Reviewer's report

**Title:** Food insecurity is a barrier to prevention of mother-to-child HIV transmission services in Zimbabwe: A cross-sectional study

**Version:** 1  
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**Reviewer:** Scott Kellerman

**Reviewer's report:**

Unfortunate that the study was done before Option A, and now of course, Option B+ is the practice in Zimbabwe.

Not entirely clear the etiology of the Survey, or why some 300+ mother infant pairs were excluded. Can the authors clarify? not to overdue it, just to give some context of where this data came from

The sampling strategy is described as 2 stage cluster. First stage, purposeful sample of 5 provinces. The second stage is a bit confusing. Rather than take every "nth" mother infant pair that enters a clinic (for example) it seems the authors actually sought out mother infant pairs known to community health workers, I'm not sure if this is correct, but the way it's written suggests that to be the case. In which case it shouldn't be described as a 2 stage cluster design.

The results are interesting but also a testament to the fact that a robust sample size will result in small differences between sub groups being significant. and some of those being a bit counter intuitive. For instance, a 98 v 96 v 92% difference in exclusive breastfeeding, which makes some sense, except moderately FI women have the lowest rate. Other than showing significant results, i'm not sure of the utility of highlighting this particular finding. And to be sure, it would make sense that those with severe FI would have the hardest time adhering to PMTCT, the differences in ANC attendance while significant, are small (95 v 94 v 92%). Im not sure those proportions are particularly useful if we're thinking of what the response might be (I'm actually heartened by such high proportions as you present)

SO the discussion should perhaps be attenuated somewhat to acknowledge that the differences are actually smaller than might be expected. The one variable that i recall with more striking differences is that for women completing all steps off PMTCT. Although all groups were well below 50%, which is in line with practical and programmatic experience. but perhaps one way to think about it is that FI, both moderate and severe, may account for at least some of the difficulties women face in trying to be compliant to PMTCT programming.

**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 that I have no competing interests'