Reviewer's report

Title: A cluster randomised controlled trial to assess the impact on intimate partner violence of a 10-session participatory gender training programme delivered to women taking part in a group-based microfinance loan scheme in Tanzania (MAISHA CRT01): study protocol

Version: 1 Date: 24 Oct 2017

Reviewer: Elizabeth Miller

Reviewer's report:
Thank you for the opportunity to review this protocol paper. This is a highly significant study with potential for major impact on the challenging problem of violence against women. The authors have already provided revisions requested by the editor.

A few additional clarifying questions:
1) What does 'registered retrospectively in August 2015' mean? Appears the first participant was enrolled into this protocol almost a year before registering in clinical trials? Could this delay be explained perhaps in a footnote or endnote?
2) The randomization scheme is not clear (pg 14 of the pdf). Is this randomization at the cluster level? What was the unit of randomization and why? Assuming that women interact with each other in the microfinance groups thus one group should be a cluster?
3) Please define 'good attendance' in the selection of the sites
4) Were all 220 groups invited to participate? If not, how were sites selected?
5) How is the photovoice being used for this study?
6) More description of measures is needed. A measures table would be helpful
7) Please describe strategies used to reduce bias (participation bias of sites as well as social desirability), plans for calculating attrition, and handling of missing data.
8) Greater discussion of potential limitations of the study is warranted (the intervention arm gets significantly more group time, more time for interaction, which is likely to increase connectedness and reduce isolation. The limitations of not having an 'attention control' should be discussed.
There is a need for copyediting throughout due to grammatical and spelling errors: e.g., complementary (misspelling in abstract - not complimentary)

**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?**
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