Reviewer's report

Title: Human resources for health planning and management in the Eastern Mediterranean region: facts, gaps and forward thinking for research and policy

Version: 1 Date: 10 August 2006
Reviewer: elsheikh mahgoub

Reviewer's report:

Thank you very much for sending this Manuscript for my review. Please allow me to make the following points:

• The paper tackles a very important topic in the field of health development, not only in the Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMR) of the world Health Organization but also globally. It is also important because HRH budget forms 70-80% of the health expenditure.

• The paper relies on and quotes heavily from the World Health Report (WHR2006). Hence it lacks originality and at times one wonders if the paper is nothing more than a summary of that report. The authors assume that no work nor documentation have been done before, neither by EMRO nor the countries. They state in the Abstract lack of knowledge about the nature, scope, composition and needs of HRH is hindering Health sector reform!! This point is repeated several times in the paper.

• This is not true because HRH division is an old one in EMRO and has taken several endeavours (e.g. consultants to countries as well as intercountry meetings) in the EMR countries to improve HRH management. The authors admit on p.6 that their variables include previous studies on the effect of HRH on health.

• All through they refer to the Eastern Mediterranean Countries usually abbreviated EMR as EMRO which is Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office!!

• P.5. Please contact DHS division of EMRO to verify that this is the 1st. study to investigate HRH issues in the EMR.

• P.7. EMR countries are 22 and not 24 because Western Sahara is not part of EMR and Ghaza strip is not a country; perhaps they mean the Palestinian refugees health service (UNRUA).

• Top p.9: It is not surprising that Afghanistan and Somalia have twice or thrice IMR because of the continued civil war for years!

• One is surprised for the comment on p.10 that the total expenditure as % of GDP was not found to be significantly correlated with mortality rates!!

• Agree with the final 3 lines on p.10..

• Top of p.11 is repetition and so are some other statements.

• P. 13, 2nd. Para about numbers of educators and trainers need be revised.

• P.14. CONCLUSION simply narrates points raised by the WHR 2006! Where are the findings of the authors and where is their role?

• I think the best part of this paper are the research priorities and the questions that the authors raised for research.

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

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.