Reviewer’s report

Title: Community perspectives on randomisation and fairness in a cluster randomized controlled trial in Zambia

Version: 1 Date: 15 Sep 2019

Reviewer: Leslie Francis

Reviewer's report:

This is a limited descriptive study of how participants in the RISE study perceived randomization. It is now clearer that although the participants perceived the process as transparent and as fair in the sense that the lottery itself was not rigged, they did not perceive the substantive structure of the trial as fair. That is, they did not understand why it was necessary to randomize in the first place (in order to understand the effects of the interventions) rather than allocating based on need. The rewritten draft brings out this contrast with greater clarity. This case study is a reasonable cautionary tale about the difficulties in explaining randomization – and may also be a cautionary tale about conducting randomization in these contexts as well.

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?
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Yes

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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:

Acceptable
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