Reviewer's report

Title: "Just like fever": a qualitative study on the impact of antiretroviral provision on the normalisation of HIV in rural Tanzania and its implications for prevention.

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Reviewer: Daniel Tarantola

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This article results from a nested study within a broader project aimed at the monitoring of ART provision in a rural community/area of Tanzania. The authors state that "this qualitative study investigated the impact of ART availability on HIV perceptions in a rural ward of North Tanzania and its implications for prevention."

The method applied to this qualitative study combined individual interviews (People on ART and care providers) and group discussions. While it is timely and important to investigate roots, manifestations and impacts of stigma on sustained access to and use of ART, the work presented suffers from major flaws:

1. The interviews of 41 people on ART did not extend to people who may have been on ART but dropped out--perhaps precisely as a result of sustained or exacerbated stigma. The conclusions of the study apply only to the convenient sample of PHIV who were on ART at the time of the study, thereby providing a selective, incomplete and truncated information on the interplay between stigma, disclosure, adherence to treatment and preventive behaviors.

2. While the study design suggests that it involved care providers, no specific information seems to have emerged from this source--at least there is no reference to it. The numerous quotes from PHIV interviewed are illustrative of selected points of view and experiences, but the article makes no reference to what might have come out from other components of the study (e.g. focus groups), or from dissenting voices.

3. The focus on stigma is clearly stated but passing references to discrimination are confusing. Stigmatization and discrimination are two linked, yet different processes (e.g.; the focus on stigma is largely examined from the perspective of the relationship between PHIV on ART and the community/family environment. Does stigma prevail in the health care setting and if so, does it result in discrimination?).

4. The study is gender-blind.