Reviewer’s report

Title: Understanding recruitment: outcomes associated with alternate methods for seed selection in respondent driven sampling

Version: 3 Date: 6 June 2013

Reviewer: Richard D Burt

Reviewer’s report:

The revised manuscript is a clearer and better organized presentation than the first submission and many of the concerns raised by the reviewers have been effectively addressed. The limitations in study design remain and limit the ability to generalize the paper’s findings but are clearly presented in the manuscript and can be evaluated by readers. Given the importance of empirical evaluations of RDS in the field, I recommend accepting the manuscript in essentially its current form. Three quibbles, which the authors may address at their discretion:

Discretionary revisions:

Table 4 - I’d find row percentages (i.e. the HIV prevalence in the subgroups) more informative than column percentages (the distribution of HIV positives across the subgroups).

Table 5 (or in methods) – A clearer statement that separate models were evaluated for arm1 recruits, arm2 seed and arm2 recruits would be helpful. More importantly, the variables evaluated for each model and the variables included in the final models should be stated; are they the same 7 variables as in the analyses of Table 4?

Page 17, second paragraph, or elsewhere– Note should be made that in contrast to most RDS studies participants were not paid when their recruits came in. Perhaps the lack of this incentive influenced the apparent weaker recruitment of marginalized arm 2 seeds.

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.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.