Reviewer’s report

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

Version: 3 Date: 16 September 2013

Reviewer: Cindy Liu

Reviewer’s report:

Again, I wish to applaud the authors for conducting an intervention that may be critical to neonatal health yet immensely difficult to carry out. The authors’ thorough response and revisions are much appreciated and overall has improved the manuscript. Indeed, many of my central questions regarding the evaluative component and the outcomes have been clarified through the response.

As I understand from your response, you are not evaluating the intervention as this has previously been conducted, but that you are reporting on the process. While this is now quite clear in the response letter, this could be better reflected through in the manuscript itself with improvements made to the language and structure.

1) Minor point, I would remove the first sentence of the abstract “(Every year 3.3 million…) as the purpose of the paper focuses on the facilitation. While it is an important point, and is central to goal of the overall intervention, it distracts from the specific purpose of the study, which is to understand the facilitation process.

2) The last sentence of the abstract background uses uninformative language “…process evaluation aimed to describe mechanisms of the intervention…” I recommend that this be re-written to identify the major concern to be addressed by the process evaluation rather than the procedure. For instance, “This process evaluation was conducted to identify the strengths and weaknesses regarding facilitation by describing the mechanisms of facilitation.”

3) I recommend that you place the World Health Organizational quote toward the end of the background as a way to emphasize the importance of the methods and its role within knowledge transfer.

4) A new paragraph could be started at “Facilitation has also been described as a method with great potential.”

5) The background overall is improved with the definition of facilitation. Rather than describing facilitation, I had hoped for more concrete descriptions or examples. For instance, what happens when there is no facilitation? Can you explicitly state the problems that are addressed by facilitation (how did facilitation come about)? Also, why would neonatal mortality rates decrease as a result of these problems addressed by facilitation?
6) I would move switch the order of these two sentences “This is a technique where one person…” and “Rather than presenting a simple linear concept where knowledge is transferred…”

7) How much of facilitation is knowledge transfer (what does it look like) and the focus on group dynamics? These seem like very different responsibilities as described.

8) I find that the following sentences to be direct and clear. Using language such as this throughout the paper would be useful “That NeoKIP was a complex social intervention requiring constant interpretation…however, what worked and what did not work…”

9) The quality improvement method described in the Methods section “the facilitators primarily used the quality improvement method ‘Plan-Do-Study-Act” might be better placed in the introduction which would help to specify the actual responsibilities of the facilitators. What kind of improvement is made with this method?

10) The paragraph on mortality in the Methods would be more appropriate in the introduction (“Mortality among children under-five and neonatal mortality in Vietnam.”) I think that including this upfront establishes the finding that the NeoKIP facilitation intervention has already been found to reduce mortality but that the present study is specifically focuses on the process evaluation.

11) The open-ended questions (and common probes) used should be described or even better listed in a Table.

12) The sentence on page 11 “…while at the same time possessing the courage to confront MNHG members about various matters…” Various matters is vague.

**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.