Reviewer's report

Title: Experiences and Expectations of Maternity Waiting Homes in Luapula Province, Zambia: a Mixed-Methods, Cross-Sectional Study of Women, Community Groups and Stakeholders

Version: 0 Date: 31 Jul 2017

Reviewer: Michelle Munro-Kramer

Reviewer's report:

Thank you for submitting this manuscript about experiences and expectations of maternity waiting homes in Zambia. The manuscript adheres to the mission of BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth and provides a cross-sectional study of maternity waiting homes from the perspectives of community leaders, women, community groups, and stakeholders. Overall, this manuscript is well-written and is important. This formative research is essential to improving interventions for maternal and child health. However, I believe that some revisions of the methods and results section would improve the clarity and impact of the manuscript. Please see my comments below for additional details.

Introduction:

1) Page 6, line 26-29. In both the Liberia and Ghana studies referenced in this sentence, I believe it was traditional birth attendants that facilitated the use of the maternity waiting homes. I would change the word "volunteers" to "traditional birth attendants".

Methods:

1) Page 8. It should be noted in the methods section that IRB approval was obtained.

2) Page 8, Line 50. The first sentence of the last paragraph needs to be rewritten. What does "the remaining 47 facilities had none"? Is this referring to maternity waiting homes?

3) Page 9-10. Additional details are needed about the focus groups and key informant interviews such as:
a. What is the range of people that participated in each focus group?

b. How long were the focus groups?

c. How long were the key informant interviews?

d. What type of training did the research assistants receive prior to conducting data collection?

4) Additional details about the quantitative tools are needed so that it is clear how this is a mixed methods study.

a. How many items were in each survey/tool?

b. Were these completed with assistance from clinic staff?

c. Were these completed at each site?

Results:

1) I was left wondering about the characteristics of the maternity waiting homes included in the study. Can you provide basic characteristics of the homes included in the study that were collected by the Maternity Home Assessment Tool, Service Abstraction Form, and water and sanitation questions? This could be incorporated into the text and/or included as an additional table.

2) Page 14, lines 24-26. The sentence on penalties for home birth should be expanded within the text. This is a critical concept that is highlighted in the discussion. How did participants describe this? Were these penalties actually enforced? Did the chiefs decide on the penalties?

3) Page 17, last sentence. Baby layette should be "baby layettes".
Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

No

Does the work include the necessary controls?
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

Not relevant to this manuscript

Quality of written English
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Acceptable

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