Reviewer’s report

Title: Home visits and Village Health Team consultations, a well-accepted method for improving communication about maternal and newborn care practices in Masindi and Kiryandongo districts, Uganda

Version: 2 Date: 13 April 2015

Reviewer: Bassey Ebenso

Reviewer’s report:

Article: Home visits and Village Health Team consultations, a well-accepted method for improving communication about maternal and new-born care practices in Masindi and Kiryandongo districts, Uganda

Date: 13th April 2015

Reviewer’s report:

This is an article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests.

Readers would benefit from the article’s exploration of how community health worker (CHWs) or village health teams (VHTs) helped to improve maternal and new-born health though supporting women during pregnancy and in the immediate post-natal period. The currency of the article is in analysing how the use of mobile technology facilitated communications between VHTs and health workers to enhance VHT support/ surveillance of pregnant women and referral to health facilities.

I therefore recommend article for publication after the authors make suggested changes below to the manuscript.

- Major Compulsory Revisions

1) The authors highlighted in the abstract (paragraph 2 and line 40 and 41) and in the methods section of the manuscript (see paragraph 5 and line 154), that data analysis was conducted using latent content analysis. However, they did not explain their understanding of latent content analysis and why they selected this approach to content analysis.

As there are different approaches to content analysis, it will be helpful, for the reader, if the authors provided a very brief explanation of latent content analysis and why they used this approach compared to other approaches to content analysis in this research. It will also be valuable for authors to provide references for their explanations to help readers who may wish to refer to the articles/documents cited. The authors may wish to see the following articles (among others) for insight:

• Mayring, P. Qualitative Content Analysis. Forum: Qualitative Social Research.
2000;1(2).


Above articles are attached to this report.

2) Information regarding male engagement in maternal and new born care provided in the Perceived positive engagement of different actors subsection of the results (see lines 273-278), appears to be repeated in the Male partner support subsection of results (see lines 316-329 of results section).

To improve flow of information, authors should consider reporting all information on positive male engagement in maternal and newborn care in the same sub-section e.g., by cutting and transferring the information on male engagement from the lines 273-278 to the subsection on Male partner support. It will be worth recasting the sentences or the entire paragraph after cutting and pasting the information to improve readability of revised sub-section.

3) In paragraph 1 and lines 429 and 430 of the discussion section, the author stated that to their knowledge, the use of home visits combined with mobile phone consultations with professional health workers for advise and supervision was new in sub-Saharan Africa. For this reason therefore, they did not cite or acknowledge a popular study in South Africa, the Philani Plus (+) project in South Africa which has been implemented since 2002, and using a mentor mother CHW home visiting programme to improve maternal and infant outcomes.

Although it could argued that the two programmes are different, nonetheless, the similarity between the two are that, like to the study in Uganda, the Philani Plus (+) programme in S-Africa combines regular home visits by CHWs with the use of mobile phones to, among other things, communicate with senior health workers to clarify issues and seek advise (supervisors). On the other hand, senior health workers used mobile phone as part of overall coordination of the programme and to support and supervise CHWs. It will be instructive for the authors to review articles on the Philani Plus project and compare and contrast the findings of the work in Uganda with it. References to the Philani Plus (+) include but not limited to:


- Philani Mentor Mother Programme - Mary Jane Rotheram www.maryjanerotheram.com/mjr/wp.../08/Mentor-Mother_D9-2.pdf
Above articles are attached to this report.

- Minor Essential Revisions

There are inconsistencies in information provided in the manuscript as follows:

1) The period/duration of the research stated in the abstract i.e. December 2013-February 2014 (see paragraph 2, lines 36 and 37) is different from that stated in study area and population subsection i.e. December 2013 to March 2014 (see paragraph 2 of the Methods section and lines 113 and 114). Please cross-check and amend as appropriate.

2) The total number of interviews reportedly conducted during the research in the data collection subsection i.e. 87 interviews, (see paragraph 4 of methods section and line 147), is different from that stated in Table 1 i.e. 67 interviews (see column 5 of table 1, lines 740).

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests