Reviewer's report

Title: Domestic violence and mental health in Bolivia

Version: 2 Date: 7 January 2013

Reviewer: Helen Herrman

Reviewer's report:

The paper reports a study of an important and neglected topic. It finds an interesting pattern of associations between domestic violence in the 12 months before the survey and symptoms of depression, anxiety and seizures. The paper provides a good scholarly introduction to the topic and justifies the study aims. The conclusions indicate the potential for such studies to promote policy development.

I have a number of comments that may be of use to the authors.

1. The context of the study is not entirely clear. I suggest the authors explain their role and the role of colleagues in Bolivia. What form of cooperation or collaboration exists and how was the study conceived? What sort of research capacity building was accomplished as part of the work?

2. The acknowledgements indicate that the study was funded by USAID, but the auspice for the study is not stated. The statement on research ethics needs to be made clearer. What organisation(s) provided the institutional ethics approval for each country? How does the commercial company ICF International relate to these organisations? I suggest these matters are added to the text of the paper as well as acknowledgements as appropriate.

3. The survey staff received special training (page 3). It would be useful to read about how the staff were recruited (local people or people familiar with the culture), and what was the nature of their experience and training. How were local cultures and languages considered? Is there any recorded information about their experiences of conducting the interviews? Where were the interviews held and how was privacy assured?

4. The statistical methods will need review by an expert in the field (not my expertise). How does the pattern of findings of significant associations translate into meaningful differences in morbidity or loss of health? What order of magnitude difference is found?

5. Is the lack of association between adverse early life events and mental ill heath unexpected? I suggest the authors discuss this point.

The language and presentation of the paper are good.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field
Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests