Reviewer's report

Title: The Reach and Impact of Social Marketing and Reproductive Health Communication Campaigns in Zambia

Version: 1 Date: 25 June 2007

Reviewer: John Cleland

Reviewer's report:

General

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

1. Causal attribution is nearly always surrounded by a degree of uncertainty in non-experimental research and this should be reflected in more cautious claims in the discussion and conclusion.

2. The paper could be considerably simplified by demonstrating more convincingly that endogeneity is not a problem (as stated on p.9 bottom) and then omitting the results of the two stage model. The current draft of the paper gives the impression that the authors do not fully trust their test for endogeneity.

3. The inclusion of the proximate determinants of condom use (knowledge of source and the belief that condoms could be obtained) in the multivariate models needs to be more strongly justified or dropped. In my view their omission would be preferable for the following reason. Campaign exposure must act by increasing the motivation for condom use and this increased motivation must surely lead to the search for information about supply sources and enhanced confidence in being able to obtain them. Their inclusion as ‘controls’ in the modelling is thus likely to bias downwards the estimated effect of campaign exposure.

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

4. The reference category (no risk) for the perceived AIDS risk variable needs to be added to the tables, together with a footnote explaining the asterisks.

5. The paper is generally well written though there are a few errors, the worst of which is the misspelling of Kaunda on p.3.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

6. Condoms may be used for pregnancy-prevention as well as
disease-prevention. Thus desire for another child in the next two years is correctly included as a possible predictor. But for the female sample, it would be interesting to confirm the probability that current use of a non-barrier contraceptive method decreases the odds of condom use at last intercourse.

7. Some of the more interesting and surprising results – other than the effect of campaign exposure-deserve discussion. Education is strongly predictive of condom use at last intercourse for women but not men. Perceived risk of HIV is negatively related to condom use for women (perhaps the contraceptive motive is more important) and not significant for men.

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

**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