Author's response to reviews

Title: Listening to health workers: lessons from Eastern Uganda for strengthening the programme for the prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV

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

**Response to reviewer’s comments on our manuscript titled:** *Listening to health workers: lessons from Eastern Uganda for strengthening the programme for the prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV*

We are very grateful for the comments and suggestions on our manuscript by the reviewer. We have addressed them and specified our response to each of the comments.

Once again, thank you to Harriet Nuwagaba-Biribonwa for the additional comments and we believe the current version reads better. We wait to hear from you.

I have uploaded the version without track changes as the main file and the one with track changes as an additional file.

Yours,

Joseph Rujumba
Corresponding author.
Reviewer: Harriet Nuwagaba-Biribonwoha

Discretionary revisions

1. Background: para 1: sentence 3 and 4 (about health facilities) could be removed

We concur with this suggestion and have thus deleted sentences describing the health care system (see introduction, 1st paragraph pg 4).

2. Study area: Need an introduction sentence as to why you describe 3/10 health facilities- something like 3 of these health facilities had unique qualities... or whatever applies. Again would condense to 1-2 paragraphs, some of the material is in the table and repeated here e.g. year started services for TASO

- An introductory sentence about the 3 health facilities that had unique characteristics has been added as suggested (see 2nd paragraph, 1st sentence under study area, pg 6)
- We have further edited the section on study area and deleted information already presented in the table.

3. Length: >10 pages of results and >5 pages of the discussion is still too much material for readers, consider condensing

We appreciate this concern and we have thus edited the results and discussion sections to make them shorter. However, given the nature of the qualitative methodology adopted in this study and in order to ensure that the voices of study participants reflecting the lessons they learnt during programme implementation have a fair representation in the paper it has not been possible to reduce the paper beyond the current size. Overall, the main content of the paper (introduction to conclusion) has been reduced by 3 pages (see changes in track changes pgs 4-29).

Minor essential revisions

4. Results: Sentence 2- In Uganda... sounds like a discussion point. Just present what was found with the 24HCW in the study – how many doubled as counselors?

This sentence has been revised, it now reads… Only four of the health workers were counsellors only (Table 2) while the rest of the health workers, mainly nurses and midwives, provided counselling as an additional responsibility (See section on social demographics 2nd sentence pg 11).

5. Table 1: add columns for funding support and any data indicating patient volume e.g. number of new ANC attendees per month or year

We have added information on average monthly ANC attendance as suggested by the reviewer …

The average monthly new ANC attendance was 700 for Mbage hospital, 200 for TASO, and ranged between 180-200 for HC IVs and 55-70 for health centre IIIs. (See table 1, footnote d, pg 36).
**Funding support:** The PMTCT programme in at health facilities in Mbale District was mainly funded by the Government of Uganda and the Protecting Families Against HIV/AIDS (PREFA) while that at TASO received funding from PEPFAR. We have provided this information under study area, (see 4th and 5th sentences of paragraph 2, pg 6-7)

6. Table 2: typos in variable (3), add a variable for clinic –Maybe, TASO, Mbale Hospital, and ‘other health centres’. Or you could add this variable to table 1 (number of HCW).

- We have edited variable 3, it now reads as - Length of involvement in PMTCT (table 2, pg 37)
- We have added a variable on level/type of health facility in table 2 (see last row, table 2, pg 37)

Thank you.