Reviewer's report

Title: Sex work and international sporting events - impact of the 2010 FIFA World Cup (TM) on female sex work in South Africa

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Reviewer: Helen Ward

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General comments
1. This article has a concise and appropriate background, although I would suggest linking it to some of the similar recent discussions around the Olympics in London 2012 to make it even more topical. There is a clear aim to assess whether there was a change in the supply of and demand for sex work services during the World Cup in South Africa. This is a difficult question to answer given the clandestine nature of sex work.

2. The repeated cross sectional survey is a reasonable approach although it has significant limitations. The design is well described, the data appear to be sound. I think a particular limitation is the inability to link respondents across the data collection rounds. Although this is cited as being due to then need not to keep identifiers for the women, it would have been possible to make some linkage (asking women for some kind of unique identifier that they could use each time but that could not be used to identify them), or even by including a question about whether they had taken part in previous rounds to get an idea of the overlap.

3. There is no reference to particular standards for reporting and data deposition, but the key elements of the reporting appear to be OK.

4. The discussion and conclusions are well balanced and adequately supported by the data, and the limitations are clearly stated.

5. The authors clearly acknowledge work upon which they are building.

6. The title could be revised to indicate the key findings – it is currently only indicating the topic.

7. Abstract is fine and the writing acceptable

Discretionary Revisions

8. Consider changing the title to indicate the key findings

9. Consider referring to academic and other articles on sex work and the London 2012 Olympics.

Minor Essential Revisions

10. Final para of introduction the phrase “supporters… would require paid sex” is odd. It seems more consistent to stick to the term “demand” rather than infer
some other driver. In the final paragraph of the introduction remove reference to the method (“using repeat cross sectional survey..”) since this is more appropriate for the methods section.

11. Results - there is no need to repeat detailed data in the text where it is in the tables; in the text it is sufficient to highlight the main findings but not to repeat all the p values etc. if these are available in the tables.

12. Results, under working conditions, second paragraph. The wording of the second sentence needs to be changed to indicate that there was a non-significant change in the proportion reporting negative experiences with the police.

Major Compulsory Revisions

13. The results should present the demographic data from each of the three time periods, some of which is reported but “not shown”. Currently only baseline data are shown in Table 1. The addition of two more columns with the during and after figures would be helpful.

14. Please clarify what parameters are being used to define sex work “supply”. In methods and the table this includes proportion under 24, where born, recent arrival etc, whereas in the text some of these are reported before the sub-heading “sex work supply”.

15. Under sex work demand, the text is unnecessarily repetitive (see also point 11 above) where the data are in the tables.

16. In the paragraphs on working conditions that combines some categorical responses with some textual analysis it would be helpful to present some more analysis of what these two different types of data show. At the moment the free-text responses are very broadly groped into positive and negatives, but in Table three there are a few key themes that could be explored in more detail. For example, were those who reported positive changes such as “business was burning, we made a killing” and other reports of increased business (24), different in any way, from those who reported the opposite, for example in where they worked. i.e. were there patterns in this qualitative data.

17. The discussion is rather too long and repeats what is in the results. The structure is good, and conclusions appear to be sound, but could be shorter.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests