Reviewer's report

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

Version: 1 Date: 6 June 2007

Reviewer: Baltazar Chilundo

Reviewer's report:

General
The manuscript attempts to describe and analyze the contribution of international volunteers to the health workforce in sub-Saharan Africa. However it fails not to discuss the major findings in comparison with other previous research on international health volunteers. The concrete implications are broadly addressed to the international health policy and less to country policies on HRH.

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)
The methods section should be rewritten to become more explicit in terms of study design (sites in both north and south, sampling size to the survey). How survey data were analyzed? What were the sub Saharan countries visited by the researchers? When? How long? What were the characteristics of the focus group discussions? These are some questions which seems not to have been covered in the methodology.

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)
In general the description of the findings lack clear examples. Some gaps are: under pg 4 "Coverage of organizations", the sentence starting with Their sizes vary from very large.... should be followed by a concrete example. In pg 6, under Perspective of volunteer organizations, in the end of the 1st paragraph there should be another clear example. Finally, the findings arising from focus group discussions come more in analytical way without bringing the original key quotes from the interviewees. Definitely it would be desirable to consider some.

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.