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 groupbased microfinance loan scheme in Tanzania (MAISHA CRT01): study protocol

Version: 2 Date: 16 Jan 2018

Reviewer: Elizabeth Miller

Reviewer's report:
The authors have done a thorough job responding to reviewer comments. Several points should be addressed for a stronger, more complete protocol paper of this critically important study that has great potential for high impact.

The description of the comparator arm was deleted in the version with tracked changes, and I cannot find where this was moved to. Please make sure that the comparator arm is adequately described, if even in a few sentences.

The selection of groups into the study could be better described in at least one additional sentence - "The study team works closely with BRAC to select groups to approach and invite to take part in the study." please add something like -- "Factors to determine which groups to approach included characteristics such as length of time the group has been operating, stability of staff, etc. Of the 220 potential groups, xxx were approached, and xxx agreed to participate."

The discussion should include a section on potential limitations of the study. In my original comments, I had noted, for example, that the intervention arm participants necessarily receive more time with each other. Please note in the discussion that one potential limitation is that because the comparator is not an 'attention control' (meaning they're not getting any additional intervention time in addition to being part of the microfinance group) that it may be hard to discern if changes in outcomes of interest can be attributed to curriculum content or to increasing connectedness and reducing isolation. There are other potential limitations to include such as not
knowing about participation bias of participating sites (how are the sites that participated different from those that didn't), and so forth. A short paragraph on potential and anticipated limitations will certainly strengthen the paper and demonstrate that the authors are aware of these limitations upfront and what they are doing to ensure as much scientific rigor as possible.

**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 recommend additional statistical review

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

Needs some language corrections before being published

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