Reviewer's report

Title: Incentives for retaining and motivating health workers in Pacific and Asian countries

Version: 1 **Date:** 21 December 2007

Reviewer: Francois Steyn

Reviewer's report:

Discretionary revisions

Content:

1. The second objective reads that â##regional and global evidenceâ## is drawn on to examine retention initiatives; however, global evidence is to a limited extent explored and presented. The authors should consider stating that evidence primarily from the Asia-Pacific region is used.

2. The first paragraph on page 6 states that the migration of health workers in the region is significant, yet evidence is not provided. A short paragraph on the extent of migration is needed to situate the discussion (i.e. the need for retention strategies). [In a similar vein, how does the extent of loss compare to other developing regions globally?] The need for HRH retention in resource-limited settings is known, but the article does not adequately articulate the rationale for such intervention.

3. It might be worthwhile for the authors to 'speak above' the various strategies, practices and outcomes to provide a stronger comment on the weight and potential of individual incentive strategies. Components of successful strategies are provided (pages 38-39), but which of these are more crucial than others, especially for resource-poor countries?

4. Some explanation/discussion is needed as to the potential impact of â##increasing the salaries and benefits of priority groupsâ## on the â##entire systemâ## (top page 12).

Technical aspects:

5. The article is quite long and could be summarized more succinctly. This can, in part, be achieved by paying specific attention to overlapping themes. For example, the issue of dual practice discussed as a coping strategy on page 9 overlaps with the discussion on pages 26-27. Similarly, the second paragraph on page 9 duplicates the bottom paragraph on page 31.

6. The bottom paragraph on page 21 requires a reference.

What next?: Accept after discretionary revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.