Reviewer’s report

Title: Assessing the Operational Effectiveness of a Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Conditional Cash Transfer Pilot Programme in Nigeria

Version: 2 Date: 07 Mar 2019

Reviewer: Margaret McConnell

Reviewer's report:

The manuscript is improved from the previous version. A few remaining comments:

Abstract:

- SWOT should be spelled out an explained here and below for an academic audience

- This phrase: "The SWOT analysis indicated that the CCT programme had a robust design with huge potentials of operational effectiveness" would benefit from further explanation -- I'm not sure what is meant by operational effectiveness here. Also I think it should be huge "potential" for operational effectiveness -- the manuscript would benefit from a thorough editing for grammar and construction before publication.

- This sentence "Though 65% of beneficiaries perceived CCT pay-out events as orderly and well-organized (p < 0.001), yet, marred with inconsistencies and irregularities resulting in large crowds and increased waiting time for beneficiaries" doesn't make sense to me. Should it say "yet it was marred"? Also what statistical test does this p-value correspond to? I don't see the need for a statistical test here.

Methods:

- A very important component of the study design is that women were selected for interview ONLY if they had received an incentive payment. This choice should be justified and discussed as a potential limitation. It is difficult to understand the experience of beneficiaries if potential beneficiaries who did not receive payment are excluded from analysis.

- I'm not sure what is meant by this "on the strength of the assumptions of the Central Limit Theorem" -- was there a minimum sample size per sampling area? This should be made more clear.
- It isn't 100% clear whether the interviews were intended to be qualitative or quantitative -- quantitative methods are used for analysis so the questionnaire must be primarily quantitative but were there any long-form response or qualitative questions included?

- P-values should only be reported along with the t-statistic they correspond to. The methods don't provide enough detail to know what exactly is being estimated. Are comparisons being made across areas? This seems like primarily descriptive information. For example by tests of statistical significance, what is the null hypothesis? For bivariate analysis -- what relationships are being considered? The results seem primary descriptive so I'm not clear on what analyses are being performed.

Results:

- The results are quite long -- I would think about streamlining.

Discussion:

- As I mentioned above, a major limitation of this study is that it only interviewed people who received incentives. This should be discussed. In general, the discussion section needs a subsection on limitations.

Conclusion:

Should be shortened to one paragraph and the table removed.

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.

No
Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?
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I am able to assess the statistics

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Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Needs some language corrections before being published

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