Author's response to reviews

Title: Holding a Country Countdown to 2015 Conference on Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) - The Zambian Experience

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Author's response to reviews:

To: Journal Editorial Office

From: Dr Victor Mukonka

Dear Sir/Madam,

Following the review of our manuscript by the two reviewers, we have addressed the issues raised and revised the article. Kindly find below the responses to the reviewers comments.

RESPONSES TO REVIEWER'S COMMENTS

Title: Country Countdown to 2015 Conference on MDGs- The Zambian Experience

Version: 1

Date: 21 October 2013

Reviewer: Sandro Accorsi

Comment: Subsequent conferences or follow-up activities carried out after 2008 to monitor progress towards the achievement of MDGs, and guide the implementation of high impact interventions between 2008 and now.

Response: The most significant and direct results at country and global levels as follow up activities have been addressed. The country has planned for the next
countdown conference next year, April 2014.

Comment: Of note is the fact that similar national conferences – with different titles, but similar content and same objectives – have been held successfully in different African countries over the past years, for which documentation of follow-up is available and results are apparent.

Response: There are only three countries in Africa who have held country countdown conference namely Nigeria, Senegal and Zambia. However of importance is that there over 25 African countries planning now to hold the country countdowns. Zambian experience has been used a lot at conferences for other countries. We thought of trying to reach many who may not be able to attend international conferences through this publication.

Comment: Since the article consists of an account of the Country Countdown to 2015 Conference held in 2008 without any explanation on the follow-up over the past five years, it does not seem to fit with the BMC journal policy for publication, which “does not consider narrative review articles”.

Response: Through your guidance we have reviewed the BMC journal policy for publication and changed our manuscript to a Corresponding Article and adhered to the provided format and requirement.

Comment: Structure of the article not consistent

Response: The structure has been modified to comply with the BMC requirement for a Corresponding article. It has the abstract, keywords, the correspondence as main body broken down into subsections which includes background, process, results at country and global levels, lessons learnt and conclusion.

Comment: Formatting - six out of seven references listed in the bibliography are not mentioned in the body of the text (with the exception of “2007-ZDHS” in the text which, however, does not correspond to the year mentioned in the corresponding reference, which is “2008”);

Response: The references have been addressed

Comment: Formatting - key statements in the body of the text are not properly referenced;

Response: The key statements have been referenced

Comment: Formatting - acronyms are not explained when mentioned for the first time across all sections of the article

Response: Acronyms have been explained
Comment: Graphs are not properly labeled and one of them has no title
Response: In view of change to a corresponding article, we have scaled down on information and the graphs have been removed.

Comment: Editorial errors are found across sections of the article
Response: The editorial errors have been attended to.

Reviewer: Barbara Deller

Comment: If the journal gives the option to use another article template, I'm not sure that the Methodology and Results sub-titles are so appropriate.
Response: The article has been changed to a correspondence article and your guidance has been followed which suits the requirement of a corresponding article.

Comment: References are needed throughout the Situation Analysis section. Much important information and many statistics are given, but without any citations as to their sources.
Response: The section on situation analysis has been removed. References have been worked on but in view of the limitation of numbers of words you can have in a corresponding article, only critical references have been left.

Comment: A thorough edit is needed for grammar and spelling. Some problems are probably only typing errors.
Response: The article has been edited.

Comment: At the first mention of the countdown conference, you should spell out the exact name of the conference. This is true for the London conference as well (under methodology/process).
Response: The exact name of the conference has been spelt out.

Comment: Some paragraphs have single spaced paragraphs and others have 1.5 line spacing.
Response: The line spacing has been changed to double spacing.

Comment: Country countdown conferences or meetings. "Country countdown" will not be understood as a meeting to many readers.
Response: Country countdown changed to country countdown conferences.