Reviewer's report

Title: "What counts": Health workers’ preferences for public or church-run health facilities in Tanzania

Version: 1 Date: 13 December 2011

Reviewer: Ian Couper

Reviewer's report:

Minor Essential Revisions

The referencing style is inconsistent and does not fit the standard requirements. Some numbers in the text have page numbers following and others do not – this does not appear to relate to direct quotations either as it is inconsistent in regard to these too. (There are also too many direct quotations.)

The section “Health worker recruitment and employment in Tanzania” has too much detail. It should be incorporated into the background as one paragraph.

Elements of the methods section are repetitive.

The paragraph in Methods “Many of the health workers interviewed, both in the public and in the church-run sectors ... from public health facilities” is more appropriately part of results.

It is not clear what the meaning is of the processes described in the following lines: “The material was subject to a thorough review and coding of the content for the identification of central themes. Both recurring themes and patterns and contradictory or ambiguous statements were systematically searched for. Documents collected during the course of the research period were systematically reviewed, for example the district’s Council Comprehensive Health Plan and national documents that were central sources of information.”

The Results section should start with a summary of the demographics and details of those who were interviewed (IDIs & FGDs).

The whole results section is too long – shorten some of the quotations.

The comment at the end of the sub-section on Human resource management is more appropriately part of the discussion.

The sub-section (unheaded) starting with the paragraph “The importance placed on the pension scheme calls for some additional considerations. The pension takes the form of a combination of a lump sum paid upon retirement and a monthly pension payment thereafter ...” should be part of the background, and presented more succinctly too. I don’t think the tables are appropriate.

Much time and attention is given to the issue of pensions. Was that specifically asked about or raised by the researchers in the interviews and FGDs? If so, this
should be stated clearly. If not, it is not clear why this is such a focus (to the exclusion of other issues). Can the conclusions drawn be fully substantiated on the basis of the results?

There is repetition in the discussion section.

I am not sure in 2 cases where “see also x” referring to another reference means – there are already too many references and some could be cut out.

Discretionary Revisions

A diagram to illustrate the key findings (the two axes) described in the discussion would enhance the article.

Additional references which relate to the article but which are not mentioned are:


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