Reviewer's report

Title: Time to Address Gender Discrimination and Inequality in the Health Workforce

Version: 1 Date: 12 December 2013

Reviewer: Narjis Rizvi

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1. Does it address an important or timely issue?
It does address an important and timely issue.

2. Is it well reasoned?
Although reasoning is extensive, however the presentation/expression of reasoning needs organization and logical sequencing.

3. Is it relatively balanced, or does it make plain where the author's opinions might not represent the field as a whole?
The author has primarily focused on the importance of gender in HRH.

4. Is the standard of writing acceptable?
The standard of writing is perfect. However, the expression of thoughts needs organization and smooth flow.

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

1. Abstract
1.1. Rationale needs to be more organized, structured and convincing. This can be done by simply spelling out what is the problem and what are the underlying factors of the problem. Then explain in a logical way how the underlying factors are leading to the outcome.

1.2. “Social Justice” and “Human Rights” are mentioned in the abstract which are broadening the focus. Moreover, later these are not addressed sufficiently.

1.3. Number of words of the abstract needs to be reduced, if possible.

2. Background
2.1. Again, the rationale needs to be more organized and sequenced logically. The suggestion given in the abstract section is applicable here as well.
2.2. The write-up should be made more reader-friendly. Sentences are very complex. Many factors are identified and mentioned in one sentence. In some of the cases even the link/relationship between/among them or their link with the main outcome is not clearly explained. For example: “HRH experts have observed that health workforce gender imbalances are a major challenge for health policy-makers [1]; that improving gender equity is essential to strengthen workforce numbers, distribution, and skill mix [2]; and that HR policy and planning failures are traceable to HRH leaders’ failure to account for gender [2]”. Brief sentences with one clearly leading to the next would be a better choice.

2.3. The whole background is one paragraph. Would be better if given in 2-3 smaller paragraph and each of these discusses one idea that sets the stage for the next one.

3. Review/Results
3.1. The second paragraph of the Section of “Framing and Implicating Gender” discusses Gender Discrimination. However, Gender discrimination is discussed again as a separate section namely “Gender Discrimination: Definitions, Forms, and Types”. This strategy is fine if author can explain why this done so and what will be discussed in each of these sections. Otherwise discuss “Gender Discrimination” in one section.

3.2. Data from Countries: The data from countries shows differences in proportion of males and females in various categories. However, the author is drawing an inference that these differences are because of unequal opportunities. This needs justification.

Kenya: Author presented data that shows differences in proportion of males and females in various occupation programmes, faculty categories and promotion rates. However, the inference is drawn that “These findings suggested the unequal opportunity for education and employment that is associated with occupational segregation.” This comment needs justification.

Uganda: The data from Uganda show differences in proportion of males and female in the income categories and wages. The author infers that “These findings suggested the unequal opportunities that are associated with occupational segregation.” This comment needs justification.

3.3. Only two countries’ (Kenya and Uganda) have been presented separately. It would have been better if information of all the countries (Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda and Zambia) is presented together in one section.

4. Discussion
The key points of the discussion are not coming out directly from the results. The results mainly show sex-disaggregated data in various categories whereas the discussion is very comprehensive and extensive mentioning broad strategies and interventions around Gender equity in HRH.

5. Conclusion
Table 3 is given in conclusion which is totally new information. Conclusion also
stands alone and is not drawn from what study has found.

6. Tables

6.1. Table 1: This table gives definitions extracted from dictionary and International labour Organization and WHO. These are basic concepts and can come before operational issues related to these definitions are described.

6.2. Table 2: Most of the information given in this table is also conceptual. There is very less utility of this information in this commentary. And if author feels it to be crucial, consider presenting this before the practical examples.

7. Figures

7.1. Too many figures. Consider reducing the number of figures

7.2. Figure 2- Rather than numbers, present the data in percentage as in other figures.

7.3. Figure 4-The data in this figure is not very convincing.

7.4. Figure 5- This is very busy and it is difficult to get any useful information out of this

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

Abstract

In the 2nd line the understanding should come before measurement.

In the 17th line there is an extra full stop.

Background

Last Paragraph of the Background-Consider changing “I present ….” to “The review presents….”. The same writing style can also be used for the other sentences of this paragraph.

Figures

It would be better if same colours are used for males and females in all the figures.

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**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

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