Reviewer's report

Title: Paris on the Mekong: using the aid effectiveness agenda to support human resources for health in Lao PDR

Version: 1 Date: 27 November 2008

Reviewer: Javier Martinez

Reviewer's report:

I have reviewed the article and I think it is an excellent one. It is original as it links aid effectiveness with HRH, and it does so in an innovative yet convincing manner. The article depicts depth in the analysis and thoroughness in assessing each of the 4 areas where synergies and opportunities are explored. While this results in the article containing a lot of information for the reader to process it is so well described and argued that it is worth the effort.

My recommendation is that it be published without any changes. Just as a suggestion to the authors I wondered why the possibility of donors introducing performance based incentives CONSISTENTLY across the country (to compensate for low salaries and to get away from the perverse incentives that are mentioned in section 3) has not been discussed. I suspect however that even that would become extremely problematic in a country where donors and government seem to be far from aligning along a mutually agreed agenda, demonstrated by the differing views between government and donors on whether salaries are the issue or deeper reforms are needed. Without alignment, harmonisation becomes much more problematic as explained in relation to the failed attempt to standardise rates across UN and donors.

Really interesting article. Thank you for asking me to review it. I am copying Becky Dodd as I am hoping she will know how to get this to the right place and person should this message not reach you.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field