Reviewer’s report

Title: Public-non-governmental organisation partnerships for health: an exploratory study with case studies from recent Ghanaian experience

Version: 0 Date: 22 Feb 2016

Reviewer: Susanna Cramb

Reviewer’s report:

This is an interesting case-study focused on NGO and government partnerships in Ghana's health care system. Several minor improvements would be beneficial, as detailed below.

1. Was ethics approval obtained to conduct this study? Details should be included.

2. Has the manuscript been approved by each of the NGOs (and ideally the government also)? The manuscript contains some candid thoughts on potentially sensitive issues, and it would be reassuring to know each of the organizations involved had approved the final version of the manuscript.

3. The separation into each organization enables a lot of detail to be provided, which is helpful. However, the results section is perhaps overly long. Is it possible to capture the information more succinctly?

4. For those unfamiliar with Ghana, a map showing the different regions (including the ones mentioned: Northern, Upper East, Greater Accra and Eastern) would be helpful.

5. Would suggest including a summary table of results. Headings could include:
   * Partnership name
   * Interviews conducted (e.g. 2 NGO, 1 MOH)
   * Driver of collaboration
   * Form of involvement
   * Time started
   * Advantages
   * Disadvantages

6. Referencing needs improving in some places.
a. The final sentence on page 5 could do with a reference supporting "NGOs are the most prominent actors in LMICs".

b. On page 4, lines 8-17, there are no references provided for any of the information included. Yet there are phrases within these lines that appear to be copied verbatim from a reference mentioned later:
http://www.who.int/countryfocus/cooperation_strategy/ccsbrief_gha_en.pdf?ua=1. Please ensure all information is phrased in your own words, and referenced appropriately.

c. The references used for lines 5-10 on page 3 seem fairly dated, and one seems to be about agriculture, whereas the sentence is referring to health care.

d. Finally, you have carefully referenced some of the methods used, but occasionally they seem to be referenced too early in the sentence (e.g. line 33 page 7).

7. I was surprised by the statement on line 8, page 4 that the health status had steadily improved over the years, given your earlier statement (on page 3) that health declined during the 1980s.

8. Please define all abbreviations in the first instance used in the text, as well as in the abbreviations list. Several seem to be missing definitions, including CSO, CBO, FBO, CORDAID, while MOU is only defined in the list, not within the text. (Also, GHS is defined in the text as "Ghana Health Services", but defined in the abbreviation list as "Ghana Health Service").

9. The statement on lines 55-57 on page 13 regarding that prevalence had decreased. Could it please specify the area this is covering? Also, are you certain there is a genuine difference here? 0.7% and 1.0% seem fairly similar.

10. In the "Data collection" section, you mention that 6 interviews were with "others who worked at national levels of the partnerships". Is it possible to give some examples of the kind of roles that would be included in this definition? I found it hard to envisage who this might include.

11. For some of the NGOs, evidence-based research was defined as the driver. The exact research should be referenced in the appropriate sentences, if known.

12. The numbering in the "Success factors across the partnerships" section (page 17) has two number 3s, so only goes to 6 instead of 7.

Minor grammatical issues

1. The English is generally to a very high standard, however, there are several instances where there are surplus commas, e.g. commas should be removed from lines 21, 32, 39
2. Very occasionally phrasing could be improved, e.g. lines 35-37 on page 7, suggest saying "The data sources were comprised of semi-structured"

3. When mentioning "a MOU" it should be "an MOU".

4. Finally, "an evidence-based research" (mentioned on pages 11 and 14) could be changed to either "evidence-based research" or "an evidence-based research project".

5. There is no need to capitalize the word "internet" when in the middle of a sentence.

Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Does the work include the necessary controls?
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

Not relevant to this manuscript

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