Reviewer's report

Title: Evaluating the impact of equity focused health impact assessment on health service planning: Three case studies

Version: 1 Date: 7 May 2014

Reviewer: Sume Ndumbe-Eyoh

Reviewer's report:

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined?
The authors provide a clear rationale for the study and clearly define the research questions.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described?
Methods
Minor Essential Revisions
Retrospective case study was an appropriate method given the research questions. The sampling criteria and rationale is well-defined.
The process of narrowing down from 4 to 3 case studies should be made more transparent (what criteria were missing which caused one case to be excluded?)
Data collection – “Semi-structured interviewed followed a guide (see Table 2) and where possible documents relating to the original plan, the EFHIA and subsequent implementation documentation was obtained (see Table 1).”
Where documents obtained from everyone interviewed? If not please provide rationale.

3. Are the data sound?
Minor Essential Revisions
Generally there needs to be more information provided on the actual changes to decisions that were made. Where some changes easier to implement than others?
Case 1
Pg 12 The results for case 1 one indicate that the recommendations were implemented to some extent. Provide a sense of what was implemented, what wasn’t implemented.
The bullet point missing from the beginning of page 13
Case 2
Pg 14 – check numbering on implementation stages of EFHIA
Pg 17 – last sentence is incomplete
Pg 28 – “informed decision making to some extent but to not lead to changes decisions and implementation”
The distinction between “informing” and “changing” decisions is not clear.
Pg 36 – the first quote is not clear. You can delete the first two words (I don’t) and leave as
“I’ve already said this but in my head that many of them the areas that I probably overlooked the most would [have been] equity related.”

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?
Yes. The authors use two established guidelines and report on them appropriately.

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?
Minor Essential Revisions
Pg 43 – In the implications section the statement that EFHIA can improve health service planning should be qualified – what specific aspects can EFHIA improve based on the three case studies? Eg. Appears to improve considerations about health equity but less likely to change actual decision-making and implementation.

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. The introduction outlines previous published work on the evaluation of health impact assessments

8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?
Yes

9. Is the writing acceptable?
Minor Essential Revisions
Yes. There are a number of typos and errors throughout the document. A general copy edit should be conducted.

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

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

**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