Reviewer's report

Title: Community Health Worker's Program in Luanda, Angola: An evaluation of the implementation process

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Reviewer: Sara Javanparast

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In the past few decades, CHW programs have been implemented in many developing countries with significant success stories documented in improving health access and outcomes. This paper presents an evaluation work concerning this important topic in Luanda, Angola. I've enjoyed reading the paper. The background section provides good information about the context including political, social and health conditions in the country and study site.

Since the study was undertaken in 2008-09 (approximately one year after the implementation of the program) the outcome evaluation of the program is difficult and so any reduction in maternal and child mortality can be hardly attributed to the CHWs program.

There are a number of issues that need to be addressed for further improvement of the manuscript:

The pilot process is not very clear. It is mentioned that there are seven districts in Luanda province and the program was implemented in six districts. Has the program commenced in all districts at the same time? Does it cover both rural and urban areas? Have there been any criteria for selecting pilot sites?

Training of a large number of CHWs in that period of time is interesting. I'd liked to read perspective of CHWs themselves on the quality of training and its duration.

Some clarifications are required in the Methods section:

Observation (interactions of CHWs with health facilities and with families) is mentioned in the manuscript. I was interested to see some findings from these observations. Who did the observations? Which specific elements of the program were observed and what were found?

Regarding individual interviews and focus groups: who did conduct the interviews or facilitate the focus groups? Were they conducted in Portuguese or English? If not in English, what strategies were put in place to ensure accuracy of the translation? Were the transcripts double coded?

What questions were asked during interviews and focus groups? Were different set of question designed for different participant groups? I’d liked to see the main areas covered in the interview schedule.

The issue of trust between CHWs and the community they serves and their familiarity to the culture is one of the success factors for CHWs programs in
many countries. In the movie I saw the CHW was talking about not been accepted by some families. Have this issue been explored at all?

It would have been very useful to include community perspectives in this evaluation work too. What do the communities, families and mothers perceive as the strengths and weaknesses of the program? I think this is a very important aspect in the evaluation of CHWs initiative. Was there any reason for not including them?

Also the differences in the perspectives of program managers (at provincial and district levels) versus CHWs are interesting.

The literature on CHWs program in other countries such as Iran and India (political support, integration into the health system, role of ongoing training, workload, and supervision) might be helpful to look at.

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