Reviewer’s report

Title: Costing the scaling-up of Human resources for health: lessons from Mozambique and Guinea Bissau

Version: 1 Date: 3 February 2010

Reviewer: Bianca Frogner

Reviewer’s report:

The article “Costing the Scaling-up of Human Resources for Health: Lessons from Mozambique and Guinea Bissau” has the potential for significant contribution to establishing a realistic methodology of costing human resources from the authors’ experiences. However, the organization of the paper and richness of the discussion makes it difficult to assess the merit of the study.

Overall my major compulsory revision comments focus on organization for better comparison of cases and point to where the discussion needs to be expanded to understand what is unique about the methodology proposed. Overall my main minor compulsory revision comments focus on clarifying jargon, acronyms, and broad statements in the paper. Generally, the written language is clear, but the substance is difficult to follow.

Major Compulsory Revisions

The challenge is to present cases for two different countries while maintaining a consistent discussion of one proposed methodology.

1. Describe the two country contexts up front near/in the Background section.

2. You present objectives that set the stage for your paper in the Discussion section. You need to bring this up to an (currently not existent) Introduction section. Also bring up the objectives presented for each country (p7 and p11) up front and consolidate them with the overall paper objectives. For example, I would drop the objective that you will identify useful economic studies under the Mozambique objectives since you do not return to this and present anything beyond what has already been discussed in the Literature Review.

3. Bring together the discussion of the Literature Review and what you are proposing to do. How is your methodology going to be the same/different from what has been discussed in the literature.

4. In addition to what is already in the Methodology section, clearly describe the proposed methodology you are applying in the two countries in the Methodology section.

5. Figure 1 should be presented in the methodology section to guide the thinking.

6. In the Results section, here you should describe how your proposed methodology had to be adjusted within the country to fit context. As part of this, describe the process and actors involved and how they impacted the changes
you had to make in your methodology. Keep the projected results in this section.
7. In the Discussion section, this is where you should discuss how your proposed methodology addresses your objectives rather than state your objectives.
8. Clarify in the Discussion the contribution of your proposed Methodology and how it is better than the currently proposed methods by WHO, etc.
9. In the Discussion or Conclusion section, this is where you should discuss how your methodology has been adopted (e.g. p12, 3rd paragraph starting with “The final costing exercise” should be presented near the end). Add discussion on how your methodology is performing for the country.
10. Also, state how despite the wide variety of data resources available in Mozambique and Guinea Bissau, your methodology is the best approach to address the wide variety.

Minor Compulsory Revisions
1. p7, 2nd paragraph, Briefly note what “top-up” means
2. p7, 2nd paragraph, Spell out the acronym PROSUADE
3. p7, 4th paragraph, While a supplemental table is provided, be more explicit in text about what you are referring to about “actual cost of training” as you did for the Guinea Bissau section
4. p8, 2nd paragraph, Be explicit about what “targets already defined” refer to
5. p8, last paragraph, Clarify (e.g. provide examples) of “classical recurrent costs.” In this same sentence, please revise - awkwardly written
6. p9, Last full paragraph, Please clarify how you have determined what is “important”
7. p10, 1st paragraph, Clarify how you determined the inverse relationship between foreign doctors cost and production capacity
8. p10, 1st paragraph, last sentence, Revise - awkwardly written
9. p10, 2nd paragraph, Clarify the three scenarios by stating the range of values examined as done in the Guinea Bissau section
10. p10, 2nd paragraph, clarify whether MoH assumptions about salary are part of the costing analysis by authors and how it relates to the scenarios; also how does this impact results?
11. p13, 1st paragraph, Spell out GFAMT
12. p13, last paragraph, should refer Figure 4 not Figure 3
13. p14, last paragraph, Be consistent when referring to scenarios, i.e. is the base scenario referring to scenario 1 I assume?
14. p14, last paragraph, How would the second scenario impact the closing of the gap?
15. p15, last paragraph, Restate here what input data you would like to have had and how not having this data impacts your results
16. Figure 5 is not referred to in the text and it’s not clear how it should be used.

Discretionary Revisions
None

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

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests.