Reviewer’s report

Title: Perinatal mortality in rural Burkina Faso: A prospective community-based cohort study.

Version: 1 Date: 28 May 2010

Reviewer: Miranda Tromp

Reviewer’s report:

The paper is very clear written and addresses the important issue of the need to have reliable data on perinatal mortality for low-income countries. As reliable data is the first step to assess the needs and design a good health programme. The title is declaritive and the methods used are appropriate and well described. I have a few remarks and questions.

Major compulsory revisions
In table 1 three areas are mentioned, while the Banfora Health District is the only area mentioned in the manuscript. Please explain the other two areas mentioned in table 1.

Minor essential revisions
1) From each village in the district 4 women were randomly selected. Therefore in the overall results very small villages contribute relatively more compared to their population. As very small villages are probably more likely to lack health facilities/ trained health personnel, could you explain how this influences the overall results? Would lower PNR rates have been found if all identified pregnant women from the 24 villages would have been included?

2) Data from the PROMISE-EBF trial were used where exclusive breastfeeding was promoted. Intention to breastfeed was one of the inclusion criteria for the study. Could this inclusion criteria have influenced the results?

3) The sample size for the EBF trial was chosen to detect a reduction in the prevalence of diarrheal morbity. The data from the EBF trial are now used to estimate the perinatal mortality rate and one of the conclusions is that there was no risk difference between deliveries at home and at the primary health centres. This finding is also used in the discussion to base the statement on the weak health system in Burkina Faso. What is the sample size needed to detect an existing difference between deliveries at home and at the primary health centre of a certain percentage? Could the small sample size of the study be the reason that no effect was found?

4) Please explain the index of wealth used. Is this index used by others (if so, please add references) and how are the individual items scored to obtain the quintiles?
5) Do the authors have information about the consideration of women to deliver in a health facility or at home?

6) What was the reason to choose for 5 kilometres as cut off point for the distance to a health facility?

**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