



Biennial Business Meeting of
the Thematic Working Group on
Health Systems in
Fragile and Conflict-Affected States

Meeting report

Monday 08/10/2018 11:45am-1pm

ACC Room 3A, Arena Convention Centre, Liverpool, UK

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Introduction

The Fragile and Conflict-Affected States (FCAS) Thematic Working Group (TWG) of Health Systems Global (HSG) conducted its business meeting on the first day of the Fifth Global Symposium on Health Systems Research in Liverpool.

The business meeting was attended by 51 colleagues who represented a wide variety of academic institutions, organisations and ministries of health.

Goran Zangana, a member of the steering committee of the FCAS-TWG, started the meeting by welcoming everyone and presenting a single slide that showed that 60% of the world's extreme poor will live in fragile states by 2030. The slide was a good reminder of why we are here and why colleagues should join the FCAS-TWG.

Then the following colleagues were introduced:

Members of the Steering Committee:

Suzanne Fustukian: Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh and ReBUILD consortium

Tim Martineau: Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine and ReBUILD consortium

Egbert Sondorp: Royal Tropical Institute (KIT), Amsterdam

Secretary: Jan Randles, Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine and ReBUILD consortium

Support: Nick Hooton, Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine and ReBUILD consortium

Tim Martineau introduced those members of the advisory committee of the FCAS-TWG who were present during the meeting: André Griekspoor, Lara Ho, Khalifa Emulsharaf and Olga Bornemisza.



Overview of key achievements since Vancouver HSR2016

Tim Martineau provided an overview of the following topics:

Membership:

It was a source of great delight that the total number of members registered on the TWG-FCAS LinkedIn Group has increased from 550 to 816. A Google Group has recently been established as a parallel communication channel, currently with limited membership. The TWG consistently attracts as many non-members as members to its events, notably webinars, helped by very active social media activity and members' own networks.

Furthering TWG objectives:

Participants and members were presented with the following achievements since the last Business Meeting in Vancouver:

1. The Strategic Plan for 2018-2020 has been developed (based on input from the 2016 Business Meeting and further consultation) and is being implemented.
2. Engagement with relevant international processes and events, notably:
 - a. Collaboration with UHC2030 TWG on Support for Countries with Fragile or Challenging Operating Environments.
 - b. Working with UHC2030 and ReBUILD to support an official side event at the 2018 World Health Assembly on UHC in Emergencies.
 - c. Continuing to work with partners from this process to support the Swiss and Afghan governments in developing a 'Call to Action for UHC in Emergencies', launched at the United Nations General Assembly in September 2018.
3. Creation of an open access Collection of Resources and Key Issue Guides on Health Systems in FCAS, in collaboration with ReBUILD and the Institute of Development Studies' 'Eldis' platform.
4. A set of nine briefing papers published by the ReBUILD Consortium was informed by key questions from the TWG research needs study.

Governance:

Tim Martineau provided an overview of the governance structure of the FCAS TWG. The FCAS TWG steering committee has been conducting regular monthly meeting. It also conducted twice yearly meetings with the Advisory Group. The Advisory Group was influential in supporting the FCAS TWG in terms of its strategy and activities.

In addition to regular meetings, a new steering committee member was appointed through direct recruitment in 2017. A recruitment process has been developed and a call posted for two new Steering Committee members. Two new Advisory Group members were also recruited in 2017

Overview of the strategic plan

Egbert Sondorp provided an overview of the strategic plan. He explained the vision and mission of the FCAS TWG and then offered a brief overview of the strategic objectives of the TWG.

Attendees were then divided into groups to discuss each strategic objective. There were two groups per objective with participants asked to explore the ways that the TWG members can contribute to each. The emphasis was mainly on the how to achieve those objectives.



Input from participants on TWG's strategic plan:

Many participants raised one particular point related to terminology, calling for further clarity for terms such as 'fragility'. They argued that, as it stands, the term fragility is being associated with conflict and political instability. However, those participants argued that fragility can apply to settings that are fragile because of, for example, an outbreak of an infectious disease or natural disasters.

Strategic Objective 1:

Participants were, in general, impressed by the large number of members of the FCAS TWG on LinkedIn. However, several points were raised in relation to the nature of that membership and the extent to which the interactions between the members are dynamic and active.

Some participants highlighted the fact that there is no information about the nature of the membership of the FCAS TWG. For example, we do not know about the regional distribution, academic affiliation, organisational membership and gender distribution of the members.

Therefore, some highlighted the importance of achieving clarity on the nature of the membership of the FCAS TWG as this will help in guiding future efforts to expand the membership to groups that are not represented or are underrepresented in the TWG. For example, some participants suggested engaging students through internships and other projects related to the TWG areas of interest.

The other issue that was repeatedly highlighted was the limited ability of LinkedIn to provide a platform that ensures a dynamic interaction among members. For example, it is not possible to know the email addresses of members through LinkedIn. Participants suggested other platforms as an alternative or to be used in parallel to LinkedIn, eg Google Groups (has already being used). Other participants suggested the tool Collaborative that has recently been successfully used by other TWGs. Colleagues from Myanmar also highlighted the success they had with using Facebook and WhatsApp groups. Of course, such social media tools introduce issues around encryption and government censorship. Other colleagues suggested the identification of thematic topics of interest for groups of members to come together and work on, eg governance, financing, workforce in FCAS. Finally, several colleagues highlighted the importance of engaging members through regular (preferably monthly) newsletters.

In addition to virtual interactions, participants highlighted the importance of physical presence in regional conferences as a means to ensure engagement and interaction with colleagues around the world. Others mentioned the usefulness of identifying regional representatives or hubs for the TWG in various regions of the world.

Strategic Objective 2:

Participants underlined the importance of sharing already established research priorities that were developed by the FCAS TWG with the wider membership¹. Relatedly, some participants also highlighted the need for a common statement on the implications of research in FCAS specifically addressed to funders. There was a call for members of the FCAS TWG to share their research with the wider membership, particularly around what works, where and why. It was highlighted that published peer-reviewed literature in this field is limited and that gaps should be filled through documenting experiences in the field. Some participants highlighted the difficulty in adopting a rigorous approach in undertaking research in FCAS, hence the limited number of research publications in this field. Therefore, those attendees called for TWG to advocate journals to publish lessons learned from those settings as well as peer-reviewed studies. The latter point has implications for funding, in some participants' opinion, because funders tend to focus on published research. Finally, some participants advocated for diversity in the sources of funding, rather than focusing only on governments.

¹ See Woodward, A., E. Sondorp, S. Witter and T. Martineau (2016). "Health systems research in fragile and conflict-affected states: a research agenda-setting exercise." *Health Res Policy Syst* **14**(1): 51. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/27439611>

Strategic Objective 3:

Participants underlined the importance of defining the communities that TWG is targeting or is interested in reaching. For example, attendees identified the following communities as potential targets for advocacy; academics from other and related fields, policy makers and service providers. Besides identifying the communities, several participants called for clarity in terms of the aims of engaging them. For example, one aim would be to assist policy and decision makers in basing their actions on evidence. Others called for the TWG to explore mechanisms for building partnerships and strategic alliances with other communities and stakeholders.

The meeting closed at 1pm.

Annexes:

1. Agenda

Business meeting of the Thematic Working Group on Health Systems in Fragile and Conflict-Affected States

Monday 11:45am- 1pm ACC Room 3A

1. Introduction to the TWG and Steering Committee Advisory Group members and agenda for the meeting
2. Key achievements since Vancouver including repository
3. Overview of the strategic plan
4. Getting engaged with the TWG's strategic plan (work in groups)
5. Other issues raised by TWG members not raised above
6. Close and invitation to FCAS-related sessions and invitation for non-members to join the TWG

2. Participant List

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