Reviewer's report

Title: Effectiveness of community based safe motherhood promoters in promoting access to obstetric care. The case of Mtwara Rural District in Tanzania

Version: 1 Date: 22 September 2009

Reviewer: Imran Morhason-Bello

Reviewer's report:

Major compulsory revisions

1. Abstract
   a. The method section should be re-written to portray the intention of the study. The methods were in two parts – the qualitative aspect – meeting the community and the feedbacks, and the quantitative aspect – the data collection. How were they analyzed? Why was maternal morbidity and mortality not included in the outcomes as presence of skilled attendant at delivery may not necessarily translate to improve outcome all the times?
   b. The results – how was the male involvement assessed? Is male participation part of the outcomes?

2. Background
   a. Are there reason(s) that are accountable for the reduction in skilled birth attendance utilization in Tanzania? Could it be cost related, cultural or religious? Or what?
   b. Where do others delivery? What do those centre offer that encourage their patronization?
   c. What is the C-section rate in the Tanzania?
   d. Line 14 para 2 – who are those that developed and evaluated the intervention? Is it a government project, individual or donor organization? It is better to provide these details so that the readers will appreciate better the context of this research work.

3. Methods
   a. The study site selection – Please how was the study site chosen? Any criteria? If not please include that you use convenient sampling and include the limitation of this method in your discussion. The second paragraph – “besides general public awareness..................skilled attendants at delivery” this statement is not clear to me
   b. The study design and brief description of intervention – Details of design should be included here
   c. Intervention components –
      i. The four TBAs and Two community representatives that were illiterate were
included and compared with others that could read or write. Are there specific task that warrant writing and reading by the SMPs? If Yes, how did this group cope during the study?

ii. What is the exact age range and mean of the SMPs? Please add to the write up

d. Organizational and implementation structure

e. How were the household selected?

f. Follow-up and monitoring activities

i. How often were the follow-up meeting held?

g. Data collection - Data on safe motherhood knowledge and perception of intervention –

h. Please describe the type of sampling technique used to select the respondents

i. “We also asked questions on the weakness, strengths and general perceived output of the intervention in the respective villages” please how were these variables measured?

j. I noticed that respondents included men, how were you able to merge the result since they will be speaking for their wives/partners? How were they selected? Are they the partner of women that declined to be interviewed?

4. Results

a. How did SMPs confirm home births that are supervised by skilled attendant during intervention phase?

b. The result section was poorly written I suggest for better understanding you first report the qualitative findings and thereafter, the quantitative aspect.

c. The qualitative findings – major outputs could be reported and divided into pre-intervention and post interventions for ease of comparison using same thematic headings.

d. The quantitative aspect – data collection can now be divided into 3 headings

i. The baseline data

ii. Outcome of SMPs activities – ANC attendance, number of delivery, associated morbidity, mortality etc

iii. Perception of stakeholders – respondents, SMPs and Health workers

5. Discussion

a. The discussion was silent about the gender disparity of SMP and the potential effect in a Muslim dominated community

b. Please the limitation needs to be elaborated upon – ie non-homogeneity of SMPs – gender and literacy, missed pregnancies, methodology adopted etc

Minor Essential revisions

1. Background/introduction – please delete Introduction see pg 3

2. There are many complex sentences in the both the Background and
discussion, please re-phrase to make your thoughts clearer. The write up has lots of typographical errors and needs heavy editing.

3. Material and Methods – please delete “and hence living under poverty line” its amounts to tautology

4. Results – The description of transport in Mtwarara should be included under methods

5. What form of incentive was offered to SMPs?

6. Review references 17 and 28 (include ch and pg if available)

7. Table 3 has no sub-title and also put the baseline column for each of the villages for comparism purposes as it may show a trend.

Discretionary Revisions

1. Is it possible to include a table showing characteristics of SMPs? Ie Age, gender, marital status, religion, educational status

2. Is it possible to add the result of the proportion of home and facility deliveries?

**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:** Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

'I declare that I have no competing interests'