Reviewer’s report

Title: Creating a locally driven research agenda for the ethnic minorities of Eastern Myanmar

Version: 0 Date: 17 Apr 2019

Reviewer: Kun Tang

Reviewer's report:

This is a well-written manuscript, the subject is highly interesting and echoed my previous work in Kachin and Shan states. Research capacity of the ethnic health organizations in Myanmar is seriously undermined by the political conflict, lack of funding and ethnic government's de-prioritization of research. I would suggest several edits where the manuscript could be strengthened:

- Line 110: I agree that EHOs should have control over their own agenda, but could you explain why the research agenda has to be "independent" from national government priorities? Despite the different demographic, culture, resource available, the ethnic groups' health concerns share great similarity with the Ministry of Health and Sports'. The local research agenda may benefit from aligning with the National Health Plan, where more resource would be available.

- Line 120: I would also recommend adding a section explaining why local participatory research is needed. Current a lot of resources have been invested towards service delivery, and donors/NGOs are more willing to scale up their program to cover more population and health focus area. So why should the EHOs prioritize research over program delivery? E.g. decision-making of resource allocation.

- Line 166: If possible, also summarize the existing local research activities into a table. What are their focus, who lead those research activities and who fund them? What are the output? These are really important background information.

- Line 185: I definitely believe that the experience would benefit from analyzing and debriefing local health condition (disease burden, health system structure, etc.) before deciding on the research priorities.

- Line 212: Could you also explain the process of why (and how) health system-related topics were dropped from the final priority list?
- Line 252: Could you explain the process of EHOs submitting their research proposal? Whom are they submitting to? Is it due to the concern over negotiating with the MoHS that discouraged their further submission?

- The manuscript would also largely benefit from quotes from the workshop participants, explaining why local research is needed, why certain topic is prioritized.

- Besides, I recommend comparing the local research agenda with the agenda listed in the NHP. The NHP, despite not specifically target the EHOs, indeed include a series of research activities that are highly relevant with ethnic groups - including task-shifting, EHOs' minimal functional human resource requirement for delivering Basic EPHS, etc.

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