Reviewer's report

Title: Child health care and the role of community health workers in rural Mali

Version: 4 Date: 10 July 2009

Reviewer: Obinna Onwujekwe

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COMMENTS

Title:
The title is too broad. It should be altered as it does not adequately represent the content of the paper. It could read something like Evaluation of Child health community programmes in Mali, or the role of CHWs in improving community health programmes in Mali.

Abstract:
The sentences are disjointed and the grammar needs to be corrected. Results sub-section is too lengthy and detailed and confusing. Only key findings should appear here and the details brought in the results section in the main script. It will be better if the results were presented in a simpler clearer format.

Background:
The objective of this study is not quite clear. What exactly was the rationale behind this study? This should be clearly emphasized.

The authors set out to assess the role and performance of community health workers in promotion of child health services at the household level but have not given a clear picture of what was obtainable before the study district implemented this component of ASCSD. A clear picture of the antecedent child health interventions before this implementation would give a baseline for adequate assessment of CHWs in promotion of child health services or if there was none say so. The last paragraph of the introduction(background) states that ‘The present paper reports the results of an assessment of the performance of CHWs in the promotion of child health services at the household level in the district of Djenné, region of Mopti, Republic of Mali.’ You have not stated what you are hoping these findings would help achieve or improve in terms of child health and general health service delivery in Mali at large. Paragraph 4 lines 6 and 7 have no references.

Methods:
The methods section should be re-written to make it easier to understand. The approach to calculation of sample size is a bit confusing. Were 400 householders interviewed or was it 401? Did the ample size of 401 include both the CHWs and caregivers or only the care givers? What is the population size from which you got your sample? What is the sample frame from which this sample was
selected? How many villages are there from which the 20 villages were randomly selected?

Results:
The presentation of the results is poor. There were too many unnecessary details and repetition of the background in some sentences, for example paragraph 1 line 1 and 2; paragraph. This section should be represented and only the results should be presented as plainly as possible. Some of the statements in this section can be moved over to the background.

Discussion:
This section does not flow. Everything is all jumbled up. There is need to create a certain pattern where each paragraph will flow into the other so that whatever information you intend to pass across is clearly understood. In some places it seems you are about to conclude then the next paragraph you start all over again. Elaborate on Paragraph 2. The results were just repeated.

Tables 1-3 should be reformatted.

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

Quality of written English: Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

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