Author's response to reviews

Title: Contribution of the Japan International Cooperation Agency health-related projects to health system strengthening

Authors:

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear Dr. Emily Crow:

Our manuscript MS: 7077623919177676 entitled "Contribution of the Japan International Cooperation Agency health-related projects to health system strengthening" was finished to revise again according to the reviewer’s comments. I would like to present our response to the reviewers as follows:

n Responses to the Reviewer 1
Dr. Federica Secci, Thank you very much for your comments and recommendation provided for improving our manuscript. I revised it according to your advices.

**Comment:** Introduction. The authors state:” In particular, we assessed the contribution of the JICA projects to health system strengthening by focusing on governance.” I believe they should motivate this focus on governance and provide justification for this at this stage in the paper. Later in the Methods (Analysis of the JICA projects), the authors state: “In our study, since governance was regarded as an overarching component to manage other blocks and generate quality health service, it was considered to be an independent block.” Since this seems to be the reason for you to focus on governance, this rationale should be made explicit in the introduction and throughout the paper.

**Response:** As the second reviewer pointed out that our study did not focus on governance, I think that it is better to delete the words “by focusing on governance” from the above sentence “In particular, we assessed the contribution...”.

Additionally, I deleted Table 5 as well according to the second reviewer’s suggestion. In the conclusions of abstract, we stated that “the JICA project met the goal of bilateral cooperation by developing workforce capacity and governance”. These results can be clarified by Table 4. I wish the first reviewer understand what I revised.

**Comment:** Abstract: Background. In order to add clarity, the authors could state:
“...and assess the contribution of JICA health-related projects to **strengthening health systems worldwide.**”

**Response:** I agree with you, so I changed the sentence according to your suggestion.

**Comment:** Key words. The authors might consider adding the Project Design Matrix they used among the key words.

**Response:** I added the term “Project Design Matrix” in Key words.

**Comment:** Methods. The authors might want to specify further the following sentence: “Collection of PDMs over 5 years provided an adequate sample of more than 100 projects”, by adding “This collections of PDMs...”.

**Response:** I changed the sentence according to your suggestion.

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**Responses to the Reviewer 2**

Dr. Yiannis Kyratsis, I would like to express great gratitude to your fruitful suggestion and recommendation. I revised our manuscript based on your comments.

**Comment:** Background; The WHO health system strengthening definition I would suggest to be moved down after the discussion on progress toward achieving the Millennium Development Goals ref [5] on page 3; the WHO definition needs to be accompanied by the relevant reference.

**Response:** I moved down the sentence of the WHO health system strengthening definition after the ref No5 and added the relevant reference as the ref. No6.

**Comment:** On page 4 when the authors start discussing the JICA I would suggest that they provide some context for the organisation to better justify the rationale for the study. Such information would also help people not familiar with JICA to get a better sense of its importance and role. For example, the authors can present at this point information such as that JICA has been in recent years one of the largest bilateral development organisations in the world with a network of xx overseas offices, projects in xx countries, and available financial resources of
xx$; these information should be supported by appropriate references.

Response: I added the sentence as below;

*The JICA has been in recent years one of the largest bilateral development organizations with a network of about one hundred oversee offices, projects in about 150 countries, and available financial resources of approximately 9.6 billion US dollars in 2010.*

Comment: On page 4: “so far these projects have seldom been evaluated systematically from a HEALTH systems perspective”. the word health should be added to improve clarity.

Response: I added the word HEALTH in the text.

Comment: On page 4: “In particular, we assessed the contribution of the JICA projects to health system strengthening by focusing on governance”. The ending of the sentence “by focusing on governance” needs to be deleted

Response: I deleted the sentence “by focusing on governance”.

Comment: Page 4: “We developed an analytical matrix of program activity and output in which the WHO’s framework and the PDM HAVE BEEN integrated” – words in capital should be added to improve clarity.

Response: I added the words “have been” in the text.

Comment: Top page 5: “Generally, JICA technical cooperation projects should be designed within a logical framework” this sentence would benefit from revision: JICA technical cooperation projects are designed following a logical framework...and then explain what a logical framework is using the example in the Figure

Response: I changed the sentence from “JICA technical cooperation projects should be designed within a logical framework” to “JICA technical cooperation projects are designed following a logical framework”.

Comment: Methods; On page 6 – last paragraph of the ‘Data sources for JICA projects’ section: the 105 projects included in the study and the 42 discussed for
exclusion add up to 147 - justification is needed for one more project currently missing from this discussion.

**Response:** We excluded 20 PDMs for programs concerning training courses, 16 with incomplete or missing outputs and activities, and seven PDMs pertaining to a follow-up program. The sum of these exclusions is 43 (=20+16+7).

**Comment:** On page 7: “As the SD was a substantially final product to the other blocks, the SD was treated differently from the other blocks in the analysis”. The point here is not very clearly stated; the authors need to revise the sentence to clarify. As it is written it doesn’t make sense. Do the authors mean that SD was found to be far more frequently the main output compared to the other blocks of the WHO framework according to their classification, and therefore, it was treated differently in the presentation of the findings?

**Response:** I revised the sentence as below;
*The SD was found to be far more frequently the main output compared to the other blocks of the WHO framework according to their classification, and therefore, it was treated differently in the presentation of the findings.*

**Comment:** Figures 1 and 2 can easily be merged. There is no good reason for adding an extra figure as the same information can be conveyed using just one figure. The authors can move the arrows from Fig 1 to Fig 2. Also the text that explains the logical process under Fig 1 should be included in the main text. The authors should give more specific information about the project example presented (which country it refers to, timeline involved etc.)

**Response:** I moved the arrows from Fig 1 to Fig 2, deleted Fig 1 and change the numbers of Figures (e.g. Fig 2 -> Fig 1). I included the footnote of Fig 1 in the text on Page 6. I gave some specific information about the project example presented in the Fig 1 into the text on the bottom of Page 6.

**Comment:** Figure 3 can be better explained in the main text – the text under Fig 3 should be included in the main text. It took me a couple of readings to understand how the classification of the example works. The authors could discuss in more detail about how the specific example was classified thus providing better guidance to the reader in understanding the classification process: i.e. output 1 of the project is classified as SD and therefore is grouped
under SD (first column on the x axis of the matrix that describes outputs) etc

**Response:** I included the footnote of Fig 2 (previously Fig 3) in the text on the bottom of Page 7 and explained in more detail how the specific example was classified as below:

*As the first column on the horizontal axis of the analytical matrix describes output, and the output of the example project was classified as SD, this example was classified as a type of Service Delivery (SD) plus Workforce.*

**Comment:** Results; Table 5 should be deleted as it does not add anything to the main findings or discussion of the manuscript, other than what is presented in the last paragraph on page 10. Also this point about governance needs to either be discussed in the following sections or be deleted.

**Response:** I recognize what the reviewer pointed out about focusing on governance. I deleted Table 5 and the below results corresponding to Table 5.

*Table 5 shows the types of projects including and excluding the governance block as an output. The majority (87.6%, 92 out of 105) of JICA projects included an output for enhancing governance, whereas about one-third (30.8%, 8 out of 26) of the projects focusing on workforce did not include an output for governance.*

Subsequently, I deleted the below sentences in the last paragraph of the Analysis of the JICA projects in Methods.

*Governance is a key component of health system building blocks; appropriate governance determines the kinds of resources required, which in turn results in a high quality health service. To account for the contribution of governance to other building blocks, we examined the number of projects that included or did not include governance as an output.*

**Comment:** Conclusions; On page 13: “This study may be the first to examine the type ...” - this sentence would benefit from revision as follows: To authors’ knowledge this study is the first that examines...

**Response:** I revised the sentence as below;

*To the author's knowledge, this study is the first...*

Thank you very much for your kindly assistance.