Reviewer’s report

Title: Male Involvement in Sexual and Reproductive Health in the Mendi District, Southern Highlands Province of Papua New Guinea: a Descriptive Study.

Version: 1 Date: 3 August 2013

Reviewer: Jess Davis

Reviewer’s report:

Major Compulsory Revisions
None.

Minor Essential Revisions

Background, first paragraph:
1. Suggest including the units for each mortality estimate (e.g. ‘per X live births’).

Background, second paragraph:
2. The sentence “Lack of male involvement and support for utilization of safe motherhood services is seen by women as a barrier to accessing services” needs a reference.

3. “Women in PNG are at risk of contracting STI and HIV because of cultural and social norms by which wives cannot decline sexual intercourse with their husbands nor can they insist that their partners use condoms”. This is also true in very casual relationships. Therefore suggest using ‘partners’ rather than ‘husband/wife’. Also, international readers are unlikely to be aware that a ‘marriage relationship’ can take many different forms in PNG, so might be better to use the terms ‘partner’ and ‘relationship’ throughout the articles, or alternatively, include a footnote or sentence at the start highlighting the range of different relationship types that are considered ‘marriages’.

Background, third paragraph:
4. I think the main point here should be that engaging both men and women in efforts to improve SRH is much more effective than working only with women. At the moment this paragraphs unintentionally suggests that we should involve men as a way of controlling their female partners. Suggest the authors edit this paragraph to make it clear this was not their intention.

Results section, tenth paragraph:
5. “Wives of knowledgeable husbands were likely to be delivered…” The phrasing of this sentence (‘to be delivered’) makes the woman a passive actor in childbirth. Suggest rephrasing as “Women with knowledgeable husbands were more likely to give birth in a health facility” or similar.
Methods section, second paragraph:
6. Remove comma after “The study population...”.

Methods section, third paragraph:
7. The ‘lucky pick technique’ needs to be described.
8. Where did the authors source the list of men for stratification?

Methods section, seventh paragraph:
9. “Main valid points” needs to be explained.

Results section, general comments:
10. More information is needed on the source of quotes. For example, authors should note when a quote comes from an interview with a married man, a health worker, or from community leaders a FGD.
11. Given the wide age range of married men interviewed, authors should note the age of participants when providing quotes.

Results section, HIV/AIDS paragraph:
12. The table on HIV/AIDs is mislabelled in the text.
13. “Those respondents who previously suffered from STI did not disclose their illness to their wives for fear of argument, retaliation and denial of sex.” Did all respondents who had experienced an STI, not disclose this information? If so, suggest specifying ‘all’ or ‘most’.

Results section, Service Factors paragraph:
14. Please outline whether these results come from interviews of health workers only or from a combination of data sources.

Results section, Literacy and Reproductive Health Outcomes paragraph:
15. The methods for measuring literacy should be described in the methods section, or in the section on study participants. For example, was literacy measure based on participants self-reporting of whether they were literate or not?
16. The methods and results of the bivariate analysis need further explaining in the text of the results section.

Discussion, twelfth paragraph:
17. “Those that had sexual relationships with non-cohabiting partners did not use condoms.” From the results section, I understood that half used condoms. Suggest rephrasing.

Table 3:
18. The meaning of the numbers included in the table need to be explained in the heading row, e.g. “number of respondents (%).” Also need to include the total
number of respondents who answered each question, i.e. did 210 men respond to each question?

Discretionary Revisions

Abstract, Results paragraph:
19. the meaning of the following sentences are not clear and could be revised for easier reading:
a. “Knowledgeable husbands’ participation in spousal discussion supported their wives in accessing services”
b. “Some men considered these services [SRH services in general?] to be important but give priority [in what way?] to social obligations.”

Keywords:
20. suggest adding ‘Male involvement’ in keeping with international terminology.

Background, first paragraph:
21. Many researchers are somewhat dubious of the 733 per 100,000 live births MMR estimate. Suggest therefore including a footnote with reference to other (much lower) estimates.

Background, second paragraph:
22. “The PNG situation is almost certainly similar to that in sub-Saharan Africa, where the majority of HIV positive women have been infected by their stable partners [8].” The HIV situation in PNG is similar to sub-Saharan Africa in this way, but different in many other ways. Therefore suggest removing the reference to sub-Saharan Africa.

Results section, third paragraph:
23. “The priority for many men in terms of resource distribution was given to social obligations such as marriage arrangements and compensation.” This sentence could be clearer. Suggest changing ‘resource distribution’ for ‘household expenditure’ if this was the authors’ intention.

Results section, family planning paragraph:
24. The section on FP consent forms is not very clear. Suggest including a strong first sentence outlining that individuals in PNG have the right to access contraceptives without partner consent, however health staff will provide a form to be taken home to a male partner if a women requests one.

Discussion, third paragraph:
25. “The study found that whilst wives of the respondents who were knowledgeable of ANC and supervised births were accessing these services.” Suggest inserting “were more likely to access these services”.

Discussion, fifth paragraph:
26. “In the study area, as in many other parts of PNG, societal norms (taboos) prohibit males from assisting and witnessing births. Such norms have hindered women from accessing care when a male health worker is on duty. To avoid this authorities have tried to ensure that every facility has female staff, but this has not always been possible in isolated areas.” This paragraph does not seem to be based on findings of the study and it does not appear relevant to the views put forward in the discussion. If the authors feel this is important information, suggest they edit to highlight for the reader why this is relevant. For example the authors may like to start the paragraph by acknowledging that health facilities have made efforts to make services more acceptable to women.

Discussion, general comments:

27. At the moment, the arguments put forward in the discussion are a little difficult to follow. Suggest restructuring and including clear ‘leader’ sentences at the start of each paragraph to highlight to the reader the main point of the paragraph.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**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.