

Reviewer's report

Title: Reproductive health issues in rural Western Kenya

Version: 1 **Date:** 1 February 2008

Reviewer: Lisa M Vallely

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Discretionary revisions

1. Abstract

-End of last sentence: nets....and (high) prevalence HIV

-My initial thought was, what is Gem, maybe state it is an area/district. The results presented within the abstract would flow better and be easier to read if they were laid out more methodically i.e ITN use, malaria, anaemia, helminths, underweight, contraceptive methods, conception.

HIV rate is stated to be high, but what was the prevalence?

2. Background. promotion of gender equality... form a VITAL role, not simply an important role. Last paragraph is difficult to follow and requires some clarification; 17% women delivered with skilled attendant and (instead of whereas) 18% on their own. A subsequent survey here..... (where, when). This needs clarification.

3. Methods. Given the ITN 5 yr trial, a long with the follow up is it really necessary to state that malaria is holoendemic?

- Last sentence re total fertility rate: was or is 5.3%?

-Procedures. To me there needs to be some clarification here. Were the lab technicians/clinical officers trained up to follow study guidelines, were the same practitioners used throughout the study. One clinician's findings may differ from that of another, were there specific procedures put in place?

Write SP in full.

-Definitions & data analysis. My only concern here was the use of a Swiss ref. pop for the BMI. Is it possible to add note on validity of MUAC/BMI in preg women in Sub

saharan Africa

-Could all these women read & write their names or were thumb prints used for consent?

4. Results.

- As thrush & herpes used as indicator of HIV status, could the 16% be an under-estimate?

- Bed net use. If 93% sleep under ITN 5x/week. What is the 69%, isn't 5x/week regular?

5. Discussion.

My main concern here is the mentioning of low condom use in sexually active women. How were these women asked? If asked in a FP context they may state that they did not use a condom, but if asked if they had used protection against HIV the results may be different.

- Couple of typos in paragraph 3. 1st sentence: ...history with (a) high reported...
Last sentence: ...interventions (are) needed...

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

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