Reviewer's report

Title: Trials of Improved Practices approach to explore the acceptability and feasibility of different modes of Chlorhexidine application for neonatal cord care

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Reviewer: Ashraful (Neeloy) Alam

Reviewer's report:

I enjoyed reading the paper. The study is very relevant to design efficient and culturally appropriate interventions to reduce neonatal mortality in low resource settings. The paper is well-written with clearly stated aims and objectives, and appropriate methodology (TIPs). I have a few minor comments.

Methods: Randomization and enrollment procedures are well designed and have been clearly described. However, the main method that distinguished this study from many other formative research (trial of improved practices) has not been described adequately. More description of the TIPs process is deserved to provide the reader with a clearer understanding of the study, i.e. tools used for follow-up data collection, whether the mothers/care givers were counseled/motivated to use CHX, how the Phase 1 formative research informed the design of the TIPs etc.

Follow-up visits: Mothers were interviewed on the day 10 after they finished using all three modes of CHX application. This poses a threat of under/miss reporting of the previous two modes of application. Mothers might report more about the immediate past modes if it was the most recent in their memory. What attempts did the authors made to reduce this bias?

Conclusion. Line 225. "...immense relevance": Please specify other relevance apart from choosing culturally appropriate & acceptable size and design of the CHX container.

Other comments:
Lines 22 & 207: Why did the authors label these studies in Nepal as 'small' studies? I would suggest the authors get rid of this labeling unless they provide a good reason.

Line 41: Use proper referencing style similar to the other references in the paper.

Lines 22-24: The authors might like to read and incorporate findings of a similar study conducted in Bangladesh (Alam et al J Perinatol. 2008 Dec;28 Suppl 2:S61-8. doi: 10.1038/jp.2008.164.)

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