Reviewer’s report

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

Version: 1 Date: 13 Sep 2019

Reviewer: Daniel Kaye

Reviewer's report:

1. The authors have ably revised the manuscript to address most of my concerns in the initial review. They however, need to correct the typos and grammatical errors in the manuscript.

my main concern is with the conclusion. The authors state:

The public randomisation ceremonies did not succeed in creating an understanding of The purpose of randomisation in a RCT was misunderstood by among most of the respondents. However, The procedures of the public ceremonies were generally perceived as fair and transparent, and the fact that traditional leaders were part of the process reassured the respondents as they regarded them as impartial and accountable. For substantive fairness, people thought that the purpose of the "lottery" was to allocate aid and that the allocation should have been based on need rather than chance. The provision of clear and accurate information to participants about RCTs is important but this alone may not ensure consistent interpretation of core concepts such as randomisation or "lottery" and research. Thus formative research on how to better explain the concept of randomisation in lay language in the context where a RCT is planned, can be useful to ensure that

2. The sample size is very small and the views of the community as respondents was not captured. These are major limitations. Do the authors acknowledge other limitations and do they indicate how they were or could have been mitigated?

3. The authors should indicate the key message as part of the conclusion of the study. They should also add the implications of their research findings for policy and practice, as well as for future research and community engagement. This is lacking from the discussion and conclusion

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.

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

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