

## World Bank commits to Papua New Guinea's fight against COVID-19

*US\$20m emergency project will deliver new laboratory, testing equipment, personal protective equipment for health staff and public education campaigns*

**PORT MORESBY, April 14, 2020** – The World Bank has approved an emergency US\$20 million (approximately PGK70m) project for Papua New Guinea (PNG) to provide rapid support the country's COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic response.

The emergency support will fund rapid health support for PNG focused on protecting health workers and others in the response effort, helping PNG health authorities quickly scale-up testing capacity, and strengthening public education to combat the spread of the virus.

The project, funded through the World Bank Group's \$14 billion [global COVID-19 response package](#), includes funding for a new container-based laboratory in the capital, Port Moresby, as well as lab equipment, medical supplies (including biosafety cabinets), and funding to transport COVID-19 samples to laboratories within PNG and to Australia for quality assurance. The project will be implemented in close coordination with the World Health Organization (WHO).

The emergency funding will also deliver personal protective equipment for PNG health workers, including masks, goggles, gloves and gowns; supplies for infection prevention such as isolation units and incinerators for waste disposal; and critical intensive care equipment including ventilators and oxygen flow regulators, among other items.

In addition, the emergency project will fund an extensive nation-wide public education and community engagement campaign, to be delivered across television, radio, social media and SMS blasts, aimed at reducing the spread of coronavirus across the country.

*“As we all know, the world – and PNG – is facing a challenge the likes of which we have never seen,”* said **the Hon. James Marape, Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea**. *“This assistance will not only ensure we are able to better protect our frontline health workers but will also enable us to improve our testing capacity and build on public awareness and education, which are central to our country's fight against the coronavirus.”*

*“At a time when the region, and the world, needs to come together to combat the spread of COVID-19, we are proud to stand with the government and people of PNG in this difficult time,”* said **Stefano Mocci, World Bank Country Manager for Papua New Guinea**. *“This commitment to PNG is, quite simply, about saving lives. Work is already underway to ensure the supplies and support delivered through this project can get to the frontlines of PNG's health system as quickly as possible.”*

The commitment is part of a wider package of World Bank support to tackle a number of PNG's most pressing health challenges. The US\$15 million [Emergency Tuberculosis \(TB\) Project](#) is now in its third year, and alongside partners including the Australian Government (DFAT) and WHO, has already had a significant impact, with treatment success rates of above 85 percent for patients in Daru Island and an expansion of project activities to Port Moresby. Improvements in testing and training financed through the COVID-19 Emergency Project will also make a lasting contribution to addressing other infectious diseases like TB.

The World Bank is now preparing several other projects to support countries throughout the Pacific region in their response to the COVID-19 pandemic. These will be announced in the coming weeks.

The World Bank Group is rolling out a \$14 billion [fast-track package](#) to strengthen the COVID-19 response in developing countries and shorten the time to recovery. The immediate response includes financing, policy advice and technical assistance to help countries cope with the health and economic impacts of the pandemic. The [IFC](#) is providing \$8 billion in financing to help private companies affected by the pandemic and preserve jobs. [IBRD](#) and [IDA](#) are making an initial US\$6 billion available for the health-response. As countries need broader support, the World Bank Group will deploy up to \$160 billion over 15 months to protect the poor and vulnerable, support businesses, and bolster economic recovery.

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