

Lessons learned from the engagement processes on knowledge exchange in Fiji: the Translational Research on Obesity Prevention in Communities (TROPIC) project

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Introduction

- **Obesity is a significant health issue among Pacific populations**
- **This may be related to a number of factors**
 - **transition from subsistence crops to imported foods**
 - **increased sedentary behaviours**
- **Need for collaboration between researchers and policy makers to use research evidence in policy development**

Aims

- **To determine whether a knowledge broker can influence the translation of obesity research into policy and practice**
- **Secondary Aims:**
 - **To develop a knowledge exchange system between researchers and policy makers**
 - **To use a knowledge-broking approach to increase the uptake of evidence**
 - **To develop policies to improve food and physical activity environments**

Method

- **Purposive sampling was used to recruit 6 partner organisations**
- **49 participants from the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Women, Consumer Council of Fiji, and Fiji Council of Social Services**
- **Interviews were conducted to examine participants' and organisations' perceptions on the engagement processes used in TROPIC**

Knowledge Broking Processes

Recruiting – Consult, recruit organisations, focal points, participants and advisors



Mapping policy environments – Examine key national and organizational documents



Analysing - Capacity for Evidence-Informed Policy-Making (EIPM) and organisational support



Building EIPM skills - Developing and delivering of workshops



Facilitating - Mentoring development of Evidence Informed Policy Briefs



Evaluating



Method - Workshops

Workshop One

- Evidence
- What's in it for us

Workshop Two

- Policy & policy cycle
- Selecting policy options

Workshop Three

- Acquiring evidence
- Analysing evidence

Workshop Four

- Adapting Evidence
- Evidence to Action: Writing policy briefs

Embedding EIDM

- Embedding EIDM
- All participating organisations

Develop 1-2 briefs per participant:
reducing support for 14 months

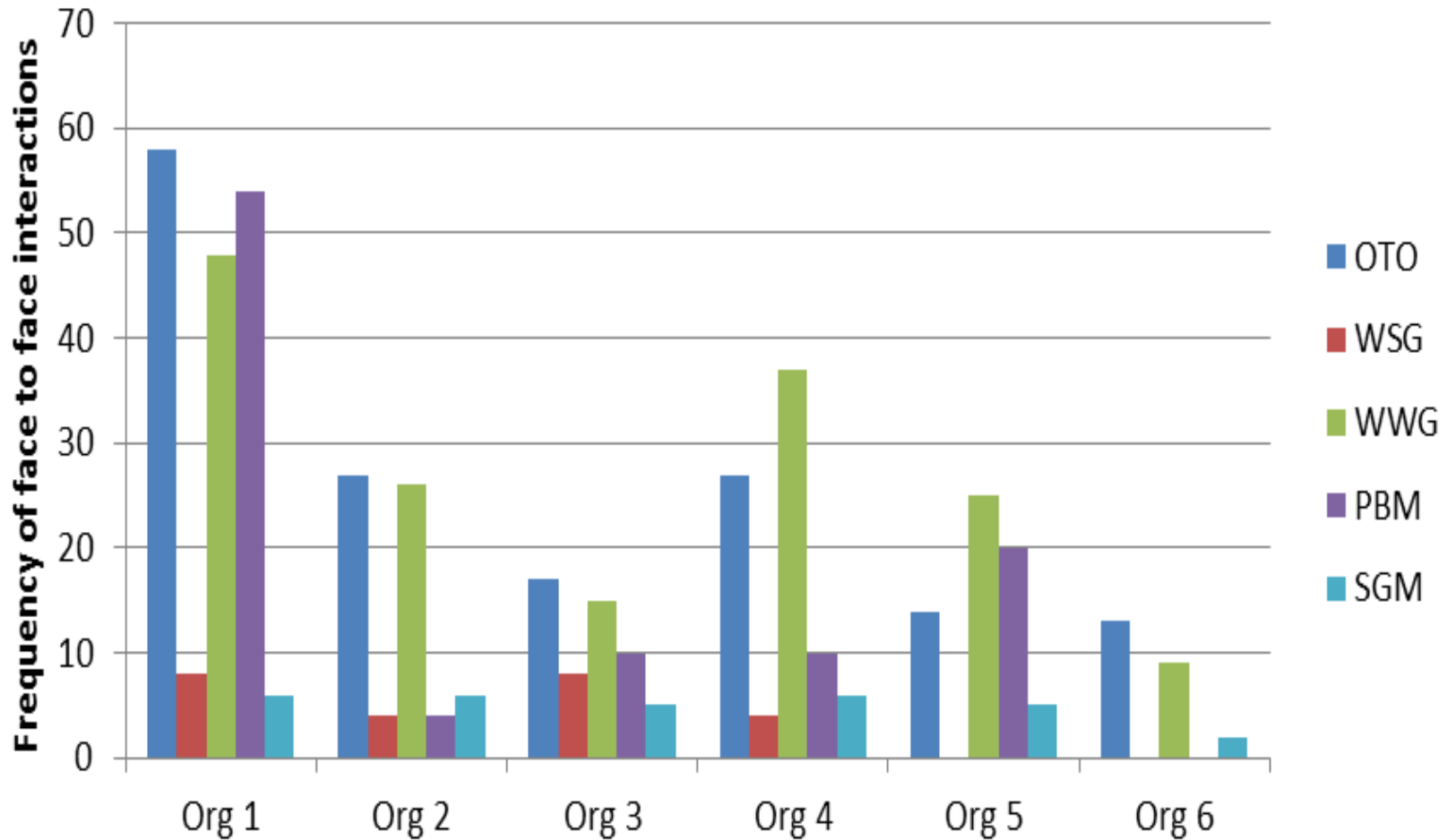
Work with high-level officers

Individual support
acquire; analyse; adapt; act(ion)

Level of Engagement

ORGANISATIONS	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	MANAGEMENT LEVEL			LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT		
		Junior	Middle	Senior	High	Medium	Low
MOH	12	1	4	7	7	1	4
MOE	5	0	1	4	4	0	1
MPI	12	1	10	1	2	1	9
MOW	9	0	4	5	2	5	2
CCOF	7	2	1	4	1	3	3
FCOSS	4	3	0	1	1	0	3
TOTAL	49	7	20	22	17	10	22

Types of engagement



OTO (One to One), **WSG** (Workshop small group), **WWG** (Workshop whole group), **PMB** (Policy brief meeting), **SGM** (Small group meeting).

Results - Policy Briefs MOH

1. **Regulation to control marketing of unhealthy food to children in Fiji**
2. **Ban on the sale of carbonated soft drinks in schools in Fiji**
3. **Impose a 32% duty on palm oil importation in Fiji**
4. **Supportive environments for physical activity policy in Fiji**
5. **Community use of government schools ground after school hours**
6. **Healthy park and public places in Fiji**
7. **Policy on policies**
8. **Water fluoridation policy**
9. **Healthy workplace policy**

Results - Policy Briefs

MOE

1. Physical education policy
2. Health promoting schools policy
3. National nutrition policy for schools
4. School gardening policy

MPI

1. Agriculture marketing authority regulations
2. Healthy workplace policy
3. Policy on policies

MOW

1. Healthy workplace policy
2. A policy on all policies

FCOSS

1. Food security for the ageing and elderly

CCOF

1. A submission on policy to limit or control the marketing of unhealthy foods to children.

Results

- **Increased skills in acquiring, assessing and adapting evidence**
- **Increased skills in presenting evidence-based arguments to high-level officers**
- **Limited resources (time; local evidence; acquiring evidence)**
- **Limited organisational culture (lack of rewards, recognition for EIPM; resistance to change)**

Participant's perception on skills gained

PPI-072 - "the skills that I learned are not only utilized in the workplace, I have written a few other papers apart from the two policy briefs that have helped me through the workshop, I was able to write up a few papers on financial procedures for running a school where I am a committee member, so that skills and knowledge was acquired from this TROPIC workshop and I'm very thankful to that.."

High level officer's perception

- *HLI-003 - "We've agreed on a number of steps for the way forward: will continue with training and awareness using participants as core trainers; liaise with Public Service Commission to try to beef up my policy unit ..., we want to strengthen their capacity by increasing their number; continue to work with the development of the policy using policy brief – crucial to look at an overarching XX policy framework, that will be done from economic planning's perspective..... As part of the way forward we will now use this as part of KPIs for my head of divisions,.....We are also going to other departments and stakeholders to work with them on drafting policies- so when we send policies out they'll know where we're coming from"*

Implications

- **Collaboration between researchers and policy makers and across organisations**
- **Critical mass of evidence-informed policy-makers with increased knowledge and skills to use sound evidence to inform policy**
- **Increased policies to improve food and physical activity environments**

Lessons Learned

- **Follow appropriate steps in approaching and securing mandate from top officials**
- **Need for flexible timetabling of activities**
- **Underestimated time required to negotiate brief topics**
- **High staff turnover limit continuity of briefs**
- **More time used for mentorship**

Conclusion

- **Knowledge-broking approach enabled the use and increase uptake of evidence in policy making**
- **Innovative approach to promoting EIPM for obesity prevention**
- **A useful model to stimulate policy action in other Pacific countries**

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