Reviewer's report

Title: Integrated maternal and child health services in Mozambique: Structural health system limitations overshadow its effects on follow-up of HIV-exposed infants

Version: 1 Date: 20 January 2013

Reviewer: maricianah atieno onono

Reviewer's report:

Major compulsory revisions

1. Background section
   a. Requires more in depth literature review and justification for why the study was done
   b. Need to insert references for the progress that has been made in terms of service delivery of PMTCT in sub Saharan Africa and then the challenge associated with high rates of loss to follow up of HIV exposed infants.
   c. It would also be good to include to give the rationale for the need for following up and retaining the HIV Exposed Infants in care
   d. Paragraph 3: Another good reference is the following systematic review

2. Methods
   This section needs to be redone and with greater detail and better organization using the CONSORT statement requirement as a guide in order to make it more clear.

Other specific concerns:

Page 5:
   a) I am not entirely sure about the justification of the site selection. Please expound a little more on this inclusion criterion - for example does size refer to the patient volume accessing MCH system or does it refer to the tier within the overall health system e.g. a health center or dispensary or district hospital. Were there any sites (health facilities) that met the criteria that were excluded and for what reason?
   b) Besides the randomization into the two different arms, was there any attempt to also randomize the initial 6 sites to be included in the study?
   c) It is not clear if these MCH services were already providing PMTCT or other ART services or if this was a part the training. There are still many different
definitions of integrated health care and little consensus on the manner in which different healthcare services are integrated in any setup. Please clarify what integration in your study context clearly meant. Was it diagnosis and follow up with referral for HAART or was this also provided in the one stop shop among the other services that you mention.

d) The semi structured questionnaire- was this a new questionnaire or has it been used and validated elsewhere? Was the questionnaire grounded in any explanatory or change theory apriori?

3. Results section

Page 7

a) Paragraph 1: This paragraph needs to be restructured.
b) Since the provider interviews were semi-structured - a few quotes to validate this sentence are needed
c) Sentence 2 in this paragraph - it is not clear whether you are referring to the one "larger health facility" or to all the facilities
d) There is need to describe the facilities a little bit more (see my previous comment above description of the facilities). Be consistent in whether you want to refer to the sites as "health facilities" which is a broader term versus "health centers" which is a sub category within heal
e) Do you have a Quote on the health care provider’s ability or perceptions of their self-efficacy on follow up the mother-infant dyads prospectively?

Discussion section

This section could be improved with more references in literature either agreeing or contrasting your findings. Below are a few alternate explanations to some of the issues your paper raises.

Paragraph 2

b) Skeptics of integration argue that integrating new healthcare services could overburden already weak health systems in resource-limited settings by increasing the workload, leading to poorer service delivery, poor sustainability of the integrated services as well as high attrition rates along the PMTCT cascade.

c) Another explanation for the lack of big difference between control and the intervention groups could be the "Hawthorne effect" The very fact that you visited/supervised the control and the intervention site - your very presence in the control site and because the control sites knew they were in a study altered their behavior.

Minor Essential Revisions

Page 3:

a) Spelling – change supplies to supply
a) Outspoken: evident/apparent/manifest

b) Stock ruptures: stock outs

Page 11

a) Change “resulted” in the first sentence to “was”

Discretionary Revisions

Page 6

Consider including a table with the routine data/indicators that was collected and the source of the document for example number of HIV-exposed infants (HEI) enrolled and dropped out could be retrieved from the a national ministry of health HEI register

Page 9

a) The quote from participant 4: This is an excellent quote and in line with the paragraph above. I would place it first then the one above as second.

Please see some additional references on the health care worker status in Africa including the impact of HIV


g. Dovlo DY (2002) ‘Retention and deployment of health workers and
professionals in Africa,’ paper presented at consultative meeting on improving collaboration between health professionals and governments in policy formulation and implementation of health sector reform. Addis Ababa.


**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