Author's response to reviews

Title: Vertical Funding, NGOs, and Health System Strengthening: Perspectives of Public Sector Health Workers in Mozambique

Authors:

Abdul H Mussa (ninomussa@gmail.com)
James Pfeiffer (jamespf@u.washington.edu)
Stephen S Gloyd (gloyd@u.washington.edu)
Kenneth Sherr (ksherr@u.washington.edu)

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Author's response to reviews: see over
April 5, 2013

Re: MS: 1957259752576217 Vertical Funding, NGOs, and Health System Strengthening: Perspectives of Public Sector Health Workers in Mozambique

Dear Editor,

Please find enclosed our revised manuscript for the above referenced submission. As the designated corresponding author, I am submitting this letter and revised manuscript on behalf of Dr. Abdul Mussa, the lead author based in the Ministry of Health in Mozambique, and the other two co-authors. We have reviewed the most recent comments from the three reviewers and have addressed each of their concerns. Overall, the requested revisions were helpful and fairly minimal. We have pasted in the comments from each reviewer below and added an explanation of how we responded to each issue beneath each comment, and then highlighted our responses in yellow. Should any further revision be required we will be happy to provide them quickly. We look forward to your response. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require any further information from Dr. Mussa or the other co-authors.

Sincerely,

James Pfeiffer PhD, MPH
Associate Professor
Department of Global Health
Department of Anthropology
Box 357965
University of Washington, Seattle 98195
Tel: 206.543.8486
E-mail: jamespf@uw.edu

Reviewer comments and author responses (highlighted in yellow)

Reviewer: David McCoy
Reviewer's report:

MINOR ESSENTIAL REVISIONS
Page 4: 2000’s should be 2000s

Correction has been made.

Page 4: Much of this “additional” funding has supported .... (add word)
The word has been added

Page 5: “has recently changed strategies” – need to state when exactly. Generally speaking, there are a number of other places in the text where a specific date would be useful.

The specific date, July 2008, has been added.

Finally, I would suggest making a stronger point about the fact that the interviews are now quite dated; but that they represent an important historical record upon which future research can build on

A statement has been inserted on page 5 to strengthen this point

DISCRETIONARY REVISIONS
The description of health financing on top of page 5, showing the relative amounts of state funding, common fund etc might be better described in diagrammatic form

(We have decided against creating the diagram since it would require additional textual explanation and would lengthen the MS)

It states that of 723 physicians trained between 1980-2006 – only 25% had left the public sector. This seems remarkably low. A 75% retention rate within the public sector deserves some comment / explanation.

We have inserted a statement in the discussion to explain that Mozambique is unique in that its private sector is very small (almost nonexistent in the 1980s) so there is little drain internally there, and there is little external brain drain, compared to some African English-speaking countries such as Zimbabwe or Kenya, since most doctors do not speak English (there is little out-migration to Portuguese speaking countries).

Maybe state what percentage of interviewees were HIV programme managers?

We decided not to present this percentage since many of those interviewed, especially at national level, had HIV various components within their departments. HIV funding cut across many program areas at national and provincial level therefore categorizing the health workers in this way could be a bit misleading.

Reviewer’s report

Reviewer: Marko Vujicic
Reviewer’s report:

This reviewer had no suggested revisions
Reviewer: Frank Feeley
Reviewer's report:

The authors have dealt well with a number of substantive comments and I appreciate the additional context on aid flows and the data on recruiting from the MOH to the private sector.

Major Essential Revision

1. I am concerned about the basis for the statement that NGO's are paying 5 to 10 times Government salaries. I would like to see some further evidence (beyond the one quote) that NGO's are paying these multiples for similar posts. If there is no reasonable statistical basis for comparing MOH and donor supported NGO salaries, then I would like to see the comments on salary differentials modulated to reflect whatever data does exist. I am skeptical that the differential can really be determined by interviews with selected Government officials.

On page 14 of the revised manuscript we have clarified the source for this information. Importantly, this statement about the salary differentials is not based on one quote from the interviews but is derived from data collected in the cited study. The statement cites a study completed in Mozambique with results presented at the 2009 meetings of the Jornadas de Saude in Maputo (and later at the APHA meetings in the U.S.). The study gathered data on NGO and Ministry of Health salaries in 2008 and 2009 to generate the comparisons. The citation (number 29 in the references section) is now more clearly indicated in the text at the end of the sentence.