Reviewer's report

Title: Decisions about delivery care in rural Bangladesh: Husbands' provision of social support and perception of social norms during childbirth

Version: 1 Date: 25 January 2012

Reviewer: Hildah Essendi

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Major Compulsory Revisions

The paper addresses an interesting topic but the writing needs to be made more succinct and catchy to the reader. The authors should revise the paper in order to improve on the content. Generally, the data/results should be reorganised and clearly presented in order to improve on the flow and clarity of the information in the paper. The Abstract and introduction sections are also not ‘tight’ enough. They should be made really strong in order to capture the reader’s interest.

Specifically:

Abstract:

Although the title includes the focus on perceptions of social norms, this issues is not captured in the abstract

Background:

The background should be rewritten to make it more succinct and catchy to the reader. In the discussion section, there is discussion on similar findings to those in this study from other developing countries/regions. The same has not been done in the background section. More review of the maternal health situation, husband’s involvement and the perception of social norms in these other countries/regions should be clearly discussed.

It also seems that the focus of this paper from part of the background and the results section is the focus on barriers to delivery care, but the title does not capture this. If anything, maybe the barriers under focus should be those relating to the husband’s involvement in decision making.

Further, the title of the study suggests that the study is looking at decisions about delivery care, specifically, husband’s provision of social support and perceptions of social norms. However, it is not clear, from the abstract and background on how perceptions will be dealt with.

Discussion:

Just like with the abstract and background, the discussion needs to be ‘tightened’ so that it is succinct and interesting/catchy to read. Discuss more literature on husband’s involvement in the region and other developing regions and clearly indicate how these vary from the findings of this study.

Conclusion:
The conclusion fails to illustrate the main issue emerging from this study, instead the authors delve straight into areas for further research. This is good but it needs to be preceded with the main conclusions from this research. A few points should be highlighted (between 2 and 5 points should do).

References:
More literature needs to be reviewed on the topic from South Asia

Discretionary Revisions

Methods:
Sample: It should be made clear how the sample of households was determined. This includes, for instance, if there a sampling frame from which these mutually exclusive groups were selected before they households visited were sampled. In addition, it is not clear whether the whole district or just a section of it comprised the study area. The sample selection section should clearly indicate the age of the youngest child.

The amount of money indicated anywhere in the paper should be accompanied by an equivalent amount in USD, for the reader to understand the value because some of the audience are going to be out of Bangladesh.

Results:
The results section needs to be clearly outlined. There is need to have a brief introduction to the results section. It should for instance, be made clear in an introduction to the results, that the authors will be presenting both the perceptions, barriers and decisions regarding delivery care will be reported simultaneously. It would also be better for the authors to outline the factors influencing delivery decisions, to also capture the positive impacts of these factors. For instance, the issue of ‘poor transportation’ may instead for instance be titled ‘transportation’ and focus on both the positive and negative influences of this issue on delivery care. The same need apply to the other factors.

While reporting the results, the authors should be able to capture and report of the divergence of the views, for instance, it is not clear whether the husbands of the women using qualified care mention that transport influenced their decisions to deliver in health facility or with qualified personnel.

Poor transportation: It would be helpful for the authors to indicate the number of husbands mentioning the condition of the roads as a major barrier to using health facilities. As it is currently, the sentence reads “Many husbands mentioned the condition…”… but how many are these men? It helps to give the reader a clear idea of the amount of support from these husbands.

Divergent views: this title is incomplete. It should clearly indicate what the divergent views are relating to.

Some of the information is not clearly explained in the text This includes the Divergent Themes, Social Support, Emotional Support, Instrumental support etc. one gets quite confused reading these sections. It would help to the reader if there was a brief introduction (say 1 paragraph) on each section of the results before delving deeper in the specifics of the results. In this introduction, a
summary/brief synthesis of the specific information to be discussed should be given so that the reader has an idea of what follows.

The second quote on page 16 does not indicate the husband’s support as outlined in the preceding text. A quote is normally used to reinforce a point that has already been made that is made immediately following the quote. But this quote does not seem to be reinforcing the previous point.

Page 17: the first line of the last quote should have square brackets between the words ‘night’ and ‘in’ to indicate this refers to the whole night of labour.

The title ‘uninvolved’ should be made much clearer because as it is, it does not give the reader an indication of what is contained in the section. In addition, the three quotes under this section do not necessarily indicate that the man is not involved in decisions regarding his wife’s delivery. Maybe more of the information in the quote that has been eliminated should be included in the quotes. In addition, the second and third quotes specifically, reminds me of the fact that sometimes even the women may not know the precise moment that labour is bound to start. So these do not point to the ‘uninvolvement’ of the husbands.

It would help to indicate the respondent of the quote on page 20

Minor Essential Revisions

Data collection: It would be useful to indicate if any ethical approval for the study was done. In addition, it would help if the authors indicate whether the four interviewers were trained on data collection and ethics. It would help to the reader if the authors clarified the kind of data collected using the semi-structured interviews.

Results:

Table 2: Although one of the variables in this table is the distance to closes health facility, given in km, this has not been properly discussed in the paper. It would greatly improve the reader’s understanding of the paper if at least one sentence of this was discussed in the paper.