Reviewer’s report

Title: Listening to health workers: lessons for strengthening the programme for the prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV in Mbale District, Eastern Uganda

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Reviewer: Anita Hardon

Reviewer’s report:

This is a highly relevant article, with good background information, elaborate methods section and good description of results. The paper presents the views of frontline health workers on how PMTCT can be improved in Uganda, a topic which is under-researched. Most studies suggest that health workers fail to provide good care, without investigating in more detail why this is the case.

I recommend publication with minor essential revisions:

Re the themes presented in the results section:
- last theme seems superfluous: frustrations are presented in relation to each of the themes.
- heading ‘appropriate working conditions’ (too broad) could be replaced by ‘heavy workload’ which seems to cover the contents better.
- continuing stigma (and related client preference for confidentiality) is a theme presented by the health workers, which could be added.
- the authors suggest that uniform rollout is needed. Why uniform? This needs explanation.

Re the discussion section:
- the authors could reflect more on the way in which the local level health worker struggle to maintain good enough quality of care in the face of changing levels of donor support and changing PMTCT guidelines (for example the change from Nevirapine to Combivir treatment for women). External agencies rarely realize that so much adjustment work is needed with every change in support/guidelines.
- the differences between the TASO PMTCT program and the regular government system could be drawn out: both have strengths and weaknesses. For example, the results suggest that TASO is less affected by shortages in drug supply, but clients fear that their status will not be kept confidential if they go to TASO.

Level of interest: An article of outstanding merit and interest 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.