Reviewer's report

Title: Burden of micronutrient deficiencies by socio-economic strata in children aged 6 months to 5 years in the Philippines

Version: 4 Date: 6 October 2013

Reviewer: Alexander J. J Stein

Reviewer's report:

Author response (AR) No. 19: "We believe that the concept of "quality of live lost" is easier to understand" >>

Comment: If the concept of "quality of live lost" is easier to understand, the authors could have used QALYs and not DALYs for their study in the first place. However, given that the paper uses DALYs, it is confusing - if not misleading - to speak of "quality of live lost" when referring to DALYs. And while it is true that the concepts are very similar, they are the inverse of each other (one DALY lost is one QALY gained) and the underlying ideas are also different (quality vs. disability), i.e. for a rigorous and unequivocal presentation, the concepts need to be distinguished. (The authors certainly do not need to use the language I had suggested in my original comment, but they should avoid the term "quality of life").

AR No. 25: "children do not have a lack of MN" >>

Comment: In my original comment I asked the authors when intakes are sufficient, or when children to not have a lack of MN: In the literature there are various dietary reference intakes, such as RDAs or EARs, and it is not clear to the reader which of these the authors use to determine that children's intakes of MNs are sufficient. (RDA = intakes at which 90% of target population is sufficient, EAR = intake at which 50% of target population is sufficient.)

AR No. 38: "consequences of VAD is based on the local expert knowledge of our Filipino coauthors" >>

Comment: If a statement or assumption, such as the exclusion of xerophthalmia and blindness as health consequences of VAD, is based on expert knowledge, this needs to be clearly stated and referenced as such -- in my comment I had given references to the literature that questioned the authors' assumption, i.e. at the very least they should back up their assumption with the evidence they used for making it. (Using their own expert knowledge is fine, but the reader needs to be aware of it.)

AR No. 40: "We only consider costs that accrue due to MNDs between 6-59 months of age." >>

Comment: This is fine, but perhaps the authors could make this more transparent and/or point out somewhere that the actual burden of MNDs in the Philippines is (much) higher, because only a sub-group of the population is considered.
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 have no competing interests.