Reviewer’s report

Title: A RESEARCH UTILIZATION FRAMEWORK FOR INFORMING GLOBAL HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

Version: 1 Date: 03 Apr 2017

Reviewer: Esther Mc Sween-Cadieux

Reviewer’s report:

Title: A research utilization framework for informing global health and development policies and programs

Version: 0 Date: Aprils 3th 2017

Reviewer: Esther Mc Sween-Cadieux

This manuscript was well-written with a good presentation and I really appreciated learning about your organization and your work in Zambia! I also appreciated the FHI360 Research Utilization framework proposed by the authors. I have one general comment and some specific questions that I hope will be useful.

GENERAL COMMENT FOR MY DECISION:

This paper has been submitted as an opinion, but it follows the structure of a research article without the appropriate content (methods, data, results). For an opinion paper, even if the case study is of interest, there is too much information on it, but not enough discussion on the relevance of the new RU framework proposed and its development. Before resubmitting, I propose the manuscript be modified to better correspond to an opinion paper.

Also, I think that before the manuscript is accepted for publication, the authors could argue more why there is a need and an added-value for their framework in the KT field and how it is different (and better!) from other similar frameworks, especially the two cited.

SPECIFIC QUESTIONS AND SUGGESTIONS:

Background and literature review: The literature review could be updated to demonstrate their knowledge of the field and better situate their frameworks among existing models (some reviews of existing KT frameworks have been published in recent years). I found that the justification for developing a new framework could be more robust.

Lines 143-152: In my opinion, this short section on barriers to under-utilization of evidence in policies or programs could be enhanced and nuanced. The recent literature tends to explain that it
is not simply a lack of capabilities or links, but rather that the use of evidence is of «politics» matter.

Framework development: The framework developed by the authors is similar to the 2 frameworks cited; Wilson, Brady, Lesesne (2011) & El-Jadarli, Fadallah (2015) (priority setting/research/translation/institutionalization or uptake). Also, they said they built upon other evidence-based RU frameworks but not enough information was giving on why did they choose specifically to combine these 2 frameworks? More information about the development process may have helped to better understand what changes were made, how and why? Also, the authors have several years of experience in global health and it would have been important to put this tacit knowledge forward and to explain how it influenced the development and modification of the framework. In my opinion, more substantive arguments about the relevance of changes made to the 2 existing frameworks are important.

Dynamic component/user engagement: The authors mention on several occasions the dynamic nature of their framework and it is very relevant in my opinion! However, more explicit details about this user engagement would be helpful for the reader who wants to use their framework. How is this engagement conceptualized and operationalized concretely? Since this collaborative aspect of the framework is important, more information is needed. How end users can be practically involved in study conceptualization or in KT products field-testing? What are the important lessons learned or challenges based on the authors' experiences? How can we measure a meaningful participation or engagement of end users?

Being myself interested in knowledge brokering in global health, the authors give brokers an important place in their framework. It would be important to clarify and deepen the understanding of their roles, tasks and influences in the process (e.g. lines 139/161). Similarly, who are the champions identified in the case study? Who brought him/her on board? (lines 245-246/333).

Context: The need to understand KT within a larger societal and political context is recognized by many. I was surprised to see that the contextual factors were not represented in the (visual) framework. The authors mentioned it as a limit, but an explanation of their choice would have been helpful to understand. Without more information aside, I am not totally certain that the framework does reflect the "real world" of decision-making and evidence use. If I understand correctly, the potential barriers to evidence use and the specific strategies to use in a specific context (translation phase) are decided in collaboration between all actors during the foundational phase? Does your framework offer a rational behind the choice of specific KT products or dissemination activities?

Evaluation component: I was also wondering what is the role of evaluation in your framework? What did you choose to not include an evaluation component during your 4-phase (compared to El-Jadarli & Fadallah, 2015 & Wilson et al., 2011)? Without a rigorous evaluation of KT's activities and processes, it is difficult to know why efforts have leaded to uptake or not. How to know how to improve KT products?

Lines 399: typo (availability)
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