Author's response to reviews

Title: National health financing policy: What should it reflect in Eritrea?

Authors:

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Author's response to reviews:

Dear Editor-in-Chief,

RE: National health financing policy: What preliminary elements could it reflect in Eritrea?

We appreciate criticisms and suggestions of the three peer reviewers. We have attempted to address them as much as possible. Below we indicate how and where we addressed the various suggestions.

General: The title has been amended slightly, since this was mainly a preliminary survey. Following the recommendation of two of the peer reviewers, the revised manuscript has been edited by a professional English editor.

Reviewer 1: Hengjin Dong

Reviewer comment: This article is not well organized. I suggest to revise it and only use the survey data because only the survey data support the topic: national health financing policy: what should it reflect in Eritrea.

Authors: We have followed the advice of Dr Dong and removed all national health accounts write-up in the initial version.

Reviewer comment: The total health spending and sources of health financing can be moved to introduction part and the introduction should be reorganized

Authors: The Introduction has been shorted. In addition, we have introduced a paragraph in Introduction section on total health spending and sources (See paragraph 3 and 4).

Reviewer comment: The results and discussion should be separated.

Authors: We have separated Results and Discussion sections.

Reviewer comment: Too many tables and Figures

Authors: The number of Tables and Figures has been reduced to five, respectively.
Reviewer 2: Keith Tin

Reviewer comment: Information on current health financing and payment arrangement is lacking in the background section albeit the focus of this article is health financing. It is difficult for readers to interpret the results without context.

Authors: That has been addressed briefly in paragraph 3 and 4 of the Introduction Section.

Reviewer comment: It should be very cautious to use WHO NHA estimates which have been show to deviate from local NHA estimates (when they became available) to different extent. The authors should supplement with more reliable data even though it may cover the public side.

Authors: No NHA exercise has been carried out in Eritrea to date. Therefore, the next best estimates available are those of WHO NHA. In addition, taking into account the suggestion of Reviewer 1 to focus the paper on only the survey data, the detailed NHA write-up has been dropped. And thus, the issue raised by Reviewer 2 on NHA may not be very pertinent to the revised paper.

Reviewer comment: Six tables and twelve figures are considered too many to be published in an academic journal. The authors should make teach table/figure more concise and informative. Also, figures and tables are not labelled and titled clearly.

Authors: The number of Tables and Figures has been reduced to five, respectively.

The authors should offer some explanation or interpretation of the observations in the results section. For example, why there is a stepped increase in total expenditure on health as a percentage of GDP in 2002 (Figure 1) whereas there is stepped decrease in government expenditure on health as a percentage of total government expenditure in the same year (Figure 2)? Based on the views of policy makers, what would be the desired health financing system in Eritrea?

Authors: The new Discussion section discusses the key findings. Since the NHA section was deleted following the recommendation of Reviewer 1, the second sentence of Reviewer 2 above is no longer relevant.

Reviewer 3: Bart Criel

Reviewer comment: This is by no means an “uninteresting” manuscript, but it does (currently) not have the format of a scientific paper, but rather one of a “report” (with for instance, very lengthy list of Tables, graph and figures). The format needs to be dramatically adapted before it can be considered for review.

Authors: The revised manuscript has been reformatted. The section on NHA has been deleted, following other reviewers recommendation; and a section on Discussion has been introduced.
Reviewer comment: There is also need to provide more substantive methodological background information on what a “quick key informant survey” for “busy” senior staff actual entails. What is its value?

Authors: The methodology section was adjusted. We have included the health financing framework.