Reviewer's report

Title: Lessons learned from stakeholders in a facilitation intervention targeting neonatal health in Quang Ninh province, Vietnam

Version: 2 Date: 19 June 2013

Reviewer: Lisa Howard-Grabman

Reviewer's report:

In your article, you have done a very good job of describing the roles of facilitator and group members and the dynamics around participation and facilitation of the group, but you don't provide much information on the actual processes and content of the meetings and how group members moved from knowledge to promoting and fostering action, which is one of the main challenges around which the article is framed. It may help readers to have a better understanding of what may have led to the changes in mortality to provide some more examples of what the group did that produced the positive results, beyond spreading messages. Did they develop plans? Did they act in some way to strengthen service providers’ skills/quality of care? Did they help communes address social, economic, geographic barriers to accessing care, and if so, how? To what extent did the groups monitor their progress during their meetings?

One of the most frequent criticisms I have seen of the trials that have used participatory approaches that are more qualitatively presented, particularly from those who come from a biomedical model perspective, is that it isn't clear enough how these processes can lead to changes in mortality. Appreciating that space is limited and that it is helpful to stay as focused as possible, I think that it would strengthen the article if there is a little bit more discussion to help the reader understand the possible causal links between this intervention and the outcome, recognizing that they may not always be linear nor direct.

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.