Reviewer's report

Title: Payday, ponchos, and promotions: a qualitative analysis of perspectives from non-governmental organization program managers on community health workers motivation and incentives

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Reviewer: Christopher J Colvin

Reviewer's report:

I thought this was an interesting and well-written report on a study with iNGO managers of CHW programs about CHW incentives and motivations. This is an issue that is of increasing importance as CHWs continue to be put forward as a response to the various crises in human resources for health. While I don't have any major reservations about the study, I do have some minor essential revisions to suggest.

Minor Essential Revisions

The specific contribution of this paper needs to be more clearly articulated. The authors say that no study has been done with this particular group of stakeholders on this particular set of questions. There are, however, studies that include CHW programme managers, and many studies of CHW motivations and incentives. Can the authors be more explicit about what they are adding to the debates around incentives and motivation that have been playing out for a number of years?

The second paragraph in the background section needs some further context. Dan Pink is described as an author. Is he also a researcher with a particular expertise? How do his ideas intersect with those of Bhattacharya et al? And what is the context for the rest of the paragraph? Are all of the references to events and perceptions in that paragraph made with respect to the material in the Bhattacharya study?

The example of CHWs in Massachusetts on page 3 is confusing/not sufficiently described.

Page 4: reference is made to ‘the first consideration’ and ‘the first direct mention’. ‘First’ with respect to what?

The final section of the findings (“What Would Be Helpful...?”) is only two sentences long and feels like an unintegrated after-thought. It needs to be fleshed out or integrated elsewhere.

The beginning of the discussion introduces ‘six key influencers’ that aren’t part of the original findings. I am not a stickler for the strict separation of findings and discussion but it does seem a bit jarring to introduce six key new ideas that aren’t really named as such in the findings.
In the second paragraph of the findings, the authors state that CHW programme manager requests for MoH guidance represents a ‘remarkable opportunity’ to recognize CHWs as a major force. This seems to over-state the case rather significantly. Surely programme managers’ desire for more guidance does not represent a lever or dramatic shift in thinking that would enable the tide to be turned with respect to CHW recognition.

Replace ‘fluctuant’ with ‘fluctuating’? (page 11)

page 3: I don’t think altruistic and financial motivations ‘seamlessly coexist’ for most CHWs. They co-exist, but rarely seamlessly.

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

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

**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.