Reviewer's report

Title: Urban Health in Africa: A critical global public health priority

Version: 0 Date: 23 Aug 2018

Reviewer: DERICK AKOKU

Reviewer's report:

Urban Health in Africa: A critical global public health priority

This paper seeks to highlight areas for research that will help advance urban health and enable the African continent achieve global public health targets. I appreciate the authors for taking time to review some published material and use their ideas and thoughts to draft this paper. Nevertheless, I think the authors could consider the following comments to improve the quality of the paper.

Abstract
Line 31: The authors are arguing that: "...a focus on urban health in Africa is urgently required". Comment: Is there any contrary view which contend that urban health should not be advanced in Africa? If so, please provide evidence in the body of the manuscript.

Background
Line:13-20
The authors stated: "The Research Initiative for Cities Health and Equity in Africa (RICHE Africa) Network aims to support improvements in urban health across the continent. The RICHE Africa Network is made up of both early career and established researchers working to support evidence-informed urban public health policy and planning processes in Africa."
Comment: As this is background of your paper, it is the reviewer's view that you should introduce your paper talking about "Urban Health" in Africa which is the subject matter rather than the organization, RICHE Africa.

The importance of Africa for global public health
Line 38-41
"highlighting the importance of addressing population health on this continent for improving global public health."
Comment: The authors should explain to their readers how addressing population health does not improve global public health. In your introductory background, it may be interesting to cite some specific examples of cities in Africa and their projected population. Otherwise, these are generalized statements.

A focus on urban health in Africa
Line 22-28
Comment: This sentence should be made clear and concise to your readers. The use of the phrase "as a result" twice in the same sentence makes it difficult to understand the message the authors are communicating. Please rephrase and simplify this sentence.

Line 55
Comment: It would be helpful if the authors could provide to their readers how these four areas of research were identified. Was it through a review of the literature? Or a Delphi technique etc? Please provide details to your readers.

Line 38/39
"…..need for research into the knowledge and attitudes of key stakeholders"
Comment: The authors should provide details on which area, knowledge and attitudes of stakeholders should be examined. Please explain how such findings will improve urban health in Africa as sometimes knowledge alone does not necessarily translate into action.

1. Increase intersectoral urban health literacy
Line 24-33
"The complexity of African cities needs to be understood, by citizens and policymakers alike, from a Social Determinants of Urban Health (SDUH) (12) perspective, that will allow for investigation and identification of the interlinked multi-level and multi-sectoral determinants of urban health (exposures) and the pathways that connect them to health outcomes (systems), with the objective of improving equity in urban health (8,10)."
Comment: This sentence is too long. I suggest that the authors should rephrase the sentence, make it short or divide it into two sentences.

2. Apply a healthy urban governance and systems approach
Line 56-57
Comment: It is not clear to your readers what reactive and proactive city planning mean. Could the authors provide more information/details to their readers?

Line 16-20
The authors stated that: "Governance is about the ways in which multiple actors work together: the state; civil society; academia; the private sector; and, community-based organizations."
Comment: The authors did not explain why it is important for these actors to work together? Could you explain the purpose? Is it to achieve a goal, enact and implement public policies or societal benefit etc? Please clarify and provide relevant information and details.

Line 37-40
The author's stated: "….requires research to explore and understand the relationships between exposure(s) and the distribution(s) of health outcome(s)."

Comment: The authors did not justify why such research is needed in Africa. Is there a research gap in this area in Africa? What types of exposures are the authors referring to? Please provide
specific examples. Are they environmental exposures? Without concrete details and justification, it is my view that these are just mere statements.

3. Develop a participatory and collaborative urban health planning process
Line 16-19
The authors stated that "...performance management systems at the local government level across health and non-health sectors."

Comment: I think it would be interesting for the authors to further discuss/explain why such plans should be incorporated in the performance management (PM) system. What is the benefit of incorporating such plans in the PM systems?

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

No

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

Unable to assess

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

No

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.

I am able to assess the statistics

Quality of written English
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Needs some language corrections before being published

Declaration of competing interests
Please complete a declaration of competing interests, considering the following questions:
1. Have you in the past five years received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

2. Do you hold any stocks or shares in an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

3. Do you hold or are you currently applying for any patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

4. Have you received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organization that holds or has applied for patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

5. Do you have any other financial competing interests?

6. Do you have any non-financial competing interests in relation to this paper?

If you can answer no to all of the above, write 'I declare that I have no competing interests' below. If your reply is yes to any, please give details below.

'I declare that I have no competing interests'

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal. I understand that my name will be included on my report to the authors and, if the manuscript is accepted for publication, my named report including any attachments I upload will be posted on the website along with the authors' responses. I agree for my report to be made available under an Open Access Creative Commons CC-BY license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/). I understand that any comments which I do not wish to be included in my named report can be included as confidential comments to the editors, which will not be published.

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal.