Reviewer’s report

Title: Analysis on the equity of government investment to primary healthcare institutions during the 3-year health reform in China

Version: 5 Date: 24 December 2012

Reviewer: Subhash Pokhrel

Reviewer’s report:

This paper attempts to analyse equity implications of government investment in primary care health institutions in China and offers potential for other countries to learn some key lessons from the Chinese health care reform. This makes this paper interesting but I have some serious concerns. It is not clear what the paper intends to do really. How does ‘improvement in financial equity’ relate to the ultimate outcome which is better access to those who need health services and often unmet needs are found in those who are the poorest section of the population? The authors assume that increasing government investment in primary healthcare institutions improves equity. I am not convinced this assumption alone is enough to justify this paper. The authors do not explain fully how this translates to the equity definition they provide in the Introduction section (“Equitable health financing means that healthcare payments are based on one’s ability to pay, and that people in need of health services, especially the poor, can access such services without putting themselves at risk of a financial catastrophe”). I don’t think just looking descriptively at increased spending levels alone provides enough grounds to conclude equitable outcomes. Moreover, the measures used to compare an increase in government expenditure are very crude, so are the methods to compare government spending in two time points. Population demographics, socio-economics and current disease burden play significant role in determining equitable outcomes and one can imagine significant variation in these attributes by geographical locations. Without better conceptual framework of analysis, it is hard to justify publication of this paper.

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

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.