Author’s response to reviews

Title: “If there are no female nurses to attend to me, I will just go and deliver at home”: a qualitative study in Garissa, Kenya

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Subject: Revision and re-submission of manuscript
Comment: BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth operates a policy of open peer review, which means that you will be able to see the names of the reviewers who provided the reports via the online peer review system. We encourage you to also view the reports there, via the action links on the left-hand side of the page, to see the names of the reviewers.

Response: Dear editor, I appreciate your time spent reviewing our manuscript “if there is no female to attend to me, I will…. I appreciate the time the reviewers have dedicated in providing us insightful comments that will improve the quality of the manuscript. We have been able to incorporate changes following their comments.

As per the journal requirements, I have responded to the reviewers indicating how I have addressed their comments in the manuscript.

Reviewer 1

- Comment 1: Background reference to ‘dismal improvements’ seems too strong a qualification as used here. While the periods between 2003 and 2008/9 may seem to have been nearly stable, the drop to 362 within a similar time frame cannot be overlooked. A suggested approach would be to state that any gains made by reductions from 2008/9 to 2014 need to be sustained

Response: we appreciate the reviewer’s comment. We agree with this comment. We have modified this section in the manuscript following your recommendation by explaining that although improvements in access to and utilization of maternal services happened, those improvements are now well sustained which is the greatest challenges in reducing maternal and neonatal deaths in Kenya. This change can be found in the background section page 3, paragraph 2, line 22.

- Comment 2: The denominator in these lines should be checked for consistency. The appropriate index is a ratio because the denominator is live births, and not women aged 15-49 years which would have made it a rate. In both lines, it is assumed that it is a rate

Response: we appreciate the reviewer’s comment. Thank you for pointing this out. This was in fact a mistake from our part. As we are using live births and not women of reproductive age as denominator, the correct index is ratio. We changed maternal mortality rate to maternal mortality ratio in the background section page 3, paragraph 2, line 18.

- Comment 3: Background Paragraph 3, Line 46 delete 'are' between 'pregnancies' and 'abound'

Response: we appreciate the reviewer’s comment. We have modified this section in the manuscript following your recommendation by deleting the word 'are' between 'pregnancies' and 'abound' to make it grammatically correct.
Response: We appreciate the reviewer’s comment. However, based on Reviewer 2’s comment concerning this part of the manuscript, we have deleted that specific sentence to improve our work.

- Comment 4: Results: Gender of service provider Line 47-50 "Besides Imams, several clan elders, men and women…": Can the proportion be more quantitatively assessed? E.g. clan elders (2/2), men (5/6) and women (6/8), rather than several? This would give a better impression of the level of consensus within and across groups. If possible and if the data was captured by coding, it should be used.

Response: We appreciated the reviewer’s comment. Originally, we have not thought of adding the proportion of people who agree or disagree with any assertion because some respondents of the FDG did not expressed themselves on all questions. Furthermore, from the comments coming from the interviewer and the note taker present during the FGDs, this happened because they already approve what their fellow before them said. Taking your comment into consideration, we have added the proportion among those who openly responded and stated their preference in the gender of the health service provider. The change can be found in page 7, Results-gender of service provider, line 8.

- Comment 5: As above line 52-53 "If there are no female nurses to attend to me, I will just go home and deliver at home" (FGD women (15-29 years), Iftin).

Was the statement made by women in the 15-29-year group or by one woman in this age group? If the statement was made by a single individual as suggested in the statement, then the description in parenthesis should read e.g. (FGD participant, [15-29 years], Iftin) or (Participant A, 15-29 year FGD, Iftin). This applies across other verbatim quotes.

Response: We appreciate the reviewer’s comment. In fact, the above quote was made by one woman in the FGD 15-26 years group. As we agree with the reviewer’s comment, we have edited every quote in the manuscript to make them reflective of the person saying it. The quotes description throughout in the manuscript are presented now as

“If there are no female nurses to attend to me, I will just go home and deliver at home” (FGD participant [Women group 15-29 years], Iftin)

We used the reviewer’s example and we though adding the gender group where the quote came would bring a better understanding of the quote.

- Comment 6: As above lines 10-11 "…Culture and religion will lead women to avoid deliver in the hospitals where male attend to them." Replace 'deliver' with 'delivery' and 'male with 'males'
Response: we appreciate the reviewer’s comment. We have taken into consideration the comment and edited the quote accordingly in page 7, line 25. At first, we did not want to change anything from the quotes and wanted them to appear exactly as the respondent said, however, we agree that editing would improve the quality of the manuscript.

- **Comment 7:** As above lines 15-16 "For those who did front breach of religious teaching and culture norm as the concern, believed that women are just shy.....". May be re-phrased: "Among those who posited that breach of religious teaching and culture norm was a major concern, some believed that women are just shy....."

Response: we appreciate the reviewer’s comment. We agree with this suggestion and edited the sentence accordingly in the manuscript in page 7, line 29-30.

- **Comment 8:** Results: Availability of service providers lines 37-38 "...Three during the day and one during the night due to source base." Please clarify what is meant by "source base". Since this is about staff, might this refer to 'shortage of human resource'?

Response: we appreciate the reviewer’s comment. The response to comment 6 responds to this comment. When writing the manuscript, we aimed not to change the respondents original quote. However, we agree that doing so would improve the quality of our work. We took the reviewer suggestion and edited the quote accordingly in page 8, line 2-3 by “...during the night due to human resources availability”.

- **Comment 9:** As above line 41 replace 'and these' in "...and these permeate communities" with 'which'

Response: we appreciate the reviewer’s comment. We edited the sentence accordingly in page 8, line 5-6.

- **Comment 10:** As above line 49 Delete 's' in "staffs"

Response: We appreciate the reviewer’s comment. We deleted “s” in staffs in line 12 of page 8.

- **Comment 11:** As above line 10 clarify if this is 6am or 6pm

Response: we appreciate the reviewer’s comment. The respondent was talking about the availability of service provider at night. We edited the quote to clarify the time.

- **Comment 12:** As above line 14 In the statement: "...I came back in the 6 in...", replace 'in the' with 'at' before '6'
Response: we appreciate the reviewer’s comment. We have edited the quote following the reviewer’s comment and replaced “in the” with ‘at’ in the above quote in page 8, line 29.

- Comment 13: Results: Autonomy and decision making regarding healthcare seeking line 25 In the phrase: "…service their wife get at health facility…". Replace wife with 'wives'; insert 'the' between 'at' and 'health facility'.

Response: we appreciate the reviewer’s comment. We agree with the reviewer’s comment and have edited the sentence accordingly in page 8, line 38.

- Comment 14: As above line 35 "…okay by…", should be "okay with…”

Response: we appreciate the reviewer’s comment. We edited the quote following the reviewer’s comment by “…might be okay with male providers” in page 9, line 1-2.

- Comment 15: As above line 37 "…concerned by male doctors…" should read "...concerned about male doctors...."

Response: we appreciate the reviewer’s comment. We have edited the quote and have replaced “concerned by male doctors” by “concerned with male doctors” in page 9, line 3.

- Comment 16: Results: Awareness of the importance of using maternity service and knowledge of availability of service lines 46-47 “…It is an important first step in efforts geared towards health care seeking behavior change.” This might read better as:

'It is an important first step in efforts geared towards a change in health care seeking behavior.'

Response: we appreciate the reviewer’s comment. We agree with the reviewer that this edit improve the manuscript. Thus, we edited the sentence just as the reviewer suggested.

- Comment 17: Results: Attitude of service providers line 40 'Services providers' should be replaced with 'service providers'

Response: we appreciate the reviewer’s comment. The sentence was edited accordingly to the reviewer’s comment in page 10, line 5.

- Comment 18: As above line 50-51"...and they became rude." This would better read: '……and they become rude.'
Response: we appreciate the reviewer’s comment. This sentence has been edited in page 10, line 14. It comes back to the fact that we thought we should not edit the respondents answer as we were quoting them.

- Comment 19: Results Cost/distance line 36 A reference is missing


- Comment 20: Discussion Paragraph 3, line 43 Delete 'condition'

Response: we appreciate the reviewer’s comment. The word condition has been deleted

- Comment 21: As above paragraph 3, Line 45 "….this result into clients…." Might better read: '……this results in clients….'

Response: we appreciate the reviewer’s comment. We took note of the reviewer’s suggestion and changed “…this result into clients to..” by “…this results in clients…” in page 12, paragraph 2 and line 14.

- Comment 22: As above paragraph 3, line 51 Replace 'delivery' with 'deliver'

Response: we appreciate the reviewer’s comment. We have edited the sentence as per the reviewer suggested.

- Comment 23: As above paragraph 4, Line 54 delete 'a sickly or' so it reads: "…suitable for a woman with pre-existing complications…"

Response: we appreciated the reviewer’s comment. We have edited the sentence as per the reviewer suggested in page 12, paragraph 3, line 22.

- Comment 24: As above paragraph 1, line 6 replace 'improved community's knowledge….' with 'improving community knowledge….'

Response: we appreciated the reviewer’s comment. We have edited the sentence as per the reviewer suggested in page 12, paragraph 3, line 28.
Comment 25: As above paragraph 1, line 7 '….as well as equipped…' should read: '….as well as equipping….'

Response: we appreciated the reviewer’s comment. We have edited the sentence as per the reviewer suggested in page 12, line 29.

Comment 26: As above paragraph 1, lines 12 & 15 'Financial' should be replaced with 'financially'

Response: we appreciate the reviewer’s comment. We agree with the reviewer, and edited “financial” in this sentence by “financially”

Comment 27: Conclusion Line 36 "… are barriers that can be addressed." This is better stated as: "… identified barriers that can be addressed."

Response: we appreciate the reviewer’s comment. We have edited this part of the sentence following the reviewer’s suggestion in page 13, line 12.

Comment 28: Although this study employed mainly qualitative methods, reference is made to quantitative survey under 'Study site and participants' and 'Data analysis'. What were the results from the quantitative survey? Other than the pre-identified themes, were there any results that from the quantitative survey that complemented the qualitative methods? Secondly, the focus groups had age-based categories. In what ways did this influence the outcomes? Were there divergent views on any of the themes or were they similar between the age based groups and between the gender based groups?

Response: we appreciate the reviewer’s comment. As this study is based on baseline results, all authors agree not to include the results of the quantitative survey. The study from which this manuscript came from is designed as a mixed method study with pre and post assessments.

Comment 29: General comments: Results are important for maternal and child health programs in the setting and other contextually similar settings. Needs some grammatical edits and minor revision prior to publication

Response: we appreciate the reviewer’s comment. We took into consideration the comment and improved the grammar of the document.

Reviewer 2
- Comment 1: Title: I propose change of your title to "If there are no female nurses to attend to me, I will just go and deliver at home": a qualitative study in Garissa, Kenya

Response: we appreciate the reviewer’s comment. We changed the title of the manuscript which is now “If there are no female nurses to attend to me, I will just go and deliver at home": a qualitative study in Garissa, Kenya”

- Comment 2: Page 3 Line 40 "....and less than 50% of deliveries...." gives an impression that it might be anywhere between 0 and 49. An exact figure would be useful (Check: https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/OD71/OD71.pdf)

Response: We appreciate the reviewer’s comment. We agree that an exact figure might be more useful. In the background page 3 line 30 we added “...and only 32.4% of deliveries...”

- Comment 3: Page 3 Line 41-44 "The government efforts...." The sentence is speculative and may not provide enough information to a reader who is not familiar with the DHIS. The authors should consider indicating the actual changes of the free maternity care policy (What were the numbers before, during and now).

Response: we appreciate the reviewer’s comment. Unfortunately, the actual changes were not clear in the reference document, so we abstained from adding them.

- Comment 4: Page 3 Line 44-46: The sentence is unclear in its current context.

Response: We appreciate the reviewer’s comment. We agree that this sentence is unclear and has been deleted.

- Comment 5: The authors should discuss trustworthiness and rigor in the study.

Response: we appreciate the reviewer’s comment. We want to reassure the reviewers of the rigor and trustworthiness used in this study. Data collected were rigorous and followed the ethics for research involved human being. Data were thoroughly analyzed with the aim to inform and made an impact in the maternal and child health research domain.

- Comment 6: The authors should also expound on how data analysis was performed. What themes emerged from the data and what themes were pre-established? Who performed the analysis and how were conflicts if any addressed?

Response: we appreciate the reviewer’s comment. The data collected and transcribed were analyzed using content analysis. Two members of the research team -the principal author and another member- were in charge of coding the data. After coding, the results of the analysis were
presented to another research team for feedback and accuracy. The pre-established themes -
views on health facility delivery, gender of the health care provider, views on husband role
during pregnancy and delivery- are mostly the ones found during the literature review done prior
to the study. As we wanted to explore and know more on these topics, the interviews were
designed to get the point of views of the participants on those topics. We included more details in
the data analysis section on page 6.

- Comment 7: Page 10 Line 36-41: The paragraph is overreaching. What do the authors
consider as "culture". Among the identified themes, which ones highlight cultural
barriers? The conclusion of the findings made here is not reflect is the study findings
especially the role of community leaders in MNCH!

Response: we appreciate the reviewer’s comment. We refer as “culture” everything that take
roots in the community and inhibit or prohibit maternal and neonatal health services. From our
results obtained, we considered the preference of the gender providers and the limited women
autonomy in decision-making being results of the Nomadic and Muslim culture. Despite some
participants reluctance to affirm the culture perspective, it was obvious that this preference was
rooted in the culture they know and follow.

Key informant interviews with the community leaders showed that if community influencers
were supported openly health facility delivery and use of male nurses, the community -women-
would have been more reassured in doing so. We recognized that we did not emphasized the role
of the community leaders in maternal and child health in this document enough, and this might
actually be one of our limitations.

- Comment 8: The authors should consider discussing further the phenomenon of conflict
views of women and their partners on autonomy and decision making highlighted in Page
10 Lines 52-55.

Response: we appreciate the reviewer’s comment. We tried to discuss the conflicting views in
the discussion section, paragraph 1 page 11 “…, the decision of having a health facility delivery
or skilled birth attendance is often made at the onset of labor, unless the woman had previous
health issue requiring a pre-established birth preparedness plan…”.

- Comment 9: Page 11 Line 36: Revise "(ref)

Response: We appreciate the reviewer’s comment. We apologize for this omission on our part.
We corrected and added the reference Ganga-Limando M, Moleki M, Modiba L. Potential
barriers to utilisation of maternal health services in public health facilities in rural and remote
Comment 10: Page 11 Lines 58-59 and Page 12 Lines 36-37: "Effective strategies to..." The statement is too broad and non-specific. The authors should attempt to highlight example of strategies that could influence social norms especially in light of their findings.

Response: we appreciate the reviewer’s comment. Thank you for pointing this out. Potential strategies were described in the discussion section of the document in page 12, paragraph 3, line 25-33 “…Improving community’s knowledge on the benefit of health facility delivery as well as equipping health facilities with functional supplies/equipment, emergency transportation, trained, competent and empathic health care workers are key potential solutions to increase health facility delivery and improve maternal and child wellbeing. Beside creating awareness, women empowerment -financial and educational- can be a critical factor in increasing health facility delivery…”

Comment 11: A major limitation of the manuscript is the focus on the negative aspects of MNCH service utilization "Barriers". A holistic view of both enablers/facilitators and barriers would have enriched the manuscript. In addition, the 32% of women in North Eastern including Garissa would have provided better insights into why they prefer health facility delivery and skilled birth attendance.

Response: we appreciate the reviewer’s comment. We did not consider the negative aspects of maternal and child health services as a barrier in this study. Most women interviewed explained that they are all in favor of health facility delivery and skilled birth attendance because of the medical help they will receive on time in case of emergency or complications. We tried to highlight this in the result section of the manuscript in page 6, line 26 “…most participants expressed support of women giving birth at health facilities due to the perceived importance of medical support available to them in case of complications or medical emergencies…”

Comment 12: The other limitation is the failure of the authors to highlight the cultural and religious barriers to MNCH service utilization considering that this was the overarching rationale for the manuscript. If not were identified, the authors should indicate it as a limitation

Response: we appreciate the reviewer’s comment. As a team we believe that highlighted culture as the main barrier of maternal, neonatal and child health services utilization. We then did not think of having this as a limitation. However, we understand your perspectives and could see how it might be a limitation.

Comment 13: The manuscript would benefit from a supplementary COREQ (Consolidated criteria for Reporting Qualitative research) Checklist
Response: we appreciate the reviewer’s comment. We went through the COREQ criteria when reviewing the manuscript after your recommendations. We believe the document is aligned to the COREQ criteria for qualitative research.

- Comment 14: Page 2 Line 21/22: "Data analysis..." The authors should consider instead to highlight the qualitative data analysis approach rather than the software only.

Response: We appreciate the reviewer’s comment. We took the comment into consideration and added more information on the data analysis approach in the data analysis section, rather than the software only as the reviewer suggested.

- Comment 15: Page 5 Line 6-7: "One KII was conducted....." The sentence is unclear but also the participant (MCA Often) should be anonymised unless the MCA consent to be revealed in reporting.

Response: We appreciate the reviewer’s comment. As the name of the specific member of the county Assembly interviewed was not mentioned, we believe the respondent was anonymized.

- Comment 16: Overall, the study is well-written with standard English language and the theme described in depth. However, the findings are not novel and just confirm finding in other settings in the country. This makes it difficult in utilization of the findings in the study area and Garissa in general

Response: we appreciate the reviewer’s comment. Thank you for recognizing our efforts in our attempt to inform and make a difference in the maternal and child research domain. Although our manuscript contains limitations, we as a team believed that it can strengthen available data on the reasons for home delivery and show that culture is still a major reason for limited utilization of maternal and child services.

- Comment 17: There is no information about how many participants were in each focus group discussion as well as how they were selected. How many women were approached and how many declined? Who did the recruitment of FGD participants?

Response: We appreciate the reviewer’s comment. Women focus group were composed of 4 women, while men focus group were composed on 7 to 8 men. The recruitment of the participants was done by the trained research assistants with the supervision of two members of the research team.

- Comment 18: The justification for undertaking the study was given in the background but that could have been made stronger if the authors had made reference to other research
that has been done in countries with similar maternal mortality rates. The reasons for home delivery have long been established though these may vary from place to place.

Response: we appreciate the reviewer’s comment. We agree with this comment and we now realized it would have benefit the manuscript.

- Comment 19: Please provide a copy of the interview guide used for both the focus group discussions and KII interview added as supplementary file.

Response: we appreciate the reviewer’s comment. Following the reviewer’s suggestion, we added the interview guide as an appendix.

- Comment 20: The authors can add on their list of abbreviations APHRC and AMREF

Response: we appreciate the reviewer’s comment. We added from our list of abbreviation APHRC and AMREF

APHRC: African Population and Health Research Center

AMREF: African Medical and Research Foundation

- Comment 21: References; 4 needs to be completed, 16 check out spelling of first author, 6 add & between Health Place


Reviewer 3

This paper provides an understanding of the key barriers to health facility delivery in the Somalia community of North Eastern Kenya and was aimed at informing interventions on specific needs of the community. The study was conducted among community members including users of the services. The finding of the study is of importance to public health, researchers and to informing policy. The study was well conducted and adds to the literature on barriers to facility delivery. Authors may consider the following to enhance the paper:
- Comment 1: The dates for the study and the study design should be stated in the abstract. I understand the word count limit but this information is important in the abstract. For instance mention of the software for data analysis may be replaced by the type of analysis.

Response: we appreciated the reviewer’s comment. Following your suggestion, we have changed the title to “if there is no female nurses to attend to me, I will just go and deliver at home”: a qualitative study in Garissa Kenya

- Comment 2: Introduction: The aim of the study and outcome measures is clearly defined with appropriate reference to the literature.

Response: We appreciated the reviewer’s comment concerning the introduction.

- Comment 3: Methods: Study setting - what method was used to select study sites and participants?

Response: We appreciate the reviewer’s comment. We agree with this comment, and we added in the study site and participants and study design sections in page 4 the method used to select the study site and the participants. All study sites were selected based on the availability of health center serving the community and similarities among the three communities. Participants on the other hand were selected after a social mapping that identified the social influencers -clan leaders, imams, health managers- in the three communities. From the quantitative survey, we identified women who had been pregnant and had or had not used specific MNH services were selected to participate in the focus discussion group.

- Comment 4: The authors should describe and provide rationale for the design used for this study

Response: we appreciate the reviewer’s comment. The study used purposive sampling to select the participants as the population is not nomadic in that part of the country. We added this in the study design section in page 4.

- Comment 5: What type of analysis was conducted for this study. This should be stated.

Response: we appreciate the reviewer’s comment. Content analysis was used to analyze the transcripts from the focus group discussions and key informant interviews.

- Comment 6: It would also be important to see how the audit trial for the analysis was generated and how the themes were identified.
Response: we appreciate the reviewer’s comment. This has been more detailed in the data analysis section. From the literature done prior to the study design, we have identified specific themes we wanted to explore more so we designed the key informants interviews and focus group discussion to have their point of view about those themes. In addition to the pre-established themes, other themes were identified by reading through the transcripts.

Comment 7: Study participants/sampling - describe composition of focus groups, and what criteria were used in purposive sampling

Response: We appreciated the reviewer’s comment. This was detailed in the table 1 data collection summary, study design section. All focus group discussions were composed of mothers and fathers.

Comment 8: Data collection tools - further detail is needed here regarding, who did the interviews/led the focus groups, when were they conducted, what language they were conducted in and fluency of the interviewer, how were interviews/FGD conducted i.e. did they use a guide, if so i would suggest including it as an appendix

Response: we appreciate the reviewer’s comment. All interviews were conducted by trained research assistants Somali native and audio recorded after participants consent. Interviewers followed the interview guide made available to them. The interview guide will be attached as an appendix.

Comment 9: Please comment on data saturation at the point of sampling and analysis.

Response: we appreciate the reviewer’s comment. We agree that data saturation should have been discussed in the manuscript. In the data analysis section of the document (page 6), we explained that due to the fact that the target population share the same culture and views, data saturation occurred at the analysis stage. Themes were re-appearing in most transcripts, relying the same information. However, data collection was already stopped before reaching the data saturation stage.

Comment 10: The authors should provide rational for using different data sources

Response: we appreciate the reviewer’s comment. The research team believe that the difference in data sources could make interviews less biased and affect less data saturation. For example, for the women focus group discussion, the two different groups of mothers - relatively young and more experienced- provide point of views of different generations. If mothers aged 30 or more think it’s not normal to be attended by a male nurse for a specific reason, the 15-29 years old group might list another reason unknown by the elders but important to them.
Comment 11: Data management/analysis - who and how many individuals coded the data. Results

Response: we appreciate the reviewer’s comment. We agree that this information should be present in the manuscript and detailed in the data analysis section of the manuscript (page 6). Two members of the research team -the principal author and another member of the team- were in charge of coding all transcripts. After coding, the codes were presented to a 3rd member of the research team that review for accuracy and feedbacks.

Comment 12: When revising the paper, I suggest the authors ensure that the paper complies with the internationally accepted COREQ criteria for reporting qualitative studies. COREQ guidance are detailed in the following paper: Tong A1, Sainsbury P, Craig J. Consolidated criteria for reporting qualitative research (COREQ): a 32-item checklist for interviews and focus groups. Int J Qual Health Care. 2007 Dec;19(6):349-57. Epub 2007 Sep 14

Response: we appreciate the reviewer’s comment. We went through the COREQ criteria when reviewing the manuscript after your recommendations. We believe the document is aligned to the COREQ criteria for qualitative research.

Comment 14: Discussion. This section is well discussed.

Response: we appreciate the reviewer’s comment concerning the discussion section. We appreciate that our efforts in explaining the results from our research were recognized.

General comment: The authors should thoroughly edit the paper for grammatical and typo errors.

Response: we appreciate the reviewer’s comment. We took into consideration the comment and improved the grammar of the document.