

Author's response to reviews

Title: A strategy to improve skills in pharmaceutical supply management in East Africa: the Regional Technical Resource Collaboration for Pharmaceutical Management.

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Author's response to reviews: see over

Reviewer 1

Please find below the response to Tana Wuliji's comments. Tana's comments have been well received and have greatly helped improve the quality of this paper.

MS ID: 1032336891811496

Title: Joint Special Issue [E.2]: Supporting national scale-up of HIV/AIDS, TB and Malaria treatment programs in East Africa through building capacity for pharmaceutical management.

Journal: Human Resources for Health

Authors: Lloyd Matowe, Paul Waako, Richard Odoi Adome, Isaac Kibwage, Omary Minzi and Emile Bienvenu

Tana Wuliji's Comments		Our Response
1	The title perhaps should be rephrased to reflect the focus of the article on developing a regional centers to improve capacity for pharmaceutical management (rather than the current title as it is not clearly described how the initiative has supported scale up)	The title has been changed
2	Background describes TB and Malaria statistics but does not connect adequately to the rest of the article on how capacity building in these areas has been developed in the initiative (only brief mention on page 11 in contributing to Global Fund Proposal writing).	Both Tana and the 2 nd reviewer have correctly picked up of this shortfall. This has been addressed and in addition the paper has been extensively rewritten.
3	Background - are there any other initiatives similar to the RTRC or similar to the approach used in the health sector that should be cited?	Indeed, comprehensive citation to INRUD, a similar initiative of tremendous success has been included.
4	Background: The article focuses on the East African countries of Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania and Rwanda. Perhaps more appropriate for figures relating to HIV/AIDS,	Following the reviewer's comment #2 above the background is now

	<p>TB and Malaria to be mentioned for these countries rather than global data. There is also a need for consistency between 'Africa' and 'sub-Saharan Africa' figures quoted on page 4. It would also be useful to know the existing workforce capacity for pharmaceutical management in these countries (as part of a country detail table?) to have a sense of the need for the RTRC and to what extent the capacity has been expanded through this initiative.</p>	<p>focused on pharmaceutical supply management challenges. As the reviewer correctly pointed out, this is more relevant to the theme than the epidemiology of infectious diseases which was in the original draft</p>
5	<p>Background: Further specific detail of the scale up of HIV/AIDS, TB and Malaria programmes in the countries involved in the initiative is needed to support the argument that the initiative enhanced pharmaceutical management capacity.</p>	<p>As stated above, we have now focused our paper on supply management challenges.</p>
6	<p>Page 5 - pharmaceutical management needs to be defined together with the weaknesses in this area. Give a clear explanation on how this relates to the HIV/AIDS, TB and Malaria programs and need for capacity building in this area (perhaps quote some findings on HIV/AIDS supply management study in Uganda).</p>	<p>Pharmaceutical management challenges have been defined, not only with regard to HIV/AIDS, TB and malaria but pertaining to the whole system.</p>
7a	<p>Methods - Further in depth analysis of the processes, outputs and experiences in developing the initiative is necessary. It is mentioned that the structure was modelled on lessons from INRUD - in what way and how?</p>	<p>We have broken down processes into core group formation, coordination, technical assistance and service delivery activities.</p>
7b	<p>Is the RTRC only focused on the areas of TB, Malaria, HIV/AIDS or does it go beyond these?</p>	<p>After rewriting the paper, we feel this point is now clearer.</p>
7c	<p>What is the precise role of MSH (to seed the RTRC development or to maintain ongoing links with MSH structures?), each institution and country group in the RTRC? How do these roles translate to enhanced capacity for pharmaceutical management and how was their impact measured (were existing efforts expanded, scaled up, or were these new efforts)?</p>	<p>RPM Plus's role has been defined in the section titled 'Technical Assistance'.</p>
7d	<p>Clearer definitions of the activities described in each section is needed (linking regional capacity building activities with national needs and initiatives, strengthening south-south collaboration, promoting a service-oriented approach to ensure sustainability, country core groups). Also to what</p>	<p>The activities undertaken have been defined and discussed in detail.</p>

	extent are these new approaches or an extension of existing approaches (eg providing pharmaceutical training)?	
7e	What is the overall purpose of the country core group (as opposed to the institution) and what are the roles of actors within this multidisciplinary team? How do the country core groups fit into figure 1?	The roles of the country core groups and the regional coordinating mechanism have been described
7f	What form of technical assistance was given by MSH RPM Plus Program?	
8	Results - findings should be presented as outputs from the RTRC with the associated evidence to demonstrate enhanced capacity for pharmaceutical management due to RTRC establishment (ie - how many people were trained that otherwise wouldn't have been, how were materials developed by the RTRC used and by whom, what is MTP and hoe does it apply to pharmaceutical management, to what greater extent are the local institutions contributing to regional initiatives because of the RTRC).	This section has been rewritten as specific activities followed by a comprehensive discussion.
9	A discussion section should be inserted with delineation of findings (to remain in the Results section) and discussion on the findings to focus the arguments to support the conclusion. Further detail on sustainability of the initiative; reflection on the role of country groups, institutions and MSH; and recommendations for further development and the future direction of the RTRC should be added.	A discussion section, including challenges faced has been added
11	Table 1 - would be useful to include the dates associated with each activity and the recipient of the mobilised resources. Additional description of how these mobilised resources contributed to sustainability of the RTRC would be useful.	An overall timeframe through which these resources were mobilized has been specified
12	Figure 1 describes the roles of the institutions. It would be useful to know to what extent these roles were expanded or new compared to existing roles of the institution prior to the establishment of the RTRC. In the methods section it would be important to include more detail on how the RTRC led to an increase in the capacity of the institution to facilitate pharmaceutical management.	The background information, including discussions on sustainability have attempted to address this point.

Reviewer 2

Please find below the response to Professor Hannes Enlund comments. His comments have tremendously improved the quality of this paper.

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	Professor Enlund's Comments	Our Response
1	The abstract should be condensed and without any subheadings	The abstract has been condensed and written.
2	In the background reiterating the scale of problems in major diseases is not very helpful, instead concentrate on problems related to pharmaceutical management, scaling-up treatment programs and capacity building	The background has been re-written to highlight the challenges in pharmaceutical supply management in East Africa and highlighting the need for capacity building in this area.
3	Delete the Methods heading - the Structure subheading could be more descriptive of its contents	The 'methods' subheading has been deleted. The other subheadings have been changed to be more descriptive of the corresponding content.
4	The Outcomes section towards the end would need editing. Now it is more like a shopping list. One option is to make it a proper list of achievements. The other option is to merge some of the subheadings	The 'outcomes' section has been changed to 'activities'. These activities have been described in detail. Significant rewriting has undergone this section.
5	A short discussion section would be helpful -Surely there have been some problems during the project? If not, how does the future and sustainability look like when RPM Plus	A discussion section has been added. This section highlights challenges faced, resource mobilization capabilities, and the potential for the model to be sustainable.

	<p>sponsorship is over. Are the participating countries or other sponsors willing to sponsor intercountry activities etc. Any other messages or challenges concerning similar activities in other parts of Africa (e.g. the west)?</p>	
6	<p>The objectives of the initiative/project is well presented, but the objectives of the paper could also be explicitly presented</p>	<p>This section has been rewritten.</p>
7	<p>On page 6 "RTRC was modeled on lessons learnt from INRUD" - the reader might want to know what these lessons were, is it something explicit?</p>	<p>This has been referenced.</p>