Reviewer's report

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

**Version:** 2  **Date:** 10 February 2013

**Reviewer:** Francois Dionne

**Reviewer's report:**

The key message from this paper is that the formal introduction of AFR in the health care priority setting processes in the Kapiri-Mposhi District has been found to have lead to increased transparency, accountability and publicity and a broadening of stakeholder involvement in PS processes. This is worth publicizing. However, for the message to be accepted, the process leading to the conclusion must be proper. While that may be the case, it does not come across that way in the current manuscript.

Major compulsory revisions:

- The distinction between 'legitimacy' and 'relevance' is confused throughout the manuscript and has to be clarified. Wide stakeholder participation improves legitimacy but relevance is related to the linkage between the reasons for the decisions and the context- i.e. the reasons have to be relevant to the context. As stated on page 26, wide participation MAY facilitate relevance but there is no direct linkage as seems to be implied throughout the manuscript.

- The presentation of the results has to link much more clearly to the methods section. Even accepting that there is no formal 'pre' and 'post', wouldn't it make sense to review the status of each of the four AFR conditions at the baseline and then later? So the results could be presented by AFR condition, with a reference to the source for each key piece of evidence and how it was supported by the other sources (triangulation).

Minor essential revisions:

There are many errors of language that obscure the message. Examples are:

- Equality and impartiality principles were said to be regularly be utilized during human resources planning sessions p13

- Deduced from the audit report for the year 2010, which, compared to the previous years, had fewer audit queries p22

- It should moreover be emphasized that during the project period seems to have had a leadership which in a particular way embraced and championed the need for observing objectivity, p25

**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 declare that I have no competing interests