Title: **The Good and the Bad of Global North-South Collaborative Health Engagements: The Case of IU-Kenya Partnership**

**Comments of Reviewer 1:**

This paper sets out to analyse a longstanding collaborative relationship between a North-South partnership between Indiana University and Moi University School of Medicine. Examining such partnerships critically is important to ensure that neither party is exploited and that both parties benefit equitably from such long-term collaborations. This could contribute to the growing literature on the fairness of such collaborations.

**Major comments**

The authors have chosen Aristotle’s concept of friendship between unequal parties as the analytic framework. While this seems defensible, the authors must justify this choice more fully and do not mention what other possible frameworks were considered – consider COHRED’s recent work on fair research contracting – see Carvalho et al (2018) https://gh.bmj.com/content/3/5/e000978.abstract and http://www.cohred.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/COHRED-guidancebookletv-web-ISBN.pdf

See also Parker and Kingori (2016) (with a very similar title): https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0163579

This reviewer has the impression that Moi was also a partner in a Fogarty ethics training grant but ethics capacity building is not mentioned in the paper (p. 3). Would this impact on the exchange analysed in the paper? Were the authors beneficiaries of such training?

From a methodological perspective, no methodological framework (e.g. Thematic analysis, etc.) is described which was applied to the analysis of the qualitative data.

In places the authors describe their results as if they were objective, overlooking the fact that the paper reports on participants’ *perceptions* of the partnership. The word ‘perceptions’ should be more frequently used in the results and discussions section – this was essentially a study of perceptions – there was no factual audit of exchange metrics.

I am not sure whether anonymity was assured in participants’ consent forms because the current tags used for all the direct quotes by participants makes participants clearly identifiable to themselves and to others and this should be carefully revised. These should be carefully revised and made more anonymous – e.g. Kenyan 1, American 1...? Similarly, should Purdue University be named (p. 10)?

There are errors in the reference list.

**Minor comments**

The paper requires careful grammar and scientific writing improvements. Details are too numerous to list.

All abbreviations must be given in full at first mention.

Several assertions (e.g. line 1 of the paper) require referenced substantiation with recent references.

The ‘Findings’ section should probably be the ‘Results’ section.

Table 1 seems a bit prematurely placed in the Findings section because it seems like a summary of the results presented in that section – it could be placed towards the end of the section to serve as a summary overview of main findings. Table 1 should be referred to as a Table and not as a “Diagram”.

The section numbering in the Findings section is not well organised and could be more coherently arranged around numbered cells of Table one to link them more explicitly. The authors must ensure that each cell in Table 1 is also discussed in the narrative. Additional subheadings would make the results easier to digest and link to Table 1.

Where performance of universities is mentioned in the findings (p. 7) it should be mentioned that there are several international university ranking systems that use different metrics and therefore rank the same universities differently.

On page 9, two quotes that are described as making ‘similar’ points do not appear similar.

Small linking statements between sections of the narrative would help the reader follow where the argument is going.

A clear brief summary of the main findings should ideally precede the Discussion section.

The writing in the Discussion section is poor and requires careful editing. In its present form poor writing obscures the points being made and undermines the clarity of the paper.

The Conclusion of the paper fails to mention the term ‘friendship’ which was one of the key Aristotelian concepts used to analyse the relationship. Similarly, the paper would be much more appealing if there were sub-headings in the Conclusions section that referred back to the provocative words ‘good’ and ‘bad’ used in the title of the paper. What was good? What was bad? What can be done to maximise the good and reduce the bad in future collaborations? The conclusions should strive to make some general points for all such collaborations, and not just summarise the local situation studied. What are the major lessons learned from the paper?

O**verall Evaluation and Recommendation:** The paper is not suitable for publication in its present form. It has potential and requires major revision.