Reviewer’s report

Title:'Born before arrival': user and provider perspectives on health facility childbirths in Kapiri Mposhi district, Zambia

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Reviewer:Vincent De Brouwere

Reviewer’s report:

I found the paper well written and relevant, although nothing is quite new. The authors have clearly defined their question: they have shown ‘in a previous study based on data from a cross-sectional survey conducted in the three districts that facility childbirth was associated with striking socio-economic and geographic inequities but it did not seem to be associated with trust and perceived quality of care in the Kenyan and Zambian districts. In this study they further investigated the low utilisation of health facility birth care in the district in Zambia focusing on trust.’

The methods are appropriate and well described: Through ‘a qualitative study design they explored perceptions and experiences of users and providers about health care seeking at childbirth’. The FGD were conducted ‘with women attending the antenatal clinic (ANC) and out-patient services at the hospital. A description of the sample is in Table 1’. In-depth interviews were conducted with 25 local stakeholders in or outside health facilities.

It is difficult to know if the data are sound but the authors are qualified and the method description looks ok. A possible bias is that some of the interviewers (the 1st author) is gynecologist and one of the interviewers is a nurse midwife with the risk of influencing patients and TBAs.

The manuscript adheres to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition.

The discussion and conclusions are well balanced and adequately supported by the data.

The limitations of the work are clearly stated, except that 1) the study was led by medical personnel (2 on 3) with a potential bias; 2) the study took place in one setting and the external validity is limited to the Kapiri Mposhi community.

The literature review was not quite extensive and half of the papers were published between 2003 and 2007. Note that a paper ‘submitted’ cannot be cited as a publication.

The title and abstract accurately convey what has been found and the writing is acceptable.

Discretionary Revisions (which are recommendations for improvement but which the author can choose to ignore)
I would suggest to give the medical name of the herb ‘palibe kantu’ (Dicoma anomala or Sansevieria hyacinthoides?) and its documented effects. This will help the reader to understand if it is a real danger for a pregnant woman.

The authors mentioned that some interviews took place in health facilities and may have influenced the interviewees but they did not mention the fact that an obstetrician or a nurse midwife may also influence the way interviewees responded.

I would strongly encourage the authors to add some papers to support the ‘trust’ discussion, the issue of childbirth complication and infidelity, the responsiveness of health personnel around childbirth.

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

Withdraw the reference “Ng’anjo-Phiri S, Kvale G, Kiserud T, Byskov J, Evjen-Olsen B, Michelo C, Echoka E, Fylkesnes K: Factors associated with health facility childbirth in districts of Kenya, Tanzania and Zambia: a population based survey” which is a submitted article and not a publication.

Major Compulsory Revisions (which the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached): no

**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