Reviewer's report

**Title:** Temporal trends and gender differentials in causes of childhood deaths at Ballabgarh, India - Need for revisiting child survival strategies

**Version:** 2  **Date:** 30 April 2012

**Reviewer:** sailajanandan parida

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Reviewers comment on
Temporal trends and gender difference in causes of childhood deaths at Ballabgarh, India—need for revisiting child survival strategies

1 Is the question posed by the authors well defined?
   - There are certain observations relating to CSMF CSMR & Gender bias in U-5 Deaths in the study population, spanning over three decades. The authors have made an attempt to justify these observations and have succeeded to a great extent.

2 Are the methods appropriate and well described?
   - Yes, with the limitations explained.

3 Are the data sound?
   - Yes. Certain more information are needed as commented in the comment no -5

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?
   - I agree with most of the points discussed. Certain observations need further clarification. The authors have emphasized on the role of private sector health care facilities for better management of diseases in U-5 age group. There are no data on number of babies seeking the health care in these institutions. Admittedly large number of such facilities have come up late in that geographical area. Number of births and their outcome in such facilities need to be taken in to consideration. It is not clear if the babies who failed to attend CRHSP are still tracked, and their outcome entered for analysis. As mentioned by the authors the people have a greater inclination to visit the private health facilities, but in Indian scenario mostly affluent people do avail such care. As agreed by the authors while addressing the temporal trends in cause of death, it is well-known that Better socio economic status of a child’s family do positively contribute for a better health outcome. These issues need some elaboration while describing the role of private sector hospitals contribution in reducing Neonatal and U-5 deaths. Gender bias leading to more deaths in girl children is a very serious issue, but
mostly confined to northern parts of India, but possible strategies will be
dressed through interventions beyond health sector as suggested by the
authors. The remedial measures to further reduce NMR, by focusing on two
important contributors like prematurity and infection needs further elaboration.

6 Are limitations of the work clearly stated?
- Yes, the main issue is the introduction of the VA tool in 1995&computerization
  of records in 1992,

7 Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building,
both published and unpublished?
- Yes

8 Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?
- Yes to certain extent.

9 Is the writing acceptable?
- Yes