Reviewer’s report

Title: Addressing maternal healthcare through demand side financial incentives: experience of Janani Suraksha Yojana Program in India

Version: 2 Date: 9 July 2012

Reviewer: Sudha Xirasagar

Reviewer’s report:

1. The authors should be congratulated on accomplishing a challenging evaluation research project with rigorous research methodology in a developing country context. I have some comments that need to be addressed before it can be accepted.

2. P.8, Results: Please start the results section with a sentence stating the estimated annual total deliveries in Orissa pre JSY, and during the first middle and last year of the study period. Then state the baseline population-based rates of institutional deliveries, ANC and PNC in Orissa. (These are shown in Table 1. They should be stated here to provide context for the results stated subsequently.

3. The authors have not touched upon a very important aspect of DSF in the Discussion section. A major program weakness is the opportunity for induction of greater magnitude of illegal payments or contributions (expected and collected) from the mothers by the various levels of service providers, from the ASHAs to the doctors conducting deliveries under JSY. It appears these functionaries factored in the increased access to finances by the women and felt entitled to a share of the new support! This impact appears to be at least as significant an impact as the induction of institutional deliveries, ANC and PNC. Impact on OOP is a key study question.

I would like to see in the Results section a quasi quantitative summarization of the FGD comments from mothers, how many FGDs turned up with this allusion. Did any participant at those FGDs refute that this happened to themselves, some summary to assess how widespread the increased OOP burden is following JSY. While it may be difficult to address at the ground level, the fact that it is a major weakness of the program should be articulated. Unless articulated, remedies to minimize this problem are unlikely to be initiated. Hence it is of policy significance that the matter be elaborated upon further and potential remedies discussed in the discussion section.