Reviewer's report

Title: Improvement in health and empowerment of families as a result of watershed management in a tribal area in India - A qualitative study

Version: 2 Date: 19 August 2013

Reviewer: Rachel Hammonds

Reviewer's report:

Revised Reviewer’s Report
Rachel Hammonds
19 August, 2013

Overall Comments
Thank you for the thoughtful response to my comments (and those of the other reviewers). I think that the revisions you have made strengthen your paper and I recommend that it be published. I will make sure that it gets any attention I can bring to it. The comments below will not take long to go through.

Major Compulsory Revisions
None

Minor Essential Revisions

Results
Direct and indirect impact of agriculture on physical, mental, and social health
1. You wrote, “Their feeling of not having the basic rights, being powerless and socially underprivileged became even stronger in these situations.”

The term “basic rights” needs to be unpacked/defined as for the more legally minded reader “basic rights” is too vague.

You could write, “Their feeling of not having what they expressed as basic rights (including access to water and sanitation and respect for their dignity) in addition to feeling powerless and socially underprivileged became even stronger in these situations.” Perhaps I misrepresent what you found but I trust you to add the appropriate clarification.

Discussion
1. You state that, “Watershed management empowers them to claim their right to
water and right to health.” Having read your study I think this is a valid conclusion but I am concerned that the way it is phrased is too broad if taken out of context. In the rest of the text – including conclusions you are very good about highlighting the context specific nature of your results.

I suggest that you nuance this statement by adding some qualifiers. “The results of our study and analysis suggest that the tribal people who participated in our study perceive watershed management programmes as empowering them to claim their right to water and right to health.”

2. In the last paragraph you state
“We propose that wherever people suffer from lack of appropriate access to water (either due to deficient rainfall or topography resulting in quick loss of rainfall water), governments in low and middle-income countries should take up holistic watershed management programmes, to fulfil the rights of their people to have access to water and access to health.”

I strongly suggest that you not limit this suggestion to governments of low and middle income countries. The government of Canada (high income country) and the government of a Canadian province (Alberta) have allowed several large oil companies to engage in extractive industry practices (extracting oil from tar sand) that pollute the local waterways that are essential to the cultural life and right to health and water of the local Dene First Nations (indigenous/tribal) population. For every litre of oil 4-5 litres of fresh water are polluted and left in nasty ponds that kill migratory birds and leach into the ground water. (http://oilsandstruth.org/). There are numerous other examples in the United States and Canada.

Discretionary Revisions

Background

1. In the background you added “Tribal people have to face water scarcity in many parts of the world, which suggests that their right to water and thus also right to health is not respected.”

You may want to add ‘protected or fulfilled”. “and thus also their right to health is not respected, protected or fulfilled.” This would cover the three different levels of obligations that are commonly employed for clarifying the obligations of a government from a rights perspective.

2. You write, “The aim of this study was to increase our understanding of perceptions of tribal populations on public health implications of watershed management.”

I think it would read better if you wrote, “The aim of this study was to increase our understanding of the perceptions of tribal populations on the public health
implications of watershed management.”

Methods

1. You wrote, “Water related diseases like diarrhoea and malaria are common.”
   For clarity, I would add “in the study area.”
   “Water related diseases like diarrhoea and malaria are common in the study area.”

Results

Water resource and its association with water related health problems

1. You use the term “disinfection of water”. I am more familiar with the terms “purification of water” or “sterilisation of water”. You may want to add one of those terms the first time you reference this – e.g. “disinfection (sterilisation) of water” – so that it is clear to a diverse group of readers.

Discussion

1. Drawing from earlier experiences, Government of India formulated common guidelines...."

   I would suggest you write, “Drawing from earlier experiences, the Government of India formulated common guidelines...”

2. I would also add “The” before “Government of India” in the final paragraph of this section.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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.