Reviewer’s report

Title: Improving district level health planning and priority setting in Tanzania through implementing accountability for reasonableness framework: Perceptions of stakeholders

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Reviewer: Hans Jochen Diesfeld

Reviewer’s report:

The authors present an interesting research report on an attempt to improve district level health planning and priority setting in Mbarali District in Tanzania. For the first time, it is said, in three African countries a new tool is tried out "Accountability Priority Setting for Trust in Health Systems (REACT) in order to improve planning and priority setting (Accountability for Reasonableness, involving local professional and lay stakeholders. 20 different stakeholders and actors from the official health system (CHMT) were interviewed, whereby community members from user committees, as part of the CHMT were included.

The result of this study under the thematic framework approach were well presented, whereby citations from interviewees were very telling examples of "people's voice".

The most interesting result for the reviewer was the participatory approach to health care planning process, whereby the providers and consumers views about this approach was quite interesting. It was carefully mentioned as ".....challenge to socio-political and traditional conditions". In other words both parties were found not to be used to a "bottom-up approach" in contrast to the traditional "top down approach" of traditional administrative processes.

The authors are self-critical towards generalisability of their results but still maintain that this approach needs further elaboration and testing.

The study results were well presented and discussed. Obviously being part of an international and long-term study from 2007 till 2012, these study results presented in 2010 should therefore be called "preliminary results".

The complex study of which this is only part should be mentioned more clearly. Furthermore it would have been helpful for the reader to have in an annex the interview guidelines in order to follow more closely the interview process, and reasoning and the leading concept behind.

The fact that the method seems to be derived from US and Canadian examples initially made the reviewer suspicious that there would be something transported into a strange environment. But this suspicion could be easily waved after having read the text.
A table of content and a list of abbreviations to begin with would have been helpful.

The research question and methodology are briefly discussed against international literature.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that there are no conflicting or competing interests from my side.