Ministry of Health
Vanuatu Government

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)

Vanuatu Situation Report #51 – 12 September 2021

HIGHLIGHTS

- So far, 94,000 doses of COVID-19 vaccines have been received in Vanuatu, comprising 24,000 AstraZeneca doses through COVAX Facility, 20,000 Sinopharm doses received from the Chinese Government and 50,000 AstraZeneca doses received from the Australian Government.
- Vaccine roll-out started on 2 June 2021 with vaccines prioritised to health workers, front line workers (e.g. border workers, quarantine facility staff, public transport drivers), the elderly (55 and over), and people 35 and over with existing medical conditions.
- Up until 12 September 2021, there were 57,170 COVID-19 doses administered in Vanuatu. A total of 42,840 people received at least one dose of AstraZeneca or Sinopharm, including 881 healthcare workers, 1,691 other frontline workers, 7,723 elderly persons and 5,104 persons with known underlying conditions. 2,945 people have received two doses of Sinopharm and 11,399 have received two doses of AstraZeneca, and are considered fully vaccinated.
- There have been 280 adverse events following COVID-19 immunization notified in Vanuatu. The vast majority have been mild to moderate side-effects reported via the dial-in line. 11 have been classified as serious adverse events and have required investigation. Of these, 11 have required causality assessments with 8 confirmed to be coincidental or immunization anxiety-related and not related to the COVID-19 vaccine product or immunization error with 1 indeterminate (due to conflicting trends). Results from 1 event are pending. **To 12 September 2021 there have been no serious adverse events or deaths confirmed to be related to the COVID-19 vaccine product, quality defect or immunization error in Vanuatu.**
- **Vanuatu remains in Scenario 1 (Level 0: Low).** 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.
- Everyone is urged to refer to official information sources and avoid rumours. 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 over) and people 35 and over with known underlying medical conditions. On 27 July 2021, 20,000 AstraZeneca vaccines were received in Vanuatu through a bilateral arrangement between the governments of the Republic of Vanuatu and Australia followed by a second batch of 30,000 AstraZeneca in August.

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 the Republic of Vanuatu and The People's Republic of China. A launch event was held on 15 June 2021 during which 110 people were vaccinated. Following a period of planning by the Ministry of Health, roll-out of Sinopharm commenced on 6 July 2021 with the 110 people receiving their second recommended dose.

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.

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 COVID-19 vaccine doses administered between 2 June 2021 and 12 September 2021 was 57,170. These have been prioritised to health workers, front line workers (e.g. border workers, quarantine facility staff, public transport drivers), the elderly (55 and over), and people 35 and over with known underlying medical conditions. For the 5,104 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

Those who have received both of the two recommended doses of either Sinopharm or Astrazeneca are considered fully vaccinated. To date, 14,344 people in Vanuatu are considered fully vaccinated.

Vaccination operations continue in south Efate in Port Vila at the National Convention Center. AstraZeneca is being administered on Mondays to Thursdays and Sinopharm is being provided on Fridays.

Table 1: Number of vaccine doses received and administered from 2 June 2021 to 12 September 2021.

Priority Group	Number of doses
Total number of doses received in the country	**94,000**
AstraZeneca	74,000
Sinopharm	20,000
Total number of doses administered	**57,170**
Total number of people who received at least one dose	**42,840**
Healthcare workers vaccinated with first dose*	881
Other frontline workers vaccinated with first dose*	1,691
Elderly (55 and above) vaccinated with first dose*	7,723
Persons with known underlying conditions vaccinated with first dose*	5,104
Total number of people who received all recommended doses ie. fully vaccinated	**14,344**

** 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 57,170 COVID-19 vaccine doses administered in Vanuatu up to 12 September 2021, adverse events were notified for 280 people mostly via the dial-in number on the COVID-19 vaccine record card. Only 11 of these were serious adverse events with investigations initiated and all 11 required a causality assessment. 8 were confirmed to be coincidental and 1 immunization anxiety-related and not related to the COVID-19 vaccine product or immunization error and 1 was indeterminate (due to conflicting trends). Results from 1 event are pending. To 12 September 2021 there have been no serious adverse events or deaths confirmed to be related to the COVID-19 vaccine product, quality defect or immunization error.

Table 2: Adverse events following COVID-19 immunization reported from 2 June 2021 to 12 September 2021.

Priority Group	Number of reports
Total number of adverse events following immunization (AEFI) notified	**280**
Total number of serious AEFI investigations initiated	11
Total number of AEFI requiring causality assessment	**11**
Vaccine-product related	0
Vaccine quality defect-related	0
Immunization error-related	0
Coincidental*	8
Immunization anxiety-related	1
Indeterminate (conflicting trends)	1
Results pending	1

* Inconsistent causal association to immunization

QUARANTINE AND TESTING

In accordance with the Public Health Act (Cap. 234), international arrivals have been placed in mandatory quarantine for 14 days in government-mandated hotels and provided with food, health checks, and psychosocial assessments and support. Testing for SARS-CoV-2 at days 5 and 11 (and day 1 if arriving from higher risk areas) of quarantined was initiated in mid-2020. To 12 September 2021, there had been 6,856 persons quarantined in Vanuatu and 8,975 tests conducted for SARS-CoV-2 on approximately 5,139 individuals.

Table 3: Number of persons quarantined and number of tests conducted from March 2020 to 22 August 2021.

Travellers and tests (total to date)	Cumulative number
Inbound travellers quarantined in government-mandated hotels	6,856
Specimens tested for SARS-CoV-2	8,975
Estimated individuals tested for SARS-CoV-2	5,139

DISEASE BURDEN

Vanuatu is currently considered to be at Alert Level 0, with no cases in quarantine or isolation. 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.

Approved by: Mr Len Tarivonda, Director of Public Health
Approved at: 14 September 2021, 10:00am

** The frequency of Ministry of Health COVID-19 Situation Reports will depend on the evolving situation.*