Reviewer’s report

Title: Removing financial barriers to access reproductive, maternal and newborn health services: The challenges and policy implications for Human Resources for Health

Version: 1 Date: 15 February 2013

Reviewer: Juliet Nabyonga

Reviewer’s report:

1. General comment:
This is a well written manuscript that adds to the debate on user fee abolition/fee reduction to improve access to health services. The focus on HRH is a good addition to this debate.

2. Compulsory comments:
   Abstract:
   There is no mention of improving access to reproductive, maternal and newborn services which is the focus of the paper.

   Methods:
   Field studied:
   Reasons why only Sierra Leone and Ghana were chosen for field studies are not stated, was this to fill in data gaps from literature review for these countries? In Sierra Leone, no KIs were conducted despite the team being there for a filed visit, was the reason time constraint? What kind of questions were KIs responding to?

   Literature review:
   Para no. 14 starting with ...Very few studies....
   The information about Nepal is confusing, authors say, literature cites a shortage in Nepal, and gain say workforce remained stable or increased in Nepal. This needs to be rephrased for clarity.

   Conclusions:
   Second para; among the investments to be made, we also need to highlight addressing the mal-distribution which could be done through incentive schemes. Authors have highlighted this in earlier sections but need to be stated here as well.

3. Minor comments:
   Introduction section:
   The last para. That states the sub-questions. Stock of HRH is mentioned as one
of the workforce characteristics but seems to be left out in the sub questions.

Methods:
First sentence under –Desk based data analysis and document review –
There seems to be a missing word after Central Statistical Offices and similar ---
was
Please check again.

Results:
2) The geographical distribution of the health workforce.
Para no. 2.
Where are the case study country annexes? Are they part of the reports? If yes then provide reference for these reports for those who want to review them.

Para after – FIGURE 2 HERE
There is no figure 4, did you mean figure 2?

Second para after TABLE 2 HERE
Can the authors provide a dollar equivalent for ZK800,000 in brackets please?

Discussion:
Para 1. The first sentence is not clear, there are five case studied. Authors should look at this again.
Last sentence on this para. May need English correction .... “access to effective are through financing policy change”

Last sentence on para 2. I think it would be better to state as GNI/GDP given the order in which countries and mentioned earlier in the sentence.

References:
Please check reference 31 again.
The correct paper seems to be –
Manassé Nimpagaritse, Maria Paola Bertone; The sudden removal of user fees: the perspective of a frontline manager in Burundi. In HPP
Check other references again, some have journal titles in upper case.

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**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