Reviewer's report

**Title:** Developing lay health worker policy in South Africa: The place of gender

**Version:** 1  **Date:** 12 November 2011

**Reviewer:** Arash Rashidian

**Reviewer's report:**

This is an important and very well written study. I enjoyed reading the manuscript. The methods are well described and relevant to the study. I have only some minor comments mainly towards the interpretation of the findings.

**Minor essential revisions**

1. In certain parts of the paper, I think further quotes to justify the argument are required. I give an example of such sentence here:

   "During the interviews it was also clear that there were tensions between policy commentators (researchers and others) and policy developers. These tensions may have hindered the facilitation of knowledge from research to policy debate and content."

2. In occasion the language of the paper seems a bit strong. I sometimes felt there was too much emphasis on gendered exploitation. The authors provide evidence of exploitation. And to me the condition is more like ignoring gender issues and women vulnerabilities in the process. Gendered exploitation has an intended meaning behind it, which may not be the case in here. It does not seem from what provided in the manuscript that if the LHWs were predominantly men, the exploitation would not have occurred. There are relevant findings that support the view I expressed here. e.g. see:

   "There was no indication from the interviews that the policy developers were confronted with the issue of gender in the debates around the problem, in their field visits, or the research they access to, in ways that led them to regard it as a problem to be addressed through policy."

3. Are there any other possible explanations for the 'political' mandate that the LHWs should not be employed by the DoH? In many countries, there are national agendas for downsizing the public sector (i.e. the government workforce)? It is important to clarify the understanding and the logic behind the so called 'political' mandate.

**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:**

None