Reviewer’s report

Title: Social capital and health during pregnancy; an in-depth exploration from rural Sri Lanka

Version: 0 Date: 21 Dec 2016

Reviewer: Eleonora Uphoff

Reviewer's report:

This is an interesting and well-designed study, which gives a good insight into the importance of relationships for pregnant women in Sri Lanka.

Major comments:

- p. 5, l 20-23: there are many definitions and interpretations of 'social capital'. Could you please clarify this is just one definition out of many, and explain why you use this particular definition. It seems a bit random to use a definition from a website. The structure of the diaries suggest you focus mainly on relationships between individuals; maybe your definition could reflect this. For example, 'trust' is sometimes included as a component of social capital, but it is not something you focused on. It would improve your paper to narrow down what you mean by social capital.

- It is not clear from the results what the contribution was of diaries, follow-up interviews and key stakeholders. Could you include a comment on what the different methods added and how results were different between methods?

- You discuss the absence of social capital as a negative experience, but not the negative experience of received social capital. There are examples of this in the literature. For example, women encouraging other women to smoke during pregnancy, or mothers of pregnant women being over-involved. Did you come across this in your study?

- You mention antenatal care but not antenatal classes for pregnant women. Although aiming to educate women, they are often an important source of emotional support for pregnant women and an opportunity to extend their social network. I don't know if this is relevant in Sri Lanka, but I would expect a reference to this, either in the introduction regarding evidence for the importance of social support during pregnancy or in your discussion section as a suggestion for increasing low social capital.
- Please address the issue of external validity/ generalizability in your discussion. On the one hand, it would be useful to know how this research is relevant to other LMICs. On the other hand, do you expect some of the findings to be specific to Sri Lanka?

- You make statements about some social capital aspects coming out stronger than others, but it seems to me this is very heavily influenced by your methods. For example, the way you structured the diaries focuses on personal relationships, and this comes out as a very important aspect of social capital. Being a qualitative study based on diaries, there are limitations to the claims you can make about the amount of different types of social capital received by women. Please include this limitation in the discussion section.

Minor comments:

- The website link for reference 18 does not work

- p. 3, l 51: 'the situation remains same' ; not clear what is meant and not good English

- p. 4, l 19-20: 'inequalities in health' instead of 'to health'

- p. 4, l 29-30: social capital is not a relatively new concept, it was used around 1900 and ever since.

- p. 5, l 1: 'periods' should be 'period'

- p. 5, l 23-33: you talk about cognitive, structural, bonding, bridging and linking capital as 'dimensions'. Could you distinguish between the dimensions of cognitive/ structural and the types of bonding, bridging and linking social capital?

- p. 6, l 39-40: 'we used qualitative design' should be 'a qualitative design'

- p. 7, l 19-20: 'Figure1' misses a space

- p. 11, l 7-8: ".. we did not anticipate emotionally sensitive situations" This seems very odd to me; you were asking women at an emotionally vulnerable stage in their life about
support they get from their friends and family and you did not expect this to be emotionally sensitive??

- p. 11, l 20-22: You said women who fell ill were allowed to discontinue. I hope everyone was allowed to discontinue if they wanted to? It would be very unethical to force people to finish the study, regardless of the reason.

- p. 15, l 26: says'mothers' instead of 'women'

- p. 23, l 14-16: 'benefit from care' instead of 'by care'

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An article of importance in its field

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