Reviewer’s report

**Title:** Caregiver perspectives on treatment and health service use for child diarrhoea among ethnic minorities: A qualitative study from Vietnam

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**Reviewer:** Helle Rydstrøm

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By focusing on child diarrhoea, the paper wishes to examine the ways in which ethnic minority groups in contemporary northern Vietnam use local health services and consider illness treatment. The paper is interesting and it contributes important knowledge. The text is well-written, the questions well-defined, and the methods employed appropriate. Even though the study is thorough and the data give a sound impression, the manuscript calls for further elaboration. (It should also be noted that the title is adequate but bulky).

1. The paper needs to introduce more carefully the Vietnamese context in which the study was conducted. More details should be provided about the health care system, how it works, and official strategies regarding child health care.

2. A more comprehensive overview of the health care situation of ethnic minority groups in Vietnam should be provided.

3. Similarly, more information should be offered about the socio-economic living conditions of the various ethnic groups which often differ radically from those of the Kinh (i.e. majority group).

4. Over the years, ethnic minority groups in Vietnam have been subjected to a variety of political initiatives, studies, projects, etc. In this particular study, it seems relevant to consider how political integration initiatives might have accentuated or minimized discrepancies between the minority groups, on the one hand, and the established health care system, on the other, as regards understandings of illness and treatment.

5. More data are needed about the ways in which a pervading neo-liberal market economy in late-socialist Vietnam facilitates a continuous flow in medical products that easily can be obtained despite the very same products elsewhere demand a prescription. As described in the paper, procuring medication at the local pharmacy is informed by household theories, fortune tellers, or local pharmacists. The paper, however, would be improved if discussing the arbitrariness of medical consumption in more detail.

6. The particular socio-cultural traditions and beliefs of each of the ethnic groups studied in this paper influence how the human body, health, and illness are rendered meaningful. Products (including medication) usually are considered along the lines of “hot”/“cool” or “sour”/“sweet” (as also mentioned in the interviews) in accordance with which people would attempt to maintain a certain
balance in their own body as well as in the body of their children. The paper thus should highlight the ways in which local cosmologies translate into ideas about body, health, and treatment in respect to diarrhoea in children.

7. Much information about gender seems to be enveloped in this study. If caregivers mainly are women, readers should know why it might be so. Only little information is provided about the gendered ways in which life is organized in the ethnic groups studied.

8. The authors acknowledge the work upon which they draw. However, more references to socio-cultural and gender specific research on Vietnam would strengthen the paper.

9. The criteria for comparing communities as different as Vietnam, Thailand, and “a variety of African countries” (p. 40) should be explained.