Reviewer's report

Title: Moving from frustration to questioning traditional gender norms: a qualitative study on community understanding of intimate partner violence in urban Tanzania

Version: 1 Date: 17 December 2010

Reviewer: Stephen Lawoko

Reviewer's report:

- Major Compulsory Revisions

1) The authors need to add an elaborate presentation of theories on causes and consequences of violence against women in the introduction. This is especially crucial as they discuss their findings in relation to one of these theories (i.e. ecological model). This suddenly appears in the discussion without prior mention in the background. Also, there are several theoretical models explaining violence causation. Therefore the reason why they discuss their findings only in relation to the ecological model is not clear. They either need to explain why they choose this framework alone or discuss their findings in relation to the different frameworks in general. The latter is preferred.

2) Another matter related to the above is that the authors assert that they intend to "develop a model of the relationship between community members understanding of intimate partner violence, their views on support of survivors and solutions to prevention". This is rather confusing as their findings in my view confirm much of what is already reported in the literature and in theoretical models including the ecological model. By both viewing their findings in relation to current theories and developing a model, they risk overcrowding the paper making it difficult to align the aims, results and consequent discussion. I suggest they should be content with a more elaborate discussion of their results in relation to theory. Development of a model would have been appreciated only if the results provided new insights beyond what is already known.

3) There is previous work done on community perceptions on intimate partner violence. This being a main theme in this paper, I feel the introduction does not cover adequately the literature in that regard, thus giving the wrong impression that such work is scarce.

- Minor Essential Revisions

4) The methods and results are easy to follow. On page 10 however, the authors indicated that they used drawings and newspaper headlines etc. to trigger discussions. Could this have biased the discussion towards a more sympathetic view about violence? This may be added in the discussion as possible factors
affecting the results. Also, in general the authors have avoided a discussion of general shortcomings of the methods used in this study.

5) As already mentioned, the discussion should focus on discussing the findings in relation to theoretical models of IPV. Also, the fact that community members on the one hand endorsed IPV but on the other expressed concerns about it reveals a complex picture. This is not discussed in detail. Could it be a reflection of society in transition? Or methodological design issues e.g. the methods used sort of acted as an intervention naturally leading to sympathetic attitude as the discussion progressed? The discussion may benefit from incorporation of plausible explanations to this complex picture. Also, how does this complex finding fit in the theoretical models of IPV causation and control?

- Discretionary Revisions

6) The first part of the title “from frustration to questioning traditional norms” I feel reflects only positive elements of the findings in this study, while hiding some of the crucial evidence that IPV is still tolerated in the society. I would prefer a more neutral title. Why the second part of the title on its own “A qualitative study on community understanding of IPV in urban Tanzania”?

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