Reviewer’s report

Title: Experiences from a Community Advisory Board in the Implementation of Early Access to ART for All in Eswatini: A qualitative study

Version: 0 Date: 07 Dec 2018

Reviewer: Kate Gooding

Reviewer's report:

Thank you for the opportunity to review this manuscript. CABs are an increasingly popular strategy for community engagement, so the article makes a valuable contribution to practical thinking in this area. In general it is well written, with clear language. My comments focus particularly on structure and depth of analysis, to ensure the focus of the paper is clear and to maximise its contribution to learning about engagement.

Introduction: it may be helpful to indicate the potential tension between some of the indicated CAB roles eg representing communities vs helping research implementation.

Methods:

Last sentence page seems to stop half way through

More explanation of the CAB would be helpful. eg what was the rationale for selecting some members from outside study communities, what was the intended role of the CAB and what guidance were they given about strategies to follow? More information on the intended or planned role and approach would provide very useful for understanding the roles and strategies reported by CAB members.

Data collection - could you explain how the interviewees were selected? It would be helpful to know how many in the FGD and interviews were living within and outside the study areas, and any other significant differences among participants.

Was there any analysis beyond coding e.g. comparison of views between CAB members and between FGDs and interviews?
Results

I think it would be worth reconsidering the structure of the results. Currently, the headings do not always completely align with the text. The methods section indicates that the study aimed to examine the role of the CAB members - I think a section focused on their perceived role might be helpful. The focus for the section on community positioning was unclear to me, and seemed to include material on role and strategies. There is some duplication between this section and the section on strategies. In addition, part of the strategy section seems to be about challenges. One option might be dividing the results into perceived roles, strategies and challenges, but there may be other approaches.

I think it would be useful to examine some of the reported findings in more depth, with more detail, discussion about underlying reasons, or interpretation of significance. For example, it is indicated that lack of introduction was a challenge - but how exactly did this hinder the work? Similarly, why was reliance on the MaxART team a challenge - what problems did this cause, were any CAB members able to overcome these issues.

It would be useful to relate the perceived roles and strategies used by CAB members to the intended roles and strategies. Was their understanding of their roles the same as the intended role when the CAB was designed? If not, why, and what implications did this have? Similarly, was the CAB guided on strategies to use, and did they follow these strategies? If they identified different strategies or didn't follow those intended, why, and with what effects?

On the latter point, the paper would provide more valuable learning with more reflection on the benefits and disadvantages of the reported strategies - were particular strategies more useful for reaching particular groups, or in particular locations, or seen as more beneficial/less useful for other reasons?

Could the authors indicate how much perceived roles and strategies varied between CAG members or villages?
More specific comments:

First sentence on beneficial - did they see their role as beneficial for the CAG members, the communities, or the researchers?

Second sentence - I think the data is only based on IDI/FGD with CAB members, so is there any evidence that communities and researchers saw the CAB as important?

I'm not sure the first 3 paras of the results section are needed - some aspects are discussed in more detail later, and the information on perceived roles could be expanded into a separate section.

Positioning the CAB in the community:

I wasn't sure about the main purpose of this section or its implications.

Check the grammar in quotes.

Strategy reported in the quotes raises issues around openness and covert reporting by CAB members. This seems to be addressed later in a comment on providing t-shirts, but seems an important issue and could be discussed in more depth.

Line 208 - was facilitating health seeking part of the CAB role and supporting the study? I wasn't clear whether these helping examples were things CAB members did anyway, or their CAB work.
Strategies

P10 quote - this also seems to be about the position of the CAB in the community, so I would consider the structure as above.

As above, it would be useful to explain how strategies related to intended activities, and to discuss effectiveness of the different strategies.

Line 259 in line with promotion of rights - could this be clarified? It's unclear to me (e.g. intended to support rights, did support rights, didn't conflict with other efforts to support rights?)

Some repetition e.g. between para starting line 259 and 267

Quote on p11 is about roles - so again perhaps consider the structure and a separate section on roles

As there are lots of different roles and strategies, one option for presenting the findings clearly might be a table with the roles in one column and the associated strategies in another. This could be taken further to indicate pros/cons of the different strategies (just an option to consider).

Hotline - as a newer initiative, it would be useful to hear more e.g. who initiated this, who is it funded by, how often is it used, any challenges.

The case study report could perhaps be explained somewhere - was this something like a midterm review? Did the reported study build on the findings?

CAB meetings used to be quarterly - how often are they now, and what difference has the change in schedule made?
Discussion

Lines 339 - 342 - I don't think there is clear evidence for these statements in the paper

Line 371 - did this strategy work?

Line 376 - what's the rationale for continuous training? I wasn't clear how this related to the study results.

Line 388 - recommendation on residential stay. Is this required for CAB functioning, or more to show appreciation? Cost implications?

Some of this section seems to be presenting new material from the data rather than discussing the results, so consider what is discussion and what is results.

Line 392 - representing communities sis often seen as a primary role, and there is a potential tension between this and implementing study activities. See work by Deborah Nyirenda on CABs.

Line 402/3 - how is this supported by study findings? Which of your reported challenges would this address?

404 limitations - 'experiences' of CAB members. To me this might include things like how they felt about their role, what they liked, and tensions they face. Earlier, the paper states that the aim is understanding their role. Perhaps the phrase is something like 'roles as perceived by CAB members and the strategies they employed' - rather than to evaluate these strategies. I agree with the thrust of the limitation though.
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.

No

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

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