Reviewer's report

**Title:** Human Resources for Primary Health Care in Africa: Progress or Stagnation?

**Version:** 4  **Date:** 9 February 2015  
**Reviewer:** Luís Lapão

**Reviewer's report:**

This paper addresses a very important factor for the sustainability of African countries health systems. The data quality is very doubtful (information systems in Africa are very weak!), which should be balanced by an improved discussion.

**Major revisions**

The title should better express the african countries involved. Both Maghreb and Portuguese speaking countries are missing in the analysis. At least some additional contextualization is necessary.

African countries have different primary-care organizations. A clear explanation about each country is required. Could we consider these kind of services primary-care? Should maternity services be considered as primary-care services? Additional explanations are required.

Another example (page 5), what is the meaning of "...only 34% of health worker posts are in primary care;"

Is the "WHO critical shortage of health workers's ratio" still applicable today? A lot have changed since 2006, with significant impact on primary-care.

The issue of human resources information systems, now reasonably covered in the literature should be included.


**Methodology**

I suggest that, due to the fragile quality of data, the authors create a classification of data sources, from more rigorous to doubtful.

This difference in data quality should be visible in the figures.

The process of selecting countries should be better explain, for instance why choose Sudan, which presents serious data interpretation problems.

**Results**

The presentation of the results could benefit from a better organization.
What is a vacant post? How is it defined? Is the "norm" reasonable or not? Why the difference between health centers II and III?

Discussion
Is reasonable to say that "staff shortages are greatest in primary care..." or simply that there are no primary-care services?

Conclusions
Part of the conclusion does not reflect the results and discussion. There is a huge problem in the quality of data that should be included here.

Minor revisions

Abstract
To be revised according the text revisions.

Several misspellings.

Substitute doctor by physician

What is the meaning of health centre II and II?

There are repeated references. It should be revised carefully.

Figures legends should be revised. Some are rather confusing (Fig. 1).

Figure 5. What is a vacant post? How is it defined?

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**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:**

I declare I have no competing interests