Reviewer’s report

Title: The evolution of the National Licensing System of Health Care Professionals: A qualitative descriptive case study in Laos

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Reviewer: Sharon Brownie

Reviewer's report:

This is a highly informative manuscript outlining development in regulatory and licenses systems in Laos. The article provides a great deal of information but would be strengthened by inclusion of some additional information to questions such as those outlined below:

1. Re lines 10-11 page 8 re the national examination for midwives. How is the examination developed? What is the exam format and is bench-marked against standards set by the International Council of Midwives (ICM). Specifically how are in-country quality standards being set and monitored locally and aligned globally

2. Re lines 18-33 page 8 about the compulsory placement of new nursing graduates in rural areas for 3 years question arises re the support provided to these new graduates, specifically, if there is any graduate internship scheme in place to support the graduates and how is the quality of the practice supervised? Lines 19 & 20 page nine goes on to speak of the strategic focus on shifting from quantity of HRH in rural areas vs improving the quality of service provision but is silent on what interventions/initiatives are envisaged to achieve this shift?

3. Re lines 26-29 on page 11 and the need to harmonize strategies with existing policies in Laos, what about the need to align regionally in support of the desire for regional licensing reciprocity and also alignment with global quality standards in HRH education and practice?

Overall this is a very interesting and useful article describing current status and development needs for HRH licensing and regulatory system in a country which currently lacks formal systems. Publication is recommended following inclusion of a little more information re some of the how strategies and initiatives that might be needed to carry this forward. Some comment re inclusion and alignment with regional and global standards would also be useful.

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