Reviewer's report

Title: Increased fairness in priority setting processes within the health sector: the case of Kapiri-Mposhi District in Zambia

Version: 1 Date: 17 September 2012

Reviewer: Flora Fang-Hwa Teng

Reviewer's report:

Major Compulsory Revisions

The authors have chosen an interesting question of understanding the current status and ongoing change of fairness in priority setting in Kapiri-Mposhi District in Zambia. They describe this within the context of the REACT project and wished to undertake a baseline and evaluation assessment of the project to understand this question. They elected to use in-depth interviews, focus groups, and documentary review as their evaluation methodology.

1. Important to this methodology is accurately describing the in-depth and focus group discussion guide with the references that the authors used to develop the questions (Methods, Paragraph entitled: Data collection techniques). The authors need to address this issue by attaching an appendix with this discussion guide. Further to this, the authors should mention who conducted the focus groups, interviews, within the text of the paper.

2. In addition, the data collection techniques paragraph should also include how the authors translated any interviews that were not conducted in English. Secondary this is the importance of cultural interpretation. I understand that the primary author is native to Zambia and will understand the cultural context, but this should be clearly stated, as it is important to the interpretation of data.

3. Within the Methods, Data Analysis section, paragraph 1, the authors mention that the data was triangulated, but they did not give reference to the methodology.

4. As well, the nature and methodology of the ‘mystery visits’ should be clearly identified.

5. Within the Results section, the authors utilized the Accountability of Reasonableness Framework for data analysis. The transparency and relevance condition were addressed, but the appeals and enforcement were not addressed at all. The authors should include whether this analysis was completed. Additionally, a table with the major themes and associated quotes would be beneficial to add to the richness of the data. Did any other major themes emerge? In what ways did traditional priority setting methods continue to influence the priority setting process?
6. Overall, the importance of contextualizing fairness in priority setting in Zambia is a critical issue that should be addressed. The authors should strengthen their discussion with a deeper literature review to place this process in the context of other nations within their region.

Minor Essential Revisions

7. There are minor grammatical errors and spelling mistakes in the following paragraphs. The authors should take to address is:
   - Data Analysis, paragraph 1
   - Ethics, paragraph 1
   - Results, paragraph 1
   - Stakeholder Involvement, paragraph 2
   - Background for transformation, paragraph 1

Discretionary Revisions

None

**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:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I have no interests to declare.