Reviewer’s report

**Title:** A minority of thousands? Prospective study of home births in Mumbai slums

**Version:** 1  **Date:** 18 March 2010

**Reviewer:** Chandrashekhar Sreeramareddy

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'A minority of thousands? Prospective study of home births in Mumbai slums'
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BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth
Research article

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined?

“A minority of thousands? Prospective study of home births in Mumbai” In my opinion this title is not a suitable though the authors attempted to convey it as a main message. The title fails to convey the specific issue or item about home births being reported in the manuscript.

“We aimed to explore factors influencing the choice of home delivery, care practices and costs, and to identify situations in which women were more likely to give birth at home.”

Since there are a number of reports about care practices, but not many about determinants of and costs for home delivery is new message from this manuscript. The authors did not report quantitatively, situations (circumstances), in which women are likely to deliver at home. Is this conveyed in the scatter plots or the multivariate analysis? Is this statement same as factors influencing home delivery?

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described?

In the main manuscript authors may choose to write Prospective key informant surveillance of vitals events. I find this methodology to be nearly same as another article i have read in the same journal.

In abstract a few more details about methods as said above, including a brief note about analysis carried out would be useful for the reader.

3. Are the data sound?

Yes,

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?
In abstract statement “Hygiene practices were better than reported previously.” This sounds like discussion in the abstract this statement may not be required.

In abstract “70% of home deliveries were assisted by a......” when a sentence starts with number should be spelled out.

The estimation of home births may better suit into results section both in abstract and manuscript. According authors objectives, the main theme of manuscript is factors affecting home deliveries, which should be emphasised, and also is the cost.

“We did not find significant differences in stillbirth or neonatal mortality rates between home and institutional deliveries (data not presented here)”. As no further details or data is presented here and does not confine within the objectives of this report authors may choose to omit this statement to keep the manuscript focussed on the objective.

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?

In abstract, “Since cost is not a dominant disincentive to institutional delivery, it might be productive to concentrate on intensive outreach in vulnerable areas by community-based health workers who could help women to plan their deliveries and make sure that they get help in time; and on efforts to improve the client experience at public sector institutions.” Is too long

6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated?

I do not see any limitations being stated. However, as interviewers collected this data from mothers 42 days after birth. There could have been some information bias due to recall from the events, or money spent may not be accurately reported. Were there any vital events i.e. which went unreported? The authors may admit to these limitations.

Also there could have been more than one reason for home delivery which is not addressed. The best way to find out why women choose to deliver at home is by qualitative methods. Also acknowledge this as a limitation

7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished?

Yes, they do acknowledge in the background. I feel it is important for the authors state from which main research this article has evolved in abstract also.

8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?

See above for the comment made earlier

9. Is the writing acceptable?

Yes, a few typos here and there the authors can edit them during revisions.
- Major Compulsory Revisions

Authors mention about verbal consent from women but not ethical approval obtained for original community trial.

Did the authors include all vital events for this report? How did authors consider in the event of maternal, neonatal death or still birth? Did you include for this analysis.

In this regard under results it would be nice to read a flow chart, of surveillance data and how 1708 home births were analysed.

Table 4: Explain as foot note here or in methods how you calculated quintile. One important factors determining place of delivery i antenatal care. Can the authors these factors in the multivariable analysis. And also is presence or absence any complication/s i.e. “high risk category”

Most importantly in table 4 all 3 socio-economic factors are “HIGHLY SIGNIFICANT” i mean very strong predictors. Authors may think why it is so. I feel all the 3 factors are highly correlated i.e.multicollinearity and same is the case with, Environmental factors Kaccha house, water and electricity also Strong predictors like socioeconomic factors mentioned above. These are also strongly correlated. I think environmental factors depend on INCOME; i may call them PROXY INDICATORS of INCOME.

I would suggest following rearrangement of tables according to main objective of this manuscript.

Table 1. Frequency and proportion of institutional and home delivery, for 10 754 deliveries in 48 Mumbai slum areas, 2005-2007

Table 2. Characteristics of respondents, comparing home births with institutional births, for 10 754 deliveries in 48 Mumbai slum areas, 2005-2007

Table 3. Univariable and multivariable random effects logistic regression models with home delivery as the dependent variable, for 10 754 deliveries in 48 Mumbai slum areas, 2005-2007

Table 4. Expenditure on care for normal delivery described by 1204 women, in 48 Mumbai slum areas, January – March 2007

Table 5. Reasons given for home delivery, in 48 Mumbai slum areas, 2005-2007

- Minor Essential Revisions
The last sentence of background i.e. objective is not clear.. i would write this as follow: In this manuscript we are reporting the proportion and estimate of home deliveries, determinants of home deliveries, self-reported reasons for, costs of, and care practices during home deliveries.

“We also wanted to identify particular situations in which women were more likely to give birth at home”. See my comments above for this.

Methods:

“The surveillance system from which data were drawn has been described elsewhere”. I have read these articles. However, it would be better if the time lines of your surveillance are mentioned here.

The authors state, descriptive analysis... when the authors ‘ main objectives are factors for home delivery, and the costing of home and hospital births.

Results:

Table 2: .............“ This is probably explained by the fact that registration is an automatic component of antenatal care, rather than a clear statement of intent”. Such interpretations should rather be made in discussion.

Table 3:..................Explain only results here. First 6 lines under this paragraph should be written in methods not in results.

Discussion: The authors refer to living conditions of these urban slums etc while interpreting their results. It would benefit the reader if to interpret all other results of this report if these are briefly described under, methods and participants i.e. study location and population.

Page 11, 2 nd paragraph: Table about Reasons for home delivery may be dichotomised as Inside Mumbai and outside. You emphasize about these differences here.

As commented earlier, authors may consider writing this projected number of home deliveries in this urban slum population in the results section. Specifically after, table 1.

- 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.

**Declaration of competing interests:**
I declare that I have no competing interests