Author's response to reviews

Title: Exploring variations in childhood stunting in Nigeria using league table, control chart and spatial analysis

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Author's response to reviews:

16th March 2013

The Editorial Team:

Re: Exploring variations in childhood stunting in Nigeria using league table, control chart and spatial analysis

We are pleased to submit a revised manuscript referenced above according to the reviewers’ comments. We have made every effort to revise our manuscript based on the reviewers’ suggestions and recommendations, which we believe made our paper stronger and better.

In the following pages we provide a point-by-point response to the reviewers’ comments. We have put the comments in bold and inside quotation marks, with response below each comment.

We would like to thank you in advance for your consideration.

Yours faithfully,
Dr Victor Adekanmbi
For Authors

Reviewer: 1

I have only minor comments:

1. On page 11, under the section “Spatial correlation” : first 3 sentences are repeating the information, perhaps they can be combined as 2 sentences (or 1);

Reply: Thanks. These sentences have been combined and simplified:

“The results show statistically significant spatial autocorrelation between states (Moran's $I = 0.775$, $p < 0.001$), such that states in red colour belong to the hot spot clusters and the states in blue belong to cold spot clusters.”
2. On page 11, under the section “Spatial correlation”: sentence starts “The formal test was significant at p<0.001);
First please state spatial correlation between what? (cases & locations?);
Second, please edit the same sentence: after you state the p-value, it is not necessary to re-state or mention that this association was significant. Perhaps you may combine the two sentences: starts with “The formal test…” & “thus suggesting that there is statistically significant…”
Reply: Thanks for pointing that out, we have corrected that as above.

3. I am not sure why the authors are calling the "hot spot" as "high-high clusters"? Seems to me unnecessary adjective(s); similarly, I don’t think that it is necessary to define or refer the regions as “low-low clusters”; if you use these definition, one expect to see that where the others are? i.e. low-high, high-low ? When the authors stated on page 11 (last sentence): “The other states marked in white are locations with no statistically significant autocorrelation”; Does it mean that the authors ONLY determined high-high and low-low regions using the software (and there were no high-low and low-high?)? Please clarify.
Reply: As suggested, we have now used hot-spot and cold-spot throughout the manuscript.

4. Page 10, under the section titled “Software”; Please delete the sentence starts with GeoDa provides…..
Reply: The correction has been done

5. Please shorten the section under the section call “Funnel plot”;
Reply: this section has been shortened.

Reviewer: 2

Minor Essential Revisions:
Abstract, methods: the reader still doesn’t know the cut-off points the authors used to define stunting (5th percentile below the median?, -2zscores). Please include that.
Reply: This has now been included in the abstract's method: “Stunting was defined as height for age below minus two standard deviations from the median height for age of the standard World Health Organization reference population”

Throughout the text several words appear in capital letters with no reason for that to happen. Please review the text.
Reply: We have done this.
The authors state on page 7 that “Nutritional status was measured by height-for-age z-scores (HAZ).” HAZ gives a measure of stunting (chronic malnutrition) but by itself it doesn’t define nutritional status. Please change accordingly.

Reply: This has been corrected.