Reviewer's report

Title: Tracking working status of HIV/AIDS-trained service providers using a Training Information Monitoring System in Ethiopia: a pilot project

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Reviewer: Susan Griffey

Reviewer's report:

This is a very interesting paper and an important application of using an electronic system to determine the effect of health worker job changes on accessibility of HIV services. It also describes issues that aren’t often researched – retention and job mobility based on training. The research is well done, well described, and scientifically substantiated.

The article documents important issues in worker retention after having received training. It is an important finding that the numbers of trainings received do not affect working status. This also appears to mean that having received even one training increases the likelihood of a worker changing jobs, perhaps away from HIV services even. The authors’ discussion on attrition identified using TIMS should be mediated through an approach to train more providers may be relevant for ensuring a rapid supply of HIV-trained providers. It would be useful, however, to extend that point to determine, if possible, which training content is associated with more job changes (i.e., what skills are being learned that give workers more job mobility). This also appears to substantiate that the MOH is a training ground for HIV-trained workers (and where donor training funds are often focused). It would be useful to have the authors discuss how to use this slant to help the MOH prepare an overall approach, not just a stop-gap measure, to HRH management. By acknowledging worker mobility, and making a determination of how long various types of workers tend to stay in their jobs, the MOH can then better prepare for worker departures with a performance management approach that includes training and incentives, if possible. We all have experience with hiring news grads and expecting them to stay a couple years as they get skills and experience – and then they tend to leave the job because it doesn’t fit their newer and broader skill set.

• Discretionary Revisions (which are recommendations for improvement but which the author can choose to ignore)

1. It would be useful for the authors to expand their discussion to address the issue they describe – how to turn what some might feel are less-than-positive findings (increased job mobility after receiving training) to a recommendation for a bolder approach to human resource management when a national MOH acknowledges its role as a training ground for developing more experienced HIV-trained providers and uses that to focus an HRH management plan including training.
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.

Declaration of competing interests:

I worked at JHPIEGO, where several of the authors are from, until mid-2004. I was also a co-developer of TIMS a decade ago.