Author’s response to reviews

Title: Polio Eradication Initiative in Africa: Influence on Other Infectious Disease Surveillance Development

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Dear Editor:

Response to reviewers’ comments

On behalf of the co-authors, I am pleased to respond to the reviewers who took some of their time to try to make our paper better. I would like first of all to thank Dr. Hill and Dr. Rodier for their help in making our work better. I will give a point-by-point response to the reviewers comments:

- We have attached a sample of the questionnaire which demonstrates that this was intended to be a very simple survey with the specific objectives of determining what other diseases are included in regular AFP surveillance, whether AFP surveillance resources are used for outbreak detection and response, and what type of personnel or mechanisms may be available for Integrated Disease Surveillance and Response (IDSR) in the future. As such the questionnaire was limited in scope, and may not have answered all the excellent questions that are raised on the review.

- We have made the correction to reflect that the respondents were both WHO-AFRO staff and Ministry of Health people, at least one per country, whoever was the first to send us the questionnaire back. There were difficulties in getting back the questionnaires or contacting some of the would be respondents. Because these people are very busy, this could have easily been low on their list of priorities, and because the survey was conducted primarily by a person who they did not report to, so they while they could have continued regularly reporting to WHO they may not have been able to respond to the questionnaire.

- We were not able to determine whether the involvement of the AFP program staff in other infectious disease surveillance was due to a natural implication, or practical reasons, or national or WHO policy. However, recent anecdotal reports from the African region suggest that WHO-AFRO may have made a policy change to try to integrate AFP surveillance and IDSR activities.

- Due to the simplicity of the questionnaire we were only able to obtain the response information that we detail in the second last paragraph of the results section. We could have probably gotten more information if we had done a larger survey. This survey did not cost much since we send the questionnaires by e-mail and met some of the respondents at meetings that we attended as part of our regular work. Had we spent more money perhaps we could have been able to obtain answers to some of the issues that are raised in the review.
• We have re-written the paragraph that addresses the last point in the review (i.e., other programs investing in general infectious disease surveillance) to clarify the point and address some of the excellent suggestions made by Dr. Rodier.

• We have tried to simplify the English in the first part of the article as suggested by Dr. Hull

Thank you very much and again please convey our sincere gratitude to Dr. Rodier and Dr. Hull for their valuable review of our work.

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