Reviewer's report

Title: Equity of Access to Reproductive Health Services among Youths in Resource-limited Suburban Communities of Mandalay City, Myanmar

Version: 3 Date: 16 October 2012

Reviewer: Elissa Kennedy

Reviewer's report:

Major Compulsory Revisions:

1. Please provide sex-disaggregated analysis of the data. Were the primary outcomes measures different for males and females? Some indicators (unmet need for family planning, unmet need for maternal health services) appear to only refer to females but there is no analysis of differences between males and females which would be relevant.

2. Please provide an explanation of how ‘sexually active’ was defined – was this based on a standard measure (sex within the last 4 weeks) or are the authors referring to ever had sex?

3. Clarify the outcome “any SRH information service” – what does this include (school-based information, mass media, peer education, clinic-based education, etc)?

4. Please clarify how the authors ascertained that a female did not intend to conceive – how was this defined or measured? Standard measures include want no more children or do not want to have a child in the next 2 years.

5. Please clarify how the authors defined “sex without any protection”.

6. In reference to the reasons for non-utilization of services (Methods/Outcome measures/Unmet RH needs) how were these collected (answer recorded from a pre-determined list) and analysed?

7. In reference to community characteristics (Methods/Outcome measures/Independent variables) please review the classification of knowledge of RH services and exposure to mass media as a ‘community characteristic’. These would be more appropriately classified as individual characteristics. Were any other measure of knowledge measured (knowledge of family planning methods, STI symptoms, etc)?

Minor Essential Revisions:

8. Methods / Utilization – please clarify whether measures such as utilization of family planning, STI/HI or maternal care were only collected for youths who report ever having had sex. While it I conceivable that a young person might
access family planning services prior to sexual debut the same is not true of maternal health and STI testing. Perhaps these outcomes could be analysed only for those youths who report having ever had sex

9. Please explain the significance of ‘waste recycler’ and why this indicator of employment is singled out while other types of employment (self-employed, paid, etc) are not

10. I am not convinced that Table 3 adds any useful information as it does not reflect how likely youths were to access or use RH services – it simply reflects the geographical and financial accessibility which is adequately covered in Table 2

11. Discussion – some of the important findings are that adolescents (15-19), unmarried young people and youths not currently in school had the lowest utilization and highest unmet need. This could be highlighted and discussed in more detail in the discussion – including possible explanations and recommendations to overcome barriers

12. Discussion - the relevance of comparisons with studies in USA and rural areas of Africa are not clear and require more explanation

13. Discussion – the authors state that there is a current definition of unmet need for family planning, however this does not appear to be the definition used in this study

14. Discussion – in general there could be more discussion of the reasons for low utilization and high unmet need, including exploration of the reasons captured by this study (provider and spouse perceptions, embarrassment, etc)

15. Limitations – were there any potential biases introduced by relying on community leaders to provide lists of youths in each community (might some young people have been excluded)\

16. Attention needs to be given to the language throughout the manuscript. While the manuscript is generally adequately written some phrasing is unclear and word choice not appropriate. There are too many to list here, but examples include “….access to RH services has been vigilant..” (Background para 3) and “….the availability of RH services is ascertained…” (Method para 1). There are numerous other examples through out.

Discretionary Revisions:

17. Background - consider providing a more explicit description of the disproportionate burden of poor reproductive health suffered by adolescents globally

18. Data collection/Preparatory phase - with reference to the structured questionnaire more explanation could be given as to how the questionnaire was developed and whether it was based on standardized tools
19. Results/Socio-demographic characteristics – history of sexual activity is very relevant to this study so consider including this in the text not just in Table 1

20. Discussion – are there any comparisons that can be made to adults’ access, utilization and unmet needs in Myanmar?

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

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

**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.