Reviewer’s report

Title: Why gone too soon? Examining social determinants of neonatal deaths in northwest Ethiopia using the three delay model approach

Version: 0 Date: 09 May 2017

Reviewer: G. Anil Kumar

Reviewer's report:

In this study, authors utilized data from community based social autopsy (SA) and verbal autopsy to investigate the type and contribution of Delays in treatment seeking resulting in neonatal mortality in northwest Ethiopia. As mentioned in the paper that most of the neonatal mortality is preventable when appropriate and timely care is sought. Even though the sample size is relatively very low, the detailed qualitative description in this paper is very useful for further research investigation. This is an important and relevant public health topic. I have a few questions or comments that the authors’ may find helpful:

It seems that the content in the background section is needed to edits further. Please make it more clear in the abstract and introduction what the advantage of the study is.

Page 6-7, line no: 108-111 - How did the authors distinguished stillbirths and neonatal births. As VA administrated self-reported questionnaire, what might have been the possibility of misclassification of neonatal death into still birth and visa-versa? Clarify in methods and discussion sections

Page 11, line no: 178, instead of 1-7, change to 1-6.

I did not understand fully the definition of the indicator "DELAY 1: Home Delay". 37 neonatal deaths were considered for SA in this paper. Of which 10 of them the deliveries took place at a health facility. How did authors define the DELAY 1 for these neonatal deaths and deaths occurred in within 24 hours?

I have a suggestion to authors that they can do this analysis by home delivery and health facility delivery separately, which will give a more accurate suggestion for future intervention.

Discussion need to be strengthened further.
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.

Unable to assess

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.

I am able to assess the statistics

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

Acceptable

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