Reviewer’s report

Title: The Human Resources for Health Effort Index: A Tool to Assess and Inform Strategic Health Workforce Investments

Version: 0 Date: 12 Apr 2017

Reviewer: Tipaporn Kanjanarach

Reviewer’s report:

The topic is interesting and useful for health service development. The key questions/comments to this papers are as follow:

Research question: In the background section, the authors pointed out clearly the importance of human resource for health, the limitations of the existing/conventional quantitative methods of assessing the effect of HRH on health services, and reasons why there was a need to develop a tool to measure HRH status and progress in low- and middle-income countries. However it was not clear what was the research question of this paper - whether the authors want to demonstrate the validity of the HRH Effort Index that was developed or want to describe the HRH in the four selected countries using the HRH Effort Index that was developed, etc. Was the research question answered?

Methods: More details of the process to develop and assess validity the HRH Effort Index are needed.

Validity of the findings: In the discussion section, the HRH Effort Index was claimed to provide new and standardized information on the inputs and processes in the area of HRH, gain insight into critical areas of HRH. However, the sample in each country was quite small and the authors was also aware of the limitation of the subjective nature of the responses. How valid of the policy recommendation based on these findings? Different techniques were employed to survey the opinions of the respondents, does it affect the validity of the findings?

Tables: Small adjustments of the details/figures in the tables and consistency in presenting the figures will ease readers. What is the "average respondents" at the last row of each table (Table 2-8)? How it was calculated? What was the use of these figures?

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

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