Reviewer's report

**Title:** Paniya Voices: Rationale, design, and implementation of a Participatory Poverty and Health Assessment among a marginalised South Indian tribal population

**Version:** 2  **Date:** 3 September 2009

**Reviewer:** Nikki Clelland

**Reviewer's report:**

The need for participatory approaches to research, particularly amongst marginalised and vulnerable groups, is increasingly being recognised. This work is very important and the authors’ attempt at describing the approach they have taken in their research is to be commended. The process and challenges described in the section ‘guiding principles in the implementation of the PPHA’ are particularly helpful. There are, however, a number of points raised in the article which require some further clarification.

A. Major compulsory Revisions:

1. Is it the authors’ intent to describe an approach to research which they call ‘Participatory Poverty and Health Assessment’? Is this a previously developed & tested process? How does it differ from other participatory and/or qualitative approaches to research? Further background and rationale for this [PHAA] approach would help to clarify the appropriateness of the research design for the study and generalisability of the approach.

2. On p10, section ‘Data recording, management and analysis’, and in the conclusions of the paper, the authors’ discuss plans for future work (eg. stages 2 & 3 of data analysis & further workshops to discuss findings) which add little ‘to providing guidance for other researchers’. Completing these aspects of the study and describing the approaches taken & challenges encountered would be of significant interest to the broader readership.

3. There certainly needs to be more work done in developing and applying culturally appropriate research techniques but I am unclear how the concluding remarks contribute to ‘provide researchers with a potential approach to working with marginalised communities in low-income settings.’

B. Minor essential Revisions

1. I am unclear about what the aims and objectives of the action research project ‘Vulnerability and Health in Wayanad, Kerala’ or details of the 2006 feasibility study (see p8 para 2) and their connection with the present study.

2. Please provide detail on the process for selecting and recruiting communities to the study.

3. On p5, in the para on ‘study population’ the sentence ‘The Paniyas are predominately landless (75% of Paniya households own less than 10 cents of
land)… Should read ’10 per cent’

4. Figures are not labelled or titled. A map that provides context of the Paniya colonies and their relation to India and the world would be more helpful.

5. I would like more explanation on Figures 2 and 3 and what they illustrate.

6. I’m not entirely clear on who conducted what aspects of the study. For example, Page 8 ‘Data collection’ para 1: the PPHA was undertaken by a local non government organisation’ page 10 section ‘Data recording management and analysis’ para 1: ‘data and field notes were recorded by handwritten diaries [whose diaries?] ‘transcripts were translated into English and reviewed [by who?] to ensure logical translation’

7. More explanation on ‘policy-relevant data on the views, experiences and priorities of an ST group’ would be helpful as this is a point often cited but with no explanation of what this actually means.

C. Discretionary Revisions

1. It would be useful to see the authors include a brief account of Indigenous capacity and development outcomes from involvement in the research, whether this was for Indigenous researchers or Paniya community people.

2. The current title could be rewritten to improve clarity on the purpose of the manuscript.

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

**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