Reviewer’s report

Title: Determinants of Maternal Health Care Utilization in Holeta Town, Central Ethiopia

Version: 2 Date: 28 December 2012

Reviewer: Maurice Yé

Reviewer’s report:

1. General remarks

The study addresses the determinants of Maternal Health Care Utilization in Holeta Town in Ethiopia with emphasis on factors underlying home delivery. This topic is therefore relevant toward attainment of MDGs 5 where Ethiopia is still far to achieve regarding the inadequate utilization of antenatal care and delivery care highlighted in this paper.

In terms of policy implication this study could contribute to raise more awareness on the necessity to take strong political decision bridge the between health service and community.

Data provided in results section seems to be consistent and follows the standard of data reporting. Both dependent variables and independent variables were considered into the results.

A sufficient literature reference acknowledging study done in this area was provided and all contributors in the study were also acknowledged.

However the policy implication of the paper was not addressed and the relevant literature on the topic and discussion section should be improved.

Also when considering that the ANC four is the minimal quality required according to WHO standard, than emphasis should be put on understanding ANC 4 coverage à 34% which seems to be very low instead of using ANC1 (87, 1%) as the ultimate goal is to act in such a way that women come to deliver at Health Facility and ANC 4 is the entry point to raise awareness about coming to deliver at HF.

2. Major compulsory Revisions

Background: study objective does not appear clearly and could only be seen at methodology section, it is advised to take this into account

Methods section

- In the method section, the study design is not so explicit, although it’s a cross-sectional study, we don’t know at this stage whether there is a combination of qualitative and quantitative method, a descriptive study? . This appears only at the sampling section.

- The sampling and sample size determination appeared confused as it seems
that the sample for the quantitative and qualitative study is the same although you mention non probabilistic purposive sampling technique which does not necessarily suggest random sampling or selection of a large number of participants in the case of qualitative study.

Are the two groups of women 7 and 8 included in the focus group are part of the 422 interviewed? In the paragraph 3

Are these numbers different to the 2 focus groups conducted with 15 women mentioned in the Data collection section, paragraph 2?

Definitely this section needs to be reorganized so that to have a clear split between the quantitative and qualitative sample size calculation so that to have:

*Quantitative data and sample size determination

*qualitative and sample size determination

Usually when referring to non probabilistic purposive sampling, there is no need to perform statistical sample size calculation since it’s a kind of convenience sampling. But please explain the difference in the Focus group discussion size in paragraph 2 of sampling section and the one in paragraph 2 of data collection section

Discussion section

Some new informations such as tetanus toxoid for women appear in the discussion section, paragraph 3(73.6%) of women received at least two during ANC visits which was not presented in the results section.

Please include this number in the results section.

The discussions shouldn’t be a point by point discussion of the results; it rather focussed on key significant findings. The discussion section should be shortening reasonably at not more than 4 pages.

4. Minor Essential revisions

Introduction: literature, please update the maternal deaths: there is 2010 data available on Trends in maternal mortality estimates 1990-2010 from WHO, UNFPA and World Bank

Keywords are missing in the document

Research questions: It is not clear whether the research aim is also the research question in the last paragraph of the introduction section

Paragraph 2 of methodology section about the study subjects, it is not clear that the sample are from the selected Kebeles (4 out of 8 kebeles that compose the Holeta town) please clarify or provide response

Paragraph 1 of results section: Demographic profile should be labelled socio demographic profile

Paragraph 1 of results section: Please also write antenatal care instead of anti-natal care correctly
Results section

Paragraph 1 In the Maternal Health Care Utilization section, the ANC users (33.7%) who had less than four ANC visits should be harmonized with the 34% in the abstract results section.

Respondent’s perception about the quality: need to precise always the total number of respondents as it can vary.

Reasons for preferring home delivery, the other reasons (9.3%) should be listed or explained briefly in the text as there could be some important reasons hidden that need to be seriously addressed

Reference: number 18 is missing in the discussion section

Limitations of the work

There is no mention about the limitations of the work in the study although it should have according to the nature of the study. Indeed having interviewed women in the past three years should have introduced some recalls bias that needs to be addressed in the limitation section.

The non response from the initial sample could also introduced some statistical bias, are the number of non response fewer in the way it has no effect in your final analysis in significance of the results?

When assessing the quality of care using perceived quality by ANC users, this does not reflect the real quality of care if there was an observational quality assessment. Also interviewed women could tend to overestimate the quality or underestimate the quality regarding the person who is conducting the interview. This constitutes a limit of the study although the method is very often used to assess quality.

Policy implication and the added value of the paper were not addressed

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**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