Reviewer’s report

Title: Technical efficiency of public health centres in Sierra Leone: a DEA application

Version: 1 Date: 21 July 2005

Reviewer: Antonio Giuffrida

Reviewer’s report:

General
The topic of Efficiency in the Delivery of Health Services is important. The lack of studies in developing countries make the study particularly welcomed.

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

1. The authors should clarify the institutional setting of the Health Facilities analyzed to understand weather the specific model utilized is appropriate. In particular:
   a. The authors use the DEA/VRS outputs oriented model. However, it is not clear why the Decisions Making Unit (DMU) should have control over the output rather than over the input. The author should explore if significant differences exists between the DEA/VRS outputs and input oriented models.
   b. How incentives work? How are staffs paid? Do they have incentives to increase output?

2. It is not clear if the model is well specified. In particular:
   a. Are the outputs used in the analysis considering the all range all health services provided by the DMU?
   b. Are the inputs used in the analysis considering all the input used by the DMU?
   If these conditions are not satisfied and trade-off exists between inputs and/or output the model would not be well specified and the results probably biased.

2. The author should control for the catchment area of the health unit. Larger physical areas and more potential patients may require more staff.

3. I have some doubts on the robustness of the analysis after looking at the summary statistics of the Input Variables. The two input are discrete number with very small range.

4. In conclusion, the value added of the paper is quite limited. To increase the value of the paper, the authors should try to understand the origin of the inefficiencies. Some hypothesis:
   a. Health facilities located in more rural areas serving a more dispersed population might be more inefficient.
   b. Identify the skill mix are efficient.

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)
What next?: Reject because too small an advance to publish

Level of interest: An article of insufficient interest to warrant publication in a scientific/medical journal

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests