Author’s response to reviews

Title: Trends in maternal and neonatal mortality in South Africa: A systematic review protocol

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We thank the editor for the critical review and valuable comments before sending the document for peer review. kindly find our responses below for each comment.

(A) I believe that the sources proposed to be searched for data in this review are incomplete/inadequate for the following reasons: (i) National-level data (and trends thereof) are unlikely to be retrieved by searching for studies unless these are nation-wide and repeated periodically, (ii) Additional sources for potential information could include census data, registration of births/deaths databases, (iii) insurance company databases if these exist, (iv) DLHS etc.

We have added in our eligibility criteria the following statement: -

All studies which are nationally representative, reports providing national-level data (and/or trend) and vital registration data will be eligible for this review. Searches will be restricted to studies being conducted in South Africa or which have used South Africa data, also multicentre studies including South Africa, covering the period of 1990 to 2015.
Further, in order to generalize the data obtained from studies conducted in/by institutions (such as medical colleges, tertiary care hospitals), several assumptions would be required. If this is the proposed approach, then the authors must specify the methods for this a priori.

We shall not include such studies as they don’t satisfy our eligibility criteria.