Reviewer's report

Title: Gender Variations in Access, Choice to use and Cleaning of Shared Latrines; Experiences from Kampala Slums, Uganda

Version: 4 Date: 15 September 2014

Reviewer: Andrea Rechenburg

Reviewer's report:

• Major Compulsory Revisions
  none

• Minor Essential Revisions

1. The methods and analysis could be described in a more detailed way, stating the number of interviewees, the actual composition of the focus groups better, explaining the reason for the choice, as well as the sampling for the key informant interviews (landlords, local leaders etc – how recruited, why?) better.

2. Are the samples representative? It is not clear how the research zones have been selected and why. It is obligatory to explain how the community transects have been done and why and how they have been analysed. T

3. The names of the research sites are not included in the paper, but need to be stated. It should also be described why those particular slums have been chosen.

4. The data, presented within tables, do at some points not interact with the text but exist isolated and are sometimes not further explained. Moreover, the tables’ descriptions are confusing and do not explain their content.

5. The reviewer highly recommends a revision of the discussion and conclusion of the study. The style of the discussion and conclusion and the writing in these parts are rather descriptive than analytical.

6. Some parts of the text are not ordered well. There are sub-headings, but not for all topics addressed, this should be done in a uniform manner.

7. The part on latrine ownership is interesting, but could be discussed further. Some statements are not comprehensible (men are at less risk to be ashamed), very simplified, too general, very absolute and not differentiated, even judging. This should be prevented.

8. Study limitations are not clearly stated. It is not clear to the reviewer whether the slums show comparable socio-economic situations, sanitation situation, water supply etc. It is not clear whether people in those slums practice different health- and sanitation behaviour (e.g. due to different religious affiliation, membership to ethnic group, tradition, education). It is unclear, whether the sample and the situation and challenges described are representative.

9. The reference list is very inconsistent and needs to be revised carefully.
10 The reviewer strongly recommends a language check by a native English speaker. There are quite some mistakes in writing, wording, structure of sentences, syntax and some sentences are incomplete. The authors are advised to check their manuscript again to prevent unnecessary repetitions.

- Discretionary Revisions

1. The observation checklist is briefly named, but not included in the research article. From the reviewer’s point of view, the inclusion of the checklist would add value to the paper.

2. The process of ethical clearance should be described in more detail, it is a major part of every health-related research, as well as the informed consent for the participation in the study.

3. Very few quotations are included in the research article, the reviewer recommends to include some more. It is necessary to make sure they really transport a relevant message, therefore the authors might rather rethink if they are placed in the right position within the text.

4. The conclusion should draw concluding remarks from the results and discussion. It could address or propose ways forward or an outlook. It may suggest recommendations that result from the study (some of which are already in the text and might be better placed here), e.g. the need for more detailed research, collaboration among different stakeholders, education.

5. From the reviewer’s point of view, the key words could be more general. Instead of simply using the exact words that appear in the title (“Gender Variations, Access, Choice, Cleaning, Shared Latrines, Kampala, Slums”), key words should be more general to address a wider range of readers (for example: “Gender, WASH, Latrines, Access, Slums, Kampala”).

6. Furthermore, the writing is too little scientific and professional. Improvements should include, for instance, the avoidance of using active tense (“we also reviewed relevant literature”). Instead, passive tense (“Relevant literature has been reviewed”) should be used.

7. The authors are advised to rewrite the abstract carefully making sure that the most important parts of the article are included and well represented.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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.