Author’s response to reviews

Title: Woman-centered research on access to safe abortion services and implications for behavioral change communication interventions: a cross-sectional study of women in Bihar and Jharkhand, India

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Author’s response to reviews: see over
Dear Editor,

We have revised our manuscript, *Woman-Centred Research on Access to Safe Abortion Services in Bihar and Jharkhand, India: Implications for Behavioural Change Communication Interventions*, according to the reviewer’s comments, and we would like to resubmit it for your consideration. Please find our responses to each reviewer comment below. Our revised manuscript has been uploaded, and our changes have been highlighted in the text. The revised manuscript has been read and approved by all authors, and Kathryn Andersen has been designated as the corresponding author.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Warmly,

Sushanta K. Banerjee
Rebecca M. Buchanan
Kathryn L. Andersen
Janardan Warvadekekar
Responses to BMC Public Health Reviewer Comments

Donna Barry/Reviewer 1

Comment 1: The reviewer noted that in the 5th paragraph of the Background section, we needed to provide the words for the acronym MBBS. This information has been added and can be found in the highlighted text in Background paragraph 5.

Comment 2: The reviewer pointed out that enrollment was misspelled in the 3rd paragraph of the Methods section. We have changed the paper to consistently use American rather than British spelling throughout the paper, and this specific correction can be found in the highlighted text in Methods paragraph 3.

Comment 3: The reviewer noted that it would be helpful to include information on the number of providers of safe abortion services in these districts. We have added this information, and it can be found in the highlighted text in Methods paragraph 1.

Comment 4: The reviewer noted that it would be helpful to include childhood immunization services as a point of contact for women to receive information on family planning and abortion services. ANMs typically provide childhood immunizations at the village level, and we have expanded our discussion of secondary audiences such as ANMs to include their many points of contact with women. This information can be found in the highlighted text in Discussion paragraph 5.

Comment 5: The reviewer asked why such a large proportion of women reported that they never go to the market in Bihar. Though we would need more data to support this, we think that because a large proportion of women live in joint or extended households, the mother-in-law or another person in the household primarily goes to the market. In Jharkhand, there is a larger population of Scheduled Tribe women who are more likely to work as wage laborers and generally have more freedom to engage in activities such as going to the market, compared to women in Bihar.

Jenny Ruducha/Reviewer 2

Abstract
Comment 1: The reviewer requested that we rework our conclusions to better match the study results. We have revised the Conclusions section of the abstract, which can be found in the highlighted text on pages 2-3.

Purpose and Research Questions
Comment 1: The reviewer requested that we make our research questions more focused and that we switch our focus from a solely descriptive study to showing the relationship between characteristics of women and perceptions about abortion services. We have expanded our focus to include bivariate and multivariate analyses of the factors associated with perceptions about access to abortion. This additional information can be found in the highlighted text in Methods paragraph 7, Results paragraphs 7 and 8, Discussion paragraph 7 and Tables 7 and 8. We think that our original research questions (listed in Background paragraph 8) still work with this broader analytical approach, and as a result, we have not changed them significantly.
Comment 2: The reviewer commented that the focus of this study is on the demand side of access to abortion services and that we make no mention of the supply side. We have added information on the number of providers who have been trained to provide safe abortion services in each district; this information can be found in the highlighted text in Methods paragraph 1.

Comment 3: The reviewer suggested that we stratify our sample by intervention and comparison districts and test whether there is a difference in perceptions about abortion services based on service availability in each district. We did not find a significant difference in perceptions based on intervention vs. comparison district. This is probably due to the fact that safe abortion providers were available in both intervention (Patna and Lohardaga) and control districts (Saran and Gumla), and in general, women were not aware of the available services.

Comment 4: The reviewer suggested that a conceptual framework would be helpful in order to anchor this research in the broader abortion access literature. We have added a conceptual model (Figure 1), and a description of the model can be found in the highlighted text in Methods paragraph 7.

Background
Comment 1: The reviewer requested that we expand the literature search to include more information on access to abortion services and BCC research. This information has been added and can be found in the highlighted text in Background paragraph 7.

Methods
Comment 1: The reviewer requested that we add information on the type of study, approaches to enrolling women and creating a confidential environment. Information on the type of study has been added to title of the manuscript and in the highlighted text in Methods paragraph 1. Information on enrollment and creating a confidential environment has been added and can be found in the highlighted text in Methods paragraph 3.

Data Analysis and Presentation of Tables
Comment 1: The reviewer requested that we update the data in Table 1. Where possible, we have updated Table 1 with data from the 2011 India census. This information can be found in Table 1 on page 24.

Comment 2: The reviewer requested that we revise the tables to include bivariate relationships between the characteristics and outcomes rather than simply descriptive statistics. We ran chi-square tests and t-tests to compare characteristics in Bihar and Jharkhand; however, since there were few significant state differences, we decided to combine the samples and report only the overall descriptive statistics. We think that this has helped to simplify the tables. The rationale for combining the samples can be found in Methods paragraph 5.

Comment 3: The reviewer requested that we aggregate categories in the tables to simplify. We have aggregated the categories and collapsed several of the tables in order to simplify; the updated tables can be found on pages 26-36.

Comment 4: The reviewer commented that the small proportion of women who report no sources for abortion information may indicate that women did not feel comfortable
answering the question. We have added this point as a limitation, and the updated text can be found in the 3rd sentence under Study Limitations.

Comment 5: The reviewer requested that we provide information on how multiple responses to the questions on exposure to mass media were handled. This information has been added and can be found in Methods paragraph 6.

Comment 6: The reviewer pointed out that we need to change the N’s to be the subset of women who reported having an abortion and that some of the cell sizes were too small. We have corrected the N’s to be the subset of 61 women who had a previous abortion, and we have collapsed some of the categories in an effort to address the small cell sizes. The updated table (Table 9) can be found on page 35.

Comment 7: The reviewer requested that we provide statistical tests in the tables. As discussed under Comment 2, we ran chi-square tests and t-tests to compare characteristics in Bihar and Jharkhand; however, since there were few significant state differences, we decided to combine the samples and report only the overall descriptive statistics. We think that this has helped to simplify the tables. The rationale for combining the samples can be found in Methods paragraph 5. We have added statistical tests for our bivariate associations between women’s characteristics and perceptions about abortion. This data can be found in Table 7 on page 31.

Comment 8: The reviewer requested that we reconstruct our tables to provide bivariate relationships between women’s characteristics and outcomes of interest such as perceptions about abortion. We have added a table (Table 7) and a description of this bivariate analysis, which can be found in the highlighted text in Results paragraph 7.

Comment 9: The reviewer commented that simply showing mean scores for women’s perceptions about abortion does not provide much information about the variability in perceptions across women’s characteristics. We have addressed this problem by adding Table 7, which shows how the mean score for each of our outcomes of interest varies by women’s characteristics. This information can be found in Table 7 on page 31 and in the highlighted text in Results paragraph 7.

Comment 10: The reviewer commented that adding a multivariate model to show which characteristics are associated with perceptions about abortion would strengthen the paper. We have added multivariate models for our three outcomes of interest: perceived availability, affordability and acceptability. This information can be found in Table 8 on page 33 and in the highlighted text in Results paragraph 8.

Conclusions
Comment 1: The reviewer requested that we rework conclusions to better match the study findings. This section has been revised, and the updated text is highlighted in Conclusions paragraphs 1 and 2.