Reviewer’s report

Title: Harmonizing community-based health worker programs for HIV: a narrative review and analytic framework

Version: 0 Date: 07 Mar 2017

Reviewer: Maryse Kok

Reviewer’s report:

Major Compulsory Revisions

- It would be valuable to expand more on how the 3 priority areas were arrived at in the methods section.

- The methods section could also contain more information on how sources (articles, grey literature) were selected. There is a wide range of CHW literature, and the list of included studies appears as quite a random selection to me. I appreciate the fact that you do not intend to present a systematic review, and you provide some information on inclusion criteria, however, the reader should be guided a bit more.

- Could you explain more in detail why an existing framework related to integration was translated into a framework on harmonization (for CHW programs related to HIV), as integration is 1 of the 3 priority areas/constructs of harmonization (other than the explanation that "Each of these five elements of the analytic framework have applicability to harmonization activities ..")? What is the exact added value of the "new" framework?

- The title and methods focus on HIV, but the narratives in the results section seem to apply to CHW programs in general. What makes the findings specific for HIV programs, or if not, why are findings from other programs, for example on maternal health, also applicable for HIV?

- Results - page 17, line 22: "There may also be overlap of issues across dimensions of the framework and areas of harmonization." I think there surely is overlap. Within Table 2, there are various factors applicable to more than 1 priority area. Related to this, the framework presented in figure 1 is quite general: there is a lot of overlap "within" the 5 components of the framework. Therefore, the questions raises how this framework could practically assist policy makers/researchers aiming for or looking into harmonization of CHW programs.

- Could you better explain throughout the paper what are the constructs/dimensions/areas of harmonization? Table 3 partly seems to focus on factors hindering harmonization, and partly facilitating factors or more neutrally formulated concepts. This makes it difficult to read.

Minor Essential Revisions
- In the second sentence of the background in the abstract, please delete "within countries" to avoid duplication.

- Background - page 3, line 57: major donors scale back funding for CHW programs. Does this refer to CHW programs related to HIV or in general? I think it might be the first.

- Background - page 4, line 21: "this public commitment.." was not focused on HIV as such, the way this sentence in phrased might mislead the reader. This is also related to my comment above about the HIV focus of this paper (against findings more generally on CHW programs).

- Methods - page 6, line 28: it might be better to say harmonization of CHW "programs".

- Methods - page 7, line 34: do you mean the constructs of harmonization?

- Results - page 9, line 4: consider to delete "support".

- Results - page 14, line 35: HEWs preferred over TBAs: by whom?; and there is also evidence in opposite direction (TBAs are older, seen as more experienced especially regarding delivery care). The reference stated here seems not to be correct (36 should be 37?).

- Results - page 16, line 7: consider to delete "and the program" at the end of the sentence, or change "the program's consistent supervision". Supervision here is linked to sustainability, but is also related to integration and even coordination. (Related to earlier raised issues of overlap and therefore the (in)possibility for practical use of the framework).

**Level of interest**

Please indicate how interesting you found the manuscript:

An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English**

Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Acceptable

**Declaration of competing interests**

Please complete a declaration of competing interests, considering the following questions:

1. Have you in the past five years received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

2. Do you hold any stocks or shares in an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?
3. Do you hold or are you currently applying for any patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

4. Have you received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organization that holds or has applied for patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

5. Do you have any other financial competing interests?

6. Do you have any non-financial competing interests in relation to this paper?

If you can answer no to all of the above, write 'I declare that I have no competing interests' below. If your reply is yes to any, please give details below.

I declare that I have no competing interests

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal. I understand that my name will be included on my report to the authors and, if the manuscript is accepted for publication, my named report including any attachments I upload will be posted on the website along with the authors' responses. I agree for my report to be made available under an Open Access Creative Commons CC-BY license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/). I understand that any comments which I do not wish to be included in my named report can be included as confidential comments to the editors, which will not be published.

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal