Reviewer’s report

Title: The players and the process behind Uganda’s National Health Insurance Scheme: a case study of Uganda

Version: 5 Date: 26 May 2013

Reviewer: Irene Akua Agyepong

Reviewer’s report:

General comments

The document is improved and the authors have clearly made efforts to address the concerns raised. I think they however still need to do some more careful thinking, critical analysis and revision to improve the quality of this paper.

I still think this is interesting, and potentially very informative and useful to readers and should be published. However major revision is still needed for the paper to attain its full promise.

The authors also need to carefully and critically go over the document (and read and re-read their revision) to pay attention to correcting minor grammatical, editorial mistakes and style issues such as missing words / some sentences made up phrases that are not well linked together to make a clear sentences etc.

The writing can be considerably tightened in several places without losing meaning.

Specific comments

I think you need to think through the structure of this paper again.

Context

The description of context can be improved

The section labeled political context (page 5) does not really describe political context. The first line is on economic growth (should be put under socio-economic context). The second line is on poverty prevalence /incidence (should probably also be put under socio-economic context). The rest of it is on the MDG and health service access (should probably be put under the health system, health goal attainment or some similar heading. It will be helpful to under political context give readers some idea of the kind of political governance system Uganda has e.g. and the implication for the proposed reform. My understanding is that this paper is essentially an analysis of stakeholder power, interest, positions and reactions related to a proposed reform. Political governance systems can affect the way stakeholders exercise power etc

Information is also needed on socio-economic context. Economic growth is mentioned in one line under political context. And health spending per capita and
proportion government spending on health under financing. What is the GNI or GDP of Uganda? What proportion of its population is in formal versus non formal employment? Etc. These are all important contextual considerations in the UHC related reforms in SSA.

There are not so many texts that deal with how to describe the context of policy reform, but the authors might like to look at the following to help them think through how to better describe the context in relation to the reform and issues of interest being presented in this paper:


The content of the reform under consideration needs to be clearly presented somewhere for the convenience of the reader. It is also important to be able to relate the content to how the stakeholders reacted to the proposals and why

Process
What was the first feasibility study?
Why did it not lead to any firm policy or implementation?
Why was there a need to commission a second feasibility study?

I find you are actually presenting information related to an analysis of stakeholder power, interests and positions and how they played out in influencing events under this section. Perhaps instead of this section on process, which overlaps your stakeholder analysis section, after describing the context, you might just want to briefly provide a sequence of events in this section on process or else merge it with your findings. You may also choose to provide the information on the content of the proposed reform here. All the other information could then join the information you present later related to the stakeholder analysis

Objectives
The objective of this paper is clearly stated in the abstract as “To depict how stakeholders and their power and interests have shaped the process of agenda setting and policy formulation for the proposed national health insurance scheme in Uganda” It is clearly stated as such in the abstract but becomes harder to clearly find stated in the body of the paper. It appears to be more implicit. It is important to clearly outline the objective in the body of the paper. It will also help the authors in structuring their work to keep remembering the objective. Sometimes the paper is not as focused as it could be.

I think it is important to keep remembering this objective and let it influence the presentations. Perhaps clearly state the objectives of the paper just before presenting the methodology, to remind the reader
Methodology
My impression of this paper is that that methodology is a single case study of agenda setting and policy formulation related to the proposed national health insurance scheme in Uganda. It involved an analysis of context, content of the proposals and process as well as a retrospective stakeholder analysis.

I find the first paragraph under methods rather confusing. Perhaps the authors should relook at it, think again exactly what they are trying to say and make sure it is stated clearly in less confusing language.

Conceptual framework
You still need to improve the way the section on conceptual framework is written. What is the policy network approach? How did you use it in this work since you say it informed your conceptual framework? What is the Walt and Gilson triangle? How did it inform your conceptual framework? I think presenting the conceptual framework after stating the problem and your objectives, before describing the methodology may be useful in terms of natural flow of the paper.

Results and discussion
The descriptive is strong, the analytical is weaker.

If you are using the Walt and Gilson framework you need to link the information about context and content of the reform as well as the processes to the analysis of the actors (stakeholders) and their interests and link all these elements to explain how they have influenced Uganda’s current state in relation to the proposed reforms i.e. the analytic needs to be strengthened

The articles below on stakeholder analysis may be helpful

The tables are very useful

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.