Reviewer's report

Title: Facility and home based HIV Counseling and Testing: a comparative analysis of uptake of services by rural communities in southwestern Uganda

Version: 1 Date: 3 August 2010

Reviewer: catrin Evans

Reviewer's report:

This paper addresses a topic that is of considerable public health importance in the HIV field. I have a number of suggestions for its improvement however:

Major revisions

- please describe in a more detail why home-based testing is of such potential significance in terms of HIV prevention. I feel that the development of this approach to testing needs to be situated within the wider debates about different kinds of testing models and their respective strengths and weaknesses (according to the available evidence). I feel some of the current introduction could be shortened (e.g. the facts on HIV in Africa) to create word space for more background to HIV testing policy (both globally as well as in Uganda specifically)

- in relation to the above point, the paper needs to provide more detail on what it means by VCT. There is a difference between VCT and provider initiated testing which happens routinely now in many health centres (especially in ante-natal settings and TB clinics). Given that the paper refers to facility based VCT - please be clear whether it is referring to provider-initiated testing or client-initiated testing? I think there is a difference between the two models and it is iuportant in your paper to establish whether you are comparing like with like (i.e. if you are comparing a client initiated model with a provider initiated one - can one then draw any meaningful comparisons?) To help the reader understand more about the types of testing model that you are comparing, more details about their structure and process is required.

- please provide more detail about the two geographical areas that are being compared. You state that they are comparable because they are both 'average'. Much more information is required to convincingly demonstrate that they are indeed 'average' and comparable. How is average defined for example?

- Please provide more information on the questionnaire that was used. Were you adapting a previously validated tool? (if so - which one?). Did you design your own questionnaire? If so - how was it piloted and validated?

- The section on female symptoms of STI sounds a bit odd in the sense that burning urine and itching in the vagina are presented as potential STI symptoms. They may equally be gynaecological symptoms that are unrelated to STIs. How was this form of questioning and content decided upon? Did the questionnaire undergo content and face validation?
- finally, I am not sure that the conclusion reflects the main findings of the paper - please clarify the conclusion to state what the significance of this study was and how it may lead to further research or service development

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

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'