Author's response to reviews

Title: SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH IN NEGLECTED TROPICAL DISEASES
- 3 Investment in social science research in neglected diseases of poverty: a
case study of Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

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Version: 2 Date: 28 September 2010

Author's response to reviews: see over
Response to the reviewers

We would like to thank you for very helpful comments made by the reviewers. All of their comments are taken into account while revising the paper. Please see the response to each point in CAPS below. Authors.

Reviewer 1

Title: SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH IN NEGLECTED TROPICAL DISEASES- 3 Investment in social science research in neglected diseases of poverty: implications for research priority setting
Version: 1 Date: 22 June 2010
Reviewer: Jacob Kumaresan

Reviewer's report:
Major Compulsory revisions:

1. The authors need to clarify the main message from this research. They note that funding for social sciences research has increased which is a good trend. Are they advocating for more resources for social sciences research in general or specific for NTDs?

THE PAPER IS REVISED SIGNIFICANTLY TO CLARIFY THE MAIN MESSAGE. THE ABSTRACT AND CONCLUSION ARE REWRITTEN, INTRODUCTION AND DISCUSSIONS REVISED. AS THE ANALYSIS WAS LIMITED TO NTDS, THE CONCLUSIONS ARE SPECIFIC TO NTDS ONLY.

2. The review is a narrow focus of data from one donor source. This should be stated in the methodology - rather than two approaches.

FOR CLARITY, WE HAVE CONFINED THIS PAPER TO A CASE STUDY ONLY- SO WE HOPE THE REVIEWER WILL FIND THIS APPROACH HELPFUL.

3. The use of figures, tables and appendix should be reviewed in light of relevant information that will support the points made in the manuscript. What is the added value of Tables 2,3 and 5? Table 5 does not reflect the accompanying text in the manuscript.

THANK YOU. WE HAVE REMOVED ALL TABLES BUT RETAINED THE MAIN MESSAGES IN THE TEXT. HOWEVER, TWO APPENDICES ARE PROVIDED AS ADDITIONAL INFORMATION WHICH THE REVIEWERS MAY FIND HELPFUL AND EDITORS MAY OR MAY NOT WISH TO PUBLISH UPON ACCEPTANCE.

4. Discussion and conclusions should be succinct and clear.

WE HAVE REWRITTEN ABSTRACT AND CONCLUSION TO TAKE THIS INTO ACCOUNT.
Minor Essential revisions:

THANK YOU FOR SPOTTING THIS ERROR. THIS HAS BEEN CORRECTED.

Discretionary Revisions:

1. A further analysis on funding of social vs non-social research for other Diseases (e.g. the big three) could enrich the discussion and conclusions.

THANK YOU FOR THE SUGGESTION. THIS COULD BE AN INTERESTING TOPIC FOR FUTURE RESEARCH.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests
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.

Reviewer 2

Reviewer's report
Title: SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH IN NEGLECTED TROPICAL DISEASES - 3 Investment in social science research in neglected diseases of poverty: implications for research priority setting
Version: 1 Date: 7 September 2010
Reviewer: Tracey Koehlmoos

Reviewer's report:
This manuscript attempts to present information about the gaps in the area of the need for social science (implementation, health systems, social and behavioral, translational) research for NTDs. However, major revisions, which seem within the grasp of the authors, should be made prior to it being shared with the scientific community. I want to know the answers to your research questions and the information was missing from your paper. Do not be discouraged, this has great potential after some re-tooling as described below:

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR SUGGESTIONS. THEY HAVE BEEN TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT IN THE REVISION.
1) The title. As it stands right now, what you really have created is a case study of the BMGF funding in NTDs. The need to expand the title or the people should become clear from my comments. However, a case study is fine—but then you need to call it that. (If you do go for only a case study—you might wish to enrich it with interviews from people working NTDs within BMGF; however, if you are truly doing a review and using BMGF as an example, then you need to strengthen the rest of your results and discussion—see details below.)

THIS PAPER NOW IS PRESENTED AS A CASE STUDY AND IT IS REFLECTED IN THE TITLE NOW.

2) The abstract. At more than 400 words, this abstract is too dense and too detailed. Look at another article in HARPS, then break it down into key issues for each section of your paper. 300 Words broken down across the topics: Intro, Methods, Results, Discussion should satisfy this requirement.

THE ABSTRACT IS NOW REWRITTEN AND IS UNDER 300 WORDS WITH THE SUGGESTED STRUCTURE.

3) Please, be consistent with your use of US$ USD or 697 BMGF funding dollars. Pick one. I suggest using US$ throughout the paper. It will be very clear for your reader.

WELL SPOTTED- THANK YOU. CORRECTED.

4) Abstract: Although I feel that the word “indubitably” is greatly underused, I do not think that it belongs in your abstract. Also, later in the abstract you discuss the amount “required”—and it is not clear in the abstract (or in the paper) how much funding is “required.”

THE ABSTRACT IS REWRITTEN NOW.

5) Page 3, Your work includes many parenthetical comments. For example, the sentence that begins with “The reason for the lack of prioritization (or otherwise)...” might benefit from the removal of the parenthesis or of the comment entirely.

REMOVED AND YOU WILL FIND NO PARENTHETICAL COMMENTS ANYMORE.

6) Page 4, in your case study description you justify it as being “reasonably representative;” however, your rationale for this assumption is unclear and this statement should be removed. We have no idea how the other organizations are dividing their funds between social science and biomedical research. It is fine to say that you opted to focus on the BMGF because of the transparency and availability of their information about funding.
THIS POINT IS TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT IN THE REVISION. INSTEAD, THIS IS PRESENTED AS A CAVEAT OF THIS PAPER.

7) Results. In the 3rd sentence, you need to select US$ or USD, please be consistent throughout your paper.

THANKS- CORRECTED.

8) Page 5. The meaning of the content in the parenthesis at the end of the first paragraph is very unclear. Please, attempt to break this down into language that is germane to the text and gives clear meaning to your material. Also, you use the word “important information” please limit judgment statements to the discussion section. Using the word “information” here would be appropriate.

CORRECTED.

9) Results. Your description of the NTD economy—the entire purpose of this paper— is limited to one table and two paragraphs. Your methods section sets you up to go in one direction and your results section delivers a completely different message. Surely your search strategy came up with results. What did you find? How many hits did you get? How many did you screen out? Why? What sorts of topics in NTD were covered? This section should be the heart of your paper. What did you learn? Who funded the research? How much was spent in total? How much on Social Sciences— were there differences across funding organizations?

THIS PAPER IS NOW PRESENTED AS A CASE STUDY AND RELEVANT INFORMATION ONLY HAS BEEN PROVIDED.

10) Results, Paragraph 1. We have no idea why you are able to make these statements because you do not tell us anything about the results of your search.

PLEASE SEE RESPONSE 9.

11) P. 8 “This is clearly a welcome movement…” to whom? How is it clear?

THIS SENTENCE HAS BEEN DELETED NOW.

12) Discussion: I have no idea how you can use the results section you presented and draw these items to discuss. The discussion should flow from key points presented in the results section.

THE DISCUSSION SECTION IS NOW REVISED TO REFLECT THE CASE STUDY FINDINGS ONLY.

13) Discussion: Again, your word choice. Try not to use the word “clearly” as nothing is very clear and you use the expression, “It is surprising”—which begs the question, it is surprising to whom? When you re-tool your paper,
please focus on using language that presents the facts rather than your beliefs.

DELTED INAPPROPRIATE WORDS/SENTENCES.

14) Discussion: You end on a high note—but you do not mention the great limitation of your study—NGOs are not necessarily doing research and generally are less likely to publish research on the work they are doing, which is a limitation of your methodology. You might wish to discuss this.

THE ENDING HAS NOW BEEN REVISED AND YOUR POINT MENTIONED AS A CAVEAT IN OUR ANALYSIS.

15) Conclusion: you jump around with your style of endnotes—are you using numbers or are you using Name Date? Pick one and stick with it throughout the paper. In its Guidelines to Authors, HARPS tells you how it should be done for papers submitted to HARPS.

THE REFERENCE IS CONSISTENT NOW.

16) Please, do not be discouraged, this is an important topic and it seems that you have spent time thinking about and research these issues.

NOT AT ALL. THANK YOU FOR IDENTIFYING IT AS AN IMPORTANT TOPIC AND PROVIDING VERY HELPFUL COMMENTS INDEED.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests
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.