Author’s response to reviews

Title: The impact of adding community-based distribution of oral contraceptives and condoms to a cluster randomized primary health care intervention in rural Tanzania

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Author’s response to reviews:

Reviewer Comment: In Summary, author states, "respecting women's preference for injectable contraceptives," I suggest broadening this to respect for women's right to choose the method that works for her. Condoms and pills are only two methods of many that can be provided at the community-level including Standard Days Method.

Author Response: Authors agree with this comment and thank the reviewer for pointing this out. The text has been changed to reflect this statement.

Reviewer Comment: "Concatenation" is used - suggest the author use more readily understandable language.

Author Response: This has been changed (line 53).

Reviewer Comment: Suggest another limitation is the methods included in the intervention. There is no mention of some modern methods of contraception including standard day’s method and LAM. This leaves an unknown in the conclusions one can make based on the findings.

Author Response: Authors do not believe that the limitations section should be adjusted with the reviewer’s suggestion. The thesis of the paper demonstrates that not providing the full range of modern contraceptive methods at the doorstep level constrains women’s right to choose their method of choice. While the results and discussion focus primarily on the most desired contraceptive methods (pills, injections, and implants), the results do not omit additional modern methods. LAM and the
standard days method are included in Table 3. These methods constituted less than 1% utilization and therefore not directly mentioned in the discussion.

Reviewer Comment: Another limitation includes another 'social system determinant' - social norms or the expectations of behavior. Expecting behavior change without any assessment or diagnosis of social norms is a limiting factor. The paper mentions men, but there are other influencers of contraceptive use.

Author Response: Thank you for this comment. The limitations section has been edited accordingly.

Reviewer Comment: Descriptive characteristics - in addition to sharing the p values of the categories which were statistically significant, please add the values and general notes. For instance, while the religion between intervention and control communities was stat. sig. different at endline, the value differences is not very high. The difference in wealth index is more pronounced. These notes are important, arguably even more so than the p values.

Author Response: Authors have provided a brief clarification in the text to account for the fact that religion and wealth, while both statistically significant, do not have the same effect difference.

Reviewer Comment: It is misleading to say the most popular methods were pills, injectables, and implants without mentioning the usage rates of each. Injectables is far more popular than pills or implants. It's confusing when the author repeatedly mentions pills as a popular method, but then says the CHA provision didn't align with method choice. Be more clear about the popularity of injectables. No other method comes close.

Author Response: A statement to clarify this has been added to the text to further highlight this as per the reviewer’s suggestion.

Reviewer Comment: Is there any monitoring data from the implementation of the intervention? Given that CHAs were responsible for so many things, it would be helpful to see if they were actually counseling on FP and providing services. The first question with a null hypothesis is whether the intervention was even implemented well. I see that 61% of respondents were visited but that doesn't tell me whether they were counseled on FP.

Author Response: As stated in the Study Design section, “family planning was seen as a component of an integrated MCH service delivery package and was not exclusively monitored.” Therefore, authors unfortunately do not have any data specific to FP counseling and the provision of services. Authors made sure to note this from the very onset of the manuscript as we agree that this would have been a valuable data point.

Reviewer Comment: This should be re-phrased to focus on the % of women who choose injectables, "In countries with rapid growth in contraceptive uptake, between more than half and three quarters of family planning methods used are injectables (34)."
Author Response: This has been changed.

Reviewer Comment: Suggest the author uses, "gender sensitive programming" The paragraph that starts at 356 needs to end with the same point that it starts with. The author already talked about access to a range of methods. That paragraph should include mention of social and behavior change, including social and gender norms

Author Response: Authors’ point has been clarified here. We have incorporated some language as suggested by the reviewer.

Reviewer Comment: Line 374 should include reference to SBC best practices and Community Group Engagement

Author Response: Authors thank the reviewer for the suggestion and have added the suggested references.

Reviewer Comment: The conclusion needs significant copy-editing. There are many typos.

Author Response: Authors thank the reviewer for this comment. The conclusion has been revised accordingly.