Reviewer's report

Title: Strategies for providing healthcare services to street dwellers in Dhaka: evidence from an operations research

Version: 1 Date: 24 February 2012

Reviewer: Divya Bhagianadh

Reviewer's report:

Major compulsory revisions.

1. Abstract: 1st paragraph on background: the background covers only the background of the study setting and in a way, a statement of the problem. But further link to rationale for the study and what is the study trying to do is missing.

2. Abstract: 2nd paragraph methods: please specify the study design more clearly. Whether it is an experimental study design or not.

3. Abstract: It is said data was collected through survey- did they cover all the street dwellers? If no, then the study cannot be a survey as there is sampling involved.

4. Abstract: Please indicate clearly that the study had both quantitative and qualitative elements.

5. Methods (main heading): State the study design clearly

6. Study subjects: please state the inclusion and exclusion criteria clearly. At present the information is scattered in different parts in methodology. There were several criteria like street dwellers from within 2 km radius of a particular area, who slept in the area for atleast one week before the onset of study , above 15 years etc. Please compile this so that there is no confusion.

7. Data collection- Reconsider the use of the word survey in the text. If there is sampling involved, it cannot be called a survey as it is not covering the entire study universe.

8. Data colletion- This section will have to be rewritten clearly. Whether mixed methodology combining qualitative and quantitative techniques were used? What were the tools in both cases? A structured or semistructured questionnaire? For qualitative- indepth interview guidelines? did they develop separate tools for street dwellers and health care providers? It is clearly mentioned what all information was collected from the street dwellers during the indepth interview, but that information is missing for indepth interviews with health care providers.

9. Ethical considerations: Please give more explanation about the consent process? Was the consent verbal? In case of illiterate participants, were there any special efforts to make them understand the study better?
10. Results: Please begin with a general information on the number of participants? What was the refusal rate for the study? It would be better to give an idea of the general characteristics like age group, sex, educational status, year of migration to the city etc, (if these information were collected). And then go on to the specific results. This will give the readers an idea about the population that is being talked about. Also, instead of giving the change as absolute difference, if given that the percentage utilisation changed from x to y percentage, it would be easier to comprehend for the readers.

11. Discussion: There is some repetition of the study findings which are already mentioned in the results section. Please try to avoid redundant statements and try to make the discussion part more concise and crisp. The discussion could be structured and controlled better. Another point of consideration would be to compare the results with similar intervention research findings from similar settings.

Minor Essential revisions.

1. Abstract: The last but one sentence on data analysis is not clear and might need restructuring.

2. Background: Paragraph 1: Study by Uddin etal- since the study is on a similar topic and is in the same area, can more details on the findings be provided? Also please correct minor grammatical/ typo errors.

3. Background : Is there any data on the number of street dwellers? If not official, from other studies or from NGOs working in the area?

4. Model 1: static clinic: The last part of the last sentence is not clear. Please rephrase

5. Model 2: satellite clinic. The second paragraph onwards talks about the general features applicable to both the clinics. It might be better to have a subheading here saying implementation.

6. Model 2: satellite clinic. The last paragraph: please use the full forms when abbreviations are used for the first time in the text.

7. Survey: it says interviewers collected data on the following variables and then the variables are missing. Please specify the variables.

8. Data analysis: please correct minor grammatical errors

9. Data analysis: Plan for analysis is missing. How was the data, analysis etc linked to the objectives of the study?

10. Maternal health: In table 4: please explain what is meant by delivery attended by birth attended.

11. Perceptions of service providers about model clinics: second paragraph. The
context in which the paramedic of an NGO is quoted is not clear. Please clarify. How has it helped them in providing services? Has it established some sort of a referral system in place so that only those who are really in need are now approaching these service providers?

12. Perceptions of service providers about model clinics: please correct the grammatical errors.

15. Discussion: 7th paragraph- “Although neither scalability nor sustainability was formally assessed, a number of factors suggest that the models are in fact both scalable and sustainable”. Please specify what are the factors.

16. Discussion The last sentence of the 7th paragraph is not clear. Discretionary revisions.

1. Methods: Two model clinics were “started” might be a better word that “implemented”.

2. Perceptions of service providers about model clinics: A general comment about this section: is there any difference between the services in model 1 and model 2 areas which is perceived by the street dwellers or other stakeholders? Different variables showed different trends in the two models, did the indepth interviews throw any light into the reasons for these differences?

3. In the discussion, it would be better to have a better understanding of what would be implication of such an intervention for the Bangladesh public health sector as a whole.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.