Reviewer's report

Title: The context and practice of handwashing among new mothers in Serang, Indonesia: a formative study

Version: 3 Date: 8 May 2013

Reviewer: Robert Dreibelbis

Reviewer's report:

Major Revisions

1) Abstract / Discussion vs. Results: The abstract and discussion heavily weight advice given from the mother/grandmother for new practices related to infant care. However, the results focus almost exclusively on the information given by and the role of the midwife in helping new mothers. (For example (p.13): The most valued advice comes from the midwife - a reportedly reputable source of information, particularly when conflicting advice is received (although the mother and mother-in-law may try and override this influence). Midwives instruct on how to bathe the baby (they are concerned about “spraining” the baby when they handle it), preventing cord infection and the importance of breastfeeding”). There seems to be a disconnect between the results and abstract/discussion. If there are other factors that make the mother/grandmother the key person for targeted interventions, that rationale could be supported with a more explicit explanation.

2) My primary concern remains the breakdown in handwashing behaviors.

a. This is presented as a method in the analysis, but it is discussed as a result. Were these categories defined a priori or did the classification emerge from the results? If emergent, this is a result and should be presented there and the process through which they were defined described in the methods, not the categories themselves. If this is part of the analysis, more background on how these categories were defined should be included.

b. The categories, as presented, are descriptive. The authors mention how these categories are insightful, could guide future data collection, and suggest alternative intervention strategies (p.14), but there is little information on HOW the categories could inform future data collection or intervention strategies.

Comments at the author’s discretion

1) I still find the categories of washer vs. dirt washer confusing – even after reading this manuscript several times. There are other terms that refer to these differences in practice – handwashing in response to a stimulus vs. handwashing in response to a desire / perception. Aunger uses the terms planned, motivated, and habitual to describe handwashing. McLaws (http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/20850197) refers to inherent vs. elective handwashing. The inclusion of “dirt” in the name seems somewhat limiting to dirt as a stimulus, when in fact, the categories seem to reflect more a difference
between elective vs. inherent or planned vs. motivated handwashing. I would suggest removing “dirt” from the naming system here and include a term that more close relates to the fact that these individuals’ handwashing is reactive in nature.

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

**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