Reviewer's report

Title: DOTS improves treatment outcomes and service coverage for tuberculosis in South Ethiopia: a retrospective trend analysis

Version: 1 Date: 11 April 2005

Reviewer: David Wilkinson

Reviewer's report:

General
I have been through the 3 documents as requested. I am firmly in favour of supporting Reviewer 1 and publication. However I also do support his recommendations re outcome analyses. Further I do think that the article is very long and overly-complicated. It reads more like a detailed report to a Health Ministry than an academic article. The problem is that the authors present a lot of data and several analyses. The key message - that TB treatment coverage and outcomes have substantially improved in the area over time, is somewhat lost, which is a shame. The second reviewer has I think missed the point a bit and in part this is probably due to the mass of data presented. Her primary concern - that the comparison should be a before-after one, around the introduction of DOTS, is reasonable in principle, but not appropriate in practice. This is because it seems that what actually happened here is that over a period of years (in a phased roll out, as is inevitable in real life) TB services were strengthened in this area, using the DOTS principles. Thus a broad picture of trends is a reasonable way to assess the effect, and it seems fairly clear that things went pretty well.

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

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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)