response to COVID-19.
- Pacific island countries and territories are in a unique place to minimise morbidity and mortality from COVID-19.

Thank you & questions



