Reviewer's report

Title: Community-level intimate partner violence and the circumstances of first sex among young women from five African countries

Version: 1 Date: 8 May 2010

Reviewer: Ramesh Adhikari

Reviewer's report:

It is an interesting manuscript covering an important topic in African countries and elsewhere. The study addresses a public health topic that impact women and families. However, I have few comments on this manuscript and these are listed below.

Major compulsory revisions:

1. This study is based on a sample of 20-29 years old women at the time of the survey. The reasons to choose this sample has been justified as recent cohort of women who have completed adolescence, the majority of whom were sexually experienced and have entered a first union However, by doing so the authors are introducing another important bias (selection bias) into their analysis. If the characteristics of women of reproductive age who were not aged 20-29 were significantly different from those who were aged 20-29 at the time of the survey, you are likely to have biased odds ratios with the model based on restricted sample only. So please examine whether it has selection bias.

2. The idea of the paper is to explore the effect of community level IPV on the circumstances of first sex. The authors need to provide enough information how community level intimate partner violence has effect on the circumstance of first sex.

Minor Essential Revisions

1. It would be helpful if the authors included a description of five African countries and the characteristics of the population in the introduction or the methods section for readers who are not familiar with this setting (e.g., demographic, socio-economic, geographic, social, and reproductive characteristics as well as women’s status within the family and society more broadly). This information would help the reader understand the findings of the study within the context of five African countries.

2. I also think the authors should provide some background and justification about why they choose to keep only some variables as control variable in the multivariate analysis. I think this need to be made explicit in the paper. Perhaps a conceptual framework might be helpful in this regard.
3. It would be helpful to have all of the social and demographic characteristics described in Table 1 rather than just a select few. It would be easier to have this information available in the table rather than having to sift through the results section to find it.

Discretionary Revisions

1 It would be better to add community attitude towards gender roles and wife beating variables in the model.

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

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

**Declaration of competing interests:**
I declare that I have no competing interests