Reviewer's report

Title: Child health care and the role of community health workers in rural Mali

Version: 4 Date: 13 July 2009

Reviewer: Ishtiaq Mannan

Reviewer's report:

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined?
   The question gets clear in the course of reading. Conventionally, the last paragraph of the introduction section should clearly state the questions addressed in the manuscript. Currently it says, "...reports the results of an assessment...." - would be helpful if this is made little more detailed and specific. (Minor essential revision)

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described?
   Adequate for a cross sectional survey designed to answer indicative questions.

3. Are the data sound?
   OK. Suggestion: since you have background characteristics presented in Table 4, you do not need to have Table 1. Just add a total column in Table 4. (Discretionary revision)

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition?
   Yes.

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data?
   Conclusions are in line with the data presented. Conclusion in the abstract and that in the manuscript do not conform; the former is more specific and relevant. Please reconcile. (Minor essential revision)

6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated?
   Clear. Please consider to mention that, in the rural study community it is likely that members of the households (of both groups - visited by CHWs and not) often interacted socially. In terms of knowledge and some practices there might have some spill over effect. The 'not visited by CHW' was not a 'control' group in true sense. (Discretionary revision)

7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished?
   None.

8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found?
Yes.

9. Is the writing acceptable?
Acceptable. Minor edits will improve the quality. Example: page 11: "Regarding knowledge........., 40% treat fever with the correct regimen...". When it's knowledge, not practice, the statement could be something like, "...40% mentioned to have treated fever with...". (Discretionary revision).

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

**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 I have no competing interests