Reviewer’s report

Title: Reliable mortality statistics in Myanmar: A qualitative assessment of challenges in two townships

Version: 0 Date: 26 Dec 2018

Reviewer: Reviewer 2

Reviewer's report:

PEER REVIEWER ASSESSMENTS:

OBJECTIVE - Full research articles: is there a clear objective that addresses a testable research question(s) (brief or other article types: is there a clear objective)?
No - there are minor issues

DESIGN - Is the current approach (including controls and analysis protocols) appropriate for the objective?
No - there are major issues

EXECUTION - Are the experiments and analyses performed with technical rigor to allow confidence in the results?
No - there are minor issues

Statistics - Is the use of statistics in the manuscript appropriate?
N/A - there are no statistics in this study

INTERPRETATION - Is the current interpretation/discussion of the results reasonable and not overstated?
Yes - the author's interpretation is reasonable

OVERALL MANUSCRIPT POTENTIAL - Is the current version of this work technically sound? If not, can revisions be made to make the work technically sound?
Maybe - with major revisions

PEER REVIEWER COMMENTS:

GENERAL COMMENTS: * What is your overall impression of the study?
This fairly well-written manuscript titled: "Reliable mortality statistics in Myanmar: A qualitative assessment of challenges in two townships" adds to the literature in this less-studied area of research.

* What the authors' have done well?
The Introduction, Results and Discussion Sections of the paper are fairly well-written, succinct and coherent. The authors reviewed the literature well, provided adequate justification for the
study. The authors provided enough information for authors who may want to replicate the study findings. The Results section was informative and was supported by Tables and Figures which were well-presented. The Authors adequately discussed their findings in the light of published literature.

In what ways does it not meet best practice?
I only have some concerns with the Methods Section of the manuscript. As it is currently, it is too concise and I feel that there is a need for an additional description of different components of the section to improve its clarity.

I have identified some revisions which will help the authors improve the manuscript

REQUESTED REVISIONS:

Introduction
"To improve the performance of VRS, this study identified barriers at the operational level in three dimensions which undermine the quality of mortality statistics: administrative support, technical capacities and public awareness and cooperation [7, 8]. These findings contribute to a better understanding of the system barriers to be addressed by policy and administrative reform."

Comment: This paragraph reads like the conclusion paragraph of the study rather than the introduction Section. There is a need for a clearly stated study objective. It could read:

"The objective of this study was to evaluate the performance barriers of VRS in Myanmar. The study findings could contribute to a better understanding of the system barriers to be addressed by policy and administrative reform."

Methods Section
This needs to be better organized and should not run like a single paragraph.

Page 5, line 91 - 93 should have a sub-heading: "Study design". Also, information about the study period should be added here. "The study was conducted during the period of January and August, 2016."

Line 93 - 96: (below) should have a sub-heading "Study area"
"Information was collected in two selected townships of Mandalay Region. The selection of townships emphasized understanding how death registration practices differ in two different contexts, i.e. more urbanized Myingyan Township with 31.8% urban population and less urbanized Myittha Township with 9.9% urban population."

Line 96 - 100: should have a sub-heading "Participants"

Line 100 - 105: should have a sub-heading "Data collection"
The Data collection sub-section of the study needs to be improved.
How/where were the health workers who participated in the FGD and KII selected from?

How/where were the community members who participated in the FGD and KII selected from?

In the abstract section, it was stated that the number of FGDs was 14 but this was not stated in the Methods section.

Was there any data saturation during data collection process?

There is a need to differentiate between how the FGD data and KII data were collected.

Line 105 - 106: should have a clear sub-heading data analysis.
There is a need for more details regarding how the data/transcripts were organized and analyzed

Results
This section is well-written and clear

Discussion

Abbreviations needs to be defined when first used. E.g., MWs, CSO. Etc

The authors need to add a last paragraph preceding the Conclusion Section, in this paragraph, the authors need to summarize the limitations of this study

References

The references and reference style are OK.

ADDITIONAL REQUESTS/SUGGESTIONS:
As stated in the commentary above

Note: This reviewer report can be downloaded - see attached pdf file.
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.

No

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown? 
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

Yes

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

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

Needs some language corrections before being published

Declaration of competing interests 
Please complete a declaration of competing interests, considering the following questions:

1. Have you in the past five years received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

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5. Do you have any other financial competing interests?

6. Do you have any non-financial competing interests in relation to this paper?
If you can answer no to all of the above, write 'I declare that I have no competing interests' below. If your reply is yes to any, please give details below.

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