Reviewer's report

Title: Engaging NGOs for health systems strengthening: A qualitative study presenting viewpoints of government, NGOs and donors in Pakistan.

Version: 2 Date: 20 April 2011

Reviewer: Ayesha Khan

Reviewer's report:

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined? Yes
2. Are the methods appropriate and well described? Yes, but more detail about the seniority and expertise of the respondents would be helpful.
3. Are the data sound? Yes
4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition? The presentation of Result 1 is incomplete and doesn't reflect triangulation. More views of NGOs and government respondents should be used and the results should show not one single view, but the range of views that were expressed. In result 2 the literature and respondents views appear to be unified, was there really no diversity of opinion? Results 3 and 4 are more comprehensively presented. However, avoid any use of “majority” or “some” to introduce views, since this is not a quantitative study. Result 5 is too important to be illustrated with just one quote.
5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data? More detail would enhance the quality.
6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated? Yes
7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished? Yes
8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found? Yes, but could include literature review as a part of the title.
9. Is the writing acceptable? Yes, with some editing. For example, in the background section at the start of the article, there should be at least two paragraphs rather than one long one.

- Major Compulsory Revisions: None

- Minor Essential Revisions

The key area of revision for this article is the manner of use of the qualitative data. As the authors have stated, the interview material elicited some themes useful for the purpose of this analysis. Since these themes are presented as findings, the authors could avoid using the language of quantitative data to illustrate – for example, “most” or “many” respondents have x, y or z view. The sample is not designed to give us proportions or percentages, it is designed to
compare and contrast views of the respondents. Particularly in the illustration of
the first finding, more than one quote needs to be used to illustrate the point.

- Discretionary Revisions

The writing style in the draft article avoids the regular use of articles such as
“the”, “a” or “an”. If they are inserted in existing sentences as needed it will help
the flow of the article.

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely
related research interests

**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 I have no competing interests.