Reviewer's report

Title: Human Rights, Health and the State in Bangladesh

Version: 2 Date: 13 March 2005

Reviewer: Elizabeth Reid

Reviewer's report:

General

The paper contains some interesting data on the specialist, curative and urban bias of health care in Bangladesh, on the distribution of care and on expenditure patterns. Its framing in terms of human rights and the role of the State is repetitious and could be pruned.

Most data sets could be brought up to date. Data should be gender disaggregated wherever possible and relevant. Some of the data would have been more effective if presented in tabular form.

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

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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)

The repetitions in sections I & III could be pruned and the framework tightened and more clearly articulated. There seems to be a confusion about the obligations of states parties to international human rights treaties, such as Bangladesh, between the responsibility to provide and the responsibility to ensure the provision of health services. In international HR law, the right to health is a claim to a set of social arrangements, laws, institutions, norms, policies, etc. that can best lead to the enjoyment of the right. At other times the right to health seems to be treated as an absolute right rather than a right to be progressively realised.

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

Section II
Introduction: a more up to date figure could be provided for the representation of businesses in Parliament. Striking data.


Health indicators: there is an argument that social/health progress has been more rapid and more broad based in Bangladesh than in India (Jean Dreze "Bangladesh shows the way", The Daily Star, Dhaka, 18 December 2004). Use of the Gini coefficient might strengthen the argument about maldistribution of access to services.

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions
Level of interest: An article of limited interest

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

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:

The reviewer has worked in the health sector in Bangladesh with both the government and the UN on several mission during the last year.