Ministry of Health
Vanuatu Government

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)

Vanuatu Situation Report #82 Issued 28 March-Covering 27-28 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 2705 confirmed cases have been reported since the beginning of 2022.**
- **112 new confirmed cases have been reported in the last 24 hours, including 99 on Efate Island (Shefa province) and 13 Santo Island (Sanma province) ** Note, the decrease in case numbers since yesterday is due to decreased testing on weekends. Discrepancies with previous reports may result from lags in data entry and reporting at a national and provincial level.**.**

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 28 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	112	2705	99	2406	13	299
	Current status of confirmed cases					
	National		**Shefa**		**Sanma**	
	Last 24 hours	**Currently**	**Last 24 hours**	**Currently**	**Last 24 hours**	**Currently**
Active	112	1643	99	1431	13	212
	Last 24 hours	**2022 total**	**Last 24 hours**	**2022 total**	**Last 24 hours**	**2022 total**
Recovered	N/A	1062	N/A	975	0	87
Death from COVID-19	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Hospitalisations					
	National		**Shefa**		**Sanma**	

	Currently	2022 total	Currently	2022 total	Currently	2022 total
Hospitalised for COVID-19	6	18	6	18	0	0
Including critically ill	0	4	0	4	0	0
	Confirmed cases at higher risk recorded in national database					
	National		Shefa		Sanma	
	Last 24 hours	Active cases	Last 24 hours	Active cases	Last 24 hours	Active cases
Underlying conditions	0	127	0	125	0	2
Pregnant	0	14	0	14	0	0
Aged 55+	3	42	3	42	0	0

Additional information about confirmed cases:

	Gender of confirmed cases					
	National		Shefa		Sanma	
	Last 24 hours	2022 total	Last 24 hours	2022 total	Last 24 hours	2022 total
Male	63	1430	55	1254	8	176
Female	39	1252	34	1137	5	115
Unknown	10	23	10	15	0	8
	Target populations					
	National		Shefa		Sanma	
	Last 24 hours	2022 total	Last 24 hours	2022 total	Last 24 hours	2022 total
Health Care Worker	12	140	7	119	5	21

	Testing and positivity					
	National		Shefa		Sanma	
	Previous day	2022 total	Previous day	2022 total	Previous day	2022 total
Number of tests reported	360	8,787	360	8,787	NA	NA
Test positivity (%)	54%	35%	54%	35%	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*

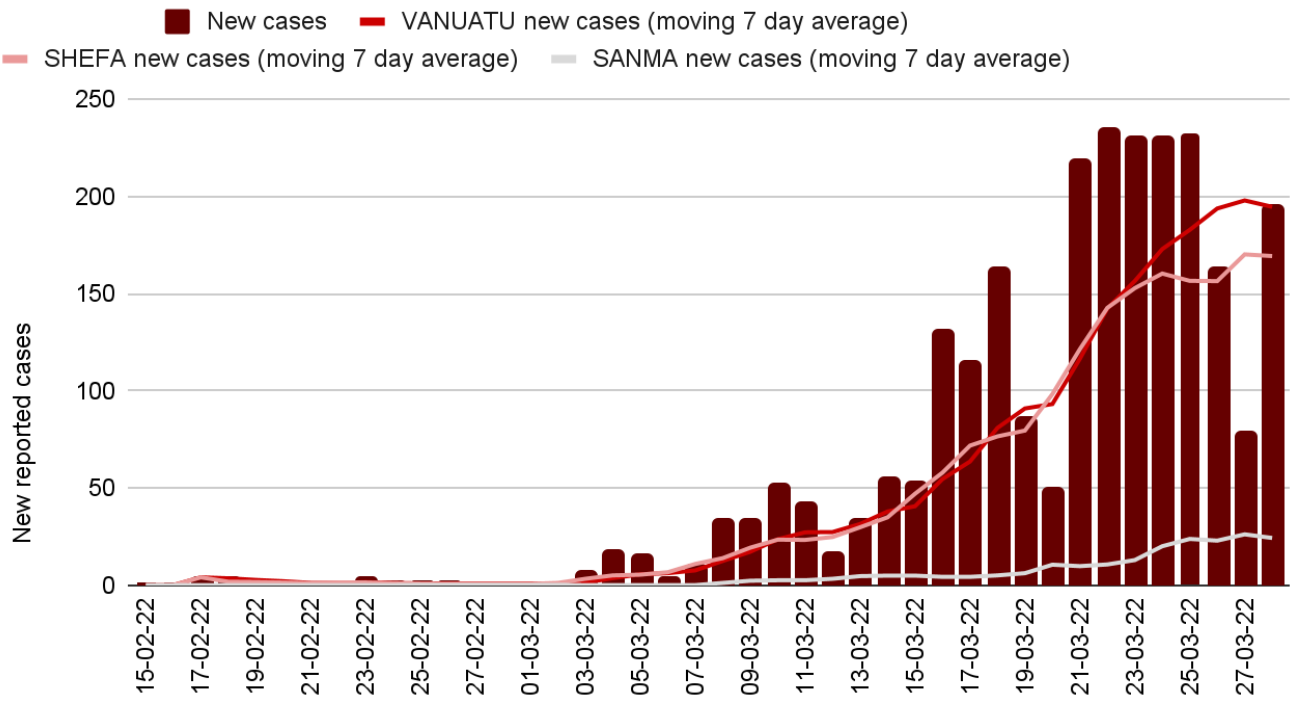
DEFINITIONS: A recovered case is someone who meets the criteria for no longer requiring isolation. A deceased case is a death from someone due to COVID-19. Each death requires additional clinical review.

Current epidemiological situation

The number of new cases continues to increase however there is daily fluctuation (see Figure 1). The 7-day moving average shows that the trend of newly reported cases is still increasing.

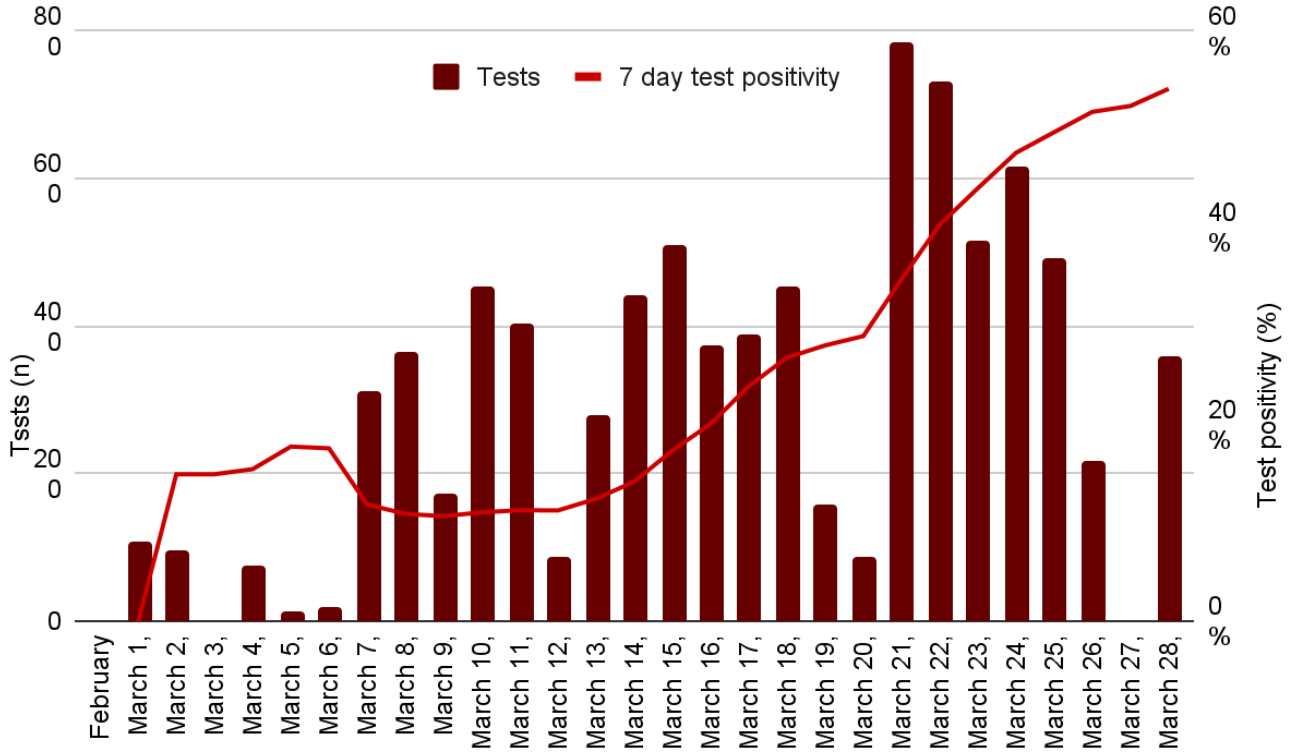
There is no evidence that Shefa or Sanma provinces have reached the peak number of cases.

Figure 1. Number of reported new cases by day of report and 7 day moving average of new cases nationally and by province, February 15 2022 until current date



The cases captured through surveillance do not represent all cases in the community; there are many more cases that have not been detected as they are asymptomatic or the person has not been tested. Work is underway to quantify the level of under detection in Shefa and Sanma provinces.

Figure 2. Total number of tests conducted each day (PCR and antigen test) and test positivity, all provinces, February 28 2022 until current



The total number of tests reported has decreased since 21 March. All people that meet the criteria for testing are encouraged to come forward for testing. The test positivity continues to increase and is currently 54%.

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 twelve (112)** new active cases have been reported, 99 in Shefa province and 13 new cases in Sanma province in the previous 24 hours. Cases have now been identified outside the Port Vila area. There was a decrease in testing over the weekend resulting in decreased new cases detected.
- 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. Work is being planned to estimate the level of under-detection in Shefa and Sanma provinces.

- The current test positivity (averaged over the previous 7 days) is 54%; this is a reflection of the test strategy which focuses on testing of symptomatic people. 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 continue. Mass multi-media campaigns progress on various platforms including on MoH 'live' updates (now every alternate day), television, social media, radio, and press releases. A media schedule has been developed and key NHEOC leads will be on MoH live engaging with the public on key key topics in the coming weeks. Products released or under development include animated video on preventative measures, posters encouraging solidarity (not stigma), radio drama ads on key topics, animated video advising actions if a person tests positive, and social media tiles and posters on COVID-19 vaccine booster doses, and Omicron variant. Social listening and rumour monitoring continues. Collaboration with key partners including the NDMO Communication & Community Engagement sub-cluster, WASH cluster, NGO partners including Wan Smol Bag, and the private sector to support RCCE messaging and products.
- **Community Isolation and Quarantine centres (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. Discussions are ongoing between the Provincial Government and the Area Administrators/Area Councils to establish additional sites in which 3 Community Isolation Centres have been confirmed in Efate.
- **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 six(6) cases are currently hospitalized in VCH, all 6 cases are in stable condition.
- **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 site have been set-up in North Efate (Saupia Health Centre) and 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 is being offered by development partners (Australia, United Kingdom, SPC and WHO) in the areas of epidemiology, clinical care, laboratory and logistics. AUSMAT team (5) from Australia, experts from SPC (1) and WHO (1) arrived on March 23 for HR surge support.
- COVID-19 response fund is being offered by development partners (ADB, Australia and New Zealand).
- 10,000 AZ vaccines arrived on March 7 with the support from Australia. 20,000 AZ vaccines and 14,400 J&J vaccines arrived on March 23 with the support from Australia and New Zealand and COVAX-Facility (CEPI, GAVI, Unicef and WHO).
- 60 oxygen concentrators and PPEs arrived on March 7 and 13,000 rapid antigen test (RAT) kits arrived on March 8 with the support from Australia. Additional PPE, medical equipment and drugs arrived on March 23 with the support from Australia.
- 5000 PCR testing kits and swabs arrived on March 8 and 9000 surgical masks arrived on March 9 from WHO. additional 10,000 rapid antigen test kits, 2000 PCR testing kits and swabs and medical equipment arrived on March 25 from WHO/WFP/EU.
- Medical equipment including high-flow oxygen machines, PPE, 12,500 rapid antigen test kits, family kits and hygiene kits arrived on March 24 supplied by New Zealand. PPE for Vanuatu Red Cross Society was also supplied on March 25 by New Zealand.
- 300 dignity kits for women with disability and reproductive health kits were delivered on March 25 from UNFPA.
- PPE was supplied by Unicef on March 22.
- The Ministry of Youth and Sports, Red Cross and UN partners assist in 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: 13 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 of Corporate Services, Policy and Planning, Ministry of Health

Approved at: 28 March 2022, 12:00pm

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