Reviewer's report

Title: The contribution of international health volunteers to the health workforce in sub-Saharan Africa

Version: 1 Date: 1 May 2007

Reviewer: Gilles Dussault

Reviewer's report:

General
Even though it covers only a limited part of the expatriate health workers active in Sub-Saharan Africa, this paper will interest the readers of HRH. I recommend acceptation with some additions/corrections by the authors:

- more specificity in the formulation of objectives: something like “to quantify the contribution of volunteers, to explore the perceptions of African health sector managers of those volunteers, to identify factors of successful contribution of volunteers to health services, …”;

- the a. should present a simple conceptual framework which gives meaning to the questions which they address;

- add information about participants to the focus groups;

- any information about how countries manage the entry of volunteers and control the quality of their work ?;

- any differences between English, French, Portuguese-speaking countries?

- in table 1, what is “logisticians”?

. p. 11: in paragraph 1, explain the basis/justification of the estimates. Paragraph 4: the list of countries with absolute shortages is based on opinions of “many informants”. Either reference is added and “absolute shortage” defined or the sentence should be deleted.

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

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

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

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.