Reviewer’s report

Title: A systematic process for identifying components of a locally desirable and feasible health research priority setting approach: The case of Zambia.

Version: 0 Date: 18 Apr 2017

Reviewer: Abraham D. Flaxman

Reviewer’s report:

Referee Report on HRPS-D-16-00204 - the quest for a framework for sustainable and institutionalized priority setting for Health Research in a Low Resource Setting: the case of Zambia

This paper describes a participatory approach to developing a process for health research Priority Setting. It is a clear and interesting description of what sounds like a very reasonable approach, and I recommend it for publication after some additions and modifications.

The approach described here includes a literature review (page 5, line 18), and I would like the authors to include more detail about the approach they took to this systematic review. The PRISMA guidelines could help make sure this review is fully documented and reproducible.

The validation of the synthesis (page 5, line 20-27) is a unique addition beyond the systematic review, and I think it is a good idea. I would like more detail in the methods section about the number of experts recruited, the response rate of experts approached, and the process by which the experts were selected.

In the Table 1, it would be useful to me and probably make this useful to many other readers to give a more detailed description of each of the PS approaches, including the full name, brief description, and a key reference for further information. If this is too much information for a Table 1, it could be a useful web-appendix.

Minor issues:

In the description of Workshop I (page 5, line 52) the authors state that workshop participants expressed a limited understanding of HRPS. How was this assessed?

Page 6, line 19: step 4 refers to steps 2-4---should this be steps 2 and 3?

Page 6, line 31: were any participants in Workshop I also participants in Workshop II?

In the description of Workshop II (page 6, line 42) are there additional relevant details on the pre-workshop preparation that readers would find useful, such as "root binding" activities to
build consensus before the start of the workshop; or the seniority of the participants, either in budget managed, management experience, or other dimensions?

Page 9, line 7: I would like to know more about what you learned from the potential users of the approach (balanced against protecting their privacy, of course).

Table 3: it would be helpful and interesting to cross-reference these desired features against the existing methods, showing which methods achieve which feature well and not-so-well.

**Level of interest**
Please indicate how interesting you found the manuscript:

An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

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

Acceptable

**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