Reviewer's report

Title: Causes of neonatal and maternal deaths in Dhaka slums: Implications for service delivery

Version: 2 Date: 20 October 2011

Reviewer: Abdhalah Ziraba

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Review for manuscript: 2021996733582733

Causes of neonatal and maternal deaths in Dhaka slums: Implications for service delivery

Reviewer: Abdhalah Kasiira Ziraba

Comments:

Major Compulsory Revisions:

1. In the introduction, provide some information on causes for maternal and neonatal deaths in Bangladeshi as a whole or regionally.

2. Provide some insights about the slum-specific characteristics/challenges that make you think the mortality picture in the slums might be different from the national one to justify your research.

3. Under methods, it is not clear whether there was an effort to distinguish/include/exclude deaths of usual residents and that of visitors or death of usual residents that did not occur within the slums. As you realise, the number of events particularly maternal deaths was low and thus any miscounting could lead to errors in the estimates.

4. Provide a bit more detail on the survey which provided the count of live births in the area. Was it a survey on sample or census of all births? How complete was it to capture all births?

5. Under results: How do you explain the huge difference in MMR in 2008 (439) and 2009 (112)? It is unlikely that the project intervention halved MMR in 1 year, else this difference is most likely a result of miscounting either in the denominator or numerator. This needs to be cross-checked if there are errors in the counting, probably the mortality estimates should not be presented particularly MMR.

6. Under results: Second last sentence under results and in table 4, you indicate that lay people said the mother died of “jaundice”, haemorrhage- these sound more medical! Was this what the respondents really said or it was interpreted by the researchers. Would have expected lay answers like yellowing eyes, bleeding etc.
Minor Essential Revisions:

1. Last paragraph page 4: You could probably write weeks in full instead of “2 w” many readers might not be familiar with the abbreviation

2. Under discussion, second sentence: I understand that the data on mortality are not segregated by slum residence, but isn’t there any break down by urban-rural at national level? The urban estimates might provide a closer comparison.

3. Under discussion you indicate that coverage of PNC visits is low, in a country short of health care workers, would you rather recommend home visits by health care workers or encourage institutional deliveries and PNC?

4. C/S not written in full anywhere in the text, figures or tables

Discretionary Revisions:

1. The first paragraph of conclusion not clearly written, it requires paraphrasing.

2. In table 4, some of the frequencies are too small to warrant a separate category e.g that of monthly household income >10,000TK has only one case! This could be combined with 5000-10000 Tk. The same applies to occupation, place of delivery.

3. Figure 1 could be deleted and replaced with a sentence in the methods section

4. Figure 4, “Failed attempted abortion” could be replaced with “abortion-related complications”.

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 that I have no competing interests