Reviewer's report

Title: Neonatal care in rural Karnataka: healthy and harmful practices, the potential for change

Version: 2 Date: 7 March 2009

Reviewer: Asha George

Reviewer's report:

A copy-editor needs to review the manuscript as a few grammatical errors and awkward phrasings remains.

The statement that 10 years ago sugar water provision in hospitals was part of clinical protocols needs to be referenced (either by the guideline itself or the interview that provided this information).

A major finding from your research is that respondents have their own worldviews regarding childbirth and newborn care practices. They are not 'empty vessels' in which health education messages/ slogans are to be deposited in. You also discuss how some respondents have already begun to change due to a variety of reasons. It is striking that your conclusion continues to focus on the kinds of health workers/ programmes that can deliver health education (when this is already an accepted part of their mandate), rather than drawing on your analysis to support principles of behaviour change and communication theory that reflect on how existing worldviews need to be engaged with respectfully and how 'positive deviants' can be affirmed. Such an analysis would better inform the kind of health education that government health workers could do, as well as the kind of training and supervision provided to support health workers to be effective brokers of positive behaviour change (a more powerful policy conclusion based on your data).

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

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.