Reviewer’s report

Title: Transforming maternal and newborn health social norms and practices to increase utilization of health services in rural Bangladesh: A qualitative review

Version: 2 Date: 14 November 2014

Reviewer: Sarika Chaturvedi

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I find the manuscript describes an interesting and useful work.

Major compulsory revisions:

1. The intervention needs to be described in more detail. The authors mention on page 6 ‘the intervention aimed to influence social norms and practices’. It is not clear what strategies and activities were employed for this, details like how were these implemented, by whom and how frequently would be useful.

2. In describing the intervention, on page 6 the authors mention of involvement of community actors. Involvement of community members in developing interventions has a significant influence on the acceptance and sustainability of the intervention, hence it would be useful to explain in what way this was achieved.

3. The study was conducted in 8 of the 80 villages where the program is implemented. The authors should make explicit the criteria for choosing the villages.

4. The authors should include essential methodological details such as how the participants for FGDs and interviews were approached, who conducted the interviews- whether the anthropologists were females, their backgrounds, did they work individually or in a team, where were the interviews/FGDs conducted-at homes or elsewhere. The word ‘semi-structured guidelines’ is not a common expression, the authors should explain what they mean by this.

5. The authors refer to social norms and practices influencing behaviour and care seeking regarding child birth. Information on what the current norms are and what specific norms did the intervention aim to address is lacking. The background section of the paper would be appropriate to include this.

6. It would be useful to describe how the BEPP card was developed and how it was practically used in the program. The authors could also discuss the experiences with using such tools in the context of illiterate and less developed areas.

7. Abstract needs to be written more precisely.

8. The definition of skilled attendant could vary in different regions, the authors should specify what is included in this.
9. In the subsection describing data analysis on page 9/10, the authors mention ‘content analysis based on resulting codes’ was conducted. It would be important to make explicit the steps in arriving at the results from the data collected.

Also it is not clear if the data from interviews and FGDs were analysed separately; or how these were used together in arriving to the results.

The authors mention they compared the results with an earlier situation analysis conducted in 2005, however relevant information from earlier study is not easy to find. The authors could mention this and describe how the results were compared.

10. The authors find that respondents mentioned different danger signs than expected from the intervention. It would be interesting to see why the authors think this is so.

11. Similar to comment about danger signs, the authors could discuss their finding that women were aware of importance of blood group screening but few had actually used the information for action. These issues about know –do gap need to be discussed with reference to the intervention the paper describes.

12. The results generally lack a reference to the intervention, hence it is not clear if the views expressed were generally attributed to the program that the author studied. It is hard to find a link between the results and the conclusion favouring the program. It would be useful to see participants experiences with the program activities.

13. The situation that authors describe about the role of TBAs- the shift in their role versus a non favouring attitudes among providers (doctors or nurses) needs further discussion, especially of its implications from a health system perspective.

14. With regard to the shifting role of TBAs, the authors do not mention of the consequences of this as viewed by TBAs, if the new role could affect their credibility and monetary/non-monetary gains. This information, if available, would be useful.

15. A mention of the qualifications, training and role of the CSBAs would be useful for readers not familiar with this.

16. Generally, the paper describes an interesting study but lacks methodological details and generalizable discussion of the findings. Without this, the paper remains a mere description of selected aspects of the program and with limitations to transferability of findings to other contexts.

Minor essential revisions:
The tables need to be referred in the text.
The paper would benefit from language editing.
**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**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.