Reviewer's report

Title: Health financing in Malawi: Evidence from National Health Accounts

Version: 1 Date: 19 May 2010

Reviewer: Xiaoyun Liu

Reviewer's report:

The authors had a clear and rather brief description of health expenditures in Malawi using national health account (NHA) data. More in-depth analysis and possibly more data sources are needed to draw the conclusions and policy recommendations as the authors did in the paper. I enclose here some of my major comments on the paper for the authors to consider.

Major compulsory Revision:

1. Much more details are needed in the method section, e.g. how do you get the data? How do you define key indicators and extract data from NHA? How do you analyze the data? Any thoughts about the limitation of the study (for example, reliability of NHA data)?

2. The decline share of private sources in the total health expenditure does not necessarily mean a reducing financial risk to the households. First, this is only a relative proportion, not in real terms; second, the authors did not have the household data to measure their ability to pay and therefore no sound data source to analyze the household financial risk. Furthermore, the results in figure 2 and the discussion are not consistent.

3. Many of the policy recommendations are inconclusive. For example, the discussions on the increasing prevalence of communicable and non-communicable disease have no evidence to support. Similarly, the authors did not mention any prepayment mechanism at all in the results and discussion, but raised this as a policy option for health financing in Malawi.

Level of interest: An article of limited interest

Quality of written English: Acceptable

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.