Reviewer’s report

Title: Incentives for non-physician health professionals to work in the rural/remote areas of Mozambique - a discrete choice experiment for eliciting the job preferences

Version: 1 Date: 16 May 2014

Reviewer: Edson Araujo

Reviewer’s report:

• General comments:

  - The paper is generally good and present new evidence on factors influencing health workers’ employment decisions, particularly on the relative importance of job characteristics for rural and remote areas practice. The DCE methodology has been widely used for this purpose and in this regard the paper contributes with new evidence;

  - It could be significantly improved by working on: expand literature review regarding: i) the application of DCEs in HRH research (summarizing results and how the present DCE contributes to this literature); ii) more information on methods, including respondents, sample selection, regression analysis, and particularly on the experimental design; iii) conclusions are somehow too broad.

• Major Compulsory Revisions

  - It needs a clearer definition of who are the “non-physician health professionals” that paper focuses. It mentions health professionals “university degrees” (N1 and N2 and length of education on page 6), but this rather vague as there might be wide range of health professionals with university degrees (nurses, physiotherapists, etc.);

  - Also the increased numbers of these professionals may be due to increased supply of training capacity for this cadres, is it possible to say something about this (e.g., are these training institutions public or private? This may influence decision to accept a rural post);

  - In the background, the authors mention the application of DCEs in health care research in LMIC. There is scope for a much larger review/synthesis of the DCE literature applied for HRH research and that would help to place the results of this paper within this broader literature. The paper identifies four papers, a recent review (World Bank, 2013) identifies fifteen and since then many others have been published;

  - Sample: would important to mention how respondents were selected (urban settings? Public or private universities? etc.). Also the “data collection” section does not make clear how intervieiews were conducted - how 33 could not be identified? Only later in the paper it is stated that there were self-administered
- Interviewers’ perception” is a good strategy to validate responses, would drop this sentence (page 6);

- More details on the experimental design selected is essential;

- The subgroup analysis: although interesting, the analysis of relative preference between students and in-service professionals may not be very important. Recruitment and retention policies may need absolute preferences of each group, not the relative;

- Some of the conclusions seem to be rather general and obvious - such as: “incentives packages should vary according to the stage of life of health professionals”. I wonder whether the paper could be provide more specific conclusions, either in terms of simulations based on the DCE results or on the context of Mozambique;

- On the other side, there are interesting results that could be better explored: for instance, the salary attribute is consistently low across all models estimated; or the role of private practice in choosing rural job (there may be an opportunity cost of rural job that is linked to the ability to practice privately), more could be said about these and that will help to avoid too general/vague conclusions;

- It would be good to have more details on how the uptake rate of rural jobs were calculated (pages 9/10);

- It would be good to observe the existence of non-linear effects on the salary attribute (see Mangham and Hanson, 2008 - Malawi).

• Minor Essential Revisions

- Positive coefficients are dependent more on the coding applied to the attribute levels than to the fact they represent an improvement on the attribute, so I suggest to avoid the term “good” or at least mention the way attribute levels were coded represent such an improvement;

- The section on WTP could be better structured and is somehow confusing.

- The last sentences of the first paragraph on page 4 mention recent debate on DCE, but these debates are ignored in the rest of the paper. Either remove or discuss them further - maybe also in the light of the findings and/or policy recommendation;

• Discretionary Revisions

- Authors may want replace “global analysis” for “all cadres” or “full model”

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests
**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**Statistical review:** Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests.