Reviewer's report

Title: Spousal violence in sub-Saharan Africa: Does household poverty-wealth matter?

Version: 1 Date: 12 February 2014

Reviewer: Nicolette Roman

Reviewer's report:

1. Is the question posed by the authors new and well defined? MAJOR REVISIONS

The question may not necessarily be new but provides different answers. The question is well-defined. However, the introduction/background to the study should be revised. There is sufficient recent information regarding prevalence of IPV in Africa. Very recently we published a systematic review regarding the prevalence of IPV in Africa and the effects on children (Roman & Frantz, 2013). In addition, the authors highlight a definition of IPV which includes physical, sexual and psychological but when further explanations are provided, psychological harm is not defined. This then further impacts on the delineation of the study where they state: Rather than using a single-question threshold approach to measure spousal violence, as in the case of Egypt, India, Peru and Zambia [1] our paper adopts the modified CTS approach as embodied in the DHS domestic violence module which consists of 15 acts of physical and sexual violence out of the 19 acts in the original CTS [32, 1].

The question then is: Is this focus defined only by physical and sexual IPV and not psychological? This would then need to be clarified in the paper.

This section could also be more succinctly written and rearranged to cover particular sections such as:

• Definition of IPV
• Prevalence of IPV (internationally and in Africa)
• Effects of IPV on women
• Poverty/Socio-economic status and IPV

In this way, the authors may decide to remove irrelevant information and only focus on the topic under study. Rather than highlight the problem in every country, perhaps the authors could use a few examples of the countries included in the study.

2. Are the methods appropriate and well described, and are sufficient details provided to replicate the work? DISCRETIONARY REVISIONS

This section is clear and replicable. However, I am a little confused by the use of
“module”. Should it not be questionnaire?

3. Are the data sound and well controlled?

Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition? MINOR ESSENTIAL REVISIONS

The manuscript adheres to the standards of reporting but the following needs to be clarified in the results section:

• However the direction of relationship between household poverty-wealth and experience of violence contrasts with that of Kenya, with highest prevalence among the rich for all forms…- What is meant by the direction of the relationship if no statistics are shown?
• Perhaps the authors should consider including the statistics for model 1 and 4?
• Check the grammar of scientifically reporting on findings such as “not statistically significant” rather than no statistically significant.

5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data? MAJOR COMPULSORY REVISIONS

My comments in 1 will have implications for the discussion as the authors would need to provide literary support for their findings. The authors could then also provide more detail as to the implications of the findings. There are lots of similarities provided but are there any differences with other countries? In the abstract there is an indication that this study has implications for…but this is not clearly explained.

6. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found? DISCRETIONARY REVISIONS

Yes but the abstract needs revision especially in terms of grammar. The first sentence of the abstract is too long and thus loses the essence of what is being stated.

7. Is the writing acceptable? MAJOR COMPULSORY REVISIONS

No the writing is, in its current format, unacceptable. There are serious grammatical problems throughout the paper. As an example, the spelling of Cameroon is incorrect.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.
Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.