Reviewer's report

Title: Stakeholder Analysis for a Maternal and Newborn Health Project in Eastern Uganda

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Reviewer: Emma Pitchforth

Reviewer's report:

Thank you for the opportunity to review this paper which presents the findings from a stakeholder analysis for a maternal and newborn health project in Eastern Uganda. The paper is interesting and it is encouraging to see a stakeholder analysis being undertaken and reported. However a number of questions are raised on reading the paper and I feel the paper could be strengthened in order to make an important contribution to the academic literature in this area.

The abstract uses abbreviations that may be better given in full. The conclusion that research to policy translation will require mutual trust, continued dialogue and engagement of the researchers, implementers and policymakers to enable scale up does not seem that new and I am not sure the main conclusion to draw from the results presented. I think this relates to the paper overall and the slight frustration that it was not possible to move beyond need for engagement onto how this may be achieved and what the mapping of power and influence adds to this.

Introduction – the authors make the point that stakeholders is critical and should be engaged from outset during problem definition and project design. This paper is focused on the implementation and scale up of two programmes shown to be effective at pilot stage. What is not clear is whether there was stakeholder involvement before this particular analysis and why the researchers chose to conduct the stakeholder analysis at this stage.

Methods – the strength of this paper, or contribution it makes is in specific use of stakeholder analysis beyond for example, just key informant interviews that may be used in another qualitative study to explore similar issues. For this reason, I feel the methods could be much more clearly reporting.

Identification of stakeholders – who were the team members who undertook the brainstorming and what consultations were undertaken? It is not clear how prioritisation was done – does this mean there was initially a longer list of stakeholders that was then cut down or was this about prioritising individuals to speak to within each of the categories. What were the criteria for prioritisation?

Data collection methods – it would be good to explain more explicitly which different methods were chosen for different groups of stakeholders.

How were interviews and FGDs recorded? Who undertook interviews and FGDs?

It may be better to present section on identifying stakeholders power, position
and influence before ‘thematic analysis’ as the authors report that thematic analysis involved the stakeholder mapping.

It may be helpful to explain what is meant by ‘internal analysts’

The authors looked for emerging themes but used a framework that seems to be more determined by research questions, it would be good to further explain the analysis and how framework was derived and to what extent this was modified during analysis.

Stakeholder analysis – the authors present an interesting analysis grid from Hyder et al. It is not clear however how stakeholders were characterised, was this based on knowledge and perception of research team. Also this grid does not seem to have been returned to – it is not clear who would be considered drivers, blockaders, supporters etc. Table 2 classifies stakeholders according to a three point scale, type of power, current level of power and current level of agreement with proposal. It is not clear how these classifications were done (not mentioned in methods) or how these classifications relate to the classifications in Figure 1.

Results
The results are fairly descriptive. The use of quotations seems sporadic and also not consistent in terms of how introduced in text etc. Table 3 is quite effective in summarising themes. I had thought that results would include more about stakeholder analysis – how stakeholders were characterised in relation to Figure 1 etc. There is a tendency to present stakeholder groups as homogenous groups and I was not clear to what extent there were differences in views between individuals within the same stakeholder groups.

Table 2 includes a column on ‘strategy to deal with stakeholders’ which seems very interesting and important if this is based on the results of the stakeholder analysis. However, this is not mentioned in methods or results. It may not be clear to the reader what the difference in strategy is between ‘empower’, ‘involve further and empower’, ‘involve further’, ‘continuous engagement’ and ‘consult further’. It is disappointing that this was not brought out more in the paper.

Discussion
The discussion is quite repetitive of results. It was disappointing that the issues of power/influence were not brought out more and how strategies would take these into account. This would seem to be the added benefit of this study. The study and results are very specific to the research team and the two programmes that they are seeking to take forward. It would be good to use the discussion to concisely summarise findings, relate to wider literature and then to think about implications – are there lessons for others reading this paper?

The discussion is lacking any consideration of the relative strengths and limitations of the study.

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests
**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 I have no competing interests