Reviewer's report

Title: Maternal and Reproductive health financing in Burundi: levels and trends of public-sector contribution from 2010 to 2012

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Reviewer: Josephine Borghi

Reviewer's report:

The paper sets out to assess whether government commitments to reproductive health through a number of policies have resulted in greater financing for reproductive health in Burundi. The authors have responded to the comments raised, providing clarifications. However, as previously indicated there are a number of inherent limitations with the study which remain.

These include:

-the limited time frame for analysis, the period 2010-2012 is too short to be able to say anything about time trends, and this time period does not overlap with the initiation of the reforms and initiatives that the paper hypotheses may have affected financing levels (these started in 2006).

-the study focuses on government financing as an agent rather than a source. As previously mentioned this does not enable the researchers to isolate the government contribution to health financing as it includes donor funding provided to the government as general budget support and sector level support. The latter is determined by donor prioritisation of health rather than government prioritisation.

-the paper does not say anything about the government share of financing relative to external or household out of pocket payments, or the levels of government financing (as a source); yet the removal of user fees and introduction of performance based financing were also pushed by and part financed by donors. Any variation in funding levels could very well be a result of greater donor investment rather than government investment. It is also important to assess whether changes in investment levels are associated with changes in the levels of out of pocket payments being made.

-the paper defines reproductive health very narrowly as maternal health and family planning; yet it is unclear how this corresponds to the focus of the policies under study.

-It is still unclear why the authors need to allocate provider level expenditures given that they appear to have information on the use of reproductive health services and the unit cost of these services. It is unclear which maternal services were included in the assessment.

-The presentation of results should be done on a per capita basis only, as you need to adjust for population changes. When this is done there is no evidence of
a change in financing levels.
- The first paragraph of the discussion is misleading (as it does not report on per capita figures) and makes claims about the effect of policies on financing which are simply not supported by the data.
- The review of the literature provided in the discussion is very confusing as comparing different years, different parameters.

**Level of interest:** An article of insufficient interest to warrant publication in a scientific/medical journal

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

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

**Declaration of competing interests:**

No conflict of interest