Reviewer’s report

Title: "Ways and channels for voice regarding perceptions of maternal health care services within the communities of the Makamba and Kayanza provinces in the Republic of Burundi: An exploratory study"

Version: 1 Date: 07 Aug 2016

Reviewer: Susan Rifkin

Reviewer's report:

Comments on Ways and channels for voice regarding perceptions on maternal health care services within the communities of the provinces Makamba and Kayanza in the Republic of Burundi: An exploratory study

General Comments:

1. The manuscript is much improved. For the most part the authors have responded positively to reviewers' comments and revised accordingly. I have some minor comments that I discuss below.

   My main concern still is focused on the presentation of participatory approaches to improve "voice".

2. In my original review I suggested to authors "that the paper could identify participatory approaches as one way of addressing the obstacles identified and the section which references where these approaches have been used to some effect be kept. Then in a final paragraph could suggest that on the basis of previous experience such an approach might be developed in pilot communities in Burundi". The authors have gone beyond what I anticipated and outlined a plan for using participatory approaches. The plan appears to be a "brain storming" of what might happen and provides little evidence of how it could be implemented. It weakens the paper. The rest of the paper presents a clear argument based on good evidence that "identify community perceptions of the quality of maternal health services and on ways used to express these views and concerns". The proposal on participatory approaches does not have sufficient evidence to promote the ideas suggested.

   I would suggest relabeling the section now called Experience with expressing views elsewhere and proposed voice mechanisms for Burundi as " A Way Forward for Promoting Voice". I would keep the first paragraph of that section. Then I would take the last sentences as follows as the conclusion. "Participative (it is actually Participatory) Learning and Action (PLA) or Interactive Learning and Action (ILA) which are collaborative approaches to research that
involve all relevant partners on equal consideration could be used [46]. They include building trust and respectful, honest, and transparent facilitation through dialogue and discussions. These approaches were used with satisfactory results in post conflict and conflict areas. In the Oyo state of Nigeria a participatory approach was used for adolescents in a reproductive health programme where they discussed their needs and agreed on priorities [47]. In Erythrea, Somalia, and Mozambique, a participatory approach was also used to adapt international aid for post-conflict areas to the local needs of the beneficiaries [48]. However, these approaches were reported as highly context specific and time consuming [49]. Based on the latter information and experiences from other countries [47; 48], the development of such approaches in Burundi should start small and support by political and health authorities sought. When successful within pilot communities, the transferability, horizontally and/or vertically, will be planned based on results of the pilot experiences.”

Specific Comments

1. Check p.1. There seems to be a repetitive sentence.

2. Check all the abbreviations 1) to make sure they are spelled out in the text the first time they appear 2) to make sure they are in the list of abbreviations.

3. There is some confusion about "community members". In the list of interviewees community members are not mentioned or defined. On p. 8 there is a reference: "Few community members reported to have addressed their concerns directly to the health providers".. Who are these community members? Also on p. 11 "Community members mentioned CHWs as a channel ".

4. On page 12, it is stated that people did not turn first to "community leaders". Who are these leaders and how do people identify them. I assume they are not the local and provincial authorities.

5. It would be best to put all the documents in the appendix on a separate file as a web attachment to the document. I suspect most readers do not want all these details.
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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No

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Not relevant to this manuscript

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