Reviewer’s report

Title: Religion and HIV in Tanzania: Influence of Religious Beliefs on HIV Stigma, Disclosure, and Treatment Attitudes

Version: 1 Date: 15 October 2008

Reviewer: Sheryl McCurdy

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Comments on Religion and HIV in Tanzania

- Major Compulsory Revisions
1) p. 3, change the stats and the cite on the religious divisions in Tanzania. Its 35% Muslim, 30% Christian, and 35% Animist
2) acknowledge that you are only sampling from that 30% of the population that is Christian.
3) redo analysis by sex. See Hodgson, D. The Church of Women, regarding the role of the church for Maasai women in Arusha.
4) redo the tables by sex.
5) Discussion, p.18, redo analysis of disclosure intentions by sex without collapsing the two measures (disclosure to pastor, disclosure to congregation) into one. It is more likely that some individuals would feel comfortable disclosing to the pastor, but not the congregation. By collapsing them you don’t get that nuanced detail and I suspect you claim too much about the Christian religious community. Make sure you note that you are only talking about the Christian religious community. If you drop ‘Christian’ then readers skimming the work might think it applies to Muslims too. Please make it clear throughout that you are only talking about a sample of Christians (who only compromise 30% of the Tanzanian population), in one northern city and one rural town.
6) p. 16, 2nd para, this whole para needs to be reconsidered and rewritten with new data after we know more about gendered responses to these questions. With the two measures conflated, it may appear that people are more likely to reveal to a congregation, when really they would only tell a pastor.
7) p. 18, 2nd para, “This may suggest....” “This implies that getting tested facilitates disclosure intentions...” It could also be that other factors not measured account for ‘willingness to disclose” I think you are claiming too much here. Lets see how this breaks down by sex, marital status, age and education, perhaps there will be more to effectively argue your point.
8) p. 18, 2nd para, last sentence, in parenths “(most like likely the majority of respondents who had been tested)” this is speculation. Drop the comment in parenths and maybe the whole sentence.
9) p. 19 mid para, last sentence “This suggests that disclosure to pastors or other
members of the religious community can be important to ARV adherence. Disclosure to 'someone other than a health care provider' is not the same as 'disclosure to a pastor'. Even if someone disclosed to a pastor they might still be hiding it from a family member. If they don’t tell a family member they might need to hide their medication regime, which could limit their willingness to take and to be adherent to ARVs.

10) p. 21, Last line. This is a non-sequitor. Drop it.

- Minor Essential Revisions

1) Change the title to Christianity and HIV in Tanzania....

Note the dominant ethnic groups in Arusha Region and in the rural area surveyed and that they are # out of 120 ethnic groups in the

2) begin sentences with a word, if you have a number, spell it out. Spell out the percent that follows it as well. See last para, p. 12.

3) p. 22 second para, 4th line, start with “Several previous…and move the rest of the para to the literature review section of this paper. This paper doesn’t compare Christians to Muslims or animists, so it doesn’t do what those other papers did.

- Discretionary Revisions (which are recommendations for improvement but which the author can choose to ignore)

1) p. 9, line 4, put in quotes “fearing contact HIV transmission”

2) p. 8, note that the attendees at the Assemblies of God church participating on a Tuesday evening may be more devout group that other Assembly of God members whodon’t attend Tuesday fellowship services.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

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

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare I have no competing interests.