Reviewer’s report

Title: Knowledge and performance of the Ethiopian health extension workers on antenatal and delivery care: a cross sectional study

Version: 2 Date: 29 September 2012

Reviewer: Lemessa Oljira

Reviewer’s report:

This article contains relevant information and looks promising. However, the article needs major revision and editing. I encourage authors to revise the manuscript. See suggestions below

1. Major
   1a. Abstract: the type of study design should be made clear in the methods section of the abstract.
   1b. Introduction: first paragraph the recent maternal mortality estimate of Ethiopia from EDHS2011 is different from what is indicated. Authors need to also refer to such national figure.
   1c. Methods: It is not clear why authors preferred too many sub-headings here which unnecessarily inflate the size of the manuscript. They can differentiate different sections of the methods either by paragraph or reorganize by major subheadings like procedures, data processing, and etc.
   1d. Design, sample size and analysis: the study design, the sample size estimated and the analysis conducted were not convincing. I suggest if authors go for qualitative than quantitative analysis as the sample size doesn’t allow them to conduct regression analysis they tried to show.
   1e. The Ethiopian University Scoring System: Actually there often times it relative scoring system for specific professionals who apply fixed scaling like in medical profession it is: 85% and above excellent, 70 – 84% very good, 60 – 69 good, 50 – 59 poor and less than 50 is failure. So if authors want apply this fixed scaling approach if they reconsider it again or go for relative scaling which best describes respondents’ situation based on mean or median score.
   1f. Results: quantitative analysis like reporting percentages for total number of respondents less than hundred (50) is misleading. Better if qualitative description is reconsidered rather than trying to quantifying and conducting regression analysis which I guess they didn’t plan for at design stage.
   1f. Discussions: first paragraph as authors rightly said HEWs played not much role assisting birth. That may be due to lack of knowledge and skill as all HEWs were not trained to assist birth rather to refer mothers to health facilities. Some of
them are getting supplemental training to enable them provide delivery services. It will be good if authors clearly indicate HEWs who actually received supplemental training that enable them to provide delivery services. And the mean number deliveries assisted (if authors favor quantitative report) should also be computed among those who have such training.

1g. Discussion: second paragraph … authors mentioned that it is unknown whether HEWs could play a significant role in improving skilled birth assistance. In reality, HEWs are generally not considered as skilled birth attendants as all of them are not trained to the proficiency level. It is wise if authors concentrate on the well-defined roles of HEWs in relation to ANC and Delivery services rather than on what they are actually not trained for.

2. Minor
2a. Methods: it is not convincing why author conducted interview himself. This should be mentioned as limitation of this study rather than strength.
2b. Methods: Ethical consideration: It will be enough that the study was approved by concerned agencies. I do not see the importance of letter number referencing.
2c. Box: I do not see the importance of presenting such textual information in box. Authors can include the information into introduction and cite the reference as required.
2d. Tables 1-6: reconsider whether that information are worth presenting in tabular ways. Qualitative description may be enough.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field
Quality of written English: Needs thorough language corrections before being published
Statistical review: actually I go for qualitative description rather than statistical review as the samples are not adequate.
Declaration of competing interests: No conflict of interest

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**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' below