Reviewer's report

Title: The family as a determinant of stunting in children living in conditions of extreme poverty: a case-control study.

Version: 2 Date: 7 July 2004

Reviewer: Anwar Merchant

Reviewer's report:

General

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

The authors have not addressed the main issue raised in the previous critique. Age and sex of the child, maternal literacy and household income are established risk factors of childhood malnutrition. If the goal is to identify other characteristics of malnutrition it is essential to estimate their relative importance independent of the established factors (because they may be correlated). In response to this critique the authors have said that they did not include sex of the child, maternal literacy and household income because they were not statistically significant or did not improve the fit of the model. Statistical significance is not the issue. The issue is how did including these factors (established risk factors) in the model change the relation of the factors identified in the study (for example length of marital union). Is this relation with malnutrition independent of the established risk factors? That is the question, which has not been adequately addressed. It would be reassuring to see the results of both multivariate models.

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:

None.