Reviewer's report

Title: Persistent Household Food Insecurity, HIV, and Maternal Stress in Peri-Urban Ghana

Version: 1 Date: 4 December 2012

Reviewer: Craig Hadley

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Major Revisions

1. The introduction can be improved to better introduce the issue. As currently written it focuses too narrowly on Ghana and does not introduce the broader question. I would suggest that the manuscript NOT open with specific information on Ghana but rather the central question of whether food insecurity is more stressful when experienced by HIV+ mothers. The introduction does not flow well because a) it opens with discussion of Ghana, and then several paragraphs lack cohesion. For example:

Page 5 Line 103: This paragraph is about treatment and the MDGs but the paper is not about these. I would save this type of discussion for the Discussion.

Page 5 Line 113: Paragraph is mixed: begins with a line about mental health of children and mothers being important for HIV treat/prevention but the rest of the paragraph discusses maternal stress and child development.

The introduction might be better structured by discussing the link between food insecurity and mental health and stress; that stress is also high among HIV+ as is food insecurity; and this leads to the compelling hypothesis that food insecurity among HIV+ has a greater effect. Then you might introduce the alternative hypotheses, which I gather from the methods include the hypothesis that food insecurity is stressful BECAUSE of HIV and that HIV is stressfull because of food insecurity; this would explain the mediation analyses. Then, I would then quickly discuss the case of Ghana.

2. The regression tables were hard to read and I would have appreciated a more formal test of the mediation analyses. A graphic illustrating the interaction of HIV and FI on stress would be a worthy addition to the paper.

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

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests.