Ministry of Health
Vanuatu Government

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)

Vanuatu Situation Report #72 Issued 18 March-Covering 17-18 March 2022

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

SUMMARY AND DISEASE BURDEN

- On 04 March 2022, an active COVID-19 case was confirmed at Vila Central Hospital who had no travel history, indicating transmission at community level.
- **On 07 March 2022, Efate and Offshore Islands moved to Alert Level 3: Very High, due to large-scale community transmission. All provinces of Vanuatu are on Alert Level 3 given reports of cases or movement of contacts of cases in the six provinces of Vanuatu.**
- **A total of 753 confirmed cases have been reported since the beginning of 2022.**
- **150 new confirmed cases have been reported in the last 24 hours, including 146 on Efate island (Shefa province) and 4 on Santo island (Sanma province).**

The best way to protect yourself, your family and your community from COVID-19 is to follow the instructions provided by health authorities, follow public health prevention measures and to get fully vaccinated against COVID-19. WHO-recommended vaccines like AstraZeneca, Sinopharm and Johnson and Johnson are safe and effective.

As of 18 March 2022, 12pm:

	Number of cases of COVID-19					
	National		Shefa		Sanma	
	Last 24 hours	2022 total	Last 24 hours	2022 total	Last 24 hours	2022 total
Confirmed	150	753	146	701	4	52
	Current status of confirmed cases recorded in national database					
	National		Shefa		Sanma	
	Last 24 hours	Currently	Last 24 hours	Currently	Last 24 hours	Currently
Active	150	649	146	606	4	43
	Last 24 hours	2022 total	Last 24 hours	2022 total	Last 24 hours	2022 total
Recovered	N/A	104	N/A	95	N/A	9
Death from COVID-19	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Confirmed cases at higher risk recorded in national database					
	National		sShefa		Sanma	
	Last 24 hours	Active cases	Last 24 hours	Active cases	Last 24 hours	Active cases
Hospitalised for COVID-19	0	2	0	2	0	0

Including critically ill	0	1	0	1	0	0

Additional information about confirmed cases:

	Gender of confirmed cases recorded in national database and detected in 2022					
	National		Shefa		Sanma	
	Last 24 hours	2022 total	Last 24 hours	2022 total	Last 24 hours	2022 total
Male	395	418	394	390	1	28
Female	316	334	313	310	3	24

	Place of isolation of confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Vanuatu					
	National		Shefa		Sanma	
	Last 24 hours	2022 total	Last 24 hours	2022 total	Last 24 hours	2022 total
Home	61	259	61	239	0	20
Hotel	25	187	25	187	0	0
Community isolation and quarantine centre (CIQ)	35	93	35	93	0	0
Hospital	2	20	2	20	0	0
Other	2	9	2	9	0	0
Under investigation	25	185	0	0	0	32
Total	150	753	146	701	4	52

	Testing and positivity					
	National		Shefa		Sanma	
	Previous day	2022 total	Previous day	2022 total	Previous day	2022 total
Number of tests conducted^	198	3351	198	3351	NA	NA
Test positivity (%)+	25%	13%	25%	13%	NA	NA

***Discrepancies with previous reports may result from lags in data entry and reporting at a national and provincial level.** Increase and decrease of cases on a daily basis is dependent on the number of tests conducted and might not reflect the actual number of cases.*

[*]Include cases detected at the border and in the community
[#]Require medical care
^Includes PCR and rapid antigen tests; this only includes tests that have been reported to the surveillance unit
+Test positivity is the average positivity over the last 7 days; this is done to adjust for daily fluctuations

DEFINITIONS: A recovered case is someone who meets the criteria for no longer requiring isolation. A deceased case is a death from someone due to COVID-19. Each death requires additional clinical review.

PUBLIC HEALTH AND SOCIAL MEASURES:

The following measures have been put in place in light of the outbreak:

1. A curfew is applied in all islands in the Shefa Province and in all of the other five provinces of Tafea, Malampa, Penama, Sanma and Torba from 6pm until 6am over the next 14 days. The curfew acts as a 'stay-at-home' order and is a key action during the pandemic with the goal of reducing COVID-19 transmission by reducing non-essential interactions between people from different households.
2. The curfew does not apply to:
    a. persons requiring emergency health services and persons assisting them to get emergency health services;
    b. essential services as defined as defined in the order and approved by the Minister; and
    c. persons engaged in activities under the national clusters that are being activated by the National Disaster Management Office on Efate and its offshore islands.
    d. persons or children requiring getting vaccination for COVID-19 and other vaccines.

OPERATIONS:

The National Health Emergency Operations Centre is activated and is meeting twice daily to manage and coordinate the response operations.

- **Surveillance and testing:** One-hundred and fifty (150) new active cases have been reported, 146 in Shefa province and 4 new cases in Sanma province in the previous 24 hours. All Shefa cases are located in the Port Vila area. The number of reported cases is less than the true number of cases in the community; reasons include some being asymptomatic, the current testing strategy focusing on symptomatic people and difficulties in access to testing. The true number of cases is expected to be at least 3-5 times the number of confirmed and reported cases.
- Testing sites using rapid antigen tests have been expanded to public health facilities and private health providers in and around Efate. Their location will be regularly updated and is available on the MOH COVID-19 website at www.covid19.gov.vu and the Health Promotion Unit Facebook page. A tent has been set-up as a triage and testing site for people presenting with flu-like symptoms at VCH. The National Surveillance and Response Unit reminds all clinicians and laboratories that reporting newly diagnosed cases of COVID-19 is required under the Public Health Act. If you do not know how to notify, please contact vnsu@vanuatu.gov.vu.
- **Contact tracing and quarantine:** Due to the volume of cases and contacts exceeding the capacity of the contact tracing team, the focus for contact tracing teams is to interview all new cases and identify high risk and priority contacts (defined as pregnant women, people with underlying conditions, unvaccinated people and people aged 55+ years and health care workers). A contact tracing hub has been established in Port Vila that will provide support for all provinces.
- **Risk communication and community engagement (RCCE):** Risk communication and community engagement activities are ongoing. So far, community mobilisation activities have been conducted throughout all the five municipal wards of Port Vila, the peri-urban communities on South East and South West communities on Efate by an integrated COVID-19 team, including key RCCE partners, such as, the Shefa Provincial Government Council, Port Vila City Council, Vanuatu Police Force, Vanuatu Society for Persons with Disability, and other community stakeholders. Over the last two days more than 3,000 people have been reached through the integrated COVID-19 team. From 18 March, the integrated team will move to carry out social mobilisation activities in villages on North Efate. Mass multi-media campaigns are progressing on various platforms including on MoH daily 'live' updates, television, social media, radio, and

press releases. Social listening and rumour monitoring continues. In addition, the team is collaborating with NDMO Communication & Community Engagement subcluster, and WASH cluster partners to support RCCE activities. Key questions and concerns raised include prompt communication on community transmission, clear advice on closure of VCH OPD and additional health services to be provided at urban and rural facilities, and information on the set up of the NCD Hub

- **Community Isolation and Quarantine centers (CIQ):** The first Government-managed, community isolation and quarantine facilities opened at Korman Stadium on 16 March 2022. CIQs are established for the isolation of mild cases that are unable to isolate safely at home. Additional sites are being established in Shefa and other provinces.
- **Case management and isolation:** Requirements for cases have been updated: Cases should isolate for 7 days and can leave isolation if symptoms have improved over the last 3 days. Monitor the person with COVID-19 for symptoms regularly and call your healthcare provider immediately if any danger signs develop. Testing prior to leaving isolation is not required, as long as the required time has passed. A total of two (2) cases are currently hospitalised in VCH, and of that one (1) is critically ill requiring oxygen
- **Emergency Medical Teams (EMTs):** National EMT Coordinating Cell (EMTCC) has been activated in Port Vila and the EOC and EMTCC has been activated at NPH. EMTCC will coordinate the deployment of national and international EMTs based on needs assessment and requests for assistance at provincial and national levels. Daily calls are conducted with provinces. EMTs will assist for outbreak investigation and contract tracing, clinical management and referral of cases as needed based on local situation.
- **COVID-19 vaccination:** Vaccination has resumed on Thursday 10th March 2022 at the National Convention Centre and is currently available from Monday to Friday. Additional vaccination sites are being set-up in Port Vila (Imere Health Center, Pango Dispensary) and North Efate (Saupia Health Centre) and will be operational on Monday 14th March. 2 mobile teams are available to cover Port Vila municipality. Vaccination is ongoing in all provinces. The elderly (55 years and over), and people 35 years and over with known underlying medical conditions, are most at risk of severe disease and hospitalization and are strongly advised to get vaccinated with all recommended doses and with a booster if they are eligible.
- **Partners support:** The Health Cluster was activated and the first meeting was held on Monday 14th March 2022 to coordinate in-country partners support. MOH and WHO are jointly coordinating development partners support, including international surge support.
    - HR surge support are being offered by development partners (Australia, UK, SPC and WHO) in the areas of epidemiology, clinical care, laboratory and logistics
    - COVID-19 response fund is being offered by development partners (ADB, Australia and NZ)
    - 10,000 AZ vaccines arrived on March 7 with the support from Australia
    - 60 oxygen concentrators and PPEs arrived on March 7 with the support from Australia
    - 13,000 rapid antigen test (RAT) kits arrived on March 8 with the support from Australia
    - 5000 PCR testing kits and swabs arrived on March 8 from WHO
    - 9000 surgical masks arrived on March 9 from WHO.
    - Ministry of Youth and Sports, Red Cross and UN partners assist setting up the community isolation center
- **Provincial update:**

  PCR, Rapid Antigen Tests, swabs and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) have been sent to the provinces to allow testing of suspected cases and of contacts as required. This will allow proper monitoring of the situation in all 6 provinces of Vanuatu. Needs assessment is being conducted to identify any support required.
    - Sanma province: 4 new cases reported on Santo island. Investigation and contact tracing ongoing.
    - Malampa province: Reports of travel of contacts of cases from Port Vila. Investigation ongoing.
    - Penama province: Province on lockdown following report of travel of contacts of cases from Port Vila
    - Tafea province: Reports of travel of contacts of cases from Port Vila. Investigation ongoing.
    - Torba province: No reports of travel or of cases.

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 COVID-19 website at www.covid19.gov.vu, the Health Promotion Unit Facebook page, and by calling the Health Information Hotline on 119.

Approved by: Dr Samuel Posikai Tapo,
National Health Incident Management Controller, Ministry of Health
Director Corporate Services, Ministry of Health

Approved at: 18 March 2022, 12:00pm

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