Reviewer's report

**Title:** Prevalence of risk factors for non-communicable diseases in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam: results from a STEPS survey

**Version:** 1  **Date:** 4 May 2009

**Reviewer:** Hanan Abdul Rahim

**Reviewer's report:**

The paper is generally well-written. The rationale for this study is the dearth of information regarding NCD risk factors for populations other than those of some major urban centers in Vietnam and one poor rural location (which was also surveyed using the STEPwise approach). The study utilizes standardized WHO methodology.

**Major Compulsory Revisions:**

1. The first objective of the study (to study the prevalence of risk factors for NCS in a rural Vietnamese sample) is very clearly stated. However, the second objective (to study the associations between surveyed risk factors) is less clear. It would benefit the paper greatly to clarify which associations would be examined specifically and why. This should also involve stating some hypotheses, especially in light of previous studies.

2. The questions and rationale of this study should be discussed, not only in relation to the study of the big city samples of Ha Noi and HCMC but also in relation to the 2005 Bavi district study. In particular, the reader needs to understand how the present study constitutes an addition to the findings of the Bavi district study (other than the obvious fact that the location is different).

**Minor Essential Revisions:**

1. More information on the location of the present study and its characteristics would be useful for the reader (see point # 2 in the previous section).

2. In the Measurements section, it was stated that the questionnaire was "modified with expanded and optional questions to suit local needs." These modifications should be described further, as they add interest to a study that applies standardized methodology.

3. The Statistical Methods section should identify explicitly which variables were treated as exposure and/or outcome variables in the different analyses (this relates to point # 1 in the previous section).

4. Under the same section, the authors should clarify to the reader what is meant by "Complex survey analysis methods."
5. Table 1: add p-values for the differences of the characteristics between men and women.

6. Tables 2 and 3: 95% CI are not what is presented. Either calculate the 95% CI or change the heading of the column (SE?).

7. In the Results section (page 8), fruit and vegetable consumption between men and women in the different age groups appears not to be significantly different, as the confidence intervals overlap.

8. In all the tables, present blood pressure findings as "hypertension" using the definition provided in the Methods section (i.e. as one variable, rather than SBP and DBP separately).

9. Table 4 should be re-done using multivariate regression analysis to control for age (and possibly education). However, Table 4 (and all the figures) should be reconsidered in line with comment #1 in the previous section (i.e. specific hypotheses regarding associations between measured factors).

10. References need to be written in the appropriate format.

**Level of interest:** An article of limited interest

**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'