Author’s response to reviews

Title: MUAC-for-age more useful than absolute MUAC for nutritional surveillance in Somalia: results from nineteen cross-sectional surveys (2007-2016)

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Reviewer #1

Comment 1: Overall this paper is well written and thought through I like the arguments, discussions and analysis put forward with regards to the recommended new method of assessing MUAC as an indicator for classifying the severity of malnutrition. This is not only very innovative but also informative because it has an implication on the cost effectiveness of the interventions that address SAM given that it has been ranked as the most expensive by the World Bank Report. In future publications may be you could include the cost and policy implications of your study or if it was not included recommend it for further studies.

Response: We thank the reviewer for her comments and positive feedback. Our study did not include a cost-effective component but we agree it will be interesting to include it in future studies.

Comment 2: There are two errors that you will want to correct;

Line 101 - population at study study -----

Line 193 - ----then in in each of the livelihood---
Response: The typos identified have been amended accordingly in the new version.

Reviewer #2

Comment 1: Thank you for asking me to review this publication. Improving the recognition of acute malnutrition to aid nutritional support is crucial and therefore markers that are cost effective and accurate need assessment. I have some recommendations that would require to be made prior to publication.

Minor comment 1: Many of the abbreviations used are written out and abbreviated multiple times - please correct.

Response: We thank the reviewer for this comment. We have reviewed the manuscript and kept the written out and the abbreviation only in the abstract and in the introduction section for the sake of clarity.

Minor comment 2: Would suggest just keeping to MUACAZ as term as sometimes author uses this as abbreviations and sometimes MUAC-for-age - it would make the message much clearer if this is consistent

Response: Thank you for your comment. We have revised the text and modified accordingly.

Minor comment 3: Date of survey - please check 2001-2016 or 2007-2016

Response: Thank you for this comment. We were introducing the time period in which FSNAU had conducted nutrition surveys in Somalia, but we have decided to keep only the period of our data collection for the sake of clarity.

Minor comment 4: Page 6, paragraph 2 - WHZ you also need accurate age, so do not understand this sentence?

Response: For the construction of the WHZ indicator the measures needed are weight and height, that are then compared to the WHO Growth Standard references that take into account the age and sex- dependency of WHZ. We have revised the text to make it more clear.
Major comment 1: The article requires extensive editing in writing as there is a lot of repetition, sections are long and the discussion can be made much more succinct. I give a couple of examples below:

Response: We agree with the reviewer, we have revised and edited the manuscript accordingly and we believe it has improved substantially in clarity of the message, and that no more unnecessary repetitions remain.

Sub-comment 1.1: Box one of the definitions should be moved to the methods, as this would save a lot of text in the method

Response: Box 1 has been moved to Methods.

Sub-comment 1.2: Page 7 last 2 paragraphs can be taken out before method section as in the first paragraph the aim of the study was outlined.

Response: We have removed one of the paragraphs and edited the other one to integrate it in the previous one.

Sub-comment 1.3: Page 8 2nd and 3rd paragraph – delete

Response: We have deleted the 2nd paragraph and edited the 3rd paragraph as we consider a short definition of Somalian livelihoods is appropriate for the text understanding.

Sub-comment 1.4: Results - a lot of the data is in the tables, but is repeated in the written text, this can be significantly shortened

Response: We agree with the reviewer. The text has been revised and edited accordingly.

Sub-comment 1.5: Discussion - needs to be shortened and needs to be much more succinct. Lots of Notwithstanding, nevertheless, therefore.....

Response: We agree with the reviewer. The discussion has been revised and shortened.