Reviewer's report

Title: Striving for better health through health research in post-conflict Timor-Leste

Version: 1 Date: 20 January 2012

Reviewer: Derrick Silove

Reviewer's report:

This is a timely and well-written commentary that illustrates what can be done to advance health research in a low-income, post-conflict country, particularly when the leadership supports and gives impetus to the process.

1. Does it address an important or timely issue?: Yes
2. Is it well reasoned?: Yes, very well.
3. Is it relatively balanced, or does it make plain where the author's opinions might not represent the field as a whole?: Not relevant
4. Is the standard of writing acceptable?: yes

- Major Compulsory Revisions (which the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached): Nil
- Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct): Perhaps some comment about internal debates about this issue - do all members of bureaucracy and government agree that research is worthy of funding - or are there strong arguments that funds should be reserved for services?
- Discretionary Revisions (which are recommendations for improvement but which the author can choose to ignore): Worth mentioning if there is or has been resistance at any levels to highlighting research - for example, arguments that funds should be used exclusively for services given the pressing needs.

Is it true that none of the early research was useful for policy development?

Level of interest: An article of outstanding merit and interest in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests