Reviewer's report

Title: A Decade of Investments in Monitoring the HIV Epidemic: How far have we come? A descriptive analysis

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Reviewer: Sema K. Sgaier

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This manuscript by Alfven T et al is a high-level descriptive paper that aims to quantify whether there has been improvement in the global HIV M&E system in the last decade. The authors use the UNGASS country progress reports to assess the system along the following main parameters: 1) government commitment, 2) M&E spend, 3) M&E system capacity and 4) M&E performance. The results are stratified by high burden LMICs and other LMICs.

This paper provides insights on the HIV M&E system at a very high level (global perspective), rather than a national or sub-national perspective. I recommend this for publication, but would like to see the following addressed:

- Recommendations: I think the paper could benefit if the authors provided recommendations based on their analysis both to the global community and to the countries. Otherwise, it remains highly descriptive and once asks at the end “so what?”.

- Linkage with outcomes: M&E systems are important because through accountability and monitoring they can actually improve the performance of programs. Would it be possible for the authors to see if there is a correlation between the trends they see in the capacity of the M&E system and improvement of program outcome indicators?

- Data points: 3 years is not enough data to establish a trend. 2 suggestions: 1) could they also analyze 2012 data and 2) add confidence intervals to see whether the changes from one year to another are actually significant. They could also apply a statistical analysis to see if there is a “true trend” is they include 2012 data.

- National vs. sub-national- it would be great if the authors could comment more on the need to focus on sub-national analyses to inform programmatic decisions.

- Data use: based on the indicator that they analyze, it is actually very difficult to ascertain whether the data is actually being used to make programmatic decisions. It would be great if they could elaborate more on this limitation.

- Donor vs. Government funding/systems: often, there are parallel systems in country set up by donors and often these systems are pretty strong (however, pose challenges to the overall ecosystem). It would be great if the authors could comment a little bit on this and recommendations to the donor community to
ensure “one national system”.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests