Author’s response to reviews

Title: Evaluation of the maternal deaths surveillance and response system at the health district level in Guinea in 2017 through digital communication tools

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Author’s response to reviews:

08/01/2019

The Editor,

Reproductive Health (REPH)

Dear Editor,

Subject: Manuscript entitled "Evaluation of the maternal deaths surveillance and response system at the health district level in Guinea in 2017 through digital communication tools"

REPH-D-18-00355

We are grateful to you for the comments and suggestions provided on this manuscript.

We have reviewed each of the comments and questions and have revised the paper accordingly. We feel that the paper has improved as a result of this peer review process.
Please find for your kind consideration the following:

Below, we provided a “point by point” response to your comments and questions. The comments and suggestions are highlighted in bold font followed by our responses in italics.

All changes have been included in the revised versions of the manuscript (a Track changes version and a clean one).

Yours Sincerely,

Dr Tamba Mina MILLIMOUNO

On behalf of co-authors

POINT BY POINT ANSWERS TO EDITOR’S COMMENTS

PLAIN ENGLISH SUMMARY

Please include a Plain English summary no more than 250 words, in addition to the abstract. This should be inserted immediately after the official scientific abstract within the manuscript file under the heading "Plain English summary".

✓ We now included a plain English summary of 250 words, immediately after the scientific abstract (Pages 3-4).

NB: We referred to the “Track changes manuscript” to indicate pages and lines where modifications have been done.

ABSTRACT

Methods

Please elaborate more on who the users are, where it is used [health facility], and what types of information is collected. Also please included how many districts and where in Guinea

✓ We more elaborated this section as follows: “This study targeted all 38 district medical officers in Guinea. In addition to district medical officers, the participation of health actors from regional and central levels were also expected in the online discussion forum. Data collected through the questionnaire were mixed and those from the online discussion forum were entirely qualitative.” (Page 2, lines 8 to 11).
NB: We referred to the “Track changes manuscript” to indicate pages and lines were modifications have been done.

Results

I think this sentence is not quite accurate and should be deleted "We found that digital tools can be used to assess a response to a health issue such as maternal deaths."

Consider organizing by the steps of the MDSR "notification, data collection, reviewing deaths, formulating recommendations, implementing recommendations, monitoring and evaluation"

We deleted the following sentence "We found that digital tools can be used to assess a response to a health issue such as maternal death" and this results section has been organised by the steps of the MDSR as you suggested and has been highly improved (Page 2, lines 13 to 25 ; page 3, lines 1 to 2).

Conclusion

Once again I do not think this is accurate "This study shows that, given certain prerequisites, digital tools can be used to analyze the health 20 districts response to a health problem like maternal deaths."

Instead it is appropriate to say that digital tools can be used to assess the functioning of a system like the MDSR

We deleted the following sentence "This study shows that, given certain prerequisites, digital tools can be used to analyze the health districts response to a health problem like maternal deaths” and used the appropriate one “Digital tools can be used to assess the functioning of a system like maternal deaths surveillance and response” (Page 3, lines 4 to 6).

INTRODUCTION

Consider deleting this sentence "Maternity, normally a happy event, is perceived as a hell for thousands of women that can lead to 3 maternal death"

Please separate into paragraphs

We deleted this sentence "Maternity, normally a happy event, is perceived as a hell for thousands of women that can lead to 3 maternal death" (page 4, lines 8 to 9) and made paragraphs separated. We then reorganized references.
These sentences are redundant - please make it more concise "More than one year after the official launch of the MDSR in Guinea in 2016 [9], it was thus important to understand the actual organization and implementation of MDSR at the district level and give improvement avenues. Assessing the MDSR system is necessary to ensure that the major steps in the system are functioning adequately and improving with time"

✅ We reformulated the following sentences "More than one year after the official launch of the MDSR in Guinea in 2016 [9], it was thus important to understand the actual organization and implementation of MDSR at the district level and give improvement avenues. Assessing the MDSR system is necessary to ensure that the major steps in the system are functioning adequately and improving with time", and removed redundancy (Page 5, lines 6 to 8).

PURPOSE

I would suggest adding to your purpose that you specifically plan to evaluate the MDSR system at a district level in Guinea

✅ We reformulated the study purpose as follows: The purpose of this study was to explore how digital communication tools can be used to evaluate an intervention implemented at the health district level. In this case, we specifically planned to evaluate the MDSR system at the health district level in Guinea (page 5, lines 13 to 15).

METHODS

Please move the section on District.team to the methods section

Please merge the two sections on District.team to make it more concise

The methods section needs to be more concise. Please review it and remove redundancy

Ethical considerations section can be reduced as well

✅ This methods section has been reworked: District.team section has been moved from Background to methods section, then merged and removed redundancy. Ethical considerations section has been reduced as well (Pages 6-10).

RESULTS

If you have data on the following it would enrich the paper:

Is MDSR linked with HMIS, IDSR or CRVS
We talked about the link of MDSR with IDSR in the discussion section: “As MDSR is included in the integrated disease surveillance and response (IDSR), the person in charge of the epidemiological surveillance is the one in charge of the maternal deaths notification to avoid duplication in a context of scarce human resources” (page 23, lines 18 to 20).

However, we didn’t specifically collecte data on its link with HMIS or CRVS.

What are the linkages between the community and facility?

We are not sure to well understand this question. However, In this study, the link between the community and facility is the community involvement in maternal deaths review at facility level. We talked about it in the results section (pages 12, lines 6 to 7).

How often do review committees meet?

Thank you for this question, we now added the review committee meeting rate in the results (weaknesses section) : low meeting rate on maternal deaths at the district level (once per semester, during the meeting of the health district technical committee) (Page 14, lines 19 to 21).

What is the status of incorporating perinatal or neonatal deaths?

We didn’t explore the status of incorporating perinatal or neonatal deaths in MDSR system. Nevertheless, we added it as a study limit in the study limitations section (page 27, lines 6 to 8) and focused future directions on it in the conclusion section (page 27, lines 19 to 21).

Did facilities or districts have a focal person to follow up on recommendations?

No! Facilities or districts have no focal person to follow up on recommendations. We talked about it in the results section (page 12, lines 13 to 14) and in the discussion section as well (page 23, lines 20 to 22).

Tables 2 and 3 have some very important information- consider including some of it in the body of the article. Consider laying out the tables in an easier format and perhaps organizing by themes.

As you suggested, we included in the body of the article, some important information from tables 2 and 3. We also managed to revise tables and organized variables by themes.

The solutions section needs to be re-written. A few quotes can be used but the entire section should not be solely quotes. Please re write the text summarizing the themes and suggestions.

The solutions section has been re-written summarizing the themes and suggestions and maintained only four quotes (Pages 18 to 22)
DISCUSSION

The discussion section is quite long and needs to be edited and shortened. Please remove headings like "death review", "response" etc.

I suggest that the discussion start with the MDSR implementation/functionality findings and then discuss the feasibility of District.Team

✓ The discussion section has been edited and shortened as possible. We also removed headings like "maternal death review", "response" etc.

✓ The discussion now starts with the MDSR organization/implementation findings and then ends with the feasibility of District.Team

CONCLUSION

Consider adding one or two sentences on future directions.

✓ For future directions, we added the following sentence : “Further studies are needed to explore the coordination of MDSR at the central level and the incorporation of perinatal or neonatal deaths into this MDSR system for a better understanding of its practical functioning” (page 27, lines 19 to 21).