Reviewer's report

Title: Myanmar mortality registration: an assessment for system improvement

Version: 1 Date: 23 Feb 2017

Reviewer: Patrick Gerland

Reviewer's report:

I would like to thank the authors for the revision of their paper, and to address most of our comments and concerns.

The authors have addressed parts of my concerns about their application of the Brass Growth Balance (BGB) and the presentation of their results.

They mention in their reply that "Comparison with deaths from the census (at national and sub-national level) was done in the revised version of the manuscript, with both raw data and adjusted mortality indicators."

But I only see the adjusted mortality indicators, not the comparison with the raw death counts as I requested in my point #5 which the authors have dismissed. I checked the journal guidelines and practices, and there are options for additional tables in online appendix (FYI https://pophealthmetrics.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12963-017-0122-8).

I respectfully disagree with the response of the authors that the comparison between two data sources has already been made with reported deaths (unadjusted) and adjusted mortality estimates, at least in its current form.

If they refer to their table 3, then this paper needs substantial improvements in the presentation of these unadjusted and adjusted information and its related comparisons. This part from my point of view is an essential aspect and contribution of this work and deserves more clarity.

page 12 lines 34+ Death Distribution Methods: Brass Growth Balance method and Preston and Coale method -- OK

But Table 3 shows Completeness of death registration (%) that are different from any of these 2 methods.

Either the results in the text are wrong or the table is wrong. Correct and/or label properly the column in the table to understand what method was used to get the numbers in Table 3.

Are the results in Table 3 based on the first assessment method described in lines 36-40 on page 6? If so this needs to be made much clearer on pages related to Table 3.
Currently the text related to Table 3 would suggest that it is the ratio of 2013 VRS columns in table 3 by those of the 2014 census (report) which themselves are based on "adjusted data from the report" (line 49 page 12).

This explanation is extremely confusing, and the reader has not idea what kind of adjustments or methods were used to derive these adjusted 2014 census mortality indicators used as benchmark.

It is for instance unclear how the infant and child deaths and related rates from the census have been obtained and why kind of adjustments were done: i.e., based on recent household deaths and/or indirect estimation from children ever born and still living?

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 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