Author's response to reviews

Title: Outputs and cost of HIV prevention programmes for truck drivers in Andhra Pradesh, India

Authors:

Prem Kumar SG (p_enoch77@yahoo.com)
Rakhi Dandona (rdandona@george.org.au)
John Schneider (jschnei1@medicinebsd.uchicago.edu)
YK Ramesh (ykrameshmcom@yahoo.com)
Lalit Dandona (ldandona@george.org.in)

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Editor

BMC Health Services Research

RE: Manuscript 5045774192391579 - Outputs and cost of HIV prevention programmes for truck drivers in Andhra Pradesh, India

Dear Editor,

Thank you for your letter of 29 January, 2009 inviting revision of this manuscript. We thank the reviewers for their useful comments. The revised manuscript is submitted. Our response to the reviewer and editor comments:

**Reviewer 1**

The recent paper in AIDS was on composite analysis of all public-funded HIV prevention interventions, whereas this paper is on the details of the outputs and cost of HIV prevention programmes for truck drivers.

1. The reason for assessing the outputs, cost and efficiency is to inform further development of HIV prevention programmes for truck drivers in Andhra Pradesh. This is now mentioned in the introduction section, on page 3, paragraph 2 and line 10. The main measure of output was the number of truck drivers served and efficiency was defined as unit economic cost per truck driver served as mentioned in the methods section on page 8, line 5.

2. Limitations of this analysis are now discussed in the last paragraph of the discussion section of the manuscript on page 14, paragraph 2.

3. A discussion on the relationship between unit cost and the scale is now presented in the discussion section on page 14, paragraph 1.

4. Truck drivers served is the number of individual truck drivers provided services in a year. “Contact” is each individual contact with a truck driver, which could be more than one in a year. In the fiscal year 2005-2006, for the six programmes combined, there were 120,436 individual truck drivers served and there were 269,476 contacts made with these truck drivers. This is now made clear in the methods section under the outputs section on page 5, line 1. The data pertaining to outputs were obtained from the written records of the programmes.
5. We are aware of various costing methodologies and their pros and cons. Annualized costing of capital goods is one of the methods reported previously in the literature. We have used this method previously in our papers on other HIV prevention interventions [References: 6, 7, 9 and 11]. As the contribution of capital goods cost to the total economic cost for truck drivers intervention was very low (1.3%), the use of other methods would not lead to any major differences in the message of this paper. We believe that use of the simple annualised method is therefore reasonable and allows consistency with our previous publications on other HIV prevention interventions, which too had very low capital goods cost as a proportion of the total cost.

6. Comparison with FSWs is now removed in the revised manuscript. Data from other recent studies on estimated sex acts and condom use by truck drivers are now provided in the discussion section on page 13.

Reviewer 2

1. The objective of this study was to assess the outputs, cost and efficiency of truck drivers programmes not to assess the behavioural correlates of the truck drivers. This has been stated in the limitations for the study in the discussion section of the manuscript on page 14, last paragraph. Two new recently published studies that provide sex behaviour data on truck drivers in India are now cited and discussed on page 13 [References 13 and 20].

2. Programme results are provided in terms of outputs and costs. Outcomes data are not available and therefore are beyond the scope of this paper.

3. The distinction between direct and indirect costs is made in the methods section under cost data section on page 6, paragraph 1, line 2.

4. We agree that the number of contacts can be small but the quality may be high. Unfortunately the available data do not allow us to examine this relationship.

Editor comment

We now mention Ethics approval in the methods section on page 4.

We thank *BMC Health Services Research* for considering our paper for publication.

Kind regards,

SG Prem Kumar