Reviewer’s report

Title: Evaluation of Stepping Stones as a tool for changing knowledge, attitudes and behaviors associated with gender, relationships and HIV risk in Karnataka, India

Version: 3 Date: 16 December 2010

Reviewer: Nthabiseng A Phaladze

Reviewer’s report:

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined?
   The description of Stepping Stones (SS) training package is well described. However, the purpose of the evaluation in the 40 villages does not come out clearly. It would have been helpful to have the aims of this project stand out e.g. have bullet points objectives followed by the hypotheses. The hypotheses should clearly spell out the endpoints/outcomes.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described?
   The methods section needs to be organized differently e.g. have headings such as: study design; sampling technique; data collection methods etc.
   As it is it makes reading a bit difficult. Data analysis methods for both qualitative and quantitative data should be specified. This is important for readers in assessing how authors came to conclusions for instance. We need to know how the sampling of the villages was done? what was the eligibility criteria?

3. Are the data sound?
   The data is relatively sound

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?
   Yes.

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?
   The discussion section only has one reference which is highly inadequate. The findings need to be supported by the literature. The authors need to revisit this section.
   There is no conclusion following the discussion. This needs to be addressed.

6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated?
   Yes.

7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished?
   Yes, they did acknowledge previous evaluations of Stepping Stones.

8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?
9. Is the writing acceptable?
Yes.

**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 do not have any competing interests