Reviewer's report

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

Version: 3 Date: 15 September 2004

Reviewer: Michael Pearce

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AJOR COMPULSORY REVISIONS

I believe the authors have addressed all but one major compulsory revisions: point 8. Although they have not explicitly responded to point 8, their description of the sampling process is now clear and it would be reasonable for the reader to assume that their statistical analysis is appropriate. I shall leave the final decision on this to the Editor.

MINOR ESSENTIAL REVISIONS

11. The authors have addressed this point, but I notice that the formatting of scientific names is not always correct i.e. not in italics, missing stops or no space between genus and species name. This can be corrected during the final editing.

12. So far as I can see, the author's have not given the species name of hookworm or trichuris. Perhaps this is not known.

15. This change has not been made. As the text stands, it suggests the authors are talking about a combined infection rather than separate infections.

16. So far as I can see, high intensity infections have not been defined in the text for STHs or for Schistosome infection. A definition for heavy infection of S. haematobium is given as a footnote to Table 1.

22. The authors claim that Table 2 shows confidence limits not the range. This is not evident from reading Table 2 and, in fact, in the top left hand corner of the table it says "[% (range)]".

23. This change has not been made.

26. The authors have not defined poor and non-poor households.

DISCRETIONARY REVISIONS
A substantial number of discretionary revisions have not been made.

GENERAL COMMENTS

• I note that in the revised manuscript the authors have compared two sets of prevalence data using a paired t-test [p11, para1]. Prevalence data is often highly skewed and I wonder if it would be more appropriate to use a Mann-Whitney U test despite the loss of statistical power that would result. If the data is sufficient, the most appropriate statistical method would be a generalised linear mixed model.

• In the revised manuscript, the authors state that there was "a clear association between prevalence and intensity" in para 2 of RESULTS, Prevalence and intensity of infection, Schistosomiasis, on page 9. This claim should be supported by statistical analysis.