

## **Author's response to reviews**

**Title:** Task shifting HIV counseling and testing services in Zambia: The role of lay counselors

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## Rebuttal to Reviewers' Comments

Below are the detailed responses to Prof. Papa Salif Sow and Prof. Elly Katabira  
 Reviewer 1 – Papa Salif Sow: *No changes requested*

Reviewer 2- Elly Katabira

<b>Reviewer 2's Comments</b>	<b>Authors response</b>	<b>Action</b>
1. What are the selection criteria for lay counsellors? Are they the same for rural and urban	Lay counselors are selected based on the ability to read and write in English, residing within facility catchment area, and experience with the health facility for at least one year. This criteria was used for both urban and rural settings however preference was given to those with some level of background training in HIV/AIDS.	<i>Included in the last paragraph on Page 4 (last four lines)</i>
2. Addressing different levels of education during training	The lay counselors receive an intensive training that is able to address individual learning needs due to education or experience level. The two-week classroom component of the training includes instruction as well as role-plays and case studies to ensure that trainees understand the concepts and methods of HIV CT. This is followed by a four-week practicum where each trainee practices counseling and testing under the supervision of a experienced CT provider. This ensures that each trainee is able to practice and refine their counseling skills. Each counselor is only certified after successfully completing both the classroom and the practicum component of the training.	<i>Additional clarification included on Page 3 Paragraph 1 Line 7-14</i>
3. Almost all counsellors wanted further training	The lay counselors have a deep sense of commitment to their role in the health facility and do view themselves as professionals providing a critical service as evidenced by the in-depth interviews.	<i>Clarification included on Page 12 Line 16-18</i>
4. Discretionary Revisions: Time taken away for supervising staff before and after lay counsellors	This was outside the scope of this study	<i>No action required</i>

Thank you

Dr Kwasi Torpey