Author’s response to reviews

Title: Participatory action research to pilot a model of mental health service user involvement in an Ethiopian rural primary healthcare setting: Study protocol

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Author’s response to reviews:

Dear Mr Stephens and Professor Staniszewska

Editors-in-Chief
Research Involvement and Engagement Journal

Re: Response to reviewers

Manuscript: RIAE-D-19-00049

Participatory action research to pilot a model of mental health service user involvement in an Ethiopian rural primary healthcare setting: Study protocol

On behalf of the co-authors, I would like to thank you very much for the opportunity to submit a revised manuscript, and the reviewers of our manuscript for their valuable comments that enabled us to improve the quality of the paper. Following the decision made on the manuscript RIAE-D-19-0009, we are pleased to submit a reviewed version of the manuscript that takes into account the reviewers comments. We have provided a point-by-point response below. All changes are marked in the new version of the manuscript using track-changes mode.

We look forward to hearing from you.
Reviewer reports:

Reviewer #1:
1. An extremely important topic to be addressing - developing involvement not only in mental health systems but also in socio-economic deprived countries.

Robust methodology - PAR approach - approached within a critical paradigm. Well thought through and evidence based.

Response 1: We thank the reviewer for the kind words, understanding of the importance of the work about service user and caregiver involvement, and the PAR approach and the paradigm.

Reviewer #2:
2. I think this article is of extreme interest to the field and especially in terms of service user involvement in developing countries.

Response 2: We thank the reviewer for the kind words and understanding of the importance of the work for service user involvement in developing countries.

3. My two major issues were firstly your lay summary - which when I ran through a readability checker had a reading level of university student which isn't lay at all (when we would consider a lay reading age to be 11 or 12 years). I ran it through the readability checker on the Writer website. I would like to see all lay summary's/paragraphs edited so they are readable for a wide range of people.
Response 3: We thank the reviewer for the helpful critical comments; we agree and have rewritten the plain English summary (Lines 22-38, page 2).

4. Secondly one thing that was coming up for me that I didn't see detailed was the impact of culture/religion on what you are proposing to do. Would it be that women are less likely than men to be involved, are there norms in Ethiopia that may make it harder for service users of certain demographics to be involved and if so how will this be addressed -for me service user involvement only becomes meaningful if in itself if represents everyone (as much as possible) and not just those that are "privileged in society.

Response 4: As rightly suggested by the reviewer, women in Ethiopia lived/live in a patriarchal society. This has been shown to hinder the active participation of women in various affairs that affect their lives. Cognisant of this, the Ethiopian government granted women constitutional rights to take part in any affairs affecting their life (e.g., political, economic, social) and committed to affirmative action to enable women to participate equally. There are several relevant policies, including the 1993 Ethiopian Women Policy that primarily aimed to institutionalize the political, economic and social rights of women by creating an appropriate structure in government offices and institutions so that the public policies and interventions are gender-sensitive and can ensure equitable development for all Ethiopia men and women. Furthermore, the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) constitution of 1995 under its article 35 is devoted to enhancing equal participation of women in all socio-economic, political, and other aspects of legal activities in the nation. In addition, Article 25 of FDRE constitution guarantees all persons equality before the law and prohibits any discrimination on grounds of gender.

Nonetheless, although there are these promising developments, the real participation of women in community affairs, particularly in rural areas, is still limited. The roles of women are closely tied to their reproductive and household activities. Hence, we proposed to use participatory action research underpinned with critical social theory in order to create an opportunity to challenge and address these disempowering factors through critical dialogue and reflective practices. We plan to maximise participation of diverse representatives of stakeholders at different stages of the research process (lines 320-323, page 16), including consideration of gender.
We have incorporated clarification (line 335, page 16, line 354, page 17) that we are going to invite a representative sample of male and female participants to sit in on the Research participant Group (RPG) and Research Advisory Group (RAG). Moreover, the participants are not only there to be representative but will be enabled to affect the discourse by articulating different perspectives through the reflective process and appreciative inquiries in our proposed PAR approach. Our experience working with this community will be helpful

5. Just some thoughts, otherwise it felt very concise and well thought out and I wish you luck with it.

Response 5: We thank the reviewer for the kind encouraging words.

Reviewer #3:

6. This is an article that will be of interest to the readership of Research Involvement and Engagement. The authors are able to handle the complexity of the topics (theory of change, involvement, PAR) really well. With some changes, this will be a really good article and I hope they are given the chance to make changes and resubmit.

Response 6: We thank the reviewer for the thorough reading, clear summary of helpful suggestions of our paper; and the encouraging words on how we approached the study.

7. My reason for requesting major changes is not related to the writing or importance of this work - both of which are high quality. However, as currently written, this isn't a study protocol. It seems, currently, to be a mixture of a protocol and a report of the work leading up to the protocol. For example, there is some description of what will be done in the forthcoming study, but there is also description of 'findings' from previous work leading up to the PAR study as well as 'discussion' and 'conclusion' sections, the latter seem like odd additions to a study protocol. For this to work as a protocol I suggest the following:

Response 7: We thank the reviewer for the helpful suggestions; we have addressed each of the specific comments below:

8. Incorporate much of the information in the supplementary files into the body of the text (if there is word space),
Response 8: We thank the reviewer for the helpful suggestion. We have now revised and incorporated the supplementary files into the body of the text in the manuscript (line 308, page 15, line 507, page 24, lines 532-533, page 25, lines 544-545, page 26, line 552, page 26, lines 556—557, page 27)

9. Take out much of the text relating to the previous work (pages 17 - 24). Some of this works ok in a protocol, for example the explanation of the theory of change, but the 'findings' from the training development seems less important. I think it is relevant to include that there will be training, and the purpose of the training, and content of the training, but I do not understand why it is relevant to include the findings from the training evaluation in this protocol. Similarly I do not understand why there is so much information about the systematic review. This fits in the background section of the protocol, not in the body of text. I found it relevant to read about the previous community stakeholder meeting, but again it seemed more relevant to have this earlier in the protocol, within the context section perhaps. The information provided to STAGE 1 should be about what you intend to do in stage 1, not work done previously. As I say, I do understand why you want to include some of the information from the previous work, but I think this should come in the context/setting or as an appendix/supplement, rather than in the main body of the protocol.

Response 9: We thank the reviewer for the helpful suggestions. We believe a certain amount of information is necessary given that the study is participatory, where the inputs of the formative phases help to inform the next phases. However, we would like to acknowledge that the manuscript included very detailed information from the previous findings; we have now deleted the elements that were not directly related to the protocol (lines 425-492, pages 20-24, lines 591-607, pages 28-29, lines 634-642, page 30) as suggested by the reviewer.

10. It would be helpful to describe the JLA and priority setting process, including the nominal group technique, a bit clearer. Moving supplement 4 into the main text might help with this.

Response 10: We thank the reviewer for the helpful comments. We have revised and moved the supplementary file into the body of the text (line 507, 24 page, lines 532-533, page 25)
11. There is very little information about stage 2 in the main body of the protocol - again including supplement 1 into the main body of text will help guide the reader into this process.

Response 11: We thank the reviewer for the helpful comments. We have revised and moved the supplementary file into the body of the text (lines 544-545, page 26)

12. In a protocol I expect there to be more detailed information about the data collection and analysis processes.

Response 12: We thank the reviewer for the helpful comments. Whilst the reviewer makes a valid suggestion, we prefer to present general overview of data collection and analysis in line with the principle of participatory action research process, for we felt data collection should be done with participants in iterative cyclical process, i.e., is not pre-determined in detail as it involves all the participants in the data gathering and analysis process which provided a deeper understanding and rigor to the research (1-3)

13. The abstract and plain English summary confused me a bit since the word 'stakeholder' is not used there. It says in the plain English summary that the research advisory group will identify priority problems, but in the main body of text it seems like priority problems will be identified from a list of the previous work, and that a larger group of stakeholders will do this using the JLA/NGT methods.

Response 13: We appreciate that this was confusing; now the abstract has been revised; as we have indicated in lines 510-513, page 24-25) in the text, the potential priority problems from the previous studies are only to prompt discussion and remind participants of points that they may have missed.