Reviewer’s report

Title: Maternal mortality in Kassala State - eastern Sudan :Community-based study using Reproductive age mortality survey (RAMOS)

Version: 1 Date: 15 September 2011

Reviewer: Andrea Barnabas Pembe

Reviewer’s report:

This paper describes causes and contributors of maternal mortality in the country with high maternal deaths. Need some language and typographical corrections before being published. Some abbreviations were used without using the long forms first; examples are on page 11 Amoc and SHHS.

1.0 Major Compulsory Revision

1.1 The study setting is not given in detail in the methods. It comes up in the discussion but in patches. There is need to describe in detail the health services provision in the primary health facilities and the referral hospitals so that the reader can understand the context under which the study was done, and be able to understand the circumstances deaths occurred.

1.2 In the methods section, the key informants were used to identify women who died in the community: Were the duty of these informants to collect data on deaths in the community? How sure that they knew all deaths occurring in the community?

1.3 Results section, Paragraph 3, which describes table 4. The total number of indirect causes of maternal deaths is 29 (Severe anaemia 13, acute febrile illness 6, jaundice 4, and miscellaneous 6) and not 26 as stated in the paragraph. The direct causes are 35 and not 38. Clarification is needed.

1.4 There is need to expand on the analysis of the narratives of the interviewed individuals as some results are not presented in the results section but to be found in the discussion section paragraph 5.

1.5 Abortion to account for a small percentage of the deaths can be due to other reasons not limited to culture on revealing pregnancy early and circumstances surrounding the abortions including the influence of abortion law. This part needs more explanation.

2.0 Minor Essential Revision

2.1 The background is well written except the last part “… identified any discrepancies between different regions of the state” which needs to be changed and state clearly that “to compare the maternal deaths in rural and urban areas”.

2.2 The results section, paragraph 2, it is better to give the median age than the mean age.
2.3 Table 4, the direct and indirect causes of maternal mortality can be separated to improve easy reading and understanding of the table. This also can help to know the miscellaneous causes of death (See 1.3 above) are in which category.

2.4 Table 5, in the timing of death, early pregnancy has to be clearly defined as some women may have died at 28 weeks of pregnancy but had not started antenatal care.

2.5 Tables 2, 5 and 8 can be presented as texts in the results section without the tables. More so table 8’s presentation of yes and no is unnecessary duplication of information. There is a need in this table to give the details of the specific causes of delays in the phases as provided in the discussion section paragraph 5.

3.0 Discretionary Revision

3.1 Table 7, the difference between illiterate and non-formal education has to be made clear. The variables source of water, having a pit latrine and electricity could better be presented in a combined form with other variables to determine the wealth quintiles of the deceased.

3.2 The recommendation is rather flat and completely derived from the last paragraph of the discussion. It should be derived from the study findings and be more specific on policy implications.

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