Author's response to reviews

Title: Health workforce issues and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria: an analytical review

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Author's response to reviews:

Dear reviewers,

thank you for reviewing this paper. Please see below comments on your proposed revisions. Concerning the editing changes and language corrections needed, please note that the paper will be edited as soon as it has been accepted for publication.

Sincerely

Sigrid Drager
Gulin Gedik
Mario Dal Poz

Comments to reviewers' remarks

* page 3 "Introduction": geographic scope of numbers was introduced

* page 5 on budget ceilings by the IMF: The point is taken that this is much discussed and a very sensitive issue. I agree that IMF policies do not directly impose a health worker hiring freeze, so the wording in this paragraph is more careful now.

* page 7 on the link between spending on health workforce and the effects on the patient/target population: There is no contradiction to studies mentioned in the introduction that prove a direct link between numbers of health workers and health outcomes. It needs to be differentiated here between macro level, long-term effects and the measurable effects of a short-term proposal. It is a very valid point to clarify this differentiation and a short explanation was included in the respective paragraph.

* page 9 "Training": Observations from the Global Fund proposals underline the lack of coordinated country training plans - accordingly this point was included in the respective paragraph and on page 13 where weaknesses of HR proposals are listed.

* page 10 "Training Institutions": The section focuses on in-service training and this clarification was introduced accordingly.

* page 13 on weaknesses in HRH proposals to the Global Fund: To prevent the view that HRH issues are mainly training, a paragraph has been introduced that mentions the key issues in HRH, going beyond training.

* page 14: The mentioning of "upgrading lab facilities and equipment" was probably unclear as the figure was not in place below the paragraph. At any case, to avoid confusion, the addition has been deleted.

* page 15 "budget allocations for human resources": Structure of this section was changed following reviewers suggestion, reference to figures was clarified.

Discretionary Revision
* Productivity of the health workforce
The mentioning of the productivity of the health workforce seems a very valid point. There is not a sufficient number of interventions specifically on this issue to discuss this item separately, however for example performance based incentives are a proposed intervention. To include this point in the paper, it is now mentioned as part of the motivation and retention strategies. In my opinion, the question to what extent performance improvement can make up for a lack of health workers does not fall into the scope of this paper.

* HRH information systems
Likewise, this is a valid point, however not enough material was found in the Global Fund proposal to discuss this separately. Table 2 on HRH interventions planned in Round 5 mentions data collection. In general the health workforce information system will be part of a general improvements of the health information system and a mentioning in this respect was added in the paper.