Reviewer’s report

Title: Stakeholders' perspectives on facilitators of and barriers to the utilization of and access to maternal health services in Eritrea: a qualitative study

Version: 0 Date: 23 Jul 2017

Reviewer: Charli Eriksson

Reviewer's report:

It is an interesting study using qualitative methods, but the authors still specify the number of respondents to different response alternatives. This can be possible when the data concerns the patients, but I do not understand why the authors do not consider this a mixed methods study. This would give a more proper presentation of the results. How the field observations have been used in the analysis is not well described. Moreover, the consideration of the quality of the inferences could be further developed.

Comments:

Abstract: The section on private healthcare need to be changed. The call for private healthcare could not be substantiated by the data as no consideration of possible financial barrier was discussed but mentioned in one of the excerpts.

Page 2: The aims of the study are presented here, but also exactly in the introduction of the discussion, which is an unnecessary prepetition.

Page 3: When the health system in Eritrea is presented the private healthcare need to be described, as a background to the coming results.

Page 4: the description of the WHO six system building blocks in the text need to be synchronized with figure1, which is difficult to understand.

Page 5: Which were the identical open-ended questions? It is important to know for understanding the scope of the study.

Page 5: The concept of health information need to be described as health information often is exclusively used for data on health status. Health Information System is often referred to as the health data system. Health education is more often the concept used for patient education and other actions aimed at improving the health literacy of lay people.

Page 6: It is not described how the data analysis included the data from the field observations.
Page 10: Preference for private healthcare - The sentence: "Although the Eritrean government runs private healthcare services within public health facilities..., is difficult to understand. IS it so that patient can bypass the waiting line by paying?

Moreover, as written, patients asked for ultrasound machines, better access and supportive staff, is this arguments for private healthcare?

Page 12: "Eleven of the 18 women had a positive experience and eight women had a negation experiences". Although not proper in a qualitative study, 11 and 8 equals to 19.

Page 13: Health information was seen as the only of the WHO building blocks in this study, but as seen in excerpts finance and workforce were also reported.

Page 13: facility based deliveries were only 48%. This means that this study is only dealing with the experiences of those that have passed the barriers. It would be interesting and important to analyze the perceptions and barriers of home-delivered women.

Page 7: Community mobilization was mentioned and this include also health education and information about maternal health services.

Page 14: Is the cause of the low utilization of facility based deliveries "negative cultural norms"? What about distance, economy, family composition, previous successful home delivery etc.

- References [44- 47] is not placed properly in relation to the text.

References:

Is the right system used for this journal?

References number 3, 8, 9, 19. 20, 23, 25, 36, 42, 43, 45, 47, 48 lack information and some of these documents are not retrievable as presented.
Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

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.

No

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

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