Reviewer's report

Title: Prevalence and risk factors for stunting and severe stunting among under-fives in North Maluku province of Indonesia

Version: 2 Date: 6 August 2009

Reviewer: Thorkild Tylleskar

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Second review of Agho et al. Prevalence and risk factors for stunting in North Maluku of Indonesia

Thank you for a nice rework of the manuscript! It is now very close, but there were some things I would like amended to make it even better:

On page 4 you write: Chronic malnutrition (stunting), a deficit in height or length relative to a child’s age is a major health problem in South Asia.

It would be more correct to use the technical term stunting alone for a deficit in height or length relative to a child’s age. Equating stunting with ‘chronic malnutrition’ is common but it seems most of the stunting happens in early life and is certainly not caused by ‘chronic malnutrition’ alone. The scientific language becomes more precise if you just wrote ‘stunting’. The same goes for several passages in the introduction and the discussion. Use stunting throughout.

In 1986 WHO said that stunting “seems to reflect overall socio-economic conditions” (and not only ‘chronic malnutrition’). Even your own findings supports the association to socio-economic factors (and of course age as the stunting increases with age).

Figure 2. In my previous comment I was suggesting a figure with the stunting rate by age. My intention was to have a figure the stunting rate is presented per year or per 6 months up to five years of age (the data that is presented under ‘age’ in table 1) in order for us to appreciate the dynamics of the stunting. And to show that most of the stunting is acquired during the first 2 years of live as stated in the Lancet series on Maternal and Child undernutrition. The present figure is not very informative so I suggest you either delete it or replace it by one that presents the stunting rate by age intervals, if possible 0-5, 6-11, 12-17, 18-23, 24-29 months, etc, If you make it a line diagram with both stunting and severe stunting it becomes easier to read.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable
Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:

'I declare that I have no competing interests'