Reviewer’s report

Title: Framing Maternal Morbidity: WHO Scoping Exercise

Version: 3 Date: 23 August 2013

Reviewer: Yadira Roggeveen

Reviewer’s report:

I find this article a interesting and valuable contribution to the discussion on measuring maternal morbidity. I do however have some comments. I would be looking forward to the author’s responses.

• Minor Essential Revisions

1. p4: “To accurately monitor and improve maternal health, a definition for maternal morbidity is first needed, which will then drive development of tools and classifications to measure and monitor complete maternal health.”

Comment: I do not agree that for maternal health improvement definitions are first needed, as the improvement of maternal health is a process that can take place without being measured. I would suggest “….and improve maternal health indicators…” etc. Moreover, definitions are important when comparisons are made between different settings. Local definitions of maternal morbidity would not be of concern when only used for local use.

2. p 6: Please specify how the thematic qualitative analysis was done, and if any (then which) research software assisted this process. Did themes emerge from the qualitative data or was a preset thematic framework used? It seems that the themes from the literature study guided the thematic analysis of the qualitative data. If so, could you describe if any other interesting data emerged from the qualitative study, beyond the thematic analysis?

3. p15: “Only after this work is completed, can there be reliable monitoring of sustainable progress towards MDG 5 and beyond.” Monitoring of “sustainable” progress seems a selected portion of progress or decline that could be measured. Sustainability is a goal in itself. I would suggest to omit the word sustainable.

4. p16 Conclusion: “Accurate and routine measurements of maternal morbidity”. The word “accurate” suggests that there is only one accurate way to measure maternal morbidity, whereas the paper also clearly indicates that this up for debate. I would find a reflection on the comparability of maternal morbidity across settings much more interesting.

5. p 17, reference 12: adhere to style format

6. General comment: I would be interested to know the author’s reflection on future operationalization of maternal morbidity registration systems. How could this important process take place without overburdening the health workers or policy makers that would need to implement and monitor these registration
systems?

**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.