Reviewer’s report

Title: Task-shifting and prioritisation: a situational analysis examining the role and experiences of community health workers in Malawi

Version: 1 Date: 27 November 2013

Reviewer: Wanda Jaskiewicz

Reviewer’s report:

Thank you for the opportunity to review this valuable study, which adds much needed evidence to the literature on the limits of work load and its effects on performance and productivity.

Discretionary Revisions:

1. To better set the context for the task sharing and other findings, consider including additional information in the description section on HSAs re their education background and other selection criteria, the length and type of the basic training they receive, as well as their employment conditions (i.e. are they on payroll/establishment list, how are they remunerated: salary or other incentives).

2. There is much mention of HSAs doing a number of jobs that they were not originally trained to do, and except the instance where it is cited that someone who is trained comes back and shows the peers what s/he learned (though were not trained as trainers), it is very unclear from whom the HSAs received the instructions or authority to do additional tasks. If someone (NGO, district, etc.) requested this/added the tasks on to their job expectations, do they then provide some level of instruction (even if inadequate) of what to do with the medicine/test/material/etc.? I believe this needs to be further described to understand how the HSAs are in the position they are in with increased task shifting.

3. The findings show that supervisors and policymakers perceive the training of HSAs as inadequate and some task shifting being done with no training at all--have they then tried to adjust policies or programs to address this? Have studies been done to assess the quality of the HSAs’ work and recommendations acted upon? It would be helpful to add this information, if available.

4. The study points out a number of challenges in the district’s HSA program. How have the study results and recommendations been shared with stakeholders? Are they now planning to implement needed interventions to address the challenges? It would be valuable to show how the evidence generated is being used in decisionmaking.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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.