COVID-19 in Pacific

Experiences to date, where to from here?

Pacific Update
Development Policy Centre
24 September 2021

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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**

Legend:
- 0.01 - 10.00
- 10.01 - 50.00
- 50.01 - 100.00
- 100.01 - 300.00
- > 300.00
- No cases reported in the last 7 days
- No reported cases

Data Source: World Health Organization, United Nations Population Division (population projection 2020-2050), Eurostat
Map Production: WHO Health Emergencies Programme

**See Annex 2: Data, table and figure notes
Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

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

1,000+ cases
100-1,000 cases
1-99 cases

- New cases reported in the past 14 days
- No new cases reported for at least 14 days
- No new cases reported for at least 28 days
- No new cases reported for at least 42 days
Preparedness & response pillars

- National Coordination and Planning
- Risk communication and engagement
- Points of Entry
- Border control & quarantine
- Operations and logistics
- Surveillance, rapid response & case investigation
- Laboratory diagnosis
- Infection prevention and control
- 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
COVID-19 in the Pacific, 22 September 2021

Pacific dashboard: https://www.who.int/westernpacific/emergencies/covid-19/covid-19-in-the-pacific
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

Figure 4: Tests done in the last 7 days, 06th to 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.
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

Source: WHO ECHO sessions, NDVPs, February 2021
COVID-19 vaccine roll out, 21 September 2021

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

*eligible age of vaccination may vary

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

A civil society group in Fiji say the success of a Covid-19 vaccine rollout to Fijians understanding of the reasons for hesitancy in Fiji.
Emerging issues around policy & regulation

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