Author's response to reviews

Title: A national survey of the prevalence of schistosomiasis and soil transmitted helminths in Malawi

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The authors are most grateful for the further comments from reviewers. Our response to these further comments are as follows:-

Michael Pearce
11. Scientific names correctly formatted
12. Species of hookworm and trichuris not known
15. Corrected
16. S. mansoni definition of high intensity infection of >400 epg now included in text. Other definitions are in the text in faecal and urinalysis paragraph
22. As the reviewer rightly points out Table 2 shows ranges of prevalence in schools and Table 1 shows confidence intervals. The references to the appropriate tables have been corrected.
23. Mansoni was found in the southern highlands (in a school in Mangochi district) and this is presented in table 2.
26 The reference 20 added on the recommendation of the reviewer defines poverty as people who are estimated to consume less than the poverty line, which was calculated using the "cost of basic needs method", and found to represent 65% of the population. This is a standard approach.

Statistical comments:-
1 The distribution of the differences between old and new prevalence rates is found not to be skewed and hence the paired t-test is a reasonable test to use in this instance. (Kolmogorov-Smirnov is non-significant).
2 A Pearson correlation coefficient has been described in the methods section and reported in the results section.

Dirk Engels
No comments to respond to.

Alan Fenwick
A senior epidemiologist at CDC has provided additional advice on the statistical aspects of this paper. Mike Dening has written on cluster sampling (e.g. Brogan D, Flagg EW, Deming M, Waldrom R. Increasing the accuracy of the EPI survey design. Ann Epidemiol. 1994;4:302-11.) We are confident of the statistical and methodological approach adopted.