

Introduction of training of trainers' approach to improve and accelerate access to SARS-CoV-2 testing: A Papua New Guinea Experience

Authors:

Ruape L¹, Kiromat M¹, Kupe C¹, Kaima P², Rioja MR³

¹Clinton Health Access Initiative, Port Moresby Papua New Guinea, ²Covid-19 National Control Centre, Port Moresby Papua New Guinea, ³Clinton Health Access Initiative, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Background/Approach: The first case of COVID-19 was detected in Papua New Guinea (PNG) on the 13th March, 2020. However, there have been issues with poor availability and accessibility to SARS-COV-2 testing in country affecting effective surveillance and interventions for care and prevention. Testing is limited to laboratory-based testing and is only performed at provincial level due to sparse capacity to perform test.

In April 2022, SARS-CoV-2 antigen rapid diagnostic test (AgRDT) was introduced in PNG to increase testing accessibility and coverage. However, access to testing was still limited due to lack of capacity to perform the test accurately at lower-level facilities. We introduced Training of Trainers (TOT) approach to accelerating trainings in four provinces, namely; Central, Milne Bay, Morobe, and Oro. These trainers were trained on locally tailored content and how to facilitate training and provide supervision.

Argument: Controlling COVID-19 requires scale-up of testing services and access to testing improved in decentralized settings. Training and supervision are critical component to ensure quality testing. TOT was utilized to accelerate decentralized trainings without compromising standards and quality of testing.

Outcome/Results: Ten (10) provincial staff were certified as trainers who then conducted trainings in their own respective provinces and certified 167 (99%) out of 169 trained facility staff across the four provinces. This resulted in increased AgRDT testing access and capacity to 108 HFs across all levels. The provincial trainers were also able to provide oversight to ensure facility staff were abiding to the principles/ procedures taught in training maintaining testing standards and quality. At the same time, taking ownership of the testing implementation.

Conclusions/Applications: AgRDT training using TOT approach ensures testing is accessible and enhanced within each province. TOT approach removed reliance on national trainers and promoted provincial ownership. It is recommended to utilize the TOT approach when conducting trainings to other provinces for scale-up.

Disclosure of Interest Statement: Support for this Project was provided through funding from The Foundation for Innovative New Diagnostics, as part of the Accelerating uptake of COVID-19 Ag RDTs in the Indo Pacific Program. The

program was delivered in 2022 as a collaborative effort between Kirby Institute at UNSW Sydney, Australia, the Burnet Institute, the Doherty Institute at the University of Melbourne, the Clinton Health Access Initiative, The Foundation for Innovative New Diagnostics of Geneva, Switzerland and our partners in Indonesia, Cambodia, PNG and Lao PDR. The views expressed by the authors do not necessarily reflect the views of the funding agency.