Ministry of Health
Vanuatu Government

# Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)

## Vanuatu Situation Report #41– 28 June 2021

### HIGHLIGHTS

- So far, 44,000 doses of COVID-19 vaccines have been received in Vanuatu, comprising 24,000 AstraZeneca doses through COVAX Facility and 20,000 Sinopharm doses received from the Chinese Government.
- Vaccine roll-out started on 2 June 2021 with the first batch of AstraZeneca prioritised to health workers, front line workers (e.g. border workers, quarantine facility staff, public transport drivers), the elderly (55 and above), and people over 35 with existing medical conditions.
- Up until 27 June 2021, there were 10,480 doses administered. A total of 567 healthcare workers, 1,163 other frontline workers, 2,035 elderly persons and 1,642 persons with known underlying conditions received their first dose of AstraZeneca.
- There have been 82 non-serious adverse events and 7 serious adverse events reported following COVID-19 immunization in Vanuatu. Of the 7 investigated, 5 required causality assessments with 4 confirmed to be **coincidental or immunization anxiety-related and not related to the COVID-19 vaccine product or immunization error.** Results from one event are pending but evidence indicates no Thrombosis (blood clots) with Thrombocytopenia Syndrome (TTS).
- Planning is ongoing by the Ministry of Health for launch and roll-out of the Sinopharm vaccine, which is targeted for 6 July 2021.
- **Vanuatu remains in Scenario 1.** There are currently no COVID-19 cases in isolation or quarantine, with no evidence of local transmission in Vanuatu since the beginning of the pandemic.
- Updates will be communicated via the COVID-19 website: www.covid19.gov.vu

*Yellow highlights indicate where information has changed relative to the previous SitRep.*

### INITIAL STAGE OF VACCINATION PLANNING

Since late 2020, work has been ongoing by the Ministry of Health and partners to plan and prepare for the roll-out in Vanuatu of COVID-19 vaccines. The Vanuatu National COVID-19 Vaccine Deployment Plan (Version 1) was developed to support Vanuatu's application for accessing vaccines through the COVAX Facility. The COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access Facility is a global procurement mechanism coordinated by Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, WHO and UNICEF with the goal to ensure fair and equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines for all countries.

An indemnity document was required to allow the import into Vanuatu of COVID-19 vaccines through the COVAX Facility; this was granted by Parliament on 22 April 2021 for vaccines that had received a WHO Emergency Use Listing (EUL). On the 19 May 2021, Vanuatu received the first batch of 24,000 doses of COVID-19 AstraZeneca Vaccines from the COVAX Facility. This should enable coverage of up to 20 per cent of the eligible population in the initial planned rollout, with the prioritised groups being health workers, front line workers (e.g. border workers, quarantine facility staff, public transport drivers), elderly (55 and above) and people over 35 with existing medical conditions.

On 6 June 2021, Vanuatu received 20,000 doses of the Sinopharm vaccine, which had earlier received a WHO EUL. This was provided through a bilateral agreement between the governments of Vanuatu and The People's Republic of China. A launch event was held on 15 June 2021 and planning is ongoing by the Ministry of Health for roll-out of the Sinopharm vaccine, which is targeted to commence on 6 July 2021.

### ADDITIONAL VACCINE SUPPLY

Currently there is greater global demand for COVID-19 vaccines than vaccine manufacturing companies can produce. The Vanuatu Ministry of Health are actively working to identify additional sources of vaccines, including through bi-lateral partners. The Ministry of Health will keep the public informed of further developments regarding additional vaccine supply and roll-out.

## PRE-REGISTRATION

Pre-Registration for the COVID-19 Vaccine was held between 18 and 24 June 2021, during which over 4,000 people pre-registered. This was initiated to collect advance information to better understand vaccine acceptance levels in selected groups eligible for vaccination in Phase 1. Pre-registration efforts mainly targeted health workers and frontline workers, though other groups also pre-registered. The pre-registration process and information was used to optimize data systems, messaging and strategies for targeted groups.

Those who pre-registered will not necessarily be entitled to receive a vaccine first or earlier. Only those in specific defined groups will be entitled to access vaccines in the initial stage, in order of priority. Those who did not pre-register will still be able to access the vaccine when it is their turn, depending on which priority group they belong to.

## VACCINATION ROLL-OUT

On 2 June 2021, Vanuatu launched its COVID-19 vaccine roll-out campaign during a high-level event. The total number of AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine doses administered between 2 June 2021 and 27 June 2021 was 10,480. These have been prioritised to health workers, front line workers (e.g. border workers, quarantine facility staff, public transport drivers), the elderly (55 and above), and people over 35 with existing medical conditions.

For the 1,642 individuals who stated they had an underlying condition at the time of vaccination, these included high blood pressure, asthmas, diabetes, heart problems, lung disease, kidney disease and cancer.

*Table 1: Number of vaccine doses received and administered from 2 June 2021 to 27 June 2021.*

| Priority Group | Number of doses |
|---|---|
| **Total number of doses received** | **44,000** |
| AstraZeneca | 24,000 |
| Sinopharm | 20,000 |
| **Total number of doses administered** | **10,480** |
| Healthcare workers vaccinated with first dose* | 567 |
| Other frontline workers vaccinated with first dose* | 1,163 |
| Elderly (55 and above) vaccinated with first dose* | 2,035 |
| Persons with known underlying conditions vaccinated with first dose* | 1,642 |

Note: These categories are not mutually exclusive; individuals may be counted within more than one category.

## ADVERSE EVENTS FOLLOWING IMMUNIZATION

Expected mild to moderate side effects following immunization include: fever, fatigue, headache, muscle pain, chills, diarrhoea, and pain at the injection site. These usually subside within a few days. Serious side effects (adverse events) following immunization are rare and do not necessarily mean that a vaccine caused a health problem. They can be reactions related to the vaccine product, vaccine quality, immunization error, immunization anxiety or they can be coincidental. Full investigation and causality assessment by a medical team with review by the National Vaccine Safety Expert Advisory Group is required for all serious adverse events. The investigation and assessment process is important to avoid any misleading classification.

From a total of 10,480 COVID-19 vaccines administered in Vanuatu up to 27 June 2021, adverse events were reported for 89 people. This comprised 82 non-serious events and 7 serious events. All of the serious events were investigated, and 5 were identified as requiring a causality assessment. Four of the 5 events were determined not to be caused by the vaccine or the immunization process and were classified as anxiety-related or coincidental. One case remains under investigation with further tests ongoing as samples were sent overseas. The evidence for this case indicates there has not been Thrombosis (blood clots) with Thrombocytopenia Syndrome (TTS). Therefore, to 27 June 2021 there have been no serious adverse events confirmed to be related to the COVID-19 vaccine product or immunization error.

*Table 2: Adverse events following COVID-19 immunization reported from 2 June 2021 to 27 June 2021.*

| Priority Group | Number of reports |
|---|---|
| **Total number of reported adverse events following immunization** | **89** |
| Non-serious | 82 |
| Serious | 7 |
| **Total number of reported serious adverse events requiring causality assessment** | **5** |
| Vaccine-product related | 0 |
| Vaccine quality defect-related | 0 |
| Immunization error-related | 0 |
| Coincidental* | 3 |
| Immunization anxiety-related | 1 |
| Results pending | 1 |

* Inconsistent causal association to immunization

## CURRENT TRANSMISSION SCENARIO

Since the beginning of the pandemic, there have been three (3) active COVID-19 cases in Vanuatu, all of which have been detected in quarantine. There has been no community transmission of COVID-19 in Vanuatu. From over 23,000 tests conducted in Australia and New Zealand on people arriving from Vanuatu between early 2020 and March/April 2021, none have detected COVID-19.

- From 1 January 2020 to 21 March 2021, 1,149 people who travelled from Vanuatu undertook approximately 2,298 tests for SARS-CoV-2 during quarantine in New Zealand. No test results were positive.
- From February 2020 to April 2021, 10,512 people who travelled from Vanuatu undertook approximately 21,024 tests for SARS-CoV-2 during quarantine in Australia. No test results were positive.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

Everyone is urged to refer only to official information sources and to avoid spreading misinformation and rumours. Further information and updates are made available by the Ministry of Health on the dedicated website at www.covid19.gov.vu and the free landing page at https://bit.ly/vanmoh or by calling the Health Information Hotline on 119.

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**Approved by:** Mr Len Tarivonda, Director of Public Health
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** The frequency of Ministry of Health COVID-19 Situation Reports will depend on the evolving situation.*