Author's response to reviews

Title: African vaccination week as a vehicle for integrated health service delivery

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Authors’ Response for Reviewers’ Comments

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Version 3
Date: May 12, 2015
Authors’ response to reviews: See overleaves
Reviewer 4059233891545407

Reviewer’s Report

Major compulsory
1. While statements are made about changes in coverage, there is actually no numbers provided. For example, in the Abstract under Conclusion it states that “…shown positive results particularly in improving immunization coverage”. However, nowhere in the article are any data provided. In fact, it never mentions the number of children or women ultimately reached. I think this would be important to add to quantify the accomplishments of the activity.

Response: The abstract has been reworked to bring in some of the data presented earlier in the main result section (See page 2, lines 45 to 54; section of the abstract on results). We have also reworked the statement to shift emphasis from increasing coverage to number of interventions delivered during the AVW. Thus instead of talking about “positive results” we rephrase the statement to focus on potential for integration (See page 2; lines 56 and 58; section of abstract on conclusion

2. While the article deals with the success of the article, it does not mention any evaluation that was done (or could be done in the future) to assess the activity and which to base their summary. I realize that the information reviewed was from country reports but were there any post-activity assessments conducted?

Response: We have included a section on limitation which flags the need for a carefully planned post campaign survey research in future. The present paper is largely a programme report (See lines 320 to 324 on page 8)

3. Based on the lessons learned in the region, could the authors make suggestions in the Discussion on how the activity could be evaluated in the future, both in terms of coverage changes and any cost-effectiveness studies?

Response: It is hoped that after the fifth edition there will be a post campaign survey, which will then look into the issues of coverage more in-depth. The present paper focuses on the feasibility of integrated delivery of equity focus pro-poor health interventions for now. (See section on limitation in lines 320 to 324 on page 8)

4. Page 3, last 2 ½ lines, it states that the paper will review the achievements made in the areas of raising awareness and creating demand for immunizations. However, no data or information is supplied to address these two issues. Either results on these two topics should be provided or the authors should modify this sentence so it coincides with the remainder of the article.

Response: This statement has been deleted. The section now stops at line 154, with the statement that “This paper reviews AVW reports from the participating countries in the African Region to assess the extent to which integration is occurring in these countries as part of the AVW initiative
5. Page 5, line 196 – the authors choose to include catch-up vaccination activities as the commonest intervention integrated with AVW. Integration with vaccination activities generally refers to the integration of immunization with other non-vaccination interventions, i.e., not with other strategies of vaccination. I think the authors should consider expanding on their choice. The authors could use this as an opportunity to introduce and highlight differences between integration activities depending on whether it is with routine immunization or during week of vaccination activities. I do not think all WHO regions use this concept the same.

**Response:** The major aim of AVW in the African Region is to create awareness and get government and people to appreciate their rights and responsibilities over immunization services. For clearer presentation however, this has been expanded as advised. (See lines 231 to 235)

6. Page 5, line 196 – coverage improvements are again mentioned without any data being provided.

**Response:** This has been reworked to show that the improvement was measured in terms of number of countries delivering multiple interventions in addition to the major goal of creating awareness on immunization. (See Lines 250 to 251)

7. Discussion, page 6, lines 226 and 241. The authors state that integration is a “viable option” (line 226) and other activities “could be integrated easily” (line 241) with the WVA. While this may be the case, no mention is made in the article of logistics and implementation to understand just how the integration proceeded, i.e., lessons learned, the inherent problems, what was easily accomplished, etc. Without some mention or discussion on implementation it is difficult to judge these comments.

**Response:** This has been reworked with some illustrations to show the workability of using AVW as a platform for integrated delivery of interventions. The constraints were also discussed in the discussion section of the paper. (See lines 300 to 310)

Minor essential:

1. The figure needs to be labeled more clearly with a title with AVW spelled out and the legend clearly labeled.

**Response:** this figure has been redrawn in line with the observations. Labels are more clearly stated and the title with AVW spelled out. The legends are clearly labeled. (See Figure 1)
Reviewer 1681932190158005

Reviewer’s Report

Major Compulsory:
This is an interesting topic - using an established health promotion – African Vaccination Week – to promote other health programs. However, I do not see it as a research study, but rather as a report or editorial. In order to improve its usefulness to the reader, I would suggest the following structure:
Introduction

Response: The suggested structure was followed (See details below)

Introduction
Clearly explain what AVW is. When did it start, who started it, what kind of planning went into developing it, What is its purpose, what are the specific guidelines for implementing it, are outcomes being measured, what are some proposed specific activities, who is the target population?

Response: This explanation has been incorporated on the fourth paragraph under ‘introduction’. (See additions to introduction addressing the issues raised by the reviewer in lines 108 to 128)

Explain why AVW is being used to add health activities, especially if it is “an initiative that primarily aims at increasing public awareness on the benefits of vaccines and immunization” as stated in the paper. Describe specific activities related to immunizations that are undertaken and that lend themselves to other activities.

Response: This explanation has been incorporated in paragraph 7. (See lines 150 to 155)

Methods
Specifically state the data collection methods, data collected on the AVW and its quality.

Response: We have elaborated on this section being cognizant of the fact that this is a report. (See lines 162 to 169)

Results
Tables should be parallel or combined into one table. It is difficult to envision changes from one year to the next if the data are not presented in a similar way.

Response: The two tables have been merged in one for easy comparison and the title has been modified to reflect the combined information; the columns have also changed from 3 to 5 showing information for 2013 and 2014 (See Table 1)

The authors indicate numbers of persons treated, but there is no reference information such as denominators or what percentage of a group the numbers constitute. The reader cannot judge the significance/success of the program without these numbers.
Response: This has been reworked to place emphasis on the number of interventions and countries involved. (See Table 1)

There are abbreviations in the tables that should be defined in a legend.

Response: The abbreviations have been defined and included in the list of abbreviations (See lines 338, 339 and 344)

Discussion
Tell the reader why these data represent success or lack thereof. Simply adding health activities may not enhance health if it diminishes the effects of the initial program.

Response: This has been elaborated upon in the discussion section of the report. (See Lines 285 to 288; 300 to 310)