Reviewer's report

Title: Health Research Profile to assess the capacity of low and middle income countries for equity-oriented research

Version: 4 Date: 15 February 2006

Reviewer: Ole Norheim

Reviewer's report:

I have now reread the original paper, the revised paper, the other referees concerns and the authors’ responses. My conclusion is that you not should publish the paper. My own concerns with the methodology, and especially the other reviewers, have not been adequately handled.

I will just give one example: the data presented in table 2 for the indicator “Balance of spending on general fields of research” indicate e.g. that Thailand spends “46% on biomedical research, 20% on health systems research, and 2% on behavioural research” and Nicaragua spends “51% on Public Health research”. No sources are given, nor is the indicator explained further.

This mix of qualitative research methods “relying on existing datasets, supplemented by interpretation of data and selection of proxies by key informants from within the health research systems” is not the adequate method for collecting data of this kind. The chosen methodology does not assure the reader that these data are valid nor reliable, and the same holds for many of the other variables. The authors do not adequately address this fundamental problem with the paper.

I apologise for not seeing this more clearly when I first reviewed the paper.

What next?: Reject because scientifically unsound

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.