

GEORGE KALKAU TALEO

Key areas: Public health program leadership | Malaria and vector borne diseases

Public health professional with extensive experience leading disease elimination programs including malaria and other vector borne disease programs and the national health department in Vanuatu.

Professional Experience

Bridges to Development, Geneva, Switzerland

(2022 - present)

Consultant, Pacific Integrated NTD Elimination Project (PINE)

- Support the Vanuatu Ministry of Health (MoH) to investigate, develop and evaluate activities aimed to strengthen health workers training to improve knowledge, skills and confidence to treat skin diseases such as scabies and yaws.
- Boosting weak health worker reporting and supporting MoH to achieve high coverage of community-wide public health programs to eliminate scabies and yaws through strong community mobilization strategies and connecting existing networks of key stake holders.
- 2022-2023: Organized health workers to develop peer-driven trainings on approaches for integrated management of skin diseases in health centers for health workers. Leading scale up across 3 provinces of Vanuatu with approximately 180 health workers trained by peers (and more public health staff and volunteers). The peer-to-peer support and training have improved confidence and ability to manage skin diseases in clinics.
- 2023: Organized regional training for front-line health workers in Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea, leading to new information for the participants and the establishment of peer support communication between the two countries.

Ministry of Health, Vanuatu Government

(2016 – 2021)

Director General

- Overall direction of the Vanuatu Ministry of health to achieve health sector strategies and policies for the health sector.
- Health Sector strategies and planning: Ensuring that MoH developed strategic plans in line with existing evidence and national goals and priorities, with annual business plans for each MoH portfolio, including the cabinet, to support implementation.
 - Evidence-driven planning contributed to substantial health infrastructure rehabilitation investments by the Australian government, new vaccines introduction supported by the Asia Development Bank, and extension of Global Fund grants for malaria, TB and HIV/AIDs programs to name a few.
- Health sector human resources restructuring plan: Successfully rolled out the restructuring of the health sector (more than 1000 employees), negotiating for associated increases in government budget, using research insights to recalibrate the roles and positions of every health staff and completing new recruitment of key positions.
- Established the first Health Partners Working Group: The mechanism through which funding sources by all health partners are aligned with government policies and priorities reflected in the health sector strategy. This forms the basis for donor responses during health emergency operations affiliated to the National Disaster Management Committee (NDMC) and is activated during and after natural disasters such as Tropical Cyclones and is now established and active as the Health Emergency Team (HEMT).

Ministry of Health, Government of Vanuatu

(1993-2016)

Director of Public Health, 2013-2016

Program Manager Malaria and Other Vector Borne Diseases, 1993- 2016

- Directed malaria elimination program that started in Aneityum island, Tafea province. Set goal with Global Fund in 2013 to eliminate malaria in Vanuatu by 2025. Led malaria reduction efforts with successful research and innovation in tools and surveillance strategies, leading to the first province (Tafea) of Vanuatu eliminating malaria in 2017.
- Organized regional workshops and led the health sector with various health partners and stake holders to work closely with the communities to ensure treatment coverage of 90% nationwide. Vanuatu was declared to have eliminated LF by the WHO in 2017, a public health success leading towards elimination of other public health diseases such as skin diseases.

Malaria microscopist with Malaria program, MOH, 1987-1992

- Assisted with the overall examination of PCD slides and ACDs for the malaria program. Underwent and contributed to the mapping of drug resistance in Vanuatu. Studied in Australia and Malaysia in the field of parasitology and focusing on the drug resistance of malaria both in vitro and in vivo techniques.

Education/ Training

Certificate, Applied Malaria Entomology, Tokyo Women's Medical University, Japan (April- November 1997)

Diploma, Post Graduate Diploma in Applied Parasitology and Entomology, Institute of Medical Research (IMR), Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, (April to November 1993)

Certificate, Drug Resistant Studies in Malaria, Army Malaria Research Unit, Sydney, Australia (1990-1991)

Publications

- 1) Researching the impact of climate change-exacerbated natural disasters on health and wellness in communities of Vanuatu:
 - Tatiana Zahlawi, Amanda B Roome, Chim W Chan, Jacqueline J Campbell, Bev Tosiro, Max Malanga, Markleen Tagaro, Jimmy Obed, Jerry Iaruel, George Taleo, et al. "Psychosocial Support during Displacement Due to a Natural Disaster: Relationships with Distress in a Lower-Middle Income Country." *International Health* 11, no. 6 (November 13, 2019): 472–79. <https://doi.org/10.1093/inthealth/ihy099>.
 - Alysa Pomer, Giavana Buffa, Marie-Belle Ayoub, Fasihah Taleo, J. Hunter Sizemore, Apisai Tokon, Chim W. Chan, Akira Kaneko, Jimmy Obed, Jerry Iaruel, George Taleo, Len Tarivonda & Kelsey N. Dancause. "Psychosocial Distress among Women Following a Natural Disaster in a Low- to Middle-Income Country: 'Healthy Mothers, Healthy Communities' Study in Vanuatu." *Archives of Women's Mental Health* 22, no. 6 (December 2019): 825–29. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00737-019-00980-6>.
 - Nzayisenga, Emmanuel, Chim W. Chan, Amanda B. Roome, Ann-Sophie Therrien, Isabelle Sinclair, George Taleo, Len Tarivonda, et al. "Patterns of Distress and Psychosocial Support 2 Years Post-Displacement Following a Natural Disaster in a Lower Middle Income Country." *Frontiers in Public Health* 10 (2022): 1017286. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2022.1017286>.
- 2) Strategies to engage Pacific Island communities to address public health challenges:
 - Watanabe, Noriko, Akira Kaneko, Sam Yamar, George Taleo, Takeo Tanihata, J. Koji Lum, Peter S. Larson, and Nelma B. C. Shearer. "A Prescription for Sustaining Community Engagement in Malaria Elimination on Aneityum Island, Vanuatu: An Application of Health Empowerment Theory." *Malaria Journal* 14 (July 31, 2015): 291. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12936-015-0779-z>.
 - Watanabe, Noriko, Akira Kaneko, Sam Yamar, Hope Leodoro, George Taleo, Takeo Tanihata, J. Koji Lum, and Peter S. Larson. "Determinants of the Use of Insecticide-Treated Bed Nets on Islands of Pre- and Post-Malaria Elimination: An Application of the Health Belief Model in Vanuatu." *Malaria Journal* 13 (November 20, 2014): 441. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1475-2875-13-441>.
- 3) Malaria elimination:

- Finn Andersen, Nick M Douglas, Dorina Bustos, Gawrie Galappaththy, Gao Qi, Michelle S Hsiang, Rita Kusriastuti, Kamini Mendis, George Taleo, Maxine Whittaker, Ric N Price & Lorenz von Seidlein. "Trends in Malaria Research in 11 Asian Pacific Countries: An Analysis of Peer-Reviewed Publications over Two Decades." *Malaria Journal* 10 (May 18, 2011): 131. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1475-2875-10-131>.
- Reid, Heidi, Andrew Vallely, George Taleo, Andrew J. Tatem, Gerard Kelly, Ian Riley, Ivor Harris, Iata Henri, Sam Iamaher, and Archie C. A. Clements. "Baseline Spatial Distribution of Malaria Prior to an Elimination Programme in Vanuatu." *Malaria Journal* 9 (June 2, 2010): 150. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1475-2875-9-150>.
- Kinzer, Michael H., Krisin Chand, Hasan Basri, Edith R. Lederman, Augustina I. Susanti, Iqbal Elyazar, George Taleo, William O. Rogers, Michael J. Bangs, and Jason D. Maguire. "Active Case Detection, Treatment of Falciparum Malaria with Combined Chloroquine and Sulphadoxine/Pyrimethamine and Vivax Malaria with Chloroquine and Molecular Markers of Anti-Malarial Resistance in the Republic of Vanuatu." *Malaria Journal* 9 (April 6, 2010): 89. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1475-2875-9-89>.
- Gerard C Kelly, Erick Hale, Wesley Donald, Willie Batarii, Hugo Bugoro, Johnny Nausien, John Smale, Kevin Palmer, Albino Bobogare, George Taleo, Andrew Vallely, Marcel Tanner, Lasse S Vestergaard & Archie CA Clements. "A High-Resolution Geospatial Surveillance-Response System for Malaria Elimination in Solomon Islands and Vanuatu." *Malaria Journal* 12 (March 21, 2013): 108. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1475-2875-12-108>.
- Kaneko, Akira, Luis F. Chaves, George Taleo, Morris Kalkoa, Rie Isozumi, Renu Wickremasinghe, Hedvig Perlmann, et al. "Characteristic Age Distribution of Plasmodium Vivax Infections after Malaria Elimination on Aneityum Island, Vanuatu." *Infection and Immunity* 82, no. 1 (January 2014): 243–52. <https://doi.org/10.1128/IAI.00931-13>.

4) Lymphatic Filariasis (LF) elimination strategy:

- Taleo, Fasahah, George Taleo, Patricia M. Graves, Peter Wood, Sung Hye Kim, Masayo Ozaki, Hayley Joseph, et al. "Surveillance Efforts after Mass Drug Administration to Validate Elimination of Lymphatic Filariasis as a Public Health Problem in Vanuatu." *Tropical Medicine and Health* 45 (2017): 18. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41182-017-0057-6>.
- Allen, Tammy, Fasahah Taleo, Patricia M. Graves, Peter Wood, George Taleo, Margaret C. Baker, Mark Bradley, and Kazuyo Ichimori. "Impact of the Lymphatic Filariasis Control Program towards Elimination of Filariasis in Vanuatu, 1997-2006." *Tropical Medicine and Health* 45 (2017): 8. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41182-017-0047-8>.
- Fraser, Margaret, George Taleo, Fasahah Taleo, James Yaviong, Morris Amos, Mark Babu, and Morris Kalkoa. "Evaluation of the Program to Eliminate Lymphatic Filariasis in Vanuatu Following Two Years of Mass Drug Administration Implementation: Results and Methodologic Approach." *The American Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene* 73, no. 4 (October 2005): 753–58.