Reviewer's report

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

**Version:** 2  **Date:** 27 March 2014

**Reviewer:** Narjis Rizvi

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I am generally happy with the authors' revisions, but would still like the following Changes:

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

1. **Abstract**
   
The abstract has been shortened and structured. It is fine, if being commentary, it does not follow the usual structure of a research article abstract. I still however feel that there should be separate small paragraphs each of them describing: the problem, how this paper is approaching the problem, what will be presented, and what needs to be done.

2. **Introduction**
   
The introduction has been improved significantly. I have following concerns:
   
   2.1. The introduction starts with the sentence; “HRH experts have noted that health workforce gender imbalances are a major challenge for health policy-makers.” If this is so than why are they not addressing this? You need to add few lines that describe the reasons behind lack of attention by policy makers and programme managers to gender inequality.
   
   2.2. The introduction clearly identifies that gender inequality leads to HRH problems, however there has been vagueness as to “where” and “how” to achieve gender equality.
   
   2.2. There is less clarity in the paper as what underlies gender inequality, what are its causes and how does it effect.

3. **Review/Results**
3.1. The article is focusing primarily on “Gender inequality of HRH mainly in
terms of pre-employment opportunities, hurdles/constraints at workplace and financial implications”. In addition to these, several gender-based factors exist that influence the capabilities/abilities of women and hence their eligibility for employment. It would be good if this is explained in an earlier paragraph in the introduction section as “scope of this review” so that it clarifies what to expect from this paper.

3.2. On page 8- two lines are added that introduce the next two sections namely “Gender discrimination and inequality in health pre-service and employment systems”. However then suddenly a new section is starting titled “Insights from Sex-disaggregated Administrative Data”-without any description as to how would it support and add evidence to the objective of review.

4. Conclusion

4.1. I still believe that irrespective of the type of article, conclusion should not have any new information. Yet however, most of the information documented in the conclusion section is new.

4.2. The conclusion is extremely lengthy and is extending on to two pages (13-15) without table 4 and three pages with table 4. This should be shortened and be made more focused.

4.3. The conclusion should summarize key findings of the review and discuss issues around those. In the current version the conclusions are not drawn from what review has found.

5. Tables: The tables are still text-heavy. It would be better if the author prioritize what is essential to be given in these tables.

6. Figures: Still there are four figures. Consider replacing figures by tables or ideally reducing the number of figures.

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

1. Abstract

1.1. The first two sentences of the abstract are not setting the context and therefore can be deleted; “Existing evidence suggests that gender is a key factor operating in the health workforce. Gender is framed in a variety of ways, which has implications for understanding, measurement, and action.” The paragraph can therefore start from “Recent research evidence points to systemic……

1.2. This sentence is very generic; “This commentary suggests global, national and institution-level actions to move the gender equality and HRH agendas forward.” Please try to specify what actions do you want to suggest and will be the outcome of these.

I hope this is useful.

'I declare that I have no competing interests'.
**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Declaration of competing interests:**

'I declare that I have no competing interests'