

THEORY OF CHANGE WORKSHOP

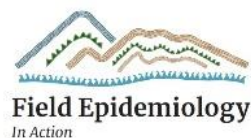
SOLOMON ISLANDS FIELD EPIDEMIOLOGY TRAINING PROGRAM



Sols FETP Theory of Change participants and facilitator, from front row left: Nathan Jama Jr, Ambrose Gali, Cynthia Joshua, Deborah Davo, Freda Pitakaka, Samuel Manu, John Harara, Lorraine Satorara, Alison Ripiapu Sio. Back row: Simpson Qalo, Rolly Viga, Martin Gavira, Barbara Leinga, Rachel Mather (facilitator), Nixon Olofisau, Dr Rex Maukera, Dr Hugo Bugorgo.

SUMMARY REPORT

March 2021



OVERVIEW

Theory of Change is a process which describes how programs bring about specific outcomes through a logical sequence of intermediate outcomes¹. The subsequent product or process describes how and why a program works, and can be used to inform the development, monitoring and evaluation, and implementation of programs. This brief report describes a workshop used to develop a Theory of Change to support planning and delivery of the nascent Solomon Islands Field Epidemiology Training Program (Sols FETP). Housed in the Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MHMS) Sols FETP is an 8-month training program through which participants (fellows) undertake a combination of classroom-based learning and work-based field projects to meet the course competencies.

THEORY OF CHANGE WORKSHOP

A two-day Theory of Change workshop was conducted on March 24-25 2021 in Honiara, Solomon Islands.

Participants

Nineteen participants contributed to the workshop, coming from a range of program areas and provinces of the Solomon Islands. The majority of participants came from the National level (n=11, 58%) and 42% (n=8) were female. Participants came from a range of roles across the health sector, including Training and Surveillance roles at both National and Provincial levels, Provincial Health Directors, and Nursing Directors. Participants represented stakeholders that could be embedded within the Sols FETP Steering Committee, Sols FETP faculty, managers of potential fellows, and potential fellows. The workshop was facilitated by a Field Epidemiology in Action (FEiA) epidemiologist from the University of Newcastle. Additional support was provided remotely by FEiA epidemiologists listening to the workshop through a Zoom connection.

Workshop structure

The Sols FETP Theory of Change workshop commenced with context presentations delivered by the Manager and Surveillance Officer of the Public Health Emergencies and Surveillance Unit (PHESU) of the MHMS. The presentations provided an overview of what Field Epidemiology Training Programs (FETPs) are and how they have been standardised globally; the rationale to establish an FETP in Solomon Islands; and the experiences of a Solomon Islander graduate of the Papua New Guinea FETP. The remainder of the workshop was structured into a series of sessions which started with group work followed by feedback to the plenary. These sessions built on the work of the previous session and asked participants to consider: 1) the challenges that were likely to present when developing and implementing Sols FETP; 2) the long-term vision for Sols FETP; 3) the key outcomes of Sols FETP; 4) the intermediate outcomes (or preconditions) required to achieve the outcomes; 5) the assumptions that needed to hold true in order for the outcomes to be achieved; 6) interventions required to achieve the outcomes; and 7) indicators of success. Finally, as a plenary, the group considered where the ceiling of accountability should be. The ceiling of accountability recognises there are wider impacts from existing within complex systems and is the line beyond which the program is no longer wholly accountable for the outcome.

THEORY OF CHANGE

The resulting Theory of Change map can be found in Appendix 1. A brief description of the ToC and the key discussion points are outlined below.

Long term outcomes and Impact

¹ Breuer, Erica, et al. "Using theory of change to design and evaluate public health interventions: a systematic review." *Implementation Science* 11.1 (2015): 1-17.

In brief, the participants articulated the long-term outcome for Sols FETP as *a cadre of competent field epidemiologists will be available and dispersed across Solomon Islands*. This overall outcome incorporated the participants' view that field epidemiology capacity needs to be distributed across the country's 9 Provinces and Capital Territory. An additional outcome and an impact statement were included beyond the ceiling of accountability. These outline the impact the program is likely to contribute to. Specifically, the program will likely contribute to high quality and appropriately used public health surveillance systems. In turn, evidence will be generated to support informed public health decisions. As field epidemiology capacity will be decentralised, evidence will support decisions made from the facility level all the way up to the National level. In fact, capacity at the facility level across the Provinces will support more timely public health interventions, such as for outbreak response, leading to less illness in the community and mitigating the need for long and costly escalation processes to National decision makers.

Intermediate outcomes

Prior to achieving the overall outcome, the Theory of Change includes an intermediate outcome of having *FETP fellows demonstrate core field epidemiology competencies and graduate from the program*. This will be the result of fellows completing the five phases of the FETP and ensuring fellows have met the required course competencies.

The Theory of Change articulates three main pathways that will enable fellows to complete the five FETP phases. Each is supported by the foundational outcome to have a clear governance structure and operational support to implement Sols FETP. Governance will be led by a Steering Committee with a clearly articulated purpose, scope and Terms of Reference (ToR). The Steering Committee will be cornerstone to all three pathways. It will also engage with other committees, such as the National Research Ethics committee, to develop an ethics pathway that is contextually relevant for the program.

The first pathway links directly to appropriate recruitment of fellows to participate in the FETP. Alongside professional suitability, participants described the necessary personal attributes of fellows which should be included in a selection criteria and minimum entry requirement for fellows. These attributes include their commitment to the training and ability to manage time.

The second pathway concerned the technical capacity of the program. It is imperative that Sols FETP faculty and mentors have the competency and commitment to contribute to the program. Competency can be achieved through clear ToR and selection criteria for faculty and mentors, as well as ongoing capacity development through Train-the-Trainer style sessions. The technical capacity of faculty and mentors in turn will ensure that the FETP curriculum is appropriate and contextualised for Solomon Islands, both in terms of cultural relevance and health system requirements, while still aligning to global FETP standards.

The third pathway links to stakeholder engagement and support for Sols FETP. By engaging National and Provincial managers and key stakeholders, including through strategic communication with fellows' workplace, appropriate fellows will both be recruited and supported by their managers and colleagues to complete the program. Workplaces will be engaged to develop operational strategies that support fellows by ensuring they have access to the resources they need to complete the FETP.

Assumptions

The Theory of Change hinges on a set of assumptions that must remain true in order for the theory to uphold and change to occur. These are listed in full on the diagram in Appendix 1. Some of the key assumptions were having a career trajectory for both faculty and graduates of Sols FETP; that fellows are aware of graduate expectations and are able to navigate personal and professional challenges to complete the program, and that the MHMS will own the program and assure its accreditation through the National Training Committee.

NEXT STEPS

The Theory of Change workshop clarified key actions to support the sustainability of Sols FETP, which highlight the key priorities and next steps for the program. These includes:

The role of the Steering Committee

The Theory of Change highlighted the imperative of a Steering Committee to oversee governance and operational support for Sols FETP. PHESU will work within the broader framework of the MHMS and with technical support from the FEiA team to articulate the role of the Steering Committee and recruit appropriate personnel. A Sols FETP Program Coordinator will be recruited to support the Steering Committee and take responsibility for the day-to-day operational management of the program.

Recruiting fellows

The FEiA team will develop a recruitment process to ensure suitable candidates are enrolled in each annual cohort of Sols FETP, to be endorsed by the Steering Committee. Alongside the personal and professional attributes of suitable fellows, such as relevant public health experience and evidence of personal reliability, selection criteria will be responsive to broader public health and MHMS strategies, such as the role delineation policy.

Investment in faculty and mentors

Existing faculty and mentors will work with the Steering Committee to develop a Terms of Reference for their role that highlights faculty responsibilities that reinforce key deliverables. The FEiA team will produce and deliver training materials that support ongoing professional development of faculty and mentors, and particularly address self-identified needs.

Stakeholder engagement

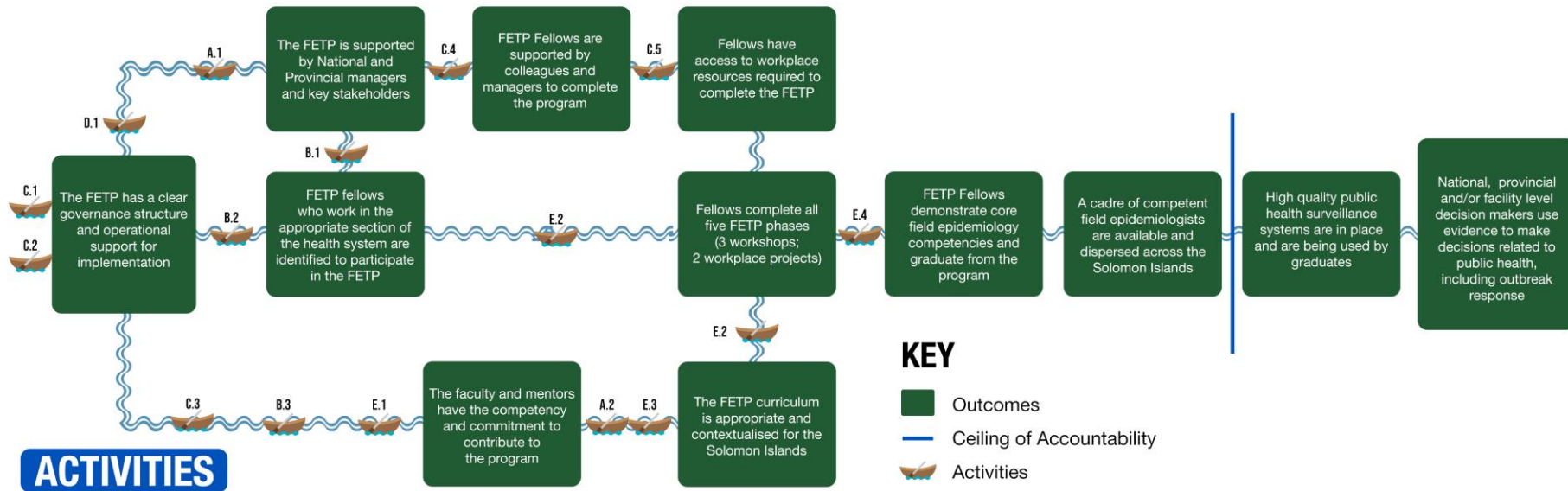
In partnership with the FEiA team, the Sols FETP Steering Committee will develop a process through which the key stakeholders at the National and Provincial levels are engaged with FETP. This includes promoting the program in order to support widespread understanding of its purpose and engaging with workplaces of potential fellows to ensure supportive environments are cultivated through which FETP fellows can thrive.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

The Theory of Change provides a framework which summarises what Sols FETP is seeking to achieve over the next five years. In order to measure change, the indicators that were discussed during the Theory of Change workshop will be further developed and presented in a SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Timebound) format. Indicators will be aligned to the key features of the Theory of Change map in order to measure progress towards them. The Theory of Change map and corresponding indicators will be reviewed annually by the Steering Committee, faculty and FEiA team, with updates made according to insights gained or context changes. Progress towards indicators will be summarised in an annual report.

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THEORY OF CHANGE



KEY

- Outcomes
- Ceiling of Accountability
- Activities

ACTIVITIES

- A. ETHICS**
 - Engage with stakeholders to streamline ethical requirements for the FETP
 - Include theoretical and practical ethics guidance in the FETP curriculum
- B. RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION**
 - Develop a recruitment strategy which aligns to existing policies for workforce development
 - Develop selection criteria and minimum entry criteria for fellows
 - Develop selection criteria and Terms of Reference for mentors/faculty
- C. MANAGEMENT**
 - Decide on the purpose, scope and terms of reference for a steering committee
 - Establish a steering committee
 - Check curriculum is appropriate for the Solomon Islands
 - Strategic engagement with key stakeholders (including FETP fellows' workplaces)
 - Workplaces develop operational strategies to support fellows
- D. SUSTAINABILITY**
 - Embed the budget and funding for the program in the Ministry of Health and Medical Services
- E. DELIVERY & ASSESSMENT OF FIELD EPIDEMIOLOGY TRAINING**
 - Train-the-trainer capacity development for faculty and mentors
 - Deliver training to each FETP cohort
 - Develop assessment criteria for core competencies
 - Assess FETP fellows for core competencies

ASSUMPTIONS

- The FETP is able to deliver the program despite the remoteness of some of the fellows and poor connectivity
- FETP are able to navigate work and personal commitments during the program
- Faculty and FETP fellows are respected within the field of public health and this leads to increased career opportunities
- The National Ministry of Health and Medical Services owns and leads an FETP for the Solomon Islands
- The FETP fellows are aware of the scope and competencies needed to graduate from the program
- The projects of the FETPs fellows are aligned with the scope of their work and are possible within their current role and available resources and data
- Positions exist in the public health system for FETP graduates
- Involvement in Solomon Islands FETP supports access to a broader public health network where different ways of training and different ideas can be shared
- The National Ministry of Health and Medical Services is committed to developing accreditation and a career pathway for FETP graduates