Reviewer's report

Title: The benefits of participatory methodologies to develop effective community dialogue in the context of a microbicide trial feasibility study in Mwanza, Tanzania.

Version: 1 Date: 5 March 2007

Reviewer: Ricky Bluthenthal

Reviewer's report:

General
This is a relatively detailed case study of how participatory methodologies were used to enhance both participant comfort and scientific outcomes in a feasibility trial. This well-written manuscript addresses an important issue. Methods are well described and the documentary evidence of the procedures used are appropriate. Further, as the main trial is rolled out, this report on the feasibility component will provide an important foundation for continued assessment of the participatory methods used by this investigative team.

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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)
On page 15, Laboratory test results, second sentence. There appears to be a missing word in the sentence beginning "Laboratory-based HIV ELISA..."

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

The document is already relatively long, however, it might be further enhanced if information could be provided on participants overall opinion of the research project and researchers. The authors do an outstanding job of describing the process of identifying problems, discussing possible solutions, and implementing agreed upon solutions and then receiving additional feedback on solutions, but for such a process to work, there typically needs to be a general context of trust, dialogue and engagement. A paragraph or two on this from the perceptive of participants would be an important addition to this compelling case study.

What next?: Accept after minor essential revisions

Level of interest: An article of outstanding merit and interest 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.