

COVID-19 Pacific Island Response Matrix

The information below is drawn from government press releases, public speeches by political and health leaders, regional agency websites, and media reporting. The Australia Pacific Security College (PSC) is particularly indebted to the work by [SPC](#). While we have attempted to gather all of the data points available, we acknowledge this matrix may not include all responses taken by each Pacific Island country and territory.

If you know of any policy updates, key sources or corrections that you would like to see included, please do not hesitate to contact PSC: psc@anu.edu.au.

Reference to, or reproduction of, this matrix should be cited as: Australia Pacific Security College (PSC), COVID-19 Pacific Island Response Matrix - 15 December 2020, Canberra, Australian National University.

<p>Papua New Guinea</p>	<p>Cases total and (new):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · 725 confirmed cases, 8 COVID-related deaths confirmed. A West New Britain man became the 8th COVID-19 related death this week (15/12/2020) · There is currently a surge in cases in West New Britain, with the province having now recorded 51 cases, the third highest of any province (01/12/2020) · A second case of COVID-19 has been detected in Bougainville, with a worker at the Lihir Gold Mine having been tested when he returned to the mine from leave in Bougainville (10/11/2020). · NCD has 339 cases, Western province 202, 12 other provinces have recorded cases. · 29,594 tests have been conducted (27/10/2020) · Ten cases have been confirmed within a week-long period week in Eastern Highlands Province (20/10/2020) · The Bougainville government has extended the SoE in the Autonomous Region until mid-December (27/10/2020) · The first confirmed case in Enga Province has now been reported, highlighting the spread of the virus (20/10/2020) · 27,003 tests have now been conducted (12/10/2020) · The majority of COVID-19 cases are male and could be attributed to employment, movement and access to testing (29/09/2020). · 50 percent of the cases are reported to be asymptomatic and are identified when they present for swabbing (29/09/2020) · COVID19.info.gov.pg <p>State of emergency – National and local Governments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · David Manning has cautioned the community ahead of upcoming Christmas celebrations (07/12/2020) · A social media post, claiming to announce a COVID-19 lockdown in Sandaun province has been described as fake. David Manning says the origin of the post will be investigated. (16/11/2020) · PNG’s National Pandemic Controller has sent workers to the Hela province to support local officials after a positive case of the virus was detected (10/11/2020) · Curfew in NCD has been lifted (06/10/2020). Controller David Manning has tightened restrictions, banning large gatherings of more than 50 people, some business activities and has made masks mandatory on public transport.
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	<p>Night clubs are now closed, but bars may operate provided that food is served and hygiene rules are followed. Sports facilities need the approval of the PNG Sports Foundation.</p> <p>Pandemic Controller Manning directed the 48 Ramu NiCo employees to be quarantined for a further 7 days (24/08/2020), with the PNG government awaiting an explanation regarding reports that the workers have received a SARS-COVID-2 trial vaccine.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Pandemic Controller Manning has said that a lack of testing in provinces means it's difficult to know how far COVID-19 has spread in the country and is calling on provincial health authorities to increase testing. · PNG Police Minister Kramer says it is illegal for police to demand spot fines for people not wearing face masks. · A group representing Catholic professionals has applied to join a challenge in PNG's Supreme Court against the government's pandemic act. Their application however has been rejected by the Court. Minister for Justice and Attorney-General Davis Stevens has also joined as an intervener. · The August surge in cases in NCD resulted in an immediate 14-day lockdown (ended 12/08/20), inclusive of a domestic flight ban, closure of schools and only essential businesses allowed to operate outside the nightly curfew (28/07/2020). Up to 300 extra security personnel were deployed to help with lockdown measures according to pandemic Controller David Manning (29/07/2020). PM Marape has ruled out a lockdown extension (11/08/2020) · A senior health officer identified hotspot areas in NCD, with localities including: Henao Drive, 5 Mile, Morata 1, Wanigela, Edai Town, Enisi, Manu Autoport and the Port Moresby General Hospital (28/07/2020). · Anti-corruption agency Transparency International PNG expressed concern about the Public Health Emergency Act, passed to control the pandemic. Critics of the Act say that it restricts citizens' rights for an indefinite period with no parliamentary oversight. PNG Law Society and Catholic Professionals have also expressed concern. · PNG SoE ended on 16 June. The legislation was replaced with the <i>National Health Emergency Act 2020</i> which Marape has described as a nationalised response, with David Manning continuing as Controller after the SoE. The legislation includes: no sporting codes to train or participate in matches unless given approval; local religious activities may continue but must adhere to social distancing; licensed gambling may operate Wednesday-Sunday; licensed nightclubs and horseracing to operate Wednesday-Saturday; a ban remains for gatherings of more than 100 people. The Permanent Parliamentary Emergency Committee had recommended prior to the end of the SOE that it be extended for a further 2 months, claiming that PNG is not ready to deal with an outbreak of COVID-19, a call which was not heeded.
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- The Emergency Controller, David Manning, has issued an Emergency Order to seize the passports of citizens who breach quarantine (11/06/2020). Any confiscated passports will be held until the emergency is over. On conviction for non-compliance, the passports may be cancelled by the Minister for Immigration.
- From 22/05/2020 anyone with a severe respiratory illness to be tested for COVID-19 within 24 hours of being admitted to hospital.
- (25/05/2020), Governor Parkop has expressed his frustration with the continued trading of betelnut.
- SoE Controller has said (22/05/2020) that provinces will play a crucial role in preventing any potential COVID-19 outbreak, needing to have post-SoE plans in place when it ends next month.
- Opposition Leader Namah has stated that West Sepik and Western provinces are still without funding promised by the Government on COVID-19 security operations (21/05/2020).
- From 28/04/2020, restaurants and places of worship began to reopen.
- PNG Emergency Controller has named the country's border with Indonesia the number one COVID-19 concern, with sustained worry about the number of cases in Indonesia.
- A full report on the Government's handling of the emergency response was to be put to Parliament in June 2020. This has not been tabled.
- PNG public servants were asked to return to work from 04/05/2020.

Travel and transport:

- Border closures between the Torres Strait and PNG have come into the spotlight for the effect that they are having on family separations (07/12/2020)
- Entry points to East New Britain have been closed from West New Britain in response to rising COVID cases (07/12/2020)
- Air Niugini will be operating a charter flight on 9 December from PNG that will fly to Solomon Islands and Fiji to repatriate citizens in time for Christmas. The charter is organized by WABS Pacific, an engineering company based in Fiji. The flight will be conducted under strict COVID-19 measures (17/11/2020). Air Niugini says there are virtually no seats from Port Moresby to Brisbane, with customers encouraged to travel via Cairns.
- WH provincial COVID-19 coordination committee expressed concerns about two people who travelled into the country and flew to Hagen without being quarantined. They were cleared by the Pandemic Controller and are concerned that such action will introduce the virus into the province

- People arriving from countries with less COVID-19 cases and deaths like New Zealand and Australia will quarantine for 7-days while those arriving from high-risk countries will quarantine for 14-days. Borders remain closed. The Controller has been liaising with foreign missions about the return of students to pursue further studies
- More than 150 workers arriving on a charter flight from China will be among the first required to wear GPS ankle bracelets, after a new directive from the Pandemic Controller was issued that requires all international passengers to wear the bracelets for the duration of their quarantine period (13/10/2020)
- Locals on an island in the Torres Strait are on high alert for COVID-19 following the arrival of a group of PNG citizens who breached border controls(13/10/2020)
- PNG has opened its border to international travel from four more countries - Singapore, Hong Kong, Japan and the Solomon Islands. This is in addition to Australia. Passengers are required to get approval from the Pandemic Response Controller’s office, and show a negative test result before the flight (06/10/2020). Travellers from New Zealand, Solomon Islands, New Caledonia, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Nauru, Vanuatu, Cooks Islands, Samoa, Palau and Niue will be quarantined for seven days upon arrival in PNG at home or at a designated facility. All passengers on domestic flights need to prove they are not infected, and provincial authorities can demand testing and to quarantine travellers if they refuse.
- PNG’s Treasurer has indicated that he is in discussions with the Australian government about reopening labour mobility programs. The Treasurer has said that the Governors of East Sepik, Northern, Southern Highlands provinces were ready to send workers to Australia in 2021, with training and work-readiness programmes to be instituted before then, with a focus on food processing, aged care, and agriculture (22/09/2020).
- The Pacific Aviation Safety Office provided online training for representatives from the Cook Islands, Kiribati, Nauru, PNG, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu for the safe resumption of airline travel, as part of the COVID-19 Aviation Recovery Program.
- PNG government chartered two Air Niugini flights to repatriate 100 citizens from China and Malaysia (18/08/2020). 175 workers from China arrived in Port Moresby via Philippines Airlines charter. They are construction workers working on infrastructure projects funded by Asian Development Bank etc. Government fears funding could be canceled if the projects are not completed (14/08/20).
- Newcrest Mining says the identification of a positive case of COVID-19 at the Lihir mine in New Ireland province has not affected mine operations. The company has said it has capacity to isolate and treat the individual who flew in from Port Moresby in late July (11/08/2020)

- Two men from Bougainville who crossed the border into the Solomon Islands' Western Province have been sentenced to 6 months jail (11/08/2020).
- New measures (10/08/2020) saw passengers needing to acquire permits to fly between provinces, and road blocks imposed to restrict road travel. These conditions have since been revoked, as PM Marape has indicated that the country must learn to live with the virus (18/08/2020)
- The President of the Lae Chamber of Commerce has called for flights between Port Moresby and Lae to be discontinued.
- Foreign Minister Pruaitch says there will be a zero tolerance for illegal border crossers from Indonesia.
- The Mayor of the Torres Shire (Queensland) has said border controls in the Torres Strait should be tightened to deal with potential cases crossing from PNG.
- The Central government has been helping people return to villages through a voluntary repatriation program, according to Governor Agarobe, with around 5,000 people expressing interest in the scheme, and 2,000 having participated. Those who have been returned have been provided with incentives to garden to meet food security needs, including the provision of bush knives and axes (28/07/2020)
- The Bougainville administration has tightened up its monitoring and surveillance at all entry points following the increase of cases in PNG (28/07/2020). Officials have re-imposed limits on flights in and out of the Autonomous region (04/08/2020)
- Flights to Hela have been subsidised by 30 percent by the Hela Government (27/07/2020)
- PM Marape said that the recent arrival of a Chinese businessman on a private jet was in compliance with pandemic restrictions, citing that the individual and three colleagues had been given prior approval to enter PNG, having expressed a business interest, (25/06/2020). This comes after former PM O'Neill expressed concern about the arrival.
- Traditional traders have called for the Bougainville border crossings to be opened.
- People's National Congress deputy leader Richard Maru has warned that Air Niugini, PNG Air and other third-level airlines may be facing bankruptcy in the next 12 months. A relief package of K300 million has been floated for Air Niugini, citing liquidity issues and the need for capital.

- A repatriation flight for PNG citizens living in Fiji, Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands arrived 5/6/2020. Thirty PNG citizens have been deported from Jayapura (4/06/2020). A flight returned with PNG citizens stranded in the Philippines on 18/5/2020.
- PNG is procuring 28 drones through Australia’s military to patrol the PNG border.
- Passenger flights between PNG and Bougainville resumed on 19/05/2020.
- PNG Foreign Affairs has revealed that it has been funded to cover quarantine costs for PNG citizens returning from overseas.
- Funding has been given to build an extra 10 border posts.
- In light of COVID-19, the government has been urged to take over management of public transport services, particularly in urban areas in a report entitled ‘The Impact of Coronavirus Pandemic on Access to Public Transport in PNG’ by the National Research Institute.
- The Madang Provincial Government has turned away cargo ships from ports. Reported in March 2020.
- Traditional border crossing arrangements between Indonesia, Australia, FSM and the Solomon Islands with PNG have been suspended, with the Solomon Islands government threatening hefty fines and long jail terms for people who illegally cross its border. It is thought that international airline flights may resume to repatriate citizens.
- Minister Justin Tkatchenko has backed the move for the Pacific to be included in a ‘travel bubble’ between Australia and New Zealand.
- Disrupted supply chains due to travel restrictions are of substantial concern, including for informal traders in major cities.
- Public transport has been raised as an issue of concern, due to the inability to achieve effective social distancing, particularly for students travelling to and from school.
- Indonesian military forces are monitoring the 750km land border. 2118 PNGDF soldiers deployed to serve the major borders of Wutung and Weam on 9/4/2020, according to Controller David Manning.
- There are calls for better management of Australia’s border with PNG, as the hardened border presents challenges for residents of South Fly District in PNG to access services.
- Use of patrol boats to monitor the Western Province border with Indonesia, as well as traffic in the Torres Strait.

Political economy:

- Three MPs have tested positive for COVID-19 in PNG (01/12/2020)

- PNG's 2021 Budget has been pushed through parliament during the extraordinary sitting which occurred with no members of the Opposition present for scrutiny or debate. According to accounting firm, Deloitte, the budget will focus on the agricultural and SME sector, citing the impact they have faced during COVID-19, a step which has been praised given that this accounts for 85 percent of employment in the country (24/11/2020)
 - Australian PM Scott Morrison has deferred a planned trip to PNG in the wake of the leadership challenge emerging against PM Marape (16/11/2020)
 - Minister for Health Sir Puka Temu expressed disappointment that MPs did not wear masks in Parliament as is required under the new normal. Updating MPs on COVID-19, Sir Puka said PNG recorded 7 deaths. He reported that the level of respiratory illness and death is low. He said community transmission is low a. He said vaccine trials are and are likely to become available at the end of the year (17/11/2020)
 - Closure of borders as a result of COVID-19 has cost tourism an estimated AUD 27.27 million in loss of revenue. Tourism Minister Walter Shnaubelt says 97.7 percent of bookings were cancelled and 1,000 people lost their jobs. International business arrivals declined by 71 percent in the first 9 months of 2020, which is about 8,500 international arrivals (17/11/2020)
 - Treasurer Ling Stuckey says around K100 million of a K1.75 billion Asian Development Bank loan funding will go toward the airline Air Niugini to assist its restructure and reorganisation (10/11/2020)
 - A funding allocation from PNG's government to support research into a potential COVID-19 treatment will be shared between government institutions and a new private company. PM Marape has said the payment is not a 'giveaway' (10/11/2020)
 - CEO of NASFUND Ian Tarutia say although Section 90 the Superannuation Act was amended (to enable members to access their savings as a result of being laid off due to COVID-19), the fact that it has not been gazetted means it has no legal effect. The fund cannot process COVID-19-relief application. Applications are being processed under the current provisions if people have been unemployed for 3 months
 - Insufficient funds have forced the PNG Department of Foreign Affairs to stop chartered international repatriation flights of citizens and reduce the number of days spent in quarantine from 14 to 7 days. The last international repatriation flight was from the Philippines. It arrived on Tuesday last week. The Department has put a submission for more funds
- PNG's Labour Secretary believes 6,000 people have lost their jobs as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic (27/10/2020)

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- The Administrator of Eastern Highlands Province says that the recent spike in cases means people must take precautions in the province
- Just a week into the role, PNG Health Minister Sir Puka Temu has been referred to the Public Prosecutor for alleged misconduct (13/10/2020)
- Bank of PNG reports that 2/3 of PNG's MSMEs have had to close their doors as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on businesses (13/10/2020)
- The PNG Census will now occur in July 2021, after being delayed due to the SOE
- PNG PM Marape has reshuffled his cabinet, saying the changes were needed for stability and to deliver key government priorities. Sam Basil is the new Deputy PM while Sir Puka Temu has taken over from Jelta Wong as Health Minister. Wong has become Minister for Civil Aviation (06/10/2020)
- Police in South Bougainville have received new tyres, fuel and a patrol boat to help the fight against COVID-19.
- PNG Central Bank has predicted GDP to contract by four percent for 2020, revising down earlier estimates of a 0.3 percent contraction (06/10/2020).
- Opposition Leader Belden Namah wants the government to remove all COVID-19 restrictions, citing that they are crippling the economy. He says that COVID-related deaths are due to pre-existing health conditions and comorbidities. He also contends that despite the revision of GDP to USD 3.14 billion in 2020, increase in debt to USD 570 million and drop in revenue by USD 1.06 billion the government has done nothing to reduce expenditure. Consequently, the budget deficit has grown to USD 1.88 billion.
- Namah claims the government failed to provide funds to border provinces (WSP and WP) which resulted in cases in WP that led to the closure of the Ok Tedi mine. He wants PM Marape to explain why he is prioritising opening the border to international travel
- In Bougainville, Ishmael Toroama has been declared victorious in the Presidential election, which reported high turnout, despite COVID-19 (29/09/2020). Two-thirds of the new Bougainville House of Representatives MPs are newly-elected. The full cabinet is expected to be announced within a fortnight.

- The President of the Porgera Chamber of Commerce says local business has lost around USD 6.9 million due to the shutdown of the mine (22/09/2020)
- The Treasurer has handed down a supplementary budget alongside the Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Report, stating that districts and provinces will need to tighten their belt to deal with the impact of COVID-19 pandemic. In it, he has announced USD 185 million in extra expenditure and a fall in revenue of USD 774 million. The fall in revenue has been associated with the global slump in oil and gas prices and mining. The debt to GDP ratio is expected to rise from 40.3 percent in 2020 to 55 percent in 2021 and 2022. With cash flow to 111 MPs beginning to boost constituency funds, the government has also flagged boosting growth through major investments in manufacturing including the USD 350 million cement-lime manufacturing plant in Central Province. The government is also hoping to see growth in agriculture and SMEs, central to stimulus packages to date. The Opposition has criticised the statement, saying the Marape Government has not focussed enough on revenue creation. The Parliament has passed legislation to enable people in financial hardship to access their superannuation savings (15/09/2020). Treasurer Ian Ling-Stuckey told Parliament that the forecasted growth of PGK92 billion has to be revised down to PGK81 billion as a consequence of COVID-19 – a drop of PGK10-11 billion. NASFUND members affected by COVID-19 will wait for three months before they can access their savings as a result of delay to amend the Superannuation Act. The Act does not allow for immediate withdrawals because Section 90 requires a waiting period of 3 months. Parliament has not amended the Act (10/09/2020).
- Fiscal Responsibility Act has been amended to increase debt to GDP ratio from 45 percent to 60 percent. Opposition describes the amendment as “at the risk of declaring PNG a failed state”. Opposition said cuts should have been made to salaries and wages which was increased to PGK90 million. The Opposition also claims with a budget deficit of PGK6.6 billion, the cuts mean we need to borrow PGK4.3 billion externally
- The acting Chief Secretary to the PNG government Isaac Lupari says the country’s public service is broken, unmanageable and a ‘threat to national unity and security’ (15/09/2020)
- Police Commissioner Manning has said that all police reservists would be stood down from September 14 from ongoing duties (15/09/2020)
- Despite COVID-19, there was a surge in participation in Bougainville’s presidential election with 222,333 registered voters in 624 locations. The date for writs to be returned was extended to 24 September (15/09/2020)

- The Port Moresby Nature Park, which is central to biodiversity in PNG, may not survive the COVID-19 pandemic due to reduced visitor numbers. The park has been covering living costs for staff who have been forced to live onsite in order to prevent staff from contracting the virus. The park is PNG’s only animal rescue centre (15/09/2020).
- Paul Harricknen has called for wider consultations before amendments are made to the Constitution. Harricknen who is president of the Catholic Professionals Society was referring the National Pandemic Act 2020 which is being challenged in the Courts for such changes not to be taken lightly
- Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Justice and Attorney General Davis Steven has been allowed to intervene in a Supreme Court reference filed by Opposition Leader Belden Namah on the legality of the Pandemic Act (11 September 2020)
- NASFUND members affected by COVID-19 will wait for three months before they can access their savings as a result of a delay by the government to amend the Superannuation Act to allow early access to funds.
- Minister for Commerce and Industry William Duma says the government has committed USD 11.5 million to agriculture-related businesses, USD 6.8 million for youth and small businesses, USD 2.3 million for woman-alone businesses, USD 2.3 million for businesses on Bougainville, and USD 11.5 million for monitoring by the Department of Commerce and Industry. Bank South Pacific will receive USD 29 million, and USD 22.9 million will be lent to the National Development Bank. SMEs will receive loans of up to PGK100,000 at an interest rate of 5 percent on a duration of 15 years for BSP while the interest rate with the NDB will be 4 percent over 20 years
- Treasurer Ian Ling-Stuckey explained the break-up of COVID-19 funds. The total USD 167 million was split in two sections. USD 79 million for health and security and USD 91 million for agriculture, households and business. The break-up of USD 79 million – Water sanitation and hygiene (USD 17 million); Frontline provincial health authorities (USD 10 million); PPEs etc (USD 8.5 million); Security – army, police and CIS (USD 17 million); Construction of border posts (USD 21 million); Food provision by churches (USD 1.4 million). Treasurer Ian Ling-Stuckey told Parliament that only some activities in the economic stimulus plan have been implemented. (08/09/2020).
- Over 50 PMVs were pulled off the road for breaching COVID-19 public safety rules in the NCD. PMVs are required to install hand sanitizers, crew and passengers must to wear face masks and limit passenger number to 15 (08/09/2020)

- Businesses in PNG are asking the government for tax relief because many are experiencing low economic activities as a result of COVID-19. Increasing taxes during this period, they argue, would be counter-productive (08/09/2020)
- According to the PNG COVID-19 Health Situation Report 34, out of the PGK245 million, a total of PGK67.1 million was spent with the balance at PGK7.1 million. The Health Department is yet to receive PGK30 million promised by Police Minister and Prime Minister some 3 months ago.
- PNG Pandemic Controller David Manning has written to the Chinese government to clarify its position on an experimental COVID-19 vaccination given to mine workers arriving in PNG from China (25/08/2020). This comes after the operator of the Ramu Nickel mine in Madang Province has denied wrongdoing by having 48 of its Chinese employees vaccinated against COVID-19, saying that the vaccine is legally available in China. The PNG government last week blocked a plane carrying workers from China, demanding answers over claims workers sent to PNG have been part of a trial COVID-19 vaccination program (25/08/2020). PNG Health Minister Wong has said that the case has “tested” PNG’s relationship with China. In a social media statement Ramu NiCo management said the 48 employees were Chinese nationals employed by the company who voluntarily participated in the SARS-COV-2 vaccination before departing China for PNG. The vaccine is legal in China. The company had prepared the vaccination statement for the employees to present to PNG in case they needed to be tested again upon arriving in PNG. The Chinese employees arrived on 13 August. Ramu NiCo denied allegations that PNG nationals employed by the company were vaccinated.
- More than 1500 defence force personnel have been deployed for COVID-19 operations. More than 3500 soldiers are in rotation including the maritime element. About 500 are stationed in the highlands, 200 along the borders, and 300 on standby. About 30 were deployed with St Johns Ambulance at Rita Flynn Courts. All those posted to the borders will go into 14-day isolation before being released
- Pandemic Controller David Manning has attempted to explain the arrival into PNG of 175 contract workers from China. He has said that they are required for infrastructure projects for the country, and have complied with quarantine requirements (18/08/2020).
- PNG Defence Force has been called out to assist with the pandemic response (11/08/2020)
- PNG Opposition has lodged a Supreme Court challenge to the National Pandemic Act, with Namah alleging the Act deprives citizens of their constitutional rights (06/08/2020).

- The Ok Tedi copper and gold mine in Western Province shut down operations after the confirmation of seven COVID-19 cases. It resumed operations on September 14 following a six-week shutdown. Ok Tedi Mining estimates a loss in revenue of USD 120 million over the six weeks.
- PNG and China have issued a statement following meetings on August 6 reaffirming a commitment to cooperative ties amidst the COVID-19 pandemic (11/08/2020)
- K200m in funding for SME's has not been received, according to the Micro-Small Medium Enterprise Council, despite it being promised as part of the COVID-19 economic stimulus package (08/07/2020). The economic rescue plan announced in June was PGK5.6 billion. It was revised up to PGK5.7 billion - the June COVID-19 budget update states funding to SMEs of PGK45.5 million.
- Indonesia's ambassador to PNG says border trade between the two countries has been severely impacted by COVID-19 shutdowns, stating that the two countries are working to support trade while maintaining health policies (10/07/2020).
- The Port Moresby Chamber of Commerce has cautioned that restrictions on international flights will continue to dramatically impact tourism and the airline industry in the second half of 2020. Their president, Rio Fiocco said business confidence was low due to the lack of people entering the country for business, or tourism (07/07/2020). PNG's Business Council has said that two thirds of businesses in PNG may shut their doors by the end of 2020 if another hard lockdown is imposed (04/08/2020)
- The Census has been delayed for 12 months, due to COVID-19 (04/08/2020).
- PM Marape announced the approval of K94.7 million over 12 months for the National Airports Corporation. The funding comes as part of the government's K5.6 billion economic stimulus package, now revised up to PGK5.7 billion.
- Government proposed to amend the General Superannuation Fund Act in June. Financial relief is only available to workers who have lost employment as a direct result of COVID-19. It excludes workers laid off without pay. But this has been delayed to August, by which time people who have lost their jobs will be able to access savings irrespective. PM Marape also assured people that commercial banks would give 3 months grace periods on loan repayments but nothing has materialised.
- Pacific Beat, ABC, reports that worker shortages are expected for Australia's horticulture sector, and that a special pathway should be established to allow Pacific workers to work on farms, after quarantine and rigorous health checks. (30/06/2020)

- 75 percent of SMEs surveyed across all provinces report being adversely affected by COVID-19.
- With the Bougainville election nearing, the police chief has pleaded with travellers into the region to be mindful of COVID-19 restrictions.
- PNG-focussed petroleum producer Oil Search says it will cut its workforce by a third and promote PNG citizens into more roles within the company as it deals with a slump in global oil prices.
- Digicel has told its creditors that it expects the COVID-19 pandemic to have a significant impact on its figures for the current quarter (03/07/2020)
- Porgera Gold Mine in Enga province has laid off more than 2600 mine workers because it cannot maintain payments to staff without revenue, citing the government’s refusal to enter into discussions about the future of the mine’s lease as the problem (25/06/2020)
- The IMF has approved financing USD 360 million to help PNG meet its financial obligations, 9 June 2020.
- A drop in resource revenues will take an estimated 4% off GDP this year.
- O’Neill has called for an end to strict, SoE style police powers, calling for the country to be increasingly opened-up (19/6/2020).
- China’s ambassador to PNG has signed a partnership to export seafood, paving the way for greater primary industry trade flows (17/6/2020). Discussions have come to light surrounding a possible free trade deal between the two countries (19/6/2020).
- Challenges in delivering the Bougainville elections included increased costs due to PPE equipment for staff and social distancing requirements.
- Thirteen shops in PNG, 11 in Lae and 2 in Ramu, have been fined for price gouging (4/6/2020). They were found to have increased the cost of items regulated under the COVID-19 SoE.
- The National Research Institute said the government had to do more than the USD 1.6 billion stimulus package to avoid a recession, calling on the Government to give everyone cash handouts in order to restore consumer demand (29/05/2020).
- PM Marape has unveiled plans to build hospitals in the 22 provinces, and one major upgraded referral hospital in Port Moresby, with work to begin in 2021, and run through 2025. The Prime Minister said that this initiative is about decentralising government in the diverse country and building capacity in regional areas.
- Agriculture Minister has announced that he is preparing a rescue plan for local businesses affected by COVID-19 (19/5/2020)

- The Marape Government outlined an economic stimulus package worth K5.7 billion, including: issuance of K2.5 billion in Treasury bonds; K0.6 billion to support loan repayment holidays for affected households and businesses; K0.5 billion in superannuation assistance; K0.5 billion for the health, security and economic sectors; K0.25 billion for the health and security response (including health systems, policing and defence). Transparency International PNG has requested greater transparency on COVID-19 spending.
- Economists have reported the impact of lockdown on the informal sector, including adverse impacts on traders dependent on the trading of agricultural goods in urban areas due to disrupted supply chains.
- Treasurer has announced that predicted GDP will drop to -1.5% growth in 2020. He has also predicted a steep rise in national poverty.
- Media reports that there has been a rush by PNG residents who have lost their jobs during COVID-19 pandemic to access their superannuation, with the government asking fund members to be patient. Some fear that their superannuation savings may be eroded as a result of drawdowns.
- The Governor of Bank of PNG has outlined that the Central Bank has reduced the policy interest rate by 2%, injected liquidity into banks by reducing the Cash Reserve Requirement from 10% to 7%, while continuing to repurchase or buy back Government debt.
- There are significant concerns for food security in Bougainville as a result of reduced travel movements.

Health and social affairs:

- There is concern in Western Highlands province after a positive case of COVID-19 was revealed 28 days after the test was conducted. Health authorities say the lengthy delay poses great challenges to the country's COVID response (24/11/2020)
- Health facilities in Western Highlands have trained people for COVID-19 preparedness but say there is not enough swabs to conduct tests. The province's COVID-19 committee wants PGK180,000 to recruit more staff and purchase equipment to test people (17/11/2020)
- The National Control Centre has deployed a team to Hela Province to support case investigation, contact tracing, collection of samples and testing. Hela Province reported its first case. (17/11/2020)
- Fifty health care workers from NCD received two-days of training to conduct COVID-19 case investigations and collection of samples for testing. The training began on Friday 13 November and is designed to improve data collection and case investigation with a view to improve testing rate. (17/11/2020)

- Lockdowns from COVID-19 affected people living with HIV ability to access antiretroviral treatment, according the UNAIDS and the National AIDS Council Secretariat. Majority of people with HIV received 1-month supply, which is about 14 percent of their week’s supply of drugs
- A spike in TB cases is expected in PNG for 2020 says Dr Clarke of Business for Help. She COVID-19 restriction measures have increased the spread of TB and reduced the number of people brave enough to get tested. B4H noted in April a drop in the number of calls to their Bmobile toll-free TB info-line. WHO report shows the incidence of TB is higher in 2019 with 38,000 cases and 37,000 cases in 2019. Treatment success for new and relapse TB was 73 percent in 2019 compared to 68 percent in 2018
- PNG PM Marape has said his government is yet to decide whether to hire a PNG company to find a COVID-19 cure. This comes after reports of alleged impropriety and corruption, following the government awarding USD 2.8 million to Niugini BioMed Ltd, a company that was established a month ago and charged with creating a drug to protect PNG and the world from COVID-19. The PM has said that owing to PNG’s great biodiversity, its people have always been ingenious to find new ways to live with disease, and that he is “not a Prime Minister to kill ingenuity, research, science and study” (03/11/2020)
- Six ventilators and six breathing machines worth PGK964,781 purchased by Kumul Petroleum Holding Limited were donated to the Port Moresby General Hospital’s intensive care unit. The equipment will be used for COVID-19 and patients with respiratory problems
- The Port Moresby General Hospital has not reported COVID-19 infections between patients and health workers for 93 days. More than 35 critical COVID-19 patients have been admitted at the hospital’s isolation ward. Patients with mild COVID-19 symptoms are isolated at the Rita Flynn Netball Court facility
- Laboratory and clinical management experts are in Eastern Highlands to strengthen the provinces COVID-19 preparedness facilities. Pre-triage, patient pathways and isolation facilities are areas the team will examine and address
- The incoming Health Minister has said that attention should be afforded to the Western Province and NCD as COVID-19 spikes in the two provinces. The confirmation of a cluster of asymptomatic cases in Western Province has resulted in concern that the true rate of COVID-19 is far higher than what is reported, due to low testing numbers, with just 26,000 tests conducted. WHO says the true figure, particularly in Port Moresby and Western Province is likely much higher (20/10/2020)

- National Control Centre commenced a nation-wide Rapid Conveniences Survey on people’s knowledge and practices (KAP) on COVID-19. The KAP survey is to gain an insight into risk perceptions, gaps in knowledge and practice and help better inform people. This work is supported by the WHO initiated through the PNG Health Department
- PNG Health Minister says the country is lacking COVID-19 testing kits, as Pandemic Controller Manning has implored provinces to double-down on their efforts to test and identify COVID-19 in communities (29/09/2020)
- With the 7th death being a 71-year-old man from Central Province, the Police Commissioner has warned that elderly people are most at risk to COVID-19.
- Manning says only 15 provinces are sending reports on COVID-19 related activities on a daily basis. “We must be able to identify COVID-19 cases quickly, provide timely medical care to those who are sick and quarantine contacts so we reduce the risk of further transmissions” (21/09/2020)
- Forty ventilators donated by donors will be distributed to a number of provinces. Port Moresby General Hospital (13); Nonga Hospital (5), Angua (5), Mt Hagen (5), 3 each to Goroka and Modilon, 1 each for Vanimo, Wewak, Daru, Tari, Kavieng and Kerema. The average lifespan of ventilators in 8 years
- Medical workers at the 9-Mile clinic in NCD noted a drop in the number of people volunteering for COVID-19 testing. Part of the drop in the number of people was due to a stop-work strike by COVID-19 response team over non-payment of overtime allowances, and disinterest. Health authorities are expecting a rise in the number of cases due to community transmission, relaxation of travel restrictions, low compliance. But health workers continue to continue to test people report for persistent cough and asthma
- PNG citizens have been urged to come forward for COVID-19 testing, with Pandemic Controller David Manning saying that the 22,000 tests taken to-date are not yet enough to get a good grasp of the extent of the outbreak (22/09/2020)
- As total cases in PNG surpasses 500, Controller David Manning has said that there needs to be more testing in regional areas (15/09/2020).
- A report into the supply and distribution of medicine in PNG has been tabled by the Public Accounts Committee, finding poor management and corruption (15/09/2020)
- PNG’s battle against rising COVID-19 rates is being complicated by access to clean water public health experts have found. 55 percent of people in PNG lack access to basic drinking water, the lowest rate in the world, according to David Hebblethwaite from SPC. World Vision PNG Director Heather McLeod says that without access to clean

	<p>water people cannot wash their hands and protect themselves from the spread of COVID-19 and other diseases. Unlike other Pacific nations including Kiribati, Nauru and Tuvalu which are affected by drought and water salination, PNG receives substantial rainfall but has poorly developed dams and infrastructure.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · NRI study on the impact on COVID-19 and learning finds that the gap between children in different socio-economic class will widen further due to the loss in learning hours (15/09/2020) · There has been a delay in releasing the 2021-2030 Health Plan, with experts out of the country. The Health Plan was supposed to be released in July 2020, Minister for Health Jelta Wong attributed the delay due to COVID-19. The health plan envisages a structure from the ground-level with village aid-posts/community health posts providing primary health care services up to health centres, district hospitals, provincial hospitals, regional hospitals, and national hospitals providing secondary, complex clinical services (15/09/2020) · According to the PNG COVID-19 Health Situation Report 34, out of the PGK245 million, a total of PGK67.1 million was spent with the balance at PGK7.1 million. The Health Department is yet to receive PGK30 million promised by the Police Minister and Prime Minister some 3 months ago (17/08/2020) · PNG Health workers who are threatening strike action over COVID-19 response measures are being warned that industrial action could be illegal (25/08/2020) · The PNG Defence Force Igam Barracks in Lae is in lockdown after a positive case of COVID-19 was confirmed. · PNG Prisoners are now required to wear masks (25/08/2020) · Shops in Port Moresby have been told to enforce a 'no mask, no entry' policy (25/08/2020) · New COVID-19 measures for people travelling to Bougainville which include passengers showing influenza like symptoms to undergo medical examination, and to produce a medical certificate · A woman in Milne Bay with no history of travel has been confirmed to have the virus, highlighting the extent of community transmission (18/08/2020) · The Gerehu Hospital in Port Moresby had closed for three weeks following a case of COVID-19, it has reopened as of 18/08/2020 · Despite the wearing of masks being mandatory in NCD, there are concerns that the number of people wearing masks in PNG is still far too low (18/08/2020) · Authorities in Lae continue to report shortages in PPE (11/08/2020)
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- PNG's isolation facility has reached capacity, with health officials establishing a new isolation facility at the Taurama Aquatic Centre with capacity for 300 people. Home-based quarantine has been raised as a potential requirement. The Rita Flynn sporting complex has now reached capacity.
- Health staff at Rita Flynn went on strike for non-payment of salaries, however have returned to work (09/08/2020)
- The PNG Nurses Association is threatening industrial action over government failures in providing PPE (29/07/2020).
- Contact tracing is ongoing after a case of COVID-19 was confirmed from a man who flew into Morobe to attend a COVID-19 training workshop with health department workers. More than 70 of the workers have been placed in isolation (31/07/2020)
- Expanded testing capacity is expected to be available at 32 hospitals and health clinics across NCD (31/07/2020)
- PNG's Centre for Disease Control has said that those with chronic diseases are at greater risk.
- Oxfam Country Director has said that the surge of COVID-19 is placing the most vulnerable members of the community at increased risk (04/08/2020)
- A purpose-built dialysis unit has been established to reduce COVID-19 risk for kidney patients, with the PNG Kidney Foundation arranging transport for patients requiring dialysis (04/08/2020)
- Australia will provide 8 medics to assist in PNG's medical response (28/07/2020)
- Testing has increased significantly in the past week. 10,000 tests have been conducted since March, a thousand of those in the week to 27 July. Test samples have been sent to Singapore and Brisbane for analysis (28/07/2020)
- The Port Moresby General Hospital has reduced services and required all staff and visitors to wear masks. Elective surgery has been cancelled along with some outpatient services (28/07/2020)
- The Red Cross in PNG has provided anxiety training for health workers suffering from increased stress as a result of COVID-19 (28/07/2020)
- Pandemic Response Controller David Manning has urged provincial hospitals to now begin preparing for COVID-19 transmission outside of NCD (28/07/2020)
- A magistrate has cautioned that crime is increasing amongst unemployed youth (28/07/2020)
- PM Marape has apologised for a four-month delay in payment of salaries and funds to church-run health facilities. This came after church-run health facilities were forced to close their doors due to a lack of payments (10/07/2020).

- Deputy Chairman of the National Health Board, Dr Mathias Sapuri, has cautioned that there's been a spike in death rates from diseases such as tuberculosis, other respiratory diseases, mental illness and maternal and newborn mortalities during COVID-19, saying that there has been a scaling down in other operations in health as the country focuses on the COVID-19 pandemic. He has emphasised that COVID-19 should not be used as an excuse to divert focus away from other health services.
- A PNG doctor has cautioned to delay pregnancy for two years (03/07/2020)
- PNG Defence Force Murray Barracks headquarters was sprayed and sanitised by the medical prevention team, following the 10th positive COVID-19 confirmed case being a worker at Murray Barracks.
- The National Capital District Commission (NCDC) declared that buying, chewing and spitting betel nut in public will be banned in Port Moresby from 22/6/2020 in accordance with the *Summary Offences Act (2018)*. This has been preceded by a public awareness campaign.
- Australia has donated 10 containerised medical clinics to PNG as part of an AUD \$9.6 million COVID-19 aid package. Five have been built in Port Moresby and will be deployed in the week of 15/6/2020 to West Sepik, Western Province and East New Britain.
- East Sepik Governor Allan Bird has cautioned that the true level of COVID-19 may be greater than what has been tested and confirmed by health authorities. He says surveillance testing in his province has sampled 1153 people over 10 days in 6 locations. Of the sample 50 people tested positive for COVID-19 antibodies (3/6/2020).
- A study has been commissioned to understand the spread of COVID-19 in PNG, with eight provinces targeted for community testing of up to 2,000 people in each province.
- Antibody testing to commence on 12,000 people to give government an assessment of COVID-19 spread (28/5/2020)
- PNG to treat respiratory illnesses as suspected COVID-19 cases
- Five PNG citizens have been detained by Indonesian police in Jayapura awaiting the results of COVID-19 tests, with the virus thought to be spreading through a detention facility. (25/5/2020)
- As part of the economic stimulus package, K280m for upgrading hygiene at potential COVID-19 hotspots such as markets and schools to be administered by the provinces. K30 million for PPE.
- Acting Health Secretary (18/05/2020) concedes that COVID-19 highlighted gaps in PNG's health system.
- Concerns for the urban poor, who have lost informal employment, are particularly salient due to the lack of social safety net.

Education:

- Two schools in NCD were advised to close for 14 days after a teacher and a student tested positive. (08/09/2020)
- A school in Port Moresby has been closed after the parent of two students was confirmed to have the virus (25/08/2020). Schools in Alotau in Milne Bay Province closed for a fortnight after a local student was confirmed with the virus, and reopened on 31 August 2020.
- Schools, universities and colleges were closed (27/07/2020), and reopened on 17 August, with year 12 exams to go ahead as planned. Masks are mandatory at schools. PM Marape has ruled out any additional school closures, saying instead that schools will need to practice social distancing (11/04/2020).
- Wearing a mask and regular hand washing throughout the day is mandatory.
- University of PNG resumed 11/05/2020 after a 6-week break. Timetables have been amended to fit in more classes, and ensure distancing.
- There is concern about school transport – including social distancing on buses.

Overseas development assistance and donor engagement:

- The Asian Development Bank has approved a USD 250 million loan to help finance the PNG government’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic (01/12/2020)
- Australia is set to provide more than AUD 405,000 in grant funding to PNG in the 2020-21 Financial year.
- Japan’s assistance to PNG is in the spotlight, as the country engages in an Indo-Pacific push, with the Foreign Minister stressing the importance of a ‘free and open’ region (27/10/2020)
- An additional 25 ventilators have been donated to PNG. 15 were from the Chinese Government and 10 were from the UNDP.
- WHO is fast tracking 40,000 tests to PNG, health officials have made it mandatory for hospitals to test patients with respiratory symptoms and high temperatures. Weekly testing quotas will be set for each province (06/10/2020)
- The UK has donated USD 1.2 million to PNG’s COVID-19 response plan (8/09/2020)
- A second AusMAT (Australian Medical Assistance Team) will travel to PNG to join COVID-19 response efforts (01/09/2020)

- Japanese Foreign Minister has promised PNG “strong” support to help its economy recover after signing a ‘Statement of Intent’ with PNG Prime Minister Marape. (25/08/2020). Japan has provided AUD 5.3 million to PICs including PNG. It is believed that PNG has sought budgetary support from Japan.
- Members of the AUSMAT medical team are assisting authorities in NCD devise local responses to the pandemic (18/08/2020)
- An online summit has been held between PM Marape and Australia’s PM Morrison (05/08/2020), where a Comprehensive Strategic Economic Partnership has been signed between the two countries.
- PNG has sought assistance from international health workers from Australia, as well as support from the WHO (28/07/2020). Australia has sent a team of medical and crisis response staff.
- The US has donated 40 ventilators (29/07/2020)
- New Zealand is supporting St John’s Ambulance to establish a drive-through testing clinic at the Rita Flynn sports centre in Boroko.
- Australia’s Human rights Law Centre has said that the Australian Government must ensure the safety of refugees it is detaining. There are 175 people in PNG and 185 in Nauru detained under Australia’s offshore detention scheme, cautioning that an outbreak could overwhelm the health system in either location.
- UNICEF have donated more than 100,000 items of PPE to the Port Moresby General Hospital (28/07/2020)
- PNG Governor General has made comments to highlight the special relationship between Australia and PNG (28/07/2020)
- Australia has announced funding of AUD 20 million for PNG, a fifth of Australia’s support to the Pacific COVID-19 response. Australia has diverted \$20m from existing ODA expenditure to COVID-19 related support.
- The US has announced a USD 2 million grant for PNG to help with COVID-19 response, in addition to USD 1.2 million previously slated.
- The UN has outlined USD 1 million in funding to support the Western province government and community organisations to support the local COVID-19 response. Meanwhile the UNDP is partnering with other UN agencies to launch a socio-economic impact assessment project in PNG, aimed at determining the impacts of COVID-19.
- PNG Foreign Minister hosted a video-conference (13/05/2020) between Chinese Vice Foreign Minister, PNG Foreign Minister and representatives from Fiji, Samoa, Vanuatu, FSM, Cook Islands, Tonga, Niue, Solomon Islands and Kiribati.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · 12/05/2020 PM Marape thanked China for the donation of 400,000 units of PPE, which arrived in PNG on 11/05/2020. In addition, masks are on shipment from UNICEF in Shanghai. · Australia provided PPE supplies (30/04/2020) and more testing kits on 12/05/2020. · Taiwan has provided PNF with 10,000 face masks (28/04/2020). · The World Bank has announced \$100m in funding, (23/04/2020). · NZ and Australia have sent assistance to Bougainville, including four vehicles.
<p>Solomon Islands</p>	<p>Cases:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · 17 cases in the Solomon Islands · All cases have been contained within the isolation stations, and PM Sogavare has announced that the threat of community transmission remains low (03/11/2020) · 22 Solomon Islands students in the Philippines have tested positive, including a pregnant woman who has since given birth (20/10/2020) · 112 people are currently in quarantine in the Solomon Islands (20/10/2020) · PM Sogavare has heralded the response to the Solomon Islands’ first cases in quarantine as evidence that the preparedness and response measures taken by his government had worked. <p>State of emergency – National and local Governments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · SoE has been extended until April (27/11/2020) · SoE came into effect on 24/3/2020 and expired on 24 July 2020. It was replaced by a two-week temporary State of Public Emergency, with the parliament voting to extend SoE until November, then April. · PM Sogavare has called on taxi and bus drivers to limit the number of passengers they transport, with no more than 3 passengers in a taxi (13/10/2020). · 36-hour test lockdown to trial the country’s response to any possible COVID-19 case from Wednesday 20/05/2020 (6pm) until 6am on Friday 22/05/2022 was enforced in Honiara from Alligator Creek to Poha River. Following the test lockdown, Permanent Secretary for Health and Medical Services said that the Ministry has identified gaps that need to be strengthened for future lockdowns, including updating SOPs and refreshing training guidelines (26/05/2020). · Government has further powers, including to close businesses which fail to comply with regulations.

Travel and transport:

- Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade has said there will be a scaling-up of repatriation, with a second flight from Manila due on 24 November 2020, as well as Auckland on 6 December, a later flight to return 175 nationals from Australia, Port Moresby on 12 December where 40 students are waiting on route from the Philippines, 104 students in Port Vila, and two flights from Fiji in late December where more than 200 students are stranded. A flight returned from Kiribati and Fiji on 19 November. (24/11/2020)
- The Solomon Islands government has scheduled a repatriation flight from Fiji for the week of 17 November (17/11/2020)
- 12 SI students who completed their studies in Taiwan are stranded, after they could not travel on a promised repatriation flight to Auckland - however the bookings were cancelled (27/10/2020)
- Increased vessel movements have been sighted between the Solomon Islands and PNG, breaching emergency zone regulations (20/10/2020)
- Construction of new venues for the 2023 Pacific Games is on track, with a design team from China now working with local authorities in-country, after completing two weeks in quarantine following their travel from China in September (13/10/2020)
- The first repatriation flight to the Solomon Islands is expected to arrive from the Philippines on 29/09/2020. The Solomon Islands government has been criticised by the Opposition leader Matthew Wale, over its perceived slow repatriation of 300 students in the Philippines (22/09/2020).
- 18 Solomon Islands students studying in the Philippines have now tested positive for COVID-19. It comes months after they have waited for repatriation to the Solomon Islands. The students are asymptomatic, and working with local authorities. With 385 Solomon Islanders still in the Philippines, there are currently three repatriation flights planned between the Philippines and the Solomon Islands in the coming weeks, with the final one scheduled for October 24 (15/09/2020).
- A Chinese worker who entered the Solomon Islands was detained for breaching quarantine. The worker entered the Solomon Islands along with 80 other Chinese nationals to work on construction for the 2023 Pacific Games. The Ministry of Health says that it is investigating the breach (15/09/2020).
- Solomon Islands authorities on the porous western border have said they will no longer be detaining border crossers due to a lack of quarantine facilities on the western border (08/09/2020)

- Two Bougainville fishermen who were caught fishing in Solomon Islands waters, near Nunungari Island, were allowed to return home after just 3 days in quarantine in Kulitanai, at the joint COVID-19 border post.
- The Pacific Aviation Safety Office provided online training for representatives from the Cook Islands, Kiribati, Nauru, PNG, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu for the safe resumption of airline travel, as part of the COVID-19 Aviation Recovery Program.
- 24 Solomon Islanders were repatriated from Samoa on 24 August.
- 8 people have been quarantined at Gizo, Western Province after travelling to Bougainville (03/07/2020).
- Domestic flights have resumed on advice from the Government. International flights were prohibited until the end of August, however the government has (23/06/2020) sanctioned two commercial repatriation flights, expected to carry more than 300 people. National borders were closed to non-citizens on 22/03/2020.
- An international flight from PNG landed in Honiara, with COVID-19 supplies and three Solomon Islanders (7/6/2020).
- Students stranded in Philippines commenced their appeal for repatriation (1/6/2020)
- Informal and traditional border crossings with PNG have been closed, with the government threatening hefty fines and long jail terms for those who illegally cross the border. Closed border has seen a number of Bougainville residents stranded in the Solomon Islands.

Political economy:

- The Solomon Islands agriculture sector had performed well since the second quarter of the year, posting growth of 2.1 percent. There has been a 58 percent increase in copra production year-to-date (15/12/2020)
- A three-day workshop on strengthening the capacity of Solomon Island journalists to report on the COVID-19 pandemic has been conducted at the King Solomon Hotel (15/12/2020). The workshop aimed to improve the quantity and quality of reporting on the COVID pandemic, and its impacts on the national economy (15/12/2020)
- Solomon Islands government is extending its vegetable seeds and farming tools distribution programme to the provinces. The program began in June through the COVID-19 Livelihood Sector support scheme, supported by the Australian government in partnership with UN's Development Programme (01/12/2020)
- PM Sogavare has said that a new multi-purpose field hospital poses no risk to residents nearby. It came online on November 27.

- The presentation of the much- anticipated Public Health Emergency Bill has been deferred until 2021, with PM Sogavare saying that the COVID-19 response has required the full attention of the Ministry. The bill legislates for the government’s response to health pandemics. (24/11/2020)
- Transparency Solomon Islands is calling for an audit of the government’s USD 39 million dollar stimulus package, with Transparency SI Chief Executive Ruth Liloqula saying a leaked list of recipients highlights that many public servants and people without legitimate businesses or projects are among the beneficiaries (10/11/2020). The SI government has rejected these allegations.
- Makira Ulawa Province has unveiled a localised COVID-19 adaptation policy, reducing the number of entry points to the province, asking locals to not take unnecessary trips to Honiara (27/10/2020)
- The Chinese Embassy has opened in Honiara, following the country’s diplomatic shift (22/09/2020)
- The Solomon Islands government has taken steps to provide food to the Shortland Islands under the National Disaster Framework, following concerns of food shortages on the islands after the national government closed the border between PNG and the Solomon Islands due to COVID-19. People in the Shortland Islands have traditionally relied heavily upon trade in food and other goods with Bougainville (15/09/2020)
- Solomon Islands has banned poultry from Australia, following avian influenza in Victoria, Australia (01/09/2020)
- Solomon Islands police are investigating the confiscation of COVID-19 related medical equipment, donated by Taiwan to the Malaita Provincial government (25/08/2020)
- The Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, Disaster Management and Meteorology has said COVID-19 has forced his ministry to put climate change issues aside, warning that there is a real risk that long-term strategic action on climate change will take a back seat (25/08/2020).
- PM Sogavare has called for increased vigilance on the border with Bougainville, following the Autonomous Region’s first confirmed case of COVID-19.
- The Solomon Islands government is urging regional seasonal workers to remain in NZ if they are being offered jobs. It is believed that 200 Solomon Islanders remain in New Zealand (25/08/2020).
- PM Sogavare made a national address, 03 July 2020, in which he stated that:
 1. SI would not ease border restrictions, allowing only cargo and necessary repatriation movements;
 2. Security on the western border remains a top priority for the government;
 3. Repatriation flights continue, with 200 arrivals in the past week on four repatriation flights, the support of Australia, NZ, Fiji and Vanuatu was noted.

- PM Sogavare has predicted a V shaped recovery in 2021 following a predicted contraction of 5% of GDP in 2020.
- The Solomon Islands opposition has called for an investigation into the failure of authorities to detect the illegal entry of a yacht from New Caledonia (23/06/2020). Under COVID-19 restrictions, yachts are banned from entering the country, but three sailors from New Caledonia last week managed to berth in the capital, Honiara, and came ashore undetected.
- The Central Bank of Solomon Islands is working on establishing an export credit facility to support the country’s exporters, as part of the USD 37.5 million economic stimulus package. 15/5/2020, Central Bank of Solomon Islands Governor has highlighted that economic growth is predicted to fall by 5%, leading to a recession in the second quarter of the year. Over the medium term growth is expected to return to an average rate of 3.5% as key infrastructure expenditure and development projects come online. PM Sogavare outlined the priority his government is taking to counter negative growth (25/05/2020).
- PM Sogavare has revealed details of the USD 37.5m economic stimulus package, including: five year tax holiday for tourism operators, subsidies for copra and cocoa exports, grants and concessional loans for large private companies, equity injections for public-private partnerships, and the ramping up of donor-funded infrastructure projects employing local workers.
- Solomon Islands Central Bank issued a statement on 19/3/2020 about declining trade with China – particularly in logs. 9/4/2020 it predicted that the Solomon Islands was headed toward recession, this has been forecast to be -4.9% (05/05/2020).
- PM Sogavare has announced a domestic development bond worth USD 14.5 million in order to mobilise resources to fund the government’s economic stimulus.
- Price control measures have been implemented on essential goods and services.
- National Provident Fund has begun payouts of superannuation funds.

Health policy and social affairs:

- Full extent of COVID-19 impact yet to be felt, according to the Minister for Health, with a lot of deferred energy from other parts of the health sector (01/12/2020)

Nurses in the Solomon Islands have gone on strike over the government’s failure to pay outstanding allowances. The government had made a commitment to pay nurses allowances for working on the COVID-19 frontline, according to the General Secretary of the National Nurses Association. However none of the Association’s 500 members

	<p>report receiving the allowances (10/11/2020). This comes as the government has moved to fast-track nurse recruitment (03/11/2020).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · The government has flagged the need for advanced nursing practices and extending nursing roles in the country (27/10/2020) · Malaita Province has provided COVID-19 awareness in three communities in the Malaita Outer Islands over the past week (15/09/2020) · 5 additional ventilators have been donated to the Solomon Islands, increasing the country’s total from 2 to 7. The ventilators were provided by Australia and the WHO with support from the UNDP global procurement program (25/08/2020) · A second quarantine facility has been touted for the country’s western border with Bougainville. The Permanent Secretary to the Ministry for Health has admitted more work needs to be done at the country’s Western Province border to support the preparedness and response efforts to COVID-19 (25/08/2020) · Solomon Islands now has capability to test for COVID-19 in the country, following the donation of medical equipment from China, Australia and New Zealand. The first in-country test occurred on 30/5/2020. · 19/05/2020, Solomon Star reported that the COVID-19 pandemic is resulting in higher deaths and inferior treatment for other conditions at the National Referral Hospital, with resources focussed on COVID-19. · Health workers have threatened to strike over lack of PPE. <p>Education:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Honiara Primary and Secondary school classes resumed in late May. · Closed throughout the country on 31/03/2020. Students in Form 3, 5, 6, and 7 in high schools returned to classes on 27/4/2020, except for in Honiara, Guadalcanal, Noro, Munda, Choiseul Bay and the Shortland Islands. · Solomon Islands National University resumed classes on 1/6/2020. <p>Overseas development assistance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · PPE and other medical supplies have arrived from ADB and the UN Children’s Fund (11/08/2020) · Australia has delivered 25,000 pieces of PPE to the Solomon Islands (14/07/2020) · ADB has pledged USD 20 million for SI (30/06/2020). They have commended the quick response from the Solomon Islands government (11/07/2020).
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Malaita Province has been criticised by China for accepting humanitarian donations of food and other goods from Taiwan. Police seized medical supplies donated by Taiwan to Malaita Province as they were not delivered through prescribed channels. The goods will be held until the investigation concludes. · WHO has handed over additional equipment and supplies from its previous support as part of equipping the quarantine centre at Henderson, the National Referral hospital and isolation facilities, as well as to support the refurbishment of the isolation centre in Auki and a new isolation facility in Gizo (25/05/2020). This is inclusive of PPEs, oxygen concentrators, patient monitors, ECG machines and other related ICU equipment. · PNG has provided the Solomon Islands with 5,000 face masks and 2,000 PPE units. · 11/05/2020 China has provided Solomon Islands with 7000 pieces of PPE. · ADB has pledged USD 3 million · IFRC has provided psychological and first aid training. · Construction complete for two quarantine facilities, supported by DFAT. Contributions also included medical equipment and laboratory improvements (May 2020).
<p>Fiji</p>	<p>Cases:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · There have been 46 confirmed cases and 2 deaths · Two sailors who arrived in Fiji on a freighter ship from Tonga have tested positive for COVID-19 (08/12/2020) · Four cases of COVID-19 have been recorded in border quarantine, while returning from Auckland (01/12/2020) · A second COVID-19 related death has been recorded in Fiji. The man returned from California on 6 August. He became unwell in quarantine shortly after his arrival, and was then transferred to Lautoka hospital. · Fiji’s first COVID-19-related death occurred on July 31. A 66-year-old man died in quarantine after he contracted COVID-19 while in India for medical treatment. · While not in Fiji, 29 members of Fiji’s rugby tour have tested positive to COVID-19 (24/11/2020) <p>State of emergency – National and local Governments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Alcohol related cases have been found to make up the majority of arrests in the curfew (03/11/2020) · PM Bainimarama has further lifted restrictions (21/06/2020) to allow for people to attend church, sports, and lifted restrictions on gathering numbers to 100. This has been further loosened, with venues now able to operate at 50 percent capacity - meaning if a venue has capacity for 500 people it may host 250 (01/09/2020).

- It has been estimated that 25,000 Fijians have lost their jobs as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- PM Bainimarama has said that there will be a measured release of restrictions, with no active cases now in the country (5/6/2020).
- Fiji Taxi Association has called for nationwide curfew hours to be removed (6/6/2020).
- Fiji was under a nationwide curfew which has been eased to 11pm-4am. Fiji's borders are closed. Recreational sport, gatherings of more than 20 people were banned. The quarantine period was been extended from 14 to 28 days, with a fourteen day quarantine in a public facility, followed by a fortnight at home.
- A 30-day state of natural disaster finished in early May 2020 for Cyclone Harold affected areas.

Travel and transport:

- The remaining crew members of a freighter that had two sailors test positive for COVID-19 in Fiji have all returned negative results for the virus (15/12/2020)
- Fiji Airways has successfully launched its Travel Ready flight, designing travel in a COVID-19 world. Executive General Manager Shaenaz Voss said the flight was to prepare staff and guests for changes to the industry once border restrictions eased (24/11/2020)
- Fiji has outlined a travel bubble push with NZ and Australia, with Minister Sayed-Khaiyum saying that since the virus is contained in Fiji, tourists would not need to quarantine when they arrived back home (10/11/2020)
- Fiji PM Bainimarama has said his country is committed to making the 'Bula Bubble' work, as his government continues to advocate for a 'Bubble Bubble with Australia and New Zealand, highlighting that his country had, at that stage, gone 170 days without a new case of the virus being confirmed in the community (13/10/2020)
- Several Fijians were removed from a repatriation flight from India in late August, following their failure to meet the government's COVID-19 requirements (01/09/2020)
- Fijians are being encouraged to download a COVID-19 tracing app, 'CareFiji' (11/08/2020). It is hoped that the app will assist progress towards a travel bubble with Australia and NZ.
- The first boat under the 'Blue Lane' initiative has arrived in Fiji since shipping was paused due to COVID-19. Two New Zealanders were onboard the vessel which berthed at Port Denarau Marina (17/07/2020). There are about fifteen further boats waiting outside Port Denarau Marina to complete their quarantine at sea (28/07/2020). Boat owners have urged other countries to adopt the initiative

- PM Bainimarama has said Fiji was establishing a ‘Pacific Pathways’ initiative, to commence travel from Tuvalu, Kiribati, Tonga, Samoa, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. Under the arrangements, visitors would need to isolate for 14 days and have a test conducted at their own cost. (28/07/2020).
- Fiji Airways has said that it is working with interested hotels and resorts to participate in the government’s Tourism Recovery Package. As part of the governments USD 28.2 million Fiji Recovery Rebate Package in the 2020/2021 Budget, Fiji Airways, through the government, will give the first 150,000 visitors USD 188 towards flights, accommodation, food and beverages.
- 413 visitors arrived in Fiji in June 2020, down from 85,652 for June 2019.
- With international travel not expected to return for the foreseeable future, locals in Fiji have been encouraged to travel domestically to revive the struggling tourism economy (10/07/2020).
- Fiji has issued guidelines ‘Guidelines for the Fijian Tourism Industry COVID Safe Operations’ https://www.mcttt.gov.fj/doc_uploads/Tourism%20Guidelines.pdf
- Fijian soldiers have been sent home to Fiji from a Sinai camp after locals working with the Fijians tested positive for COVID-19
- Fiji Hotel and Tourism Association says Australian plans to extend the travel ban into 2021 is a “worst-case scenario” for Fiji and the Pacific region, citing that Australia and NZ travellers account for 70 per cent of annual visitors to Fiji. (30/06/2020)
- Bainimarama has announced (21/06/2020) plans for a ‘Bula Bubble’ for tourism with Australia and New Zealand, as well as Tuvalu, Tonga and Kiribati. The plan would see tourism areas zoned for other tourists who match similar exposure profiles.
- Fiji Airways has laid off nearly 800 staff (25/05/2020). Domestic flights were suspended from 30/03/2020. Anyone entering Fiji from any overseas destination is required to self-isolate for 14 days. Fiji government staff have been banned from overseas travel. Air New Zealand has organised repatriation flights leaving Fiji.
- The Chinese Government is reported to be organising another repatriation flight for 100 Chinese nationals still stranded in Fiji.
- Fiji visitor arrivals totalled 678 for April 2020, down from 76,813 for April 2019.

Political economy:

- The COVID19 Risk Mitigation Taskforce will allow new investment ventures into the country if the risks to public health are low, the Permanent Secretary of Health James Fong has announced (08/12/2020)
- A 64.3 percent decline in job vacancies has been posted in Fiji in the year to October 2020, according to the Reserve Bank of Fiji (08/12/2020)
- Efforts to prepare police officers and law enforcement agencies for the opening of borders is underway in Fiji (24/11/2020). Meanwhile, policing in the Pacific has received a boost with the opening of a regional law enforcement unit in Suva. The decision to open a unit in Fiji was taken at the recent Pacific Islands Chiefs of Police (PICP) meeting.
- Pacific Trade Invest Australia recently released Pacific Business Monitor Fiji Focus 8, which showed that the top three challenges as a result of COVID-19 remained as poor cashflow (90 per cent Pacific, 91 per cent Fiji), impact of closed international borders (89 per cent Pacific, 85 per cent Fiji), and not knowing how long the crisis will last (88 per cent Pacific, 85 per cent Fiji).
- Job opportunities have declined by more than 60 percent, according to the Reserve Bank of Fiji. In its October review, the RBF found 62.9 percent decline in job vacancies from January to September (03/11/2020)
- Fiji's Health Minister has said that the Ministry's message on COVID-19 needs to remain clear and consistent.
- The government of Fiji has extended COVID-19 relief payments for pension fund members, saying that with borders remaining closed, the need for assistance during the pandemic is far from over. The National Provident Fund says that 50,000 people are accessing assistance, with members eligible to withdraw between USD 47 and USD 518 (20/10/2020).
- Tourism Minister Faiyaz Koya has said maintaining the health of Fiji's oceans is just as important as the country's COVID-19 recovery (29/09/2020)
- Villages are feeling the impact of urban drift, according to a Village Headman, with villagers moving to urban areas to access education and services, and subsequently returning temporarily to live rurally during the COVID-19 pandemic
- Arrests continue, daily, for breaching the COVID-19 evening curfew in Fiji. In the 24 hours to September 26, 34 individuals were arrested for breaking curfew.
- There has been a reduction in unemployment in Fiji during the COVID-19 pandemic, according to University of the South Pacific disaster risk management supervisor and coordinator Viliamu Lese. This is due to a large number of

people returning to rural villages and engaging in subsistence agriculture and gardening. The need for diverse crops has been highlighted as a necessary response to ensure that people access healthy meals.

- Women-led businesses in the Pacific are in urgent need of support due to COVID-19 pandemic, according to the head of the Pacific Trade and Investment Commission. Caleb Jarvis has said that women are disproportionately impacted by the border closures and reduction of tourism. A survey revealed 92 percent of women entrepreneurship had dropped in revenue (22/09/2020)
- Speaking at the Virtual Islands Summit, Fiji PM Frank Bainimarama has said that climate change still warrants urgent action, even amid the COVID-19 pandemic. He told delegates that the pandemic has left islands even more isolated than usual with borders shut and economies and key industries left reeling (15/09/2020)
- Visitors to Fiji will now have to pay their own quarantine costs, following amendments passed to the Public Health Act (09/09/2020)
- Fiji’s opposition, SODELPA, is calling on the government to close the Blue Lane initiative, claiming it could bring more illegal drugs into the country.
- A survey in Fiji has revealed that almost half of the workers on reduced income due to Covid-19 are earning 30 percent less compared to pre-pandemic levels. The Fiji Trades Union Congress Rapid Assessment Survey said that based on the minimum wage rate and 30 percent reduced income, an average worker on reduced hours was taking home USD 35 a week.
- Fiji’s government has lifted the seasonal June to September ban on the harvest, sale and consumption of Coral Trout and Grouper (Donu and Kawakawa), in order to alleviate the economic impact of the ban.
- There are reports of senior citizens waiting for hours in Suva to access monthly social welfare payments. Public frustration is growing in Fiji over the delayed social welfare payments during the pandemic. The Minister for Social Welfare has said that the government has assisted about 77,000 people through schemes (11/08/2020).
- Handing down the 2020-21 budget, the Fiji government has projected the single largest economic contraction in Fijian history, of 21.7 percent (20/07/2020). The budget will comprise a USD 390 million stimulus package, and a deficit pushing the debt to GDP ratio of 83.4 percent. As part of the relief package, tax reductions of USD 232 million have been passed, around 150,000 visitors will be given a travel stipend of USD 185 per passenger to go toward tourism packages. Remittances have also been forecast to decline by 15 percent, while FDI is set to drop by 40 percent. 1/3 of the workforce, or 115,000 Fijians, have lost their jobs or suffered reduced hours, resulting in USD 9.2 million being allocated for unemployment relief.

- A USP economist has argued that the budget could have done more to diversify the economy. Naleesh Gounder has said that the pandemic has revealed the country’s dependence on tourism, with the industry contributing around 35 percent of Fiji’s GDP. He has argued now is an opportune time to look at not only sugar production but agriculture and manufacturing (28/07/2020).
- Foundation for Rural Integrated Enterprises Development (FRIEND) says that people in the tourist-dependent Western Division are panicking about their prospects. FRIEND provides food banks and professional transition training for those affected by the tourism collapse (28/07/2020). The NGO estimates that half the country’s breadwinners are unemployed, with those in informal employment such as fishing, farming, domestic services and taxi drivers, largely ignored by the government’s stimulus packages as passed in the July budget. FRIEND reports that applications for assistance have increased substantially, reflecting the dire needs of the community. The Council of Social Services has similarly said that the July budget focussed more on supporting businesses to recover than it did in helping families make ends meet.
- The Minister for the Economy has outlined that 86,000 Fijians have accessed relief payments from their pension fund during stage 1, and a further 26,000 were accessing support during phase two (20/07/2020), nearly USD 29 million has been paid.
- The Opposition NFP have said that the entire economic collapse cannot be placed on COVID-19, with underlying economic mismanagement by the government partly to blame, claiming that the economy was struggling before the outbreak of the pandemic (16/07/2020).
- Chinese Embassy in Fiji has condemned claims made by opposition MP Mitieli Bulanauca that the COVID-19 pandemic has been spread to assist China (31/07/2020)
- Fiji has moved to Phase 2 of the COVID Safe Economic Recovery Framework, which involves continuing to open more businesses, the education sector and communities with COVID plans. Report may be accessed: https://www.mcttt.gov.fj/doc_uploads/Fijian%20COVID%20Safe%20Economic%20Recovery%20Framework.pdf
- Fiji Trades Union Congress and the Fiji Commerce and Employers Federation have signed a bipartite initiative to support redundant workers in micro-businesses (02/07/2020).
- Ratings agency Standard and Poors has outlined that COVID-19 pandemic has triggered a sharp collapse in tax revenue, saying the negative outlook reflects uncertainty around the pandemic. It said that the rating could be revised up or down depending on when tourism travel recommences (21/06/2020).

- Fiji opposition party, Sodelpa, has had its suspension lifted, a month after it was imposed (30/06/2020).
- An amendment to the Employee Relations Bill will see a reduction in family care and paternity leave during the COVID-19 pandemic (29/5/2020).
- The COVID-19 was gazetted in Parliament as an Act of God in late May, to assist businesses to manage employment responsibilities.
- NFP has called for an inquiry into the condition of Fiji's hospitals and health centres, articulating that the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the fragilities of the country's health system.
- FNPF has paid out FD 52.1 million in assistance to 82,850 members.
- Australia has expressed support for Fiji's inclusion in a trans-Tasman travel bubble.
- The Fiji Government unveiled a USD 400m response budget to address COVID-19 on 30/3/2020, with more than half the funds directed to employees and businesses. From 6/04/2020 workers in hospitality, as well as those in the Lautoka lockdown, who have lost work will receive support. Employee and employer superannuation contributions to Fiji National Provident Fund (FNPF) will decrease from 10% to 5% for the remainder of the year. Mortgages and loans have been delayed by 6 months. Student loans have been deferred until the end of the year, there will be no water disconnections this year. The Ministry of Local Government has announced that stalls will not pay stall fees until June 30, on their first two stalls.
- More than 70 traders are being investigated for price-gouging during the COVID-19 crisis.

Health policy and social affairs:

- 25 people who made contact with a vessel in Lautoka port, which had a suspected case of COVID-19 onboard have been taken into quarantine (08/12/2020).
- The Fiji Cancer Society says that the pandemic has affected supply of medicine for local cancer patients (03/11/2020)
- More women have been found to to engage in sex work in the wake of COVID-19 (03/11/2020)
- The Fijian Government has cautioned locals to only use government recognised COVID-19 testing facilities (27/10/2020)
- A Fijian transgender activist says community members have faced increased stigma during the COVID -19 global pandemic.

- Fiji's government says increased NCDs - such as heart diseases - is putting pressure on the country's health system. Acting Health Secretary Fong says 82 percent of premature deaths in Fiji are due to NCDs (06/10/2020).
- Fiji is calling for a collective effort in the Pacific to protect women from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, The Minister for Women has said the COVID-19 pandemic's impact has highlighted the heightened inequalities of women and girls' safety, including increased incidence of gender-based violence, as well as their limited access to economic resources, while simultaneously playing a frontline role in the COVID response.
- Fiji National University Head of School Dr Odlille Chang has expressed concern of a spike in mental health cases during the COVID-19 lockdown, as well as domestic violence and child abuse (06/10/2020)
- Fiji health workers have been warned that they risk being terminated if they refuse to provide services after hours. This follows debate over the non-payment of overtime and rural and remote allowances to staff. Following the 2020-21 Fiji National Budget, overtime will no longer be paid, with staff instead given time off in lieu (29/09/2020)
- There is a need to decentralise COVID-19 testing in Fiji, according to a health official who has said that the current arrangement, whereby testing is conducted at the Centre for Communicable Disease Control in Suva is insufficient. Greater decentralisation would allow for quicker result times on tests (22/09/2020)
- A Fijian psychologist is calling on people in Fiji to work together to tackle issues related to mental health in Fiji amid the COVID-19 pandemic. (15/09/2020).
- The Health Ministry has declared an outbreak of dengue fever and leptospirosis amid the COVID-19 pandemic, attributing the spike to TC Harold.
- Fiji Civil Society Organisations have reported an increased demand in NCD medication requests, due to economic downturn associated with COVID-19 (18/08/2020)
- The Fiji Women's Rights Movement has released the results of a survey which has shown that women have been disproportionately affected, as COVID-19 has brought to the fore underlying gender roles and profiles. Physical and mental health concerns were flagged as underlying patriarchal structures have prevailed during the pandemic (14/07/2020). Fiji's Minister for Women says the sharp rise in domestic violence in the country may be associated to COVID-19. A helpline, 1560, had 87 calls in February, rising to 527 in April (01/09/2020)
- Fiji NRL has axed lower grades of the game to combat COVID-19 risk (10/07/2020).
- Fiji rural development organisation, FRIEND, says a humanitarian crisis is emerging in Fiji, with half of the country's population experiencing extreme financial hardship due to the effects of COVID-19. The pandemic has been

	<p>labelled a disaster for the country, with the tourism sector shedding 100,000 jobs in the tourism-dependent country, not taking into effect job losses in the informal sector (02/07/2020).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · The Fiji CSO Alliance of civil society groups is calling for urgent action to respond to what it has labelled a growing humanitarian crisis in Fiji, citing COVID-19 related job losses, weakened food security, poor access to health, education and other essential services as driving the crisis. The Alliance reports that in households in the tourist-dependent Western Division 7 in ten people are without work. With the pandemic becoming protracted, savings are running low and many households are turning to the land and sea in the struggle for food, with reports of root crop theft growing. Violence against women has increased by 200 per cent. · More than 92% of the Fiji population have been screened, and 2000 COVID-19 tests have been conducted (6/6/2020). This announcement came as the Health Minister warned against COVID-19 complacency. This follows PM Bainimarama’s announcement on 18/05/2020 that 800,000 Fijians had undergone health screening, and that testing would be ramped up. · Doctors are informally offering medical services for COVID-19 affected patients who cannot afford treatment (1/6/2020) · Fiji has COVID-19 testing capacity, funded through a pooled donation from NZ, Australia, SPC, WHO and UNICEF 05/05/2020. · Fiji reports more than 700 cases of dengue in the country, in the northern and central divisions. · An isolation ward has been opened in Nadi for those who have come into contact with cases. · Eight COVID-19 clinics have been opened around the country, as well as the Mobile Fever Clinic Team, which provide a door-to-door service. · Outpatient services at Labasa Hospital have been suspended, as resources redirected. · Reports of widespread falling revenue, particularly for informal sellers. <p>Education:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Fijian schools reopened on 30/6/2020. Sources report that the Fijian Government is trialling remote learning for school children using smartphones and TV. However due to low ownership numbers, primary and secondary remote learning is not compulsory. Remote learning is active at National universities. · The Fiji Muslim League and Sanatan have stepped in to assist students whose parents have been made redundant as a result of COVID-19, assisting with the provision of meals and school supplies (05/07/2020).
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · A USP librarian was questioned and released regarding possible contravention of COVID-19 restrictions by helping to organise a protest at the USP’s Laucala campus. · Schools were scheduled to reopen on 15/6/2020, however the PM has announced that they will remain closed until there are no cases of COVID-19 in Fiji. <p>Overseas development assistance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Fiji has accepted USD 700,000 worth of medical supplies from the WHO (29/09/2020) · Bilateral trade negotiations in the agricultural sector have been pointed to as an area for growth by USAID. USAID has provided, as at September 2020, USD 27.7 million in assistance to Pacific island countries to respond to COVID-19. · A UN Report has warned of an increase in poverty rates in Fiji. UN Women have said their assessments predict that as many as 200,000 Fijians could fall below the poverty line, with 140,000 children at risk (25/08/2020) · The US has provided 50 ventilators for Nauru, Kiribati and Fiji (25/08/2020) · EU has provided USD 23.4 million to Fiji. This comes after Fiji shut its embassy in Brussels (11/08/2020) · SPC has provided Fiji’s Ministry of Health and Medical Services with 20,000 hand washing posters (28/07/2020) · ADB has loaned USD 200 million to Fiji to boost private sector development (16/07/2020) · Australia has provided a further USD 4.5 million to Fiji to assist with COVID-19 (30/06/2020). In all, in the month to June 29, in total, Australia has provided USD 84 million in relief assistance to Fiji. · Fiji will be able to access a future COVID-19 vaccine through Australian investment in Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance (8/6/2020). · 6/6/2020, EU allocated USD 20 million to help the Fijian government tackle COVID-19 and climate change. · 19/05/2020, Australia and NZ have provided 47 GeneXpert test kits to the Ministry of Health in addition to 470 testing cartridges. · Fiji has called on the UN to help small island states facing the double burden of climate and COVID-19, reminding nations of the 2019 commitment by the General Assembly to extend health coverage.
<p>Vanuatu</p>	<p>Cases:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · 1 confirmed case

- Vanuatu has recorded its first case of COVID-19 in quarantine. The individual was asymptomatic and returned a positive test on day 5 of testing (11/11/2020)

State of emergency – National and local Governments:

- A SoE has been declared, and was extended until July. It has since been extended until 31 December, the longest extension to an SOE in Vanuatu history. Opposition leader Regenvanu has written to the President requesting referral to the Supreme Court for review of its constitutionality. The TC Harold SOE has ended (11/08/2020)
- Lockdown has been lifted, apart from on Tanna (24/11/2020)

Travel and transport:

- 800 workers from Vanuatu will travel to Australia to take up seasonal labour work in the next six weeks. There are currently 3,000 ni-Vanuatu workers in Australia (15/12/2020)
- Vanuatu students studying in Fiji have arrived home on the country’s final repatriation flight before Christmas (08/12/2020)
- USD 5 million has been provided to Air Vanuatu (24/11/2020)
- Director of Customs and revenue has said that increased small craft movements is of concern not only for Vanuatu but for the region. There is concern that small crafts are slipping across borders.
- Stricter quarantine rules have been instituted in Vanuatu, with the period of quarantine for citizens after repatriation increasing from 14 to 28 days (16/11/2020)
- Domestic travel to Efate has been halted (16/11/2020)
- A second round of seasonal workers has been sent to Darwin as part of the Seasonal Worker program (13/10/2020)
- The Vanuatu Director of Public Health has confirmed that COVID-19 testing of repatriates from high risk areas will start this week. Testing will occur twice a week after the repatriates arrive in Vanuatu, and while they remain in the government approved quarantine facilities. (15/09/2020)
- The Vanuatu government looks set to allow four repatriation flights per week during the second repatriation phase, with the first flight expected from Brisbane to Vanuatu on 5 September. Air Vanuatu’s inflight protocols have been approved by the Ministry of Health. It has been confirmed that there are 800 ni-Vanuatu seasonal workers in New Zealand awaiting repatriation.

- The Vanuatu NDMO has put a hold on incoming Air Vanuatu flights until further notice on 11 August, since then, repatriation has re-commenced: 119 seasonal workers returned to Vanuatu from NZ on August 18. (18/08/2020).
- The Pacific Aviation Safety Office provided online training for representatives from the Cook Islands, Kiribati, Nauru, PNG, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu for the safe resumption of airline travel, as part of the COVID-19 Aviation Recovery Program.
- 6 ni-Vanuatu students have organised their own travel home from Samoa, meeting the costs of a charter flight and quarantine.
- Vanuatu’s Council of Ministers had approved a plan to reopen borders on September 1. Recent outbreaks have shelved this
- Air Vanuatu operated an outbound repatriation flight on 23 July to France. The airline announced a schedule of international flights as part of the government’s second phase of repatriations, beginning August 12, which has since been delayed by the NDMO. 2000 seasonal workers need to be repatriated from NZ, 200 from Australia, 100 from Fiji and 20 from New Caledonia (11/08/2020)
- Air Vanuatu operated its first outbound repatriation flight on Friday (03/07/2020), returning 9 French nationals from Port Vila to Noumea.
- Domestic air travel was reinstated from 10/04/2020.
- An Air Vanuatu commercial cargo flight flew from Port Vila to Noumea on 29/04/2020, making it the first international flight since 23/03/2020.
- Local business leaders claim that COVID-19 restrictions are slowing the movement of goods and services, needed particularly to respond to TC Harold clean-up efforts, 2/6/2020.

Political economy:

- NDMO has confirmed a third-round of food deliveries to the West Coast, noting a lack of supply chains for communities (24/11/2020)

AUD 633 million 2021 budget has passed parliament. A supplementary budget to cover the costs of TC Harold and COVID-19 has also been approved

The Reserve Bank of Vanuatu hosted reserve bank governors from across the region for a two day conference to discuss the theme “Emerging from the COVID-19 crisis”

- The Vanuatu government has promised to budget over USD 26 million to help the private sector, with USD 1.8 million for Air Vanuatu. The majority of funds will be deposited with the Vanuatu National Bank, allowing the private sector firms to apply for soft loans, with a maximum loan of USD 90,000. (03/11/2020)
- Vanuatu PM has said 21% of the 2021 budget will be spent in the productive sector to boost livelihoods and recovery following TC Harold and the COVID-19 pandemic, with a focus on fruit, vegetable and commodity production. The TC Harold and COVID-19 Post-Disaster Needs Assessment has been released, estimating the monetary value of the disaster effects at 61% of GDP. Recovery and reconstruction from TC Harold is estimated at approximately 36 percent of 2021's GDP (27/10/2020)
- Vanuatu Opposition has enquired when outstanding stimulus payments promised to workers and businesses will be paid (06/10/2020).
- In a speech to the UN General Assembly, Vanuatu PM Bob Loughman has called for debt forgiveness for developing nations. The PM stressed the need for the international community to work together to overcome the unprecedented challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic (29/09/2020)
- The Vanuatu Ministry of Health and Ministry of Tourism have collaborated to provide guidelines for safe business operations, in order to provide measures and actions to support COVID-19 preparedness and response.
- 170 ni-Vanuatu Seasonal Workers are once again set to travel to the Northern Territory (Australia) to pick mangoes as part of a Seasonal Worker Program. There has been a delay, with the government cancelling the farewell ceremony, stating that the Council of Ministers had not approved the program. On 31 August the Council of Ministers belatedly approved the program, with the Seasonal Workers set to depart Vanuatu in the first week of September. No seasonal workers have travelled to Australia since March. The Australian Government has again pledged its support to the Vanuatu Government to pay the repatriation costs for Ni-Vanuatu citizens engaging in the Seasonal Workers Program (SWP), Pacific Labour Scheme (PLS) and anyone undertaking studies or other programs abroad under the Australian Government funding.
- Vanuatu Livestock Department is planning to distribute one million chickens throughout the country to improve local protein supplies, noting food shortages associated with COVID-19 and TC Harold (18/08/2020)
- Government will allocate USD 8,777,910 to support the agricultural sector and provide USD 26,333,730 to the agricultural bank as a recovery measure from COVID-19 and TC Harold (04/08/2020)
- PM Loughman says cooperation between Vanuatu and France has reached an unprecedented level (16/07/2020)
- The parties of government attended an online meeting with Chinese Communist Party officials in July

- While the entire opposition was under suspension an amendment passed the parliament to empower the government to extend the SOE indefinitely.
- A report published by MSG has found that turnout for the Vanuatu election in March was significantly lower compared to the 2016 election, with the collapse in turnout attributed to extreme weather conditions and the COVID-19 pandemic. An average of 51 per cent turnout was recorded.
- The opposition party boycotted parliament on its First Sitting (First Ordinary Session, 11/06/220) resulting in an adjournment until 16/06/2020 due to lack of quorum. The reason given was a claim that the Minister of Climate Change, Bruno Leingkone breached COVID -19 rules. The Ministry of Health has since given assurances that correct procedures and testing were followed and parliament was safe. A motion to suspend the 22 Opposition members instigating the protest and bill them for costs has been made.
- The government has allocated AUD 40m to infrastructure projects to boost economic activity, provide jobs and support food security.
- Port Vila’s main fresh food market has reopened with social distancing rules 05/05/2020, as well as the Port Vila Market House (12/05/2020).

Health policy and social affairs:

- Vanuatu’s frontline health workers are entitled to a supplementary allowance of AUD 219 on top of their salary (24/11/2020)

Vanuatu has announced that it is considering mandatory COVID-19 testing for those who enter the country (25/08/2020)

- With food shortages in the country, more than one hundred people attended a programme in Port Vila to take up backyard food gardening (06/07/2020).
- Medical clinics in Vanuatu’s cyclone-affected communities are reporting an increase in sickness, including red eye, diarrhoea and malaria as the recovery process continues.
- Vanuatu has ordered 8,000 testing cartridges which are arriving in gradual shipments.
- Acting Health Director General has outlined that the Vila Central Hospital and Northern Provincial Hospital should be established as fully equipped COVID-19 centres, if there is any detection. This follows the arrival of medical supplies including ventilators, testing kits and masks from China, Australia, New Zealand, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank.

- Director of Public Health has said that the country is lacking testing capacity, which is delaying the repatriation of ni-Vanuatu citizens abroad (5/5/2020).

Education:

- The UN’s children’s agency in Vanuatu has said that motivating children to return to school is its key focus for the 24 July public holiday, Children’s Day, following the COVID-19 induced school shut down. There is concern that many students have now not been attending school for several months, as a result of both COVID-19 and TC Harold.
- Homeschooling packages have been developed at some schools, including bilingual schools. Schools closed as of 3/04/2020. School fees exempted.

Overseas development assistance:

- NZ’s government has announced new funding to help Vanuatu’s recovery from TC Harold with AUD 9.4 million announced for schools, health centres, water and sanitation infrastructure and agriculture support (15/12/2020)
- Australian Minister Alex Hawke has met with Vanuatu’s Minister for Finance and Economic Management to discuss economic partnership, and the trial resumption of labour mobility under which 170 ni-Vanuatu workers will be temporarily employed on mango farms in the NT (18/08/2020)
- In May 2020, DFAT supported Vanuatu Police Force to procure PPE, recruitment of nurses, building accommodation for potential isolation, and assisted the Ministry of Education and Training’s COVID-19 contingency plan.
- First 220 testing cartridges are expected to arrive in Port Vila this week (12/05/2020), 300+ more arrive from Australia (16-17/05/2020).
- Government has confirmed China is supporting funding of testing capacity and providing ventilators.
- CCECC has provided container housing for isolation.
- 11/4/2020, COVID-19 medical equipment, including testing kits. This is on top of humanitarian assistance from Australia, New Zealand and France.
- Red Cross has offered USD 678,000.
- AUD 1.5 million agreed by Council of Ministers to assist families affected by Cyclone Harold and COVID-19.

<p>Tonga</p>	<p>Cases:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · No confirmed cases in Tonga. · Two sailors who arrived in Fiji on a freighter ship from Tonga have tested positive for COVID-19 (08/12/2020) <p>State of emergency – National and local Governments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · The SoE has been extended further to November 23. · A nationwide curfew is in place from 12am - 5am. · Mass gathering restrictions of 40 people indoors and 80 outdoors no longer apply to religious services and educational institutions. All gyms, sporting events, birthday and wedding celebrations are now permitted, however contact sport is banned. Funerals are still restricted by mass gathering limits. <p>Travel and transport:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Over 800 Tongans have now been repatriated (24/11/2020) · The first group of Tongan Seasonal Workers to travel to Australia since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic has arrived in Queensland, and will be quarantined on a farm before they begin work. The 151 individuals follow on from 323 ni-Vanuatu workers currently in the Northern Territory (10/11/2020) · All 141 Tongans repatriated from Christchurch tested negative for COVID-19 on 14 October (20/10/2020) · Over 60 people were repatriated to Tonga on 2 September from Fiji and Kiribati (08/09/2020) · The CEO of Tonga’s Ministry of Health has expressed frustration at the difficulties in repatriation, particularly from India, citing a lack of support from PIFS and SPC (18/08/2020) · 140 Seasonal Workers repatriated from NZ Thursday 6 August. Repatriation of Tongans stranded overseas was scheduled to begin on 9 July, however was delayed. Officials are reviewing processes from the first repatriation flight before a second in August. A charter flight is being organised by a church in Tonga to repatriate missionaries stranded in the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Samoa. While repatriation flights are ongoing, Tongans have been banned from entering the Fua’amotu International Airport, as well as the Tanoa International Dateline Hotel. Military will guard both venues (14/07/2020)
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- More than 7000 Tongans are estimated to be stranded overseas, 2,000 have registered for repatriation (25/06/2020)
- A second repatriation drill has been held in Tonga to assess the readiness of testing facilities at the quarantine facility established at the Tanoa Hotel, where arrivals will be held for 14 days before being tested again and then released.

Political economy:

- Tonga's Health Minister has spoken to ABC Australia about healthy eating initiatives for Tongans amid the COVID-19 pandemic, and embracing gardening and local produce amidst the pandemic
- Tonga has asked China to restructure its heavy debt load, in response to mounting government debt and the Chinese loan repayment schedule (28/07/2020)
- Plans have been unveiled for Tonga's economic recovery, as the Kingdom stares down its largest budget deficit in its history. Tonga's 2020/21 budget passed the national parliament 21 - 0 ahead of the 30/6/2020 deadline. Finance Minister Tevita Lavemaau has outlined a plan to issue government bonds and take a low-interest loan from the IMF as steps to bridge the deficit. The Budget outlines 7 priority areas to kick-start the economy, including: health; illegal drugs; education; economic development, including support to agriculture, fisheries and tourism; infrastructure; climate change and public sector reform.
- Stimulus package has been announced, 2/4/2020 worth USD25 million. Losses to date forecast as US 15 million to the Tongan economy. Tonga PM has proposed that MPs take a 20 per cent pay cut.
- Taxes are deferred until 30/6/2020, while goods to support tourism, agriculture and fisheries imported into Tonga will now enter duty free.
- Expenditure includes: USD 2 million to the Ministry of Health; USD 1.6 million to Education; with additional funds for food security and agriculture assistance. The Reserve Bank has given USD 2 million to the Tonga Development Bank for loans to small businesses and other groups. Pensions will be increased for retirees.

Health policy and social affairs:

- The cost of testing has reportedly gone up from \$70pp to \$300. However all repatriated Tongans will be tested pre and post travel and again after 14 days at a quarantine centre

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · 537 domestic violence cases were reported between January and July, with 99 prosecutions. During the first 15 days of lockdown, there was an average of 8 cases of domestic violence reported to the Women and Children Crisis Centre each day (04/08/2020). · Testing capacity arrived in the country on 7/5/2020, supported by Australia. Testing facilities are open in Nuku'alofa. <p>Education:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Remote learning will be trialled for school and university (30/06/2020 and 31/07/2020), in case COVID-19 reaches Tonga. · Schools were closed for a fortnight from 27/03/2020, and are now reopened. <p>Overseas development assistance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · In the midst of COVID-19, the IMF has said that Tonga needs USD 600 million for climate adaptation (10/07/2020). · ADB has pledged USD 12.2 million for Tonga · The Australian Government has donated 1.9 million to help combat COVID-19 and mitigate the Cyclone Harold aftermath. The money will be used for safe water supply, hygiene education and to support agricultural development. · Testing capacity arrived in the country on 7/5/2020, supported by Australia. · Medical supplies have arrived from NZ and Australia. · Support has been pledged by China to Tonga, including support to athletes (27/05/2020) · USD 111 million in damage recorded from TC Harold, compounding the economic and social effects of unemployment during COVID-19
<p>Samoa</p>	<p>Cases:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · 2 cases suspected in Samoa have both returned negative results. · A Samoan sailor who returned on a repatriation flight from Auckland has tested positive for the coronavirus on 18 November, despite previously testing negative (24/11/2020). Both the 23 year old sailor and a 70 year old man who had travelled from Australia have been declared non-infectious (01/12/2020)

State of emergency – National and local Governments:

- Following news of the first potential case of COVID-19 in Samoa, the PM called for calm as parents moved to withdraw their children from the country’s schools and panic-buying ensued across the country. There is widespread concern with memories of the Measles Outbreak of 2019 looming large.
- The quarantine period has been extended from two weeks to three weeks (24/11/2020)
- Media reports that the Prime Minister is considering increasing COVID-19 restrictions, with the PM telling his weekly radio show that extended quarantine for returning citizens was a possibility, as well as increased social distancing (01/09/2020)
- A SoE was declared on 20/03/2020, and has been extended until December 23
- Two customs officers and their driver have been detained and isolated in Samoa after entering a COVID-19 quarantine facility (25/08/2020)
- Amendments to the permissible activities have been made numerous times as restrictions ease. The SoE was extended with further easing of restrictions on 11/6/2020, including limited roadside vendor sales and increased wedding attendees. As of August, the bestowal of matai titles has now been permitted with group size of fewer than 50 people and social distancing measures observed. As of September, private pharmacies are now allowed to open on Sundays, Sunday flights for medical emergencies between Savai’i and Upolu are allowed.
- Restrictions have been placed on Samoans visiting areas near the airport and quarantine sites as repatriation flights continue.
- Opening hours for supermarkets have begun to be increased, and casinos are now permitted to open as well as schools and churches with social distancing provisions.
- Church services have resumed in Samoa 05/05/2020.

Travel and transport:

- A January repatriation flight from the US to Samoa has been approved (08/12/2020)
- Samoa has imposed strict measures for returning citizens on upcoming repatriation flights from NZ and Fiji. The PM has said entry will only be provided for returning citizens and scholarship students (01/12/2020)
- Samoa has postponed the first repatriation flight from the US (01/12/2020)

- 12 repatriation flights have now arrived in Samoa, with 300 passengers arriving from Auckland on 31 October (03/11/2020). A Tokelau man who travelled to Samoa on the same flight as the sailor from NZ who tested positive to COVID-19 has raised concerns in the media that COVID-19 precautions were not appropriately followed on the repatriation flight.
- It has been reported that talks are underway to restart Samoan Seasonal Worker programs with NZ (03/11/2020) Samoa's government has approved the first repatriation flight for citizens stranded in Europe and the US. 5 flights have been approved from Los Angeles, beginning in October. Samoans stranded in the US or Europe will have to make their own way to flights. Meanwhile, more than 1300 Samoans have registered for five repatriation flights from NZ in the coming weeks. (20/10/2020)
- With Samoa entering a seventh month of restrictions, the President of the Samoa Hotels Association has called for some restrictions to be relaxed to support the tourism industry.
- The Samoa government has, as of September, allowed Sunday flights between Savai'i and Upolu for medical emergencies (29/09/2020)
- Border closures have delayed the return of Samoan Police Officers serving as peacekeepers with the UN in Africa (22/09/2020)
- Samoa has resumed repatriation flights from New Zealand, with 300 Samoans repatriated on 18 September. This marks the first flight since repatriation was halted due to NZ's second-wave of the virus. Most of the returning Samoans are seasonal workers. All arriving passengers will be tested for COVID-19 and undergo 14 days of supervised quarantine (22/09/2020)
- A Samoa repatriation flight designated to return citizens and seasonal workers from NZ scheduled for Friday September 11th has been delayed until September 18th. Samoan PM has flagged the potential for repatriation flights from Australia, Japan and China at the end of September (08/09/2020).
- All international travel to and from Samoa was suspended, effective 26 August, including repatriation flights. The decision has been made as a response to the Auckland outbreak.
- Repatriation flights between Samoa and American Samoa commenced on 18/6/2020. The government has allowed the first community facilitated quarantine of repatriated citizens. With more than 300 seasonal workers having arrived on 17/07/2020 149 individuals will be quarantined in two halls in Poutasi village (20/07/2020). On 1 August 140 Samoan seasonal workers were reunited with their families, following the completion of the 14 day quarantine.

- The Pacific Aviation Safety Office provided online training for representatives from the Cook Islands, Kiribati, Nauru, PNG, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu for the safe resumption of airline travel, as part of the COVID-19 Aviation Recovery Program.
- Samoa’s RSE workers in New Zealand who finished their contracts in May and June will be repatriated on flights organised by the NZ horticulture industry.
- All international travel has been banned from 26/03/2020. Inter-island travel was halted from 25/03/2020 but has begun to resume.

Political economy:

- Remittances to Samoa increased by 10 percent month-on-month in October 2020, according to the Central Bank of Samoa (15/12/2020)
- The fallout from the resignation of long-serving MP Fiame Naomi Mata’afa from the ruling HRPP, and thus as Deputy Prime Minister, has led to a period of change in Samoan politics, with caucus members preparing to vote for a new Deputy Prime Minister (15/09/2020). Fiame has said that she quit the government because she believes planned changes to the Land and Titles Court will undermine the rule of law.
- Samoa Rugby Union is facing a loss of USD 385,000 over 6 months due to the financial fallout from COVID-19.
- Samoa’s government is disputing claims made on social media that a man died on 15 August as a result of COVID-19. The man had completed a 14 day mandatory quarantine on 31 July, and tested negative, after being repatriated. The man collapsed in his home and was pronounced dead on arrival at the Leulumoega District Hospital. Residents must also provide three negative tests before their repatriation journey to Samoa (18/08/2020)
- Every citizen whose personal details are collected by the Samoa Bureau of Statistics Officers will receive USD 18 as part of the second stimulus package (14/07/2020).
- The Samoa Observer has argued that the PM is using emergency powers to push his own ideological agenda to ban all commercial activity on Sundays (17/06/2020).
- 07/04/2020, a USD 66 million supplementary budget presented, with focus on relief to households. This includes a 2% interest rate relief for households, SNPF loan repayment fund, and a special, one-off pension. Utilities will be lowered. Media reports concerns that this funding did not support the education sector, and disproportionately supports larger firms, rather than farmers, growers, fishers and small traders.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Concerns have been raised about food insecurity. Disrupted trade routes could lead to food shortages in Samoa. · The President of the Samoa Chamber of Commerce has written to the Minister of Finance requesting government assistance for over 430 businesses affected by COVID-19 restrictions. <p>Health policy and social affairs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Samoa’s Director of Health says the country remains free of COVID-19, and that the community should not panic or believe rumours to the contrary (25/08/2020). This comes after preparations were revealed for how the government is preparing for a potential outbreak, including a mass grave site. · Testing capacity has arrived in the country (7/5/2020), supported by WHO, Australia and NZ. · Samoa Victim Support Group says it’s noticed a marked increase in family violence since the country went into lockdown. · Spike in poverty as tourism jobs disappear. <p>Overseas development assistance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Samoa is set to receive USD 2.3 million worth of laboratory equipment and medical supplies for its COVID-19 response through the UN Office for Project Services, along with the World Bank and Samoan government (15/12/2020) · NZ has said it is open to helping Samoa’s government repatriate 400 citizens stranded on 17 cruise ships due to the COVID-19 pandemic (26/06/2020) · The World Bank has pledged to support Samoa with USD 8.5million. On top of USD 5.1 million initially announced to support the COVID-19 response, an additional USD 3.4 billion was announced through a dedicated emergency health project, focused on laboratory equipment, testing, PPE, X-Rays and other medical supplies. · UNDP and Japan have provided funding to support Samoa’s politicians to work remotely. · UNDP have provided prevention and control supplies for COVID-19 case management. · WHO has provided assessment of healthcare in Savai’i, provided technical support for hospital planning, provided guidance and support for information and communications, finalised and supported the implementation of RCCE checklists (May 2020).
Tuvalu	Cases:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · No confirmed cases in Tuvalu. <p>State of emergency – National and local Governments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · SoE declared on 25/03/2020. · 14 day quarantine restriction in a third party state. <p>Political economy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Former Tuvalu PM, and current MP Enele Sopoaga has targeted a lack of action by the US and Australia on climate change, saying it was time for the countries to prioritise climate change measures (15/09/2020) · Tuvalu has revised economic relief measures as it winds back its COVID-19 alert level from level three to level two. Monthly AUD 40 payments to all citizens have ceased, and will be limited to households with no regular income. Monthly payments to sponsored overseas students will also end. Payments to civil servants abroad will continue until they return home, and frontline officers will receive a risk allowance until the SOE is lifted. · Tuvalu PM has called for political unity in responding to COVID-19 while speaking at the World Health Assembly (21/5/2020). He also called for Taiwan to be included in the WHO, a move supported by the US, Australia and New Zealand, and has angered China. · Economic package announced on 30/04/2020. All citizens are to receive USD 17 per month, as well as increased welfare for unemployed, underemployed, students, National Provident Fund members, and support to police. Emergency grants will also be provided to businesses. <p>Overseas development assistance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Tuvalu has received PPE from Australia. · IFRC has supported first aid training, handwashing stations around islands. · UNDP has provided PPE for health care workers.
<p>Kiribati</p>	<p>Cases:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · No confirmed cases in Kiribati. <p>State of emergency – National and local Governments:</p>

- Lockdown in effect from 30/3/2020 until 16/4/2020.
- National elections in Kiribati were delayed by a week, as a COVID-19 precautionary measure.

Travel and transport:

- Repatriation has begun in Kiribati with the first flight arriving on 19 November. The Fiji Airways Charter flight brought 62 i-Kiribati who have been stranded since borders shut. They will now quarantine for 14 days (24/11/2020)
- Kiribati borders will remain closed for the remainder of 2020, with exceptions for repatriations, humanitarian flights and transport of essential supplies.
- The Kiribati government says that preparations are nearing completion for the country’s first repatriation flight since the border closed in March. A group of 20 i-Kiribati in the Marshall Islands will be flown home, and then quarantined for two weeks. The government has said that if this preliminary flight is successful repatriation from other countries will follow, with countries free from COVID-19 being prioritised first.
- Kiribati President has said that construction of more rooms at the old General Hospital in Bikenibeu is near completion, and that repatriation of i-Kiribati will begin when all isolation centres are ready to accommodate returning residents (14/07/2020). Travellers must have spent 14 days in a country without reports of COVID-19 prior to entry.
- The Pacific Aviation Safety Office provided online training for representatives from the Cook Islands, Kiribati, Nauru, PNG, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu for the safe resumption of airline travel, as part of the COVID-19 Aviation Recovery Program.

Political economy:

- Taneti Maamau has been re-elected President of Kiribati by more than 8,000 votes (23/06/2020). The outcome cements the country’s burgeoning relationship with China, as the diplomatic shift from Taiwan to China was the main dividing issue between the two presidential candidates in the election.
- President Maamau’s governing party has secured just 22/45 seats in the Assembly, however, losing its majority.

Overseas development assistance:

- The US has provided 50 ventilators for Nauru, Kiribati and Fiji (25/08/2020)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · A partnership has been announced between Kiribati, EU and UNICEF to improve sanitation. The EU will provide USD 7 million to install and repair infrastructure and promote hygiene. Additional assistance will be provided to improve water quality, waste and sanitation on outer-lying islands. · Australia has provided Kiribati with rapid testing capacity (11/05/2020). · Kiribati has received its first batch of medical supplies from China, including PPE, contactless thermometers and related gear. · Community communication and health worker support provided by UNICEF. · IFRC has provided psychological first aid training and guidance. · Continued radio messaging and phone text alerts provided through UNICEF. · UNICEF has procured bars of soap for outer islands.
<p>Republic of the Marshall Islands</p>	<p>Cases:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · 4 confirmed cases in the Marshall Islands. · The US military has brought two cases of COVID-19 to the Marshall Islands, with both cases flying into Kwajalein from Honolulu. The two cases remain in quarantine on the military base, and the Marshall Islands National Disaster Committee says there is no threat of community transmission (03/11/2020) · As of 18/06/2020, 20 Marshallese people living in Arkansas have died of COVID-19. Pacific islanders account for half of all COVID-19 related deaths in the area, but a much smaller fraction of the region’s population. <p>Travel and transport:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · 3 positive cases have arrived on two repatriation flights from the US. The results came a fortnight into the three week quarantine period. They have had no contact with the broader community (24/11/2020) · Tuna transshipment in Majuro has increased in October, but remains beneath averages for the past six years. COVID-19 regulations have reduced the number of purse seine fishing vessels to 60 percent (16/11/2020) · The first group of Marshall Islanders to be returned from the US were repatriated on 30 October. 27 Islanders were brought on a United Airlines flight on October 30 from Honolulu to Kwajalein Atoll for those who have been stuck in the US since March, including the First Lady (06/10/2020). It marked the first repatriation flight from a country with a recorded case of COVID-19 to RMI · RMI has suspended outbound travel, amongst rising infections in Hawai’i and Guam (01/09/2020).

- The repatriation of Marshall Islanders continues to be considered despite mounting cases of COVID-19 in Hawai'i and Guam, the two principal points of departure. There are believed to be 200 people stranded in Hawai'i, Guam, the Philippines, Fiji and Kiribati (25/08/2020)
- 29 May 2020, two RMI citizens who drifted at sea for 42 days, and seven others, have been repatriated, marking the first arrivals into the Republic since March 22. Placed into a 14-day quarantine.
- Fishing boats that have visited a COVID-19 infected country or territory are temporarily suspended, while fishing vessels that are based in RMI must spend 14 days at sea prior to return. United Airlines' regular weekly service has been suspended since March 20. Authorities have extended the ban on inbound travel until June 5.
- The importation of betel nut has been banned.

Political economy:

- Marshall Islands says that it is seeking opportunities to engage with other COVID-free countries to open economic corridors (27/10/2020)
- Concern that the drop in fisheries revenue in RMI associated with COVID-19 could be more than the USD 4 million initially forecast. The sector underwrites 10 percent of the national budget of the RMI. As of the end of July more than 700 fishing days remained to be sold, translating into a USD 7 million loss in revenue.
- With government subsidies in place to help the industry, RMI has recorded its largest ever copra production (14/07/2020).
- Cabinet has agreed to provide a one-time payment to Marshallese stranded abroad as a result of COVID-19 of USD 500.
- The Ministry of Finance has reported a 25% shortfall in collections against March predictions.

Education:

- RMI to receive close to USD 2 million to expand technological, distance learning, training and long-term planning capabilities (announced 20 May 2020)

Overseas development assistance:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · At least two COVID-19 vaccines from American pharmaceutical companies are expected to go into circulation shortly with RMI officials meeting with US government officials in December to discuss logistical preparations (01/12/2020) Japan has committed to USD 17 million of assistance to increase Majuro’s water storage capacity by 40 percent (29/09/2020) · The number of testing kits available was reduced by half following a directive from the US Centre for Disease Control to suspend use of Abbott ID Now lab equipment (17/06/2020). · USAID has provided USD 27.5 million in COVID-19 related support to be shared between RMI, FSM and Palau. · ADB has pledged USD 6 million. · The World Bank has provided a USD 2.5 million assistance package. · UNDP has procured disinfectants, assisted with communications (May 2020). · WHO is working to review strategy for outer islands (May 2020).
Federated States of Micronesia	<p>Cases:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · No confirmed cases in FSM. <p>Travel and transport:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · The government has announced a plan (16/07/2020) to assist citizens stranded abroad with cash payments of up to \$1500 (17/06/2020). · Borders closed to all international travel. <p>Political economy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Current drought may exacerbate food security concerns felt elsewhere in the region. · Governor of Yap is being sued over the state legislature (28/5/2020) for the continued SoE. While the initial 27/3/2020 declaration was lawful, the Constitution articulates that the Legislature should review it after 30 days. <p>Health policy and social affairs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · US Navy Seabees are assisting with the creation of an isolation facility in Pohnpei.

	<p>Education:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Schools closed on 18/03/2020. FSM to receive USD 3.7 million to expand technological, distance learning, training and long-term planning capabilities (announced 20/5/2020). <p>Overseas development assistance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · US provided USD 7 million in Compact Funds for COVID-19 assistance. · USAID has provided USD 27.5 million in COVID related support to be shared between RMI, FSM and Palau. · Support received from China, of medical equipment, supplies and USD 100,000 in cash. · USD 6m grant provided from ADB. · IFRC has provided psychological first aid.
<p>Palau</p>	<p>Cases:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · No confirmed cases in Palau. <p>Travel and transport</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Tourism between Taiwan and Palau will not recommence in the near future, according to Taiwan’s Ambassador to Palau - stating that a tourism bubble is unlikely (01/09/2020) · 87 individuals were expected to be repatriated on July 23 from Guam to Palau, however this was delayed after it emerged that two of the expected passengers were positive for COVID-19 (28/07/2020). This is the second repatriation flight. The first having arrived in June. · 143 Palau citizens trapped overseas due to travel restrictions. Borders have been closed since 22/3/2020. · Three stage quarantine: two weeks in Guam, two weeks in a hotel, two weeks in self-isolation at home. <p>Political economy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Surangel Whipps Junior has been elected the next President of Palau. In the face of the COVID-19 economic contraction, he has called for diversification of Palau’s economic base (10/11/2020) <p>Palau president Remengesau has confirmed that his country will host an in-person meeting of the leaders of Kiribati, Nauru, FSM and RMI, scheduled for mid-October. The countries remain free of COVID-19. (15/09/2020)</p>

	<p>Health policy and social affairs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Palau has begun on-site testing for COVID-19. <p>Education:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Schools closed from 03/04/2020. Palau to receive close to USD 762,497 to expand technological, distance learning, training and long-term planning capabilities (announced 20/5/2020). · Schools reopened on 10/08/2020 <p>Overseas development assistance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Under Operation Warp Speed, Palau predicts the whole population will be vaccinated by April (15/12/2020). The vaccine requires storage at -70 degrees celsius, which makes administering the vaccine difficult in Palau, with the Moderna vaccine seen as a more suitable option by Palau authorities. · A US military vessel has docked in Palau, with the government labelling the visit as a humanitarian mission designed to strengthen relationships and provide technical assistance and training in the region (28/07/2020). The government has said that all personnel tested negative for COVID-19 prior to arrival in Palau, and the vessel has been at sea since June 6. · USAID has provided USD 27.5 million in COVID-19 related support to be shared between RMI, FSM and Palau. · ADB has pledged USD 15 million to Palau.
<p>Nauru</p>	<p>Cases:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · No confirmed cases in Nauru. <p>State of emergency – National and local Governments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · National SoE declared. <p>Travel and transport:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · 14 day quarantine for any arrivals.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Speaking at the Micronesia Leaders Meeting in Palau, Nauru’s President says Micronesia is leading the world in terms of travel bubbles. President Aingimea has said that the virus-free status of all five Micronesian countries was commendable. · Flights suspended. An additional USD 1.68 million has been provided to Nauru Airlines. The airline has predicted an 80 per cent drop in activity in 2021. · Nauru has removed PNG From the list of safe countries to travel (25/08/2020) · The Pacific Aviation Safety Office provided online training for representatives from the Cook Islands, Kiribati, Nauru, PNG, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu for the safe resumption of airline travel, as part of the COVID-19 Aviation Recovery Program. <p>Health policy and social affairs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Donated ventilators have been offered to Nauru hospitals. An Australian technician is currently onshore for equipment maintenance. · Australia has provided Nauru with rapid testing capacity (11/05/2020). <p>Overseas development assistance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Australia’s Human rights Law Centre has said that the Australian Government must ensure the safety of refugees it is detaining. There are 175 people in PNG and 185 in Nauru detained under Australia’s offshore detention scheme, cautioning that an outbreak could overwhelm the health system in either location. · Australia has provided Nauru with USD 3 million for COVID-19 as well as rapid testing capacity (12/05/2020). · The US has provided 50 ventilators for Nauru, Kiribati and Fiji (25/08/2020)
<p>Guam</p>	<p>Cases:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · 6969 cases. 118 deaths have now been recorded · Analysis shows that Guam is making inroads in cutting the COVID-19 rate. The rate of community transmission has begun to fall (08/12/2020). · A ten year old boy, with underlying health comorbidities, has been reported as the youngest person to die from COVID-19 related illnesses in Guam.

State of emergency – National and local Governments:

- The stay at home order in Guam has been extended, with some restrictions: non-essential curbside retail operations are now allowed, as well as restaurants and cafes being reopened to take-away (22/09/2020). Further loosening of restrictions includes retail and services stores operating at up to 25 percent capacity, the resumption of solitary sports and outdoor dining (29/09/2020).
- Guam has reopened public service buildings, subject to a 50 per cent occupancy rate (1/6/2020). From August 8, Guam’s governor has ordered all bars in the territory to close for two weeks. The number of people allowed at social gatherings has been halved from 50 to 25. This came after 53 cases of COVID-19 had been confirmed in a week.
- Executive orders were signed to shut down non-essential businesses and gatherings, from 20/03/20. From 10/5/2020 retail outlets, malls, salons, government services have been allowed to operate with social distancing measures in place.

Health policy and social affairs:

- Thousands of vaccines are due to arrive in Guam in late December. Governor Guerrero said her administration is working to coordinate the rollout (08/12/2020).
- Indications reveal that 20 percent of cases will end up in hospital (25/08/2020)
- Governor Guerrero announced a COVID-19 tracing app for Guam (29/09/2020)

Political economy:

- Guam’s government has implemented a mortgage relief programme for people struggling with home repayments due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The program will be run by the Guam Housing Corporation and provide three months of mortgage assistance to those eligible for it. Individuals must occupy the home in which they applying for assistance for (13/10/2020)

Guam’s Governor Lou Leon Guerrero has tested positive for COVID-19 (11/08/2020)

- With Guam in lockdown, there’s anger that the US military has flouted restrictions. It has sparked anger in the community, with independence activists claiming that members of the military have been flouting COVID guidelines before entering the community from base.
- Guam’s primary elections have been cancelled, with all candidates to advance to the 3 November general election.

	<p>Education:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Guam to receive close to USD 60 million to expand technological, distance learning, training and long-term planning capabilities (20/5/2020). <p>Overseas development assistance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Guam’s Governor has appealed to the US for investment in public health, in the face of rising cases. Guam has met with Japanese Defence Minister Kono to reaffirm the strength of the alliance (31/08/2020)
<p>Northern Mariana Islands</p>	<p>Cases:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · 113 COVID-19 cases confirmed in the Northern Mariana Islands, 2 deaths confirmed. · Of the 109 cases, 83 were from incoming passengers (34 from the US mainland, 30 from Guam, 11 from elsewhere). 26 cases were from community transmission. (08/12/2020). The last case of community transmission was in early August. · Northern Mariana Islands has not had a case of community transmission since its 51st case in early August (27/10/2020) · The 50th COVID-19 case was recorded when the person was tested before an operation at the Commonwealth Health Centre. This marked the first case of community transmission since June 3 (18/08/2020) <p>State of emergency – National and local Governments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Christmas carolling has been banned due to COVID-19. The Catholic tradition of bringing the statue of the Child Christ, known as Nino into homes during the holidays due to the pandemic (15/12/2020) · CNMI has escalated restrictions, following recent community transmission (25/08/2020). A 10pm - 4am curfew has been reimposed, while indoor gatherings are restricted to no more than 10 people. Schools closed for in-person lessons and beaches and parks only used for isolated exercise. · CNMI has ended quarantining of individuals entering the country, instead instituting self-quarantine at home, with mandatory testing after 5 days.

- CNMI had further eased restrictions (11/08/2020) as it looks to welcome back tourists to the Commonwealth. People arriving will be exempted from quarantine if they register with a monitoring system and consent to specimen collection, and prove that they have had a test in the last 6 days (21/06/2020).

Travel and transport:

- CNMI authorities have announced plans for a travel bubble with its main tourist market, South Korea (01/12/2020). It is set to commence on 8 January. Under the arrangement tourists must show proof of a negative COVID-19 test 72 hours prior to arrival and take a subsequent test 5 days later (15/12/2020)
- Back-to-back passengers arriving from Guam tested positive for COVID-19, (28/07/2020). The cases come following the CNMI government’s decision to discontinue self-quarantine procedures for arriving passengers.
- CNMI borders remain open to arrivals, despite two more passengers testing positive for COVID-19. The CNMI government is without the ability to unilaterally close borders, as a US territory, however may request that the sole air provider, United Airlines, to hold flights (01/09/2020)
- CNMI reopened borders on 15 July 2020. A recent US suspension on incoming flights from Chinese airlines has presented a further challenge for the CNMI tourism industry, affecting Chinese airlines that serviced Saipan. China is one of the key tourism markets of CNMI.
- Despite borders reopening, scheduled flights to Asia, the main tourism source for the Commonwealth, are not expected until September (10/07/2020)

Political economy:

- CNMI Senate passed a bill to extend early voting time to 21 days and add more polling places ahead of the 3 November election (08/09/2020)
- CNMI Centre for Disease Control and Prevention acknowledged CNMI’s success in stopping the spread of COVID-19.
- CNMI Governor Ralph Torres has written to President Trump for support for the plan to reactivate tourism (22/06/2020).
- Torres has come under scrutiny for taking a trip to the remote northern islands of his country during the pandemic to release deer, as part of an ecotourism initiative (06/07/2020).

Health policy and social affairs:

- The Alternate Care Site at the Kanoa Resort on Saipan has opened. The facility has 50 to 70 intensive care unit beds and 115 mid-level care rooms (03/11/2020)
- The Northern Mariana Islands has outlined a plan to have a possible future COVID-19 vaccine distributed in three phases: first to healthcare and frontline workers; then to children and the most vulnerable; and then to the broader community.
- The cost of a COVID-19 test in CNMI has risen from USD 50 to USD 300 (22/09/2020)
- The only hospital in the Northern Mariana Islands had to run on back-up power for six hours after its electricity was cut over unpaid bills (15/09/2020)
- CNMI quarantine facility reached capacity on 5 August, with the former Mariana Resort and Spa now also being used.
- While self-quarantine has been halted, people arriving in CNMI must be tested on their first and fifth day in the country (28/07/2020)
- Contact tracing over the weekend of 6-7 June has seen a large spike in the number of cases in the CNMI, after a passenger from a May flight from Guam was confirmed to have COVID-19. Follow-up contact tracing has resulted in new, asymptomatic positive cases. The spike in cases comes after restrictions were eased, following 14 days without a COVID-19 case.

Education:

- Schools have resumed lessons, albeit digitally, in the Northern Mariana Islands (10/09/2020).
- CNMI to receive close to USD 30 million to expand technological, distance learning, training and long-term planning capabilities (announced 20/5/2020).

Overseas development assistance:

- CNMI has received 10 ultra cold freezers from South Korea, in preparation of a future COVID-19 vaccine.
- CNMI received USD 11 million in Federal funds to purchase PPE. The funds will assist in procurement of medical supplies and test kits (08/09/2020). CNMI submitted a USD 38 million reimbursement request to the Federal Emergency Management Agency to cover costs incurred while responding to COVID-19.
- USD 36 million has arrived from the US under the CARES Act, to be spent on test kits and PPE.

<p>American Samoa</p>	<p>Cases:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · 3 cases in American Samoa · Three crew members of a container vessel, Fesco Askold tested positive to COVID-19 <p>State of emergency – National and local Governments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · SoE has been amended (1/6/2020), to allow gatherings up to 150 people, with social distancing. Church services have resumed. On 2 July restrictions eased further, with schools, daycare and community classes able to resume, and all government workers can return to full working hours. Businesses will only be allowed to trade between 5am-9pm, with some exceptions. <p>Travel and transport:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · American Samoa has moved to repatriate Samoans stranded in the US territory (15/12/2020) · The American Samoa Department of Health has announced that it had plans to facilitate the US government mission to Antarctica, despite the US mission being denied access by the American Samoa Governor (08/12/2020). Three planes carrying 31 people were due to stopover in American Samoa and stay the night at a quarantine facility before carrying on to New Zealand and then Antarctica. Prior to travel to American Samoa, one of the crew members tested positive to COVID-19, and the other two close contacts were removed from the flight (08/12/2020) · American Samoa's governor has given provisional approval to the government's plan to repatriate about 600 residents stranded in Hawai'i and the US mainland (24/11/2020). There is a four-stage repatriation plan, which includes quarantine in Honolulu prior to departure. The first flight is slated for 19 January. · Three crew members onboard a container vessel, Fesco Askold, docked in Pago Pago have returned a positive result for COVID-19. · Hawai'i has granted American Samoans on medical charter flight quarantine exemption (27/10/2020) · The American Samoa government has been accused of having no repatriation plan, including for those who went off the island for medical appointments - citing people stranded in Hawai'i and the US mainland. · Flights between Pago Pago and Hawai'i have been suspended until September (20/07/2020). · Repatriation flights between Samoa and American Samoa commenced on 18/6/2020.
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- All air links between the territory remain suspended until the end of 2020. Cruise ships halted between Samoa and Hawai'i.

Political economy:

- US Federal Emergency Management Agency is reportedly pulling its staff out of American Samoa after one official was sent to quarantine (11/08/2020). American Samoan authorities have said that quarantine will be imposed on COVID-19 related workers, including US Federal Emergency Management Agency personnel entering the territory.
- The Governor says that the Territory faces a shortage of labour and accordingly skilled and technical workers will be brought into American Samoa in August, with USD 200 million worth of projects underway or about to start.
- A US official has been denied entry to American Samoa after failing to provide two negative test results for COVID-19 (28/07/2020)
- American Samoans stranded off-island will be able to vote as absentees in the November elections (20/07/2020).
- Government employees stranded abroad will have their pay restored (30/06/2020)
- American Samoans received USD 24 million in stimulus from the US Government on 23/05/2020. An additional USD 3 million was provided (18/06/2020) for the LBJ Medical Centre.

Health policy and social affairs:

- The first shipment of COVID-19 vaccines is due in American Samoa this week (15/12/2020)
- American Samoa's Governor has created a Covid-19 Vaccine Distribution Taskforce, charged with planning the distribution of any vaccine for the coronavirus when it becomes available.
- Health authorities in American Samoa are struggling to care for people in quarantine, following repatriation flights from Samoa commencing (30/06/2020)
- Authorities have set the goal of testing 20 percent of the population (19/05/2020).
- Preparations are continuing in American Samoa for possible COVID-19 infections with the hospital morgue's capacity being increased as a precautionary measure.

Education:

- Schools were closed for the school year, recommencing in September.
- Schools in American Samoa receive over USD 47 million to assist in COVID-19 teaching.

	<p>Overseas development assistance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · 25,000 testing units requested from the US.
<p>Cook Islands</p>	<p>Cases:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · No confirmed cases in the Cook Islands. <p>State of emergency – National and local Governments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · 14 day quarantine in New Zealand for anyone entering the Cook Islands. · First plane load to repatriate Cook Islanders arrived on 12/05/2020. <p>Travel and transport:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · New Zealand and the Cook Islands have agreed to open a quarantine-free travel bubble by the end of March 2021 (15/12/2020) · Stricter border controls are being adopted in Cook Islands, with the COVID-19 bill extended to run until mid 2021, requiring physical distancing and ongoing mask use (01/12/2020). · NZ officials are due to visit the Cook Islands for talks and an inspection of the requirements for a safe travel bubble (10/11/2020) · The Cook Islands has lifted the requirement for incoming travellers to spend 14 days supervised quarantine on arrival. The Opposition has hit out at the decision. (03/11/2020) · All 66 people on a Cook Islands repatriation flight from New Zealand have tested negative for COVID-19 (08/09/2020) · Cook Islands and NZ have delayed announcing details of an air-bridge between the two countries (28/07/2020) · The Pacific Aviation Safety Office provided online training for representatives from the Cook Islands, Kiribati, Nauru, PNG, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu for the safe resumption of airline travel, as part of the COVID-19 Aviation Recovery Program. <p>Health and social affairs:</p>

	<p>A family in the Cook Islands has been placed in supervised quarantine after a family member had contact with a person repatriated from NZ (15/09/2020).</p> <p>Political economy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · The Cook Islands PM, Mark Brown, says he expects quarantine-free travel with NZ by December (06/10/2020) · More than 20 percent of businesses surveyed in the Cook Islands have indicated that they may be forced to close their doors. · The Cook Islands business community have expressed hope that the current wage subsidy, which is due to end in September, may be extended. <p>Schools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Schools were closed. Now have reopened. <p>Overseas development assistance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · The Cook Islands have taken out a USD 10.3 million loan from the ADB to help finance its response to COVID-19 (8/07/2020) · USD 46.5m stimulus package announced 30/04/2020 by the Finance Minister, in addition to the initial USD 4 million package. · Abuse of wage subsidy programs reported (28/04/2020).
<p>Tokelau</p>	<p>Cases:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · No confirmed cases in Tokelau. <p>State of emergency – National and local Governments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Business hours restricted from 6am - 6pm. <p>Political economy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Government has announced that the three atolls are not yet in a position to effectively quarantine, isolate and manage a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19.

	<p>Travel and transport:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Tokelau shut its borders on 21 March. · The first repatriation flight has completed its journey, with a handful of Tokelau residents able to return home from Samoa (16/11/2020). The first group are now finally home after more than a month in quarantine in New Zealand and Samoa (13/12/2020). They had been in Apia since 13 November, when they flew from New Zealand. Their time in Samoa was extended after a passenger on the same flight from New Zealand tested positive for COVID-19. · Samoa has approved a petition from the Tokelau government for a special repatriation trip between Samoa and Tokelau.
<p>Niue</p>	<p>Cases:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · No confirmed cases in Niue. <p>Travel and transport:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Niue government has moved to allow home quarantine and has increased the number of passengers arriving from NZ. Niue’s opposition has labelled the move “unprofessional and irresponsible” (16/11/2020) · The Premier has announced that the Niue government will wait to assess how a travel bubble between NZ and the Cook Islands progresses before entering one itself (20/07/2020). He has indicated interest in a Realm countries travel bubble. As of November, discussions have commenced (03/11/2020) · International travel has been closed since March, with only Niueans allowed on a once-weekly flight, followed by 14 days’ quarantine. <p>Political economy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Government agencies in Niue have been urged to watch their spending closely, as the island attempts to overcome a deficit of USD 3.2 million.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Niue’s finance minister says the government, elected in June, is considering passing austerity measures as it stares down a USD 3.8 million deficit. Wage cuts, reduced expenditure and increased revenue collection have each been flagged as potential policy options (08/09/2020). · A USD 4.1 million COVID-19 stimulus package has been announced, inclusive of assistance to health, utilities, increase in support payments to vulnerable citizens, wage subsidies and interest free loans for food security (04/04/2020). The Niue Development Bank has offered businesses loan repayment holidays, and the government some tax relief on imports. · Telecom Niue has announced a boost for those without work due to COVID-19. The company is preparing to next week launch the new Manatua digital fibre cable which provides stronger international telecommunications links for the island (25/06/2020). <p>Overseas development assistance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Calls are mounting for more vouchers to be made available to medical patients being referred to New Zealand for treatment. Niue’s Chief Medical officer has said that some patients may be missing out on treatment as they cannot access vouchers to enter quarantine facilities (01/12/2020) · Former NZ foreign minister Murray McCully has been recruited to help Niue access ODA. · Australia and NZ have both provided the island with assistance.
<p>Wallis and Futuna</p>	<p>Cases:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · 3 confirmed cases in Wallis and Futuna. · A second case has been detected, after an individual arrived from France in late October, and was diagnosed as positive for COVID-19 at the end of their compulsory quarantine period. The asymptomatic individual has been transferred to isolation (16/11/2020) · The first case was detected during isolation, and the individual has since been moved to an isolation ward. <p>State of emergency – National and local Governments:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Chiefs in Wallis and Futuna have called for tighter measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The Chiefs of Futuna have said their island has no facilities to manage COVID-19, and suggested a limit of flight connections from Paris via Tokyo and Noumea to one per month (27/10/2020) <p>Travel and transport:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · France has decreed a ban on air travel to and from its overseas territories in order to fight the COVID-19 pandemic (13/07/2020). · Borders closed since mid-March. This came following customary leaders calling for complete isolation in March. · A three day disembarkation process has been completed for 100 residents who had been stranded in Noumea. <p>Education:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · School resumption 10/4/2020.
<p>New Caledonia</p>	<p>Cases:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · 36 COVID-19 cases confirmed in New Caledonia. · Two additional cases of COVID-19 have been detected in New Caledonia (24/11/2020). Both cases were in quarantine and are now in the hospital isolation ward. · One additional case has been recorded in quarantine (03/11/2020) · One case of COVID-19 has been detected in quarantine (29/09/2020). This comes almost two months since the last reported cases, when three cases were detected on 4 September in quarantine facilities. There is currently no evidence of community transmission in New Caledonia. · There are currently around 500 people in quarantine, half of them French, in the lead up to the territory's independence referendum which will occur on 4 October. <p>State of emergency – National and local Governments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · New Caledonia has shortened the mandatory isolation period for arriving travellers from 3 to 2 weeks (22/06/2020). Currently, 500 people are in government-managed quarantine. · Mandatory lockdown 24/3/2020, restrictions easing as of 20/04/2020.

- Rallies and riots at Noumea airport, including in late April, in relation to deferral of French flight rotating military personnel.

Travel and transport:

- New Caledonia has extended its travel restrictions until July 2021 (16/11/2020)
- While fishing vessels and cruise ships remain banned from entering New Caledonian waters, French-registered yachts may enter, provided they have advised authorities and isolate for two-weeks (28/07/2020).
- France has decreed a ban on air travel to and from its overseas territories in order to fight the COVID-19 pandemic (13/07/2020).
- Aircalin have scheduled a return flight to Wallis and Futuna to pick-up travellers bound for France and needing medical support in New Caledonia. The passengers will mark the first incoming visitors to New Caledonia who are not required to quarantine.
- 04/05/2020 domestic flights have resumed.
- 62 French military personnel arrived, bypassing customs, immigration and health checks in the 24 hours to Monday 18/05/2020. This is despite the policy requiring all arrivals to spend 14 day quarantine in government managed hotels prior to a week in self-isolation.

Political economy:

- New Caledonia's COVID-19 response management is set to be tested in the French Constitutional Court. Pro-independence parties have challenged decisions taken by the French High Commission, arguing they violate the Noumea Accord, which had transferred healthcare to local government (06/10/2020)
- New Caledonia has rejected independence from France in the second of three independence referendums, with 53 percent of the electorate opting for the status quo. Turnout was 85 percent, higher than 81 percent recorded 2 years ago at the most recent vote. There were, however, several reports of voter intimidation.
- French High Commissioner has said that all arrivals to New Caledonia will be subject to a compulsory 2 week, government run quarantine. 300 French officials and international observers are expected in New Caledonia for the 4 October independence referendum.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · France’s newly appointed overseas Minister Lecornu says independence referendum for New Caledonia in October will occur as planned (11/08/2020) · USD 66 million has been provided to businesses in New Caledonia during the COVID-19 outbreak. · Pro-Independence party president Daniel Goa has said that France has failed to respect the Noumea Accord, and asked the French High Commissioner to leave the country. French PM has stated he is prepared to discuss altering the health emergency law to take into account New Caledonia’s situation (25/05/2020). · Rotation of French officials on hold, amidst great community concern. <p>Health and Social Affairs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Five people who arrived in New Caledonia have been placed in special isolation after coming into contact with a Japanese woman who has since tested positive for COVID-19. The arrivals travelled from France to New Caledonia via Japan (11/08/2020). <p>Education:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Schools have reopened in the Northern Province, after a 6 week closure. Schools in Southern Province opened (04/05/2020) <p>Overseas development assistance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · France has guaranteed unemployment benefits for New Caledonia residents left unemployed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. · Two New Caledonia airlines are seeking loans guaranteed by France (25/08/2020)
<p>French Polynesia</p>	<p>Cases:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · 15,618 cases are reported, with 91 deaths confirmed (15/12/2020) · There are 82 people in hospital and 21 in intensive care (01/12/2020) · French Polynesia now ranks fourth in the world for the propagation of the virus. · 20 positive test results have been returned for COVID-19 in a Tahiti prison, with cases detected amongst both staff and prisoners (29/09/2020)

- Officials in Tahiti have warned that 100,000 French Polynesians will likely have COVID-19 by the end of the year (29/09/2020)
- First two deaths recorded on the weekend of 13-14 September.
- Most cases are isolated to Tahiti, however there are cases in Moorea, Hao, Bora Bora and Raiatea.
- More than 420 cases were recorded in the month of August. Several staff members of the French Polynesian Assembly have now tested positive.
- COVID has been reported in Huahine and Bora Bora during the second wave, which had been COVID-19 free in the first wave.
- 51 of 72 members of a French Mobile Police Squad have tested positive for COVID-19 on return to France, with the cases linked to a dinner party in Papeete on 31 July.
- A US traveller tested positive for COVID-19 on a cruise ship.

State of emergency – National and local Governments:

- A nine hour curfew has been reintroduced for Tahiti and Moorea, cultural and sporting events involving the public have been banned (27/10/2020). The curfew has been extended until mid January, although shortened by an hour on Christmas Eve and New Year’s Eve
- The French Polynesian health minister has ruled out a state of emergency or lockdown, despite escalating case numbers (01/09/2020). Social gatherings have been restricted to a 10 people limit until the middle of October (22/09/2020)
- Mandatory lockdown until 29/4/2020. Since 29/4/2020, a periodic easing of conditions including reduced curfew. All restrictions eased on outer islands as of 14/5/2020.
- The Administrative Court has ruled quarantining arrivals in hotels as illegal. Territory wide curfew was lifted after the court ruled it illegal.

Travel and transport:

- three French Polynesians who have been stranded on Rarotonga have flown home after eight months (01/12/2020)
- French tourists have been suspended from travelling to French Polynesia, until further notice (16/11/2020)

- French Polynesia’s Opposition has blamed President Fritch for what it has labelled “disastrous management” of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Air Tahiti Nui has secured a USD 21 million loan from the French Polynesian government (03/11/2020)
- The French Military will repatriate 20 Rapa Nui people stranded in Tahiti since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic (13/10/2020)
- A cruise from Tahiti to the Marquesas Islands has been aborted after seven crew members tested positive for COVID-19. Local passengers have been allowed to return home, while foreigners are being repatriated (29/09/2020).
- More than 100 employees of Air Tahiti Nui have accepted voluntary redundancy packages, as the airline grapples with the turndown in tourism (15/09/2020)
- The US is now discouraging travel to Tahiti (25/08/2020). More than 7,500 tourists arrived in Tahiti from mid-July to mid-August, with 90 percent of travellers coming from the US or France.
- 600 people were refused boarding in Paris and Los Angeles in the past month for failing to meet the requirements to enter Tahiti (25/08/2020)
- In light of a “second wave” in early August, health authorities are now recommending that visitors to French Polynesia spend six days in Tahiti or Moorea before travelling on to other islands (08/08/2020). Five of the seven new cases to August 8 were international arrivals, while a member of Air Tahiti Nui also tested positive.
- More than 4100 people arrived in French Polynesia in the first two weeks since quarantine requirements were lifted. 71 percent of arrivals were tourists, with 24 percent coming from the US, with most arrivals travelling to Moorea, Bora Bora, Rangiroa and Fakarava.
- A cruise ship passenger in French Polynesia has tested positive for COVID-19 forcing all travellers on board the MS Paul Gauguin to isolate in their cabins (04/08/2020). All close contacts to the case have tested negative. Media has reported that the infected traveller is foreign.
- Commercial flights between San Francisco and Tahiti resumed with United Airlines scheduling flights three times per week to Papeete (04/08/2020)
- An individual is being held in isolation on suspicion of using falsified health documents to enter (20/07/2020).
- Cruise ship tourism recommenced after a four-month hiatus (20/07/2020).

- An online registration system has been launched, replacing mandatory quarantine, as preparations continue for international travel from Paris and Los Angeles. The online registration system will include the traveller's itinerary and travel insurance (14/07/2020). Around 7,000 visitors are expected to arrive in August.
- Tourists arriving in French Polynesia will be given a kit to test themselves for COVID-19 as the territory becomes the first destination open for travel (11/07/2020)
- France has decreed a ban on air travel to and from its overseas territories in order to fight the COVID-19 pandemic (13/07/2020).
- International travel from French Polynesia began on 4 July. Quarantine requirements abolished, with arrivals instead requested to produce a certificate stating they have been tested 72 hours prior to departure and were COVID-19 free.
- Repatriation and freight flights run by Air Tahiti Nui and Air France have now concluded, with pre and post flight COVID-19 testing. 9 flights have now arrived in Tahiti (06/07/2020). The 9 flights repatriated a total of 2500 people.
- French Polynesia's domestic airline announced in June that that it would drop more than half of its destinations from its network due to the COVID-19 pandemic (20/06/2020), however, on July 2, the plan was rescinded, with an agreement reached allowing for services to all 46 destinations to resume on 7 July (02/07/2020).
- Paris to French Polynesia flights reported to resume from 15/7/2020 for travellers from Europe, USA and New Caledonia. Pre and post flight COVID-19 testing is mandatory.
- French Polynesian President has advised China's consul that international travel to French Polynesia would soon resume, and that direct flights to China were a possibility.
- 22/5/2020, twenty-nine COVID-19 cases reported on an Ecuadorian vessel off Tahiti.

Political economy:

- The French Polynesian opposition has called for rapid testing of the entire population of French Polynesia (13/11/2020)
- French Polynesian unionist Patrick Galenon has called for a lockdown like in France to stem the spread of COVID-19, as cases near 10,000 (10/11/2020)

- President Fritch has defended reopening borders in July, saying that the country was 'COVID-19 prepared' from late May. The President made the announcement in the Assembly, despite the virus having infected more than 7,000 people, despite being eliminated following the first wave in March (03/11/2020). Fritch said it would have been irresponsible to keep borders closed and let businesses die.
- President Fritch has tested positive for COVID-19. He returned the positive test result on his return from France, where he met with the French PM and President Macron (13/10/2020)
- Whilst in Paris for the first time since the pandemic began, the French PM has assured French Polynesia of France's financial support. France has so far contributed USD 14 million toward healthcare, but President Fritch says more investment in hospitals and cancer treatment is required (06/10/2020)
- A French Polynesian court has ruled against a challenge to the order to wear masks. Lawyer Thibaud Millet, who represented 47 individuals sought to quash the mask decree, arguing it was imprecise and restrictive.
- 150 people rallied on 14 September against newly-introduced obligations to wear a mask. The new rules make it mandatory to wear a mask in enclosed public spaces, on public transport, and for students aged 11 and older (15/09/2020).
- Teachers unions in French Polynesia have threatened to strike as the government pushes ahead with reopening public schools. Teachers are demanding tighter measures be adopted to deal with the pandemic. Five French Polynesian unions threatened to strike in the first week of September unless COVID-19 measures were tightened in the Territory, however they held off the strike. They have demanded the reintroduction of a 14-day quarantine for arriving travellers, and the wider availability of masks, saying that the health and safety of their workers cannot be assured.
- In light of the second wave, both the French Polynesian government and the French High Commission have ruled out a return to quarantine and isolation measures (18/08/2020)
- The French Polynesian government has signed a USD 285 million loan from France, due to the COVID-19 pandemic (11/08/2020)
- The French Polynesian Assembly has approved an updated budget, which takes into account a revenue shortfall of about USD 150 million (26/07/2020). A total of USD 125 million has been flagged for wage support to offset the shock to the economy associated with reduced international tourism (28/07/2020)
- Calls from the Opposition to make masks free in Tahiti have been rejected by the Health Minister (28/07/2020)

- French Polynesian President Fritch plans to travel to Paris to secure loans of up to USD 525 million to deal with the COVID-19 crisis, stating that USD 375 million would be sought for running the territory, while USD 150 million as needed for social security. This comes as employees in the tourism sector missed a reported USD 6 million in wages over the past month (20/06/2020). In total, more than 16,000 tourism employees will receive government assistance until December.
- French Polynesia's largest church, Maohi Protestant Church, has asked Paris to suspend the rotation of officials from France for a year to reduce the risk of COVID-19 being imported. France wants to rotate 1,500 public servants over the coming month, who would be subject to isolation on arrival (4/6/2020).
- French Polynesia is estimated to have lost USD 1.2 billion as well as 25,000 jobs due to COVID-19.

Health policy and social affairs:

- France is sending 12 nurses to French Polynesia, to assist in the COVID-19 response. This is in addition to an initial round of 12 French nurses already sent, and the early employment of 49 medical students (24/11/2020)
- $\frac{2}{3}$ of ICU beds are currently in use (03/11/2020). The French military is readying 10 ICUs as well as additional staff for French Polynesia
- Due to COVID-19, Tahiti's homeless community have been accommodated in temporary facilities including schools and sports halls. It has been reported that only 80 of 205 people have accepted the offer of continued shelter.

Education:· Strike action has been scheduled for schools in French Polynesia 10/11/2020 over the lack of response from authorities to the COVID-19 pandemic (10/11/2020)

- Health Minister has ordered the closure of a high school in Tahiti due to a COVID-19 outbreak. Diademe High School will be closed from 22 October until the All Saints holidays (27/10/2020)
- The education ministry has said that a boarding school in Taone will remain despite more than 20 of its students testing positive for COVID-19 (20/10/2020).
- Around 1:6 students are absent from school (22/09/2020)
- Schools to gradually reopen from 18/5/2020.
- 7 schools in Tahiti have closed due to the second wave (25/08/2020), they opened in the second week of September, leading to teachers threatening strikes.

<p>Papua Province and West Papua Province <i>(Indonesia)</i></p>	<p>Cases:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · 12,472 cases, 142 deaths in Papua Province · 5,610 cases in West Papua Province and 94 deaths <p>State of emergency – National and local Governments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Many cases have been confirmed in the cities of Jayapura and Merauke, both lie close to the PNG border. <p>Political Economy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · The UN has expressed concern about human rights violations and escalating violence in West Papua, calling on Indonesia to commence an inclusive dialogue (08/12/2020) · Students in Jayapura demonstrating against the Indonesian government’s planned new Special Autonomy law were pursued by authorities, accompanied by the sound of gunfire. At least one student has been taken to hospital, with a police spokesperson saying that during the COVID-19 pandemic, public gatherings are not allowed (03/11/2020) · There have been mass arrests in West Papua, across the Nabire regency, following protests against an extension of the Special Autonomy Laws. Demonstrators from the United Liberation Front called for a referendum on independence, however Indonesian authorities dispersed and arrested them, citing COVID-19 restrictions (29/09/2020) · There are reports that Indonesian authorities are using COVID-19 as a means to clamp down on individual freedoms in West Papua. Two West Papuans have been reportedly shot dead by Indonesian military as a result of enforcing COVID-19 restrictions (21/07/2020) · A protest demanding an easing of COVID-19 lockdown restrictions was held at the Grasberg gold and copper mine on 28 August. Workers have not been able to leave the mine, due to the cancellation of a bus service to the nearby town by mine operator Freeport Indonesia. <p>Education:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Students, who were protesting at the Cenderawasih University in Jayapura against the extension of special autonomy status in the Papuan provinces have been broken up by dozens of armed police. Reports indicate that hundreds of demonstrators have been arrested in the past week across Nabire regency, with the Indonesian
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	<p>government saying that dispersing protests was necessary to curb the spread of COVID-19 in Indonesia (29/09/2020).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 300 West Papuans under the age of 19 have now been confirmed to have COVID-19. In response, the education minister has responded to rule out a link between the virus spreading in the Province’s schools (18/08/2020) <p>Travel and transport:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 750km long land border between PNG and Papua Province is the Pacific region’s only land border. While substantial forces have been sent to patrol the border, border crossings continue to occur, raising concerns for community transmission of COVID-19 not only into PNG, but further into Melanesia. <p>Health policy and social affairs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The shooting of a West Papuan while fishing (20/4/2020), has led to local protests (reported 11/06/20). Increasing numbers of West Papuan’s are fishing and tending to crops to supplement food stocks during the COVID-19 pandemic. 73 ventilators reported across 45 hospitals.
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<p>Australia</p>	<p>Due to the large number of cases in Australia and New Zealand, information in this matrix is limited to discussing each country’s assistance to the region.</p> <p>https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert/coronavirus</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A travel bubble between Australia and New Zealand has been granted in-principle approval by New Zealand’s cabinet for the first quarter of 2021 (15/12/2020). It follows NZ’s announcement of a quarantine-free bubble between NZ and the Cook Islands. Australia and the Pacific Community (SPC) have renewed their longstanding partnership, reaffirming their commitment to supporting the sustainable development of the Pacific. Australia will provide A\$42.5 million in core funding to the SPC over the next 3 years to support the renewed 10-year
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	<p>-covid-19-current-situation-and-case-numbers</p>	<p>strategic partnership (2014-2023) between Australia and SPC. Minister Payne welcomed the renewed partnership and said Australia is proud to support the organisation, whose work has never been more important than in the COVID-19 era, including for women and girls.“The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on women and girls across the world, including in the Pacific. I look forward to working with SPC to ensure Pacific women and girls contribute to our region’s recovery and help our people and economies to emerge stronger.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Research published by the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) shows that the COVID-19 pandemic is exacerbating existing threats to food security and has long-term implications for the Asia Pacific region (16/11/2020). · Australian PM Scott Morrison has deferred a planned trip to PNG in the wake of the leadership challenge emerging against PM Marape (16/11/2020) · Australia’s chief of the Defence Force General Angus Campbell said the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the Pacific’s maritime and border security efforts at a Joint Heads of Pacific Security meeting, which has focussed on border security, maritime security and the humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, in the aftermath of the challenges presented during the COVID-19 pandemic (16/11/2020). The meeting had representation from 24 PICs including New Zealand and Australia. · Australia looks set to sign a defence pact with Japan that is aimed at demonstrating the strength of alliances in the Indo-Pacific region (10/11/2020)
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · The first group of Tongan Seasonal Workers to travel to Australia since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic has arrived in Queensland, and will be quarantined on a farm before they begin work. The 151 individuals follow on from 323 ni-Vanuatu workers currently in the Northern Territory (10/11/2020) · Two new cases have been confirmed among a cargo ship anchored off the Sunshine Coast which regularly sails between Australia, PNG and the Solomon Islands (27/10/2020) · Ministers Payne and Hawke have detailed plans to work in partnership with the Fiji Government through the Nadi Flood Alleviation Project to reduce the effects of flooding on the Nadi flood plain. Noting Nadi's economic significance to Fiji as a travel gateway infrastructure development has been earmarked as playing an important role in the region's economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic (27/10/2020) · Ministers Payne and Hawke have detailed country plans for 27 nations in the Asia-Pacific as part of the Partnerships for Recovery program, which seeks to support livelihoods through a whole-of-government framework to drive Australia's response (27/10/2020) · The announcement by PM Morrison of an English language requirement for partner visa applications to Australia has been described as cruel, leaving the many Pacific islanders whose spouses are in Australia - in limbo (20/10/2020) · Minister Hawke has said that trade and prosperity will thrive when PACER Plus comes into force in 60 days, as the Cook Islands becomes the eighth state to ratify the agreement. The Minister has said that the agreement will
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		<p>support Pacific partners as they work to recover from the economic impact of COVID-19. PACER Plus will be accompanied by AUD 19 million to support Pacific partners implement the agreement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Australia’s aid funding for the Pacific has increased in the country’s 2020-21 Budget, with new funding for the region’s COVID-19 response. Australia’s Pacific aid commitment has increased to AUD 1.66 billion, with PNG receiving AUD 491 million - the largest recipient, although a AUD 20 million reduction from the previous year. A separate, two-year AUD 305 million COVID-19 response package has been outlined, with Foreign Minister Payne saying it will seek to address the economic and social costs of the pandemic. · Save the Children have put forward a submission to the Australian parliamentary committee on Defence, Foreign Affairs and Trade, urging Australia to help establish a social safety net for families left without income, either through local jobs or remittances. According to Mat Tinkler, Save the Children Australia Deputy CEO poverty rates will rise to 30 percent in PNG, 30 percent in Timor-Leste, 27 percent in the Solomon Islands and 17 percent in Vanuatu, urging the Australian government to partner with Pacific governments and international donors to develop a “Pacific jobkeeper” - a child-focussed social safety net (22/09/2020) · With the trial Seasonal Worker Program between Vanuatu and the Northern Territory underway, Australia’s National Cabinet has agreed to resume the Seasonal Worker Program and the Pacific Labour Scheme for workers from across the Pacific and Timor-Leste. Discussions remain ongoing between Pacific countries and Australian states with relation to quarantine and
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		<p>isolation processes (25/08/2020). Farmers will cover the cost of the airfare from Vanuatu, and part of the quarantine fee, with the NT government making the balance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Ministers Hawke and Sukkar attended August’s FEMM meeting, with the Ministers articulating a commitment to the Pacific, including supporting pathways for resilience, long-term economic growth, and assistance for continued supply chains. · 5 additional ventilators have been donated to the Solomon Islands, increasing the country’s total from 2 to 7. The ventilators were provided by Australia and the WHO with support from the UNDP global procurement program (25/08/2020) · PM Morrison has promised to distribute a COVID-19 vaccine to the Pacific, if Australia develops a supply of working drugs (25/08/2020) · Australia has sent an AUSMAT to PNG, including medical specialists and crisis response staff with the goals of improving laboratories, case management, infection control, triage and emergency management, as well as public health assistance. As of 18/08/2020 the Australian team are assisting with local pandemic management plans. Australia sent a second team to support. As of August, Australia has provided 20,000 sample collection kits, 15,000 rapid serology tests, four Polymerase Chain Reaction testing machines, 2 million pieces of PPE, 3,800 GeneXpert cartridges for quick testing and 3000 tests have been conducted in Australia (04/08/2020). · Australia’s Human rights Law Centre has said that the Australian Government must ensure the safety of refugees it is detaining from COVID-19. There are 175 people in PNG and 185 in Nauru detained under
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		<p>Australia’s offshore detention scheme, cautioning that an outbreak could overwhelm the health system in either location.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · DevPolicy (ANU) has reported that many Australians support a Pacific travel bubble (28/07/2020) · PNG Governor General has spoken in support of the special relationship between Australia and PNG (28/07/2020) · Australia has delivered 25,000 pieces of PPE to the Solomon Islands (14/07/2020) · Australia has provided a further USD 4.5 million to Fiji to assist with COVID-19 (30/06/2020). In all, in the month to June 29, Australia has provided USD 84 million in relief assistance to Fiji. · Australia convened, along with then Samoan Deputy PM the Hon Fiame Naomi Mata’afa, a region-wide meeting of Pacific Women Leaders to discuss the impact of COVID-19 on women’s health, economic security and personal safety. · Australia has supported the GAVI Alliance, pledging AUD 300 million to provide access to vaccines for countries in the Indo-Pacific. The investment will see access for Pacific countries to a COVID-19 vaccine (8/6/2020). · Australia is committing funds to WHO, SPC and WFP under Phase 2 Pacific Health Sector Support Plan and the Pacific Humanitarian Pathway. · Australia has committed AUD 100 million in support to the Pacific COVID-19 response. (20/05/2020). The funding will be split between 10 Pacific countries, with PNG receiving the largest share, of AUD 20.5 million. As part of the package, Pacific workers in Australia have been granted a 12-month visa extension. Other funding will be directed toward the Solomon Islands
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		<p>and Vanuatu (AUD 13 million each, to assist with COVID-19 and cyclone recovery), Fiji, Samoa and Tonga will receive AUD 10.5 million, Timor-Leste will receive AUD 10 million, Nauru and Kiribati AUD 4.5 million and AUD 3 million for Tuvalu.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · (11/05/2020) FM Payne and Minister Hawke have announced further support to PICs through the arrival of new rapid diagnostic test kits. The first deliveries were sent to Fiji, Kiribati, PNG and Nauru, with further support to 9 additional Pacific countries. · Australia has pledged \$10m in financial support to PNG and Bougainville to prepare for COVID-19 impact as well as AUD 20.5m in support for PPE and increased testing. · Australia and NZ have provided PGK400,000 in technical assistance and support to distribute information and raise awareness of COVID-19 in Bougainville. · Australia has delivered 10 container health facilities to boost health infrastructure capacity. · Australia delivered USD 2.5 million in humanitarian relief supplies to Vanuatu and USD 3 million for COVID-19 response. · Australia reports that it is reorienting development partnerships to bring forward funding for critical health services and mitigate the economic shock. This includes AUD 22 million in COVID-19 aid reallocated in PNG’s existing aid balance. · Australia is providing autoclave and waste disposal machines, including to the Solomon Islands.
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<p>New Zealand</p>	<p>Due to the large number of cases in Australia and New Zealand, information in this matrix is limited to discussing each country’s assistance to the region.</p> <p>https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · A set of new health scholarships to study at the Hamilton-based tertiary institution, Wintec, is set to boost Pasifika representation in the health workforce (15/12/2020) · New Zealand and the Cook Islands have agreed to open a quarantine-free travel bubble by the end of March 2021 (15/12/2020) · NZ COVID Response Minister has said that there is no hope of a travel bubble before Christmas with the Cook Islands (07/12/2020) · NZ has provided a delivery of PPE to Tonga (08/12/2020) · Under the resumption of Regional Seasonal Worker programs, Pacific Island seasonal workers will be paid a living wage in 2021. The NZ government has announced places for 2,000 additional workers in the new year (01/12/2020)

		<p>Three Pasifika MPs have been included in the NZ Government’s ministerial lineup, with special health and education portfolios for Pacific Peoples (03/11/2020)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Safe travel zones could be opened up between NZ and countries with no community transmission, NZ Health Minister has indicated (13/10/2020). The new Cook Islands PM has indicated that he would welcome a travel bubble “within weeks”. · Pacific people will not be punished for being in New Zealand without a valid visa if their immigration status is revealed during COVID-19 testing, the NZ health minister has revealed (25/08/2020). · Airport officials have said they would divide the Auckland and Wellington airports into two zones: one for COVID-free travel, to places including the Cook Islands, and one for infected travel, if a travel bubble were to proceed (04/08/2020) · New Zealand supported a drive-through testing clinic at the Rita Flynn sports centre in Boroko. · Cook Islands and NZ have delayed announcing details of an air-bridge between the two countries (28/07/2020) · NZ Navy Pacific patrols will be scaled back due to COVID-19 risk, with the Navy not boarding suspicious fishing vessels in the Pacific due to the risk of COVID-19 (10/07/2020) · Slowed progress on climate change, surging transnational crime and the need for significant investment to recover from the COVID-19 fallout are among the primary concerns flagged by MFAT for the Pacific region in an altered international environment (26/06/2020). In the Foreign Policy Re-Engagement Strategy Cabinet Paper released in June 2020, MFAT have highlighted the need for NZ to do more to help the Pacific respond to security challenges, and to establish a ‘green recovery’.
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Regional Organisations

<p>PIF</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · PIF leaders have reaffirmed climate change as the single greatest threat to the livelihoods, security and wellbeing of the peoples of the region (15/12/2020). The leaders have endorsed the development of a 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent ahead of next year’s COP26 in the UK. · PIF and MSG have issued a joint statement, highlighting the strength of e-commerce in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic (10/11/2020) · PIF leaders have drafted a statement entitled “Protecting the Health and Wellbeing of the Blue Pacific” to be considered at the UNGA on COVID-19 in December, stating that there is a need to address the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on vulnerable groups in the Pacific islands region, including those with disability, the elderly and women and girls (27/10/2020). · PIF Foreign Ministers have highlighted the need for cooperative multilateral projects to ensure the equitable access to trusted and certified COVID-19 tests, treatments and vaccines. Dame Meg welcomed Australia’s commitment to ensure the Pacific has access to a vaccine. Foreign Ministers have cautioned the perception that the Pacific is the least affected by the pandemic, and that although health has not been impacted to the same extent as in other parts of the world, the economic impact has been substantial (27/10/2020) · China has signed off on its annual contribution to the PIF through China Pacific (PIF) Cooperation Fund 2020. USD 1.08 million has been granted to the Cooperation Fund. The money will support the Pacific Trade and Invest Network Office in Beijing, as well as the operation of the Pacific Humanitarian Pathway on COVID-19. · The COVID-19 response has been brought into the PIF Secretary General election, with Palau President Remengesau saying that, if the Micronesian candidate, Gerald Zackios is not successful, Micronesian states would consider pulling out. Candidate Puna has said that in the face of COVID-19 the need for the right person in the top job is required more than ever. · Ministers Hawke and Sukkar attended August’s FEMM meeting, with the Ministers articulating a commitment to the Pacific, including supporting pathways for resilience, long-term economic growth, and assistance for continued supply chains. · Pacific Islands Forum have released common protocols on the PHP-C, https://www.forumsec.org/2020/08/04/20774/ · The Humanitarian Air Service was launched on 6 August 2020 with a flight from Nadi to Port Moresby delivering 44 cubic metres of essential medical supplies. The flights are part of the PHP-C.
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- Forum Foreign Ministers have called for member states to work together to overcome COVID-19, issuing a joint statement that highlights the Tuvaluan concept of *te fale-pili*, that houses in close proximity have a moral responsibility to care for and protect their neighbours (18/07/2020).
- The Pacific Humanitarian Pathway on COVID-19 (PHP-C) continues to coordinate consignments of medical support to FICs, with medical supplies received in Fiji, French Polynesia, PNG and New Caledonia. Fiji, French Polynesia, and New Caledonia are each receiving 50,000 face masks, 10,000 medical gloves, 2,000 protective suits, 30 forehead thermometers, and 3 ventilators. A repatriation flight for Papua New Guinea citizens in Fiji on Friday 5 June 2020 returned to Papua New Guinea with 225,000 N95 and surgical masks, 45,000 medical gloves, 9,000 protective suits, 135 forehead thermometers, 14 ventilators, and 9,000 face shields donated by the Jack Ma Foundation. The consignments are considerable noting the global shortage of Personal Protective Equipment.(30/06/2020)
- PIF Chair says climate change remains the biggest crisis facing humanity in the long-term, despite the COVID-19 pandemic (5/6/2020).
- PIF Secretary General has stated that the lockdown for COVID-19 has exposed entrenched inequalities (3/6/2020)
- PIF Secretary General Dame Meg Taylor has spoken with the Lowy Institute’s COVIDCast. Dame Meg praised a strong response from FIC governments, but acknowledged the heavy economic impact. She endorsed a travel bubble with Australia and New Zealand; she acknowledged that rising unemployment has prompted a review of traditional welfare systems in FICs.
- The Vanuatu government has agreed to postpone hosting the 51st PIF scheduled for August 2020.
- Secretary General Dame Meg Taylor has outlined on Pacific Beat, 24/04/2020, that, as a lesson from COVID-19, the region needs to better invest in health infrastructure.
- Secretary General Dame Meg Taylor has outlined connectivity between COVID-19 and climate change. Speaking after TC Harold swept through the region, she outlined that the cyclone was a clear example that climate change-induced disasters can exacerbate the pandemic in the Pacific. She outlined that the pursuit to limit temperature increases to no more than 1.5 degrees must continue.
- Forum Foreign Ministers met on 7/04/2020 to discuss a proposed regional response.
- Ministers agreed to establish a Pacific Humanitarian Pathway on COVID-19 (PHP-C), invoking the Biketawa Declaration, collectively labelling the COVID-19 pandemic as a major crisis to the Blue Pacific, its peoples,

	<p>wellbeing and communities. Invoking the Biketawa Declaration will “assist in enabling the provision of medical and humanitarian assistance from regional, international and development partners in a timely, safe, effective and equitable manner,” according to the PIF’s media release following the summit.</p>
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<p>SPC</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Australia and the Pacific Community (SPC) have renewed their longstanding partnership, reaffirming their commitment to supporting the sustainable development of the Pacific. Australia will provide A\$42.5 million in core funding to the SPC over the next 3 years to support the renewed 10-year strategic partnership (2014-2023) between Australia and SPC. Minister Payne welcomed the renewed partnership and said Australia is proud to support the organisation, whose work has never been more important than in the COVID-19 era, including for women and girls. “The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on women and girls across the world, including in the Pacific. I look forward to working with SPC to ensure Pacific women and girls contribute to our region’s recovery and help our people and economies to emerge stronger.” · Tuna tagging is more important than ever during the COVID-19 pandemic, according to SPC. Dr Simon Nicol, SPC Principal Fisheries Scientist has said that with the shutdown of global tourism, income derived from tuna is even more critical than usual for Pacific economies (06/10/2020) · SPC has provided Fiji’s Ministry of Health and Medical Services with 20,000 hand washing posters (28/07/2020) · SPC reports (26 June 2020) COVID-19 is compounding the Pacific’s NCD crisis. · SPC has received requests from 8 island nations to boost food security due to COVID-19 through its ‘Seeds for Life’ programme (29/5/2020). · Fiji and FSM have requested repatriation guidance, 10/5/2020. · SPC Director of Public Health has outlined concern at funding cuts to the WHO. He has also described the Pacific as the “best place to be and the worst place to be”, benefited by its remoteness, a natural advantage aided by the quick responses of governments to close borders. The region’s strength is hindered by the fact that health systems could not deal with an outbreak, if that eventuated. SPC have outlined that countries could open up, to a limited degree, when new arrivals can be isolated from the general population, buffeted by a quarantine period of up to 4 weeks. · SPC is coordinating information between WHO and Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs), risk communication, humanitarian response, and collating regional information and statistics. SPC has authored extensive information and fact sheets to be distributed to businesses and homes.
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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">· SPC convened a webinar to bring together Pacific Health Workers as a joint initiative with the WHO, titled 'Oxygen Therapy with Limited Response to COVID-19' and was attended by health workers from Samoa, Tonga, Vanuatu, Fiji, Palau, Cook Islands, Solomon Islands and Tuvalu.· SPC additionally presented an interview with Sylvie Goyet director Climate Change division of SPC, and a website outlining steps to reduce violence against women during the COVID-19 lockdown period.· SPC Identifies key risks for Pacific countries and territories:<ul style="list-style-type: none">· In most of the PICTs, access to quality health services is limited, due to a lack of infrastructure, equipment, and qualified personnel. In the current situation, this can pose a problem of access to care if the number of infected people increases.· Most PICTs do not have the needed laboratory equipment to analyse the tests on site, which creates difficulties in identifying cases. The test samples have to be sent to other countries for analysis.· PICTs are frequented by tourists. This represents a risk due to the movement of people to and from PICTs (although restrictive measures have been put in place); and also a risk for the local economies: in Palau, Vanuatu and Fiji for instance, the tourism industry represents around 40% of the GDP. |
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<p>WHO</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · WHO says critical mental health services have been disrupted during the COVID pandemic, despite an increase in demand for assistance due to bereavement, isolation, loss of income and fear (20/10/2020) · Regional Health Ministers have met for the 71st Regional Health Committee Meeting to discuss COVID-19, immunisation and other health topics. The WHO regional emergency director has recommended that COVID-19 free states retain their health status - implying an approval of border closures. · WHO Regional Director Takeshi Kasai has advised PICs to work hard to maintain their health status, and address high incidence of NCDs in the region, as people with these comorbidities have a high-risk of contracting the virus (13/10/2020) · WHO is fast tracking 40,000 tests to PNG, health officials have made it mandatory for hospitals to test patients with respiratory symptoms and high temperatures. Weekly testing quotas will be set for each province (06/10/2020) · The WHO Has been working with FSM to prepare for COVID-19, with a focus on empowering local communities. Chiefs have come together to discuss protecting their communities, including hurdles due to a lack of running water, difficulties of protecting family members with mental health illnesses, and those who refuse advice on physical distancing (22/09/2020) · Countries must do more on the ground to halt the spread of COVID-19 within their borders, as travel bans cannot be indefinite, according to the WHO. WHO Emergencies programme director Mike Ryan has said: “Economies have to open up, people have to work, trade has to resume,” he said. “...Continuing to keep international borders sealed is not necessarily a sustainable strategy for the world’s economy, for the world’s poor, or for anybody else.” · Completion of the Phase II Pacific Health Sector Support Plan (purchase of PPE, medical equipment and devices, and medical consumables), with PICS and Pacific territories has reached finalisation (mid June 2020). · WHO and the larger consortia have received all PIC and territory requests for supplies within the Task Force of the Global COVID-19 Supply Chain System (CSCS) allocations (medical equipment, and 17,250 GeneXpert cartridges). · WHO hosted the third Pacific Technical Forum for Heads of Health, Directors of Public Health and partners (11/06/2020). 50 nations attended including French Polynesia, representatives from the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Cook Islands, Palau, Pitcairn Islands, Republic of the Marshall Islands and Tonga.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · WHO continues to coordinate the Joint Incident Management Team (JIMT, estab. 27/01/2020), which closely liaises with Pacific Ministries of Health. Active members include ADB, DFAT, IFRC, IOM, MFAT, OCHA, PIFS, PIHOA, SPC, PIHOA, UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA, UNOCHA, UNRCO, UNWOMEN, USAID, US CDC. US Embassy Suva, WB, and WFP. · WHO has identified expanded testing, planning for relaxation or lifting of lockdown, monitoring consumption of PPE and procurement pipelines, case management protocols for cases, risk communication and continuity of healthcare service delivery as key priority needs for PICs in COVID-19 (6/6/2020). Key challenges include procuring essential supplies, overstretched health systems, dispersed and isolated communities, and limited transport options. · WHO has provided substantial flows to the Solomon Islands (detailed in SI section) (26/05/2020) · WHO has provided medical supplies in collaboration with the PIF relief effort - with assistance arriving in Nadi, Fiji and shared to Samoa, Vanuatu and Tonga. · The second, third and fourth batches of testing cartridges from GeneXpert are being delivered. · Interagency procurement plans under Phase 2 COVID-19 Health Sector Support Plan have been consolidated. · WHO has launched the WHO Academy and WHO Info mobile application to provide guidance and tools, as well as virtual workshops.
<p>SPTO</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · SPTO head Chris Cocker has accepted a donation of USD 20,000 from the US to boost economic resilience in the tourism sector (29/09/2020). With 2.9 million arrivals last year, SPTO reports that tourism generated USD 4 billion in receipts in 2019, accounting for 7.8 percent of regional GDP. · SPTO reports UNWTO predictions that domestic tourism initiatives should be prioritised as a way to boost tourism industries. It has reported UNWTO statistics that international tourist travel has plunged 93 percent in June when compared to 2019. · SPTO reports that Vanuatu air travel is down 76 percent, year on year. While domestic flying recommenced relatively quickly capacity has been constrained by Air Vanuatu’s available fleet. Year-on-year international movements in the August quarter were down 97 percent. · SPTO CEO has said that hopes of a travel bubble this year have been written off. This comes despite the Cook Islands continuing to push for a travel bubble with NZ (10/07/2020).

- SPTO has authored an article stating that sustainable tourism and fisheries will be key to growth in the industry, post COVID-19 in the Pacific (10/07/2020)
<https://corporate.southpacificislands.travel/sustainable-tourism-and-fisheries-key-to-growth-in-post-covid-pacific/>
- 13/5/2020 SPTO launched COVID-19 Recovery Strategy for members. It provides an overview of the global situation, expected future trends and addresses the current and expected challenges of the Pacific private sector.
- Advice included: the impact of travel restrictions in the Pacific is significant. Tourism accounts for a large portion of GDP in most PICs, including 87% in the Cook Islands. It was viewed that there would be direct unemployment and in related sectors. While sector resilience varies from country to country, all are vulnerable. Immediate needs were identified as wage support to minimise skill losses, financial microgrants, a review of taxes, training programs, and scenario development to better inform the response.
- <https://corporate.southpacificislands.travel/category/covid-19-update/>
- SPTO has warned that International Tourist numbers could fall 60 – 80% in 2020.
- SPTO has released Pacific Tourism COVID-19 Impact report 7/5/2020.
<https://corporate.southpacificislands.travel/spto-releases-pacific-tourism-impact-report/>

<p>World Bank</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · The World Bank estimated that the East Asia and Pacific regional growth could slow down to 0.05% compared to 5.9 % in 2019. These would be the worst figures since 1967. But figures could bounce back by late 2021. Growth has been impacted by COVID-19 driven lockdowns, financial and trade restrictions. · Predicting a sharp fall as resource prices collapse and tourism numbers plummet to zero, with Samoa, Fiji and Cook Islands to be hit particularly hard. · In resource-dependent economies in PNG, plummeting oil and gas prices are likely to see a collapse of government revenue, with the country tipping into recession. · World Bank has provided USD 20 million for PNG’s COVID-19 response. · World Bank has provided a USD 2.5 million emergency project for RMI to support COVID-19 measures. · World Bank has pledged support for new projects in agriculture, health and youth employment in PNG. · World Bank has pledged to support Samoa USD 8.5million. On top of USD 5.1 million initially announced to support the COVID response, an additional USD 3.4 billion was announced through a dedicated emergency health project, focussed on laboratory equipment, testing, PPE, X-Rays and other medical supplies. · Support has also been pledged for Kiribati, Palau and FSM.
<p>EU</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · EU has provided AUD 35.7 million to support the health response in the Pacific and Timor-Leste through the “Health Support in response to COVID19 in the Pacific” programme (01/12/2020) · EU has provided USD 23.4 million to Fiji. This comes after Fiji shut its embassy in Brussels (11/08/2020) · EU has redirected USD 130 million to respond to COVID-19 in the Pacific. · A partnership has been announced between Kiribati, EU and UNICEF to improve sanitation. The EU will provide USD 7 million to install and repair infrastructure and promote hygiene. Additional assistance will be provided to improve water quality, waste and sanitation on outer-lying islands. · 6/6/2020 EU has allocated USD 20 million budget support to help the Fijian government tackle COVID-19 and climate change.

<p>Asian Development Bank</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · UN and ADB are convening a virtual roundtable with representatives from the Solomon Islands, Kiribati, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and Fiji to discuss the safe reopening of entry points and border protocols. Similar discussions are slated for the Cook Islands, Niue, Samoa and Tokelau. · ADB has released its 2020 Pacific Economic Monitor (PEM), which shows a region-wide economic contraction, expected to be of 4.3 percent. It has predicted that Palau, Cook Islands and Fiji will be worst hit, with GDP in Fiji predicted to shrink by around 15 percent. Growth of 1.6 percent is predicted in 2021, but this relies on the resumption of international travel. · ADB has approved a USD 20 million loan to help Palau prepare for the COVID-19 pandemic and economic response (04/08/2020) · ADB has loaned USD 200 million to Fiji to boost private sector development (16/07/2020) · ADB has provided USD 7.3 million to UNICEF to provide urgent medical supplies in 13 PICs, including: Cook Islands, FSM, Kiribati, RMI, Nauru, Niue, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. (13/07/2020) · ADB has written that the COVID-19 pandemic is resulting in more household waste and increased dangerous medical waste. In this context, more is needed to be done to manage these challenges. · ADB has pledged USD 20 million for the Solomon Islands and USD 12.2 million for Tonga. (30/06/2020) · ADB announced USD 27million (week of 20/04/2020) including USD 15 million to Palau, USD6 million to RMI and USD3 million to SI. · Committed a USD 6 million grant to Tonga from the Pacific Disaster Resilience Program. Tongan Government has outlined that this would be directed toward healthcare facilities, funding the logistics of border lockdowns, providing relief for the elderly, unemployed, as well as vulnerable businesses in the tourism, retail, agriculture and transport sectors. This comes in addition to a USD 470,000 grant as part of the Asia Pacific Disaster Response Fund to help finance Tonga’s response to COVID-19 pandemic. · USD 2.9 million grant to Samoa to help finance the health sector’s response to the COVID-19 threat. · Funding was pledged on 01/04/2020 to support FSM (USD 470,000), RMI (USD 370,000), Nauru (USD 320,000) and Tuvalu (USD 370,000).
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<p>UN</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · UN has joined with PICP to provide workshops to prepare police for the reopening of borders was organised by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) · UNICEF State of the World’s Children report says that the issue of malnutrition has not received appropriate focus during the COVID-19 pandemic, with the region’s children being irreversibly impacted with health resources directed elsewhere (16/11/2020) · The UN says the introduction of a Temporary Basic Income for the world’s poorest people including those in the Pacific could help slow the surge of COVID-19 in the Pacific. The UNDP has said that the introduction of a Temporary Basic Income for the 2.7 billion people across the world living at or below the poverty line in 132 developing countries would cost USD 200 billion per month (10/11/2020). UNDP Chief Economist has said that Vanuatu, the Solomon Islands, PNG, FSM and Kiribati have been surveyed for the scheme. He has said that assessment of the socio-economic impacts of the pandemic have shown that those in the informal sector and those not covered by social protection could not stay at home and receive no income. A 6 month TBI would cost 0.4 percent of GDP. Tuvalu is one of two countries across the globe (the other being Namibia) to adopt the TBI proposal. · UN Coordinator for the Pacific Sanaka Samarashinha has marked the 75th Anniversary of the UN with an event in Suva that the UN would continue to mediate peace and build consensus to save the planet for future generations. He said that multilateralism and global action solutions will be the key to rebuilding from COVID-19 (27/10/2020) · UNICEF have warned that COVID-19 threatens routine child immunisation (22/09/2020). UNICEF have stated that there has been a decline in childhood vaccinations during the pandemic. · UN has commended the Pacific’s swift response to COVID-19, stating that the Pacific has been spared the devastating health impacts of COVID-19 due to their swift preventative measures (22/09/2020). Marking international day of democracy UN coordinator in the Pacific, Sanaka Samarashina said that the scale of the economic, social and political impacts of the national states of emergency and public health alerts is yet to be assessed. Samarashinha said it is crucial that the processes of enforcement adhere to democratic principles, including responsive, transparent and accountable COVID-19 responses. · A UN Report has warned of an increase in poverty rates in Fiji. UN Women have said their assessments predict that as many as 200,000 Fijians could fall below the poverty line, with 140,000 children at risk (25/08/2020)
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International Labour Organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Predicted that thousands of people in tourism-dependent countries of Fiji, Samoa and Tonga could fall into poverty. · ILO Director has met with travel industry workers to discuss ways to assist (1/6/2020).

IFRC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · IFRC have provided PPE to PNG (04/08/2020) · The IFRC Pacific Office in Suva has been providing technical support to 11 national societies COVID-19 emergency preparedness and response plan. · The Health and WASH technical staff facilitated COVID-19 awareness and psychological first aid training. · A package of PPE as its guidance consisting of hand sanitizer, surgical masks and gloves was distributed to 11 National Societies. · Has highlighted that the restriction of movement has hindered delivery of PPE to PICs.
IOM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Supporting public health authorities with the implementation of COVID-19 communication strategies and activities to help prepare and protect individuals, vulnerable groups, families and the public's health during the response to COVID-19. - Assisting migrants to access services and advocating for the inclusion of migrants in on-going preparedness and response plans to avoid stigmatization.
WCPFC	<p>Fisheries observer coverage on all purse-seiners fishing in Pacific waters is suspended until 31/10/2020.</p>
Melanesian Spearhead Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - MSG has met to discuss a potential Melanesian Bubble, 24 June 2020. - Emphasis is being placed on regional-integration in the immediate future, with Acting Director General George Hoa'au saying there is a focus on border control. - A Five Point Sustainability Plan is being developed to ensure members were resilient to the challenges caused by COVID-19. The five priority areas are: health networking and visibility; education, social and family connectivity; economic recovery; sports and recreation; traditional agriculture and food security.

