Reviewer's report

Title: Remaining life expectancy among older people in a rural area of Vietnam: trends and socioeconomic inequalities during a period of multiple transitions

Version: 2 Date: 9 September 2009

Reviewer: Vladimir M. Shkolnikov

Reviewer's report:

The paper has been significantly improved. However, one problem remains. The description of RLE estimation is still unsatisfactory. It is too long and hardly understandable. I recommend to remove the text on pages 9-10 beginning from “There are two general approaches … “ (p. 9) and ending with “… is shown in Figure A1” (p. 10). This fragment can be replaced by the following shorter explanation:

Life expectancy can be obtained from life tables calculated from period or cohort age-specific mortality rates. The period mortality rate is based on deaths occurred and exposure time spent within a specific age interval over a period of observation. The cohort mortality rate is based on following up people being at a specific age at the beginning of the observation period. Mortality rates are calculated by dividing the number of deaths of these people by the person-time lived by them during the observation period. Figure A1 illustrates the two ways of calculating age-specific death rates and life tables. In this study estimates of RLE are based on cohort age-specific mortality rates.

The text under Figure A1 is also problematic. It should be something like the following:

The figure shows Lexis rectangle and Lexis parallelogram underlying period and cohort age-specific mortality rates, respectively.

Level of interest: An article of importance 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'