Reviewer’s report

Title: Analysis of selected policies towards Universal Health Coverage in Uganda: the Policy Implementation Barometer protocol

Version: 0 Date: 28 Sep 2017

Reviewer: E Paul

Reviewer's report:

Your protocol is already suitable for publications; however, I would like to suggest a few ways of improving it. I don’t know what is your room for manoeuver to take my suggestions into account, considering you have already been granted ethical approval. However, these may be useful on the one hand to improve this publication, on the other hand during future implementation steps of your protocol.

My two main concerns and related suggestions are the following:

1. Your study rests on a cross-sectional survey. However, for several reasons, I think it could be useful to transform it into a longitudinal survey, by administering the same questionnaire say 1-2 years after (possibly to a reduced sample, and/or only through online interviews). Indeed, this could help you assess whether your intended feedback effect is useful - especially since you mention that: "For objective 5, we plan to learn from the process of dissemination of the PIB findings. The main methods of data collection will involve the active documentation of stakeholder reactions and responses to the findings" (page 17) and that you attempt "assessing progress in policy implementation". You mention that the study on the 3 policies is just a first wave, but will be followed by 2 other waves. Please briefly explain how will be performed these following waves and whether it can be treated as a longitudinal survey.

2. Your study implicitly assumes that there are systemic barriers to programme/policy implementation (you acknowledge on page 20 that "The selected policies are not mutually exclusive meaning that some issues may overlap") but also specific barriers. The systemic issues should appear more clearly. Both in your questionnaire and in the way you analyse it and present results, I think it would be worth disentangling between (i) systemic issues/barriers & enablers (common to the 3 policies) and specific issues/barriers & enablers (to each policy/programme). Moreover, you mention the importance of understanding the ToC, include it in the Barometer questions (#2) and briefly mention them on page 15, but do not explain them in the protocol. I guess you have already elaborated a draft ToC, which can possibly be adapted based on respondents' appraisal - and which forcefully integrate
systemic/transversal issues - but your draft ToC should explicitly appear in the protocol (main text or annex), and not just in the questionnaires.

Specific comments:

- **Title:** Consider revising the title of your manuscript, which is not very appealing and imperfectly reflect the contents of the paper; try and make it more precise, for instance by mentioning the PIB or at least selected policies to reach UHC.

- **Abstract:** Please rephrase the sentence starting by "While", and explain how this study is located within the 3 barometer surveys. The fact that this is a theory-driven research could also be mentioned.

- **Page 5:** "Where it exists, it is often about what frontline actors should do to improve policy outcomes but less focused on the upstream actions that support implementation processes…": and also systemic barriers & enablers. The next sentence is a repetition. Next §: spelling of indicator.

- **Page 7:** do you have references regarding the section on policy standards?

- **Pages 9-10:** this section is long and there are duplications, consider synthetizing it.

- **Page 11, Box 1:** question #2 is of a different nature than the others (which deal with respondents' opinions); consider explaining a bit more into details how you are going to deal with that question.

- **Page 12:** why introduce the concept of UHA? This does not seem very helpful.

- **It would be helpful to describe a bit the study setting, i.e. the three policies/programmes studied (either in the main text, or as an annex).**

- **Sampling procedure:** among the 120 expected respondents at national level, I guess some should be considered as transversal or outside the 3 policies - e.g. representative of the MoH dept. for planning, financing, HR, etc., who can help understanding systemic issues (cf. my 2nd main comment).

- **Page 20:** ) missing on line 28, "to" should be suppressed on line 49.

- **It would be helpful to give more details about the practical implementation of your research: how is the research team composed of, who will perform the surveys, etc.**

- **Page 22:** "thank" missing on line 27.
- Table 2 should be simplified because many elements are the same across the 3 programmes; you could have for instance a common module and a specific module for each of them.

- Figure 1: what is its title? Source?

- Spelling should be check in the questionnaires

Suggested additional reference on policy-implementation gap:


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

An article of importance in its field

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

Acceptable

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