**Reviewer's report**

**Title:** Addressing fragility through community-based health programmes: insights from two qualitative case study evaluations in South Sudan and Haiti

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**Reviewer:** Christine Ardal

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This article addresses an interesting concept - can access to predictable health services actually make a country less fragile. Yet it does so in an unstructured way. Definitions of fragility and the fragility framework are only briefly described and not in enough detail for the reader to understand the framework. The study is based upon qualitative data of 49 participants, which is fine, but then strong statements are made regarding the findings, such as "Results...presented here suggest that community-based health programmes in fragile contexts can contribute to mitigating fragility." (page 15, 391-392). There is no mention that it could be the other way around - less fragile contexts are more amenable to community-based health programmes.

The article begins (page 3, lines 54-55) with a significant misunderstanding of the facts, stating that "the proportion of people living in fragile contexts is expected to increase from 17% at present to 46% in 2030, mostly affecting the extreme poor". This is not what the World Bank report states. Rather the report states that "By 2030, the share of global poor living in fragile and conflict-affected situations is projected to reach 46%." This is a major error in facts. Global poverty rates are declining. The UN through the Sustainable Development Goals estimates that 11% of the world population live below the extreme poverty threshold. The World Bank report states that by 2030 about half of the extremely poor will live in fragile contexts, not that 46% of the world's population will live in fragile contexts.

The fragility framework needs to be presented in greater detail. The drivers are listed on page 9 lines 231-236 but the reader needs more understanding. How do they drive fragility? How has this framework been tested or used? What evidence is there to support the framework? Can examples be given of countries that fit the various criteria?

Page 9, line 243-245 is an erroneous statement. The OECD report states that "more countries experienced some form of violent conflict than at any time in the past 30 years". However, there is not a general historical trend in increasing violence.

Without a stronger foundation of the fragility framework, the various elements in the Results section (i.e., effective mechanisms to ensure inclusive participation, etc.) give little evidence of
whether the experiences of Haiti and South Sudan actually limit fragility. These elements need to be presented within the framework.

The evidence is not strong enough to come to the conclusions of the Discussion section, for example, page 15 lines 409-410. The entire Discussion and Conclusion sections require more careful and neutral analyses, especially regarding confounding factors.

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