Reviewer's report

Title: Boys are more stunted than girls in Sub-Saharan Africa: a meta analysis of 16 demographic and health surveys

Version: 2 Date: 17 November 2006

Reviewer: Joseph Beyene

Reviewer's report:

General

This is a well written manuscript on an important question. The authors set out to address a couple of focused hypotheses and have carried out detailed analyses and comparisons to help them answer the questions they posed. Their discussion is comprehensive and insightful.

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

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1) Table 1 Zambia 2001/2 the percentages do not add to 100% (only adds up to 98%)

2) The authors have made several tests (Tables 2 and 3) there by inflating the likelihood of finding spurious associations. It would be useful if their discussion mentions this multiple testing issue and warns readers as to what extent a reliable/generalizable inference can be made based upon the reported p-values.

3) The authors have provided a p-value corresponding to a test of homogeneity/heterogeneity to justify their choice of fixed-effects modeling. I assume that they have used the Cochran Q statistic for this test (although they do not say this in their methods section). I think it would be important to describe the specific test that was used and also to provide the I2 statistic for their data to help readers see the magnitude/extent of heterogeneity, even if it is not deemed statistically significant.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

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

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.