Reviewer’s report

Title: Understanding the Social and Structural Context of High HIV Transmission in Kasensero Fishing Community, South Western Uganda. A qualitative Study

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Reviewer: Alexander Kintu

Reviewer’s report:

A well-written manuscript on the social and cultural dynamics of a high HIV transmission region in a setting with existing treatment and prevention services.

A few comments:

Background:

1. Please provide more detail on the mentioned CHP services, and their implementation in this community

Methods:

1. Under data and collection tools (page 6): A good description on the sampling process for FGDs but none provided for the In-depth interviews. Provide more detail on purposeful sampling for this data collection process.

2. Under data analysis: Provide more details on coding process, the number of people involved, how consensus was achieved in the event of discordance and reliability targets if any.

Results:

1. The 5 themes are presented well to explain the social dynamics of HIV transmission. Did any of these appear to be the key factor (as compared to others) in this complex context? If so, this would guide policy interventions.

Discussion:

1. Page 12” Please clarify the meaning of positive attitudes. Are these truths as in the case of “circumcision reduces HIV acquisition” or some form of untruths with risk compensation e.g. the assumption that circumcision altogether protects someone from HIV acquisition?

2. Page 13: If available, provide some detail on met and unmet demand, as well as coverage of circumcision in this community over the past few years.

3. Page 13: The behavioral disinhibition seems to refer to risk-compensation, which would be an interesting factor in the context that this has not been described in other settings. If, so please provide more detail on this and whether it was a recurring theme in the FGDs and in-depth interviews.
4. On unprotected sex and cross-generation sex: There have been several efforts by to target these behaviors in this and other Ugandan settings. Is the consensus that these efforts are not effective in this community because of the described social context?

Conclusion:
1. From the results and discussion, it seems necessary counseling services are available ongoing but aren’t effective because of the existing social and cultural context. Should more emphasis instead be put on community led programs (described in last sentence of conclusion) as opposed to routine counseling? If so, briefly highlight any existing community programs that are targeting these social norms in the discussion section.