Reviewer's report

Title: Key populations and human rights in the context of HIV services rendition in Ghana

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Reviewer: Leslie Wolf

Reviewer's report:

This paper addresses an important topic that, despite considerable scholarly and policy attention, continues to be policy relevant. I am unfamiliar with the circumstances in Ghana and think that a paper exploring them would be of interest. That said, I found the paper dissatisfying in that it did not provide enough details about the Ghanaian experience. There were too many generalities without the specific examples to persuade the reader of a premise that I think could easily be supported. For example, there are general statements about the criminalized "status", but no specific statutory language. It would be very helpful to understand how specific Ghanaian laws interfere with the human rights of individuals and those who wish to help them achieve the best possible health. To give a specific example, the paragraph on lines 127-138 refers to a number of different specific laws, but never indicates what they provide. Similarly, there is mention of "police swoops -- in line with the Police Act 1970," but there is no description of what authority the act provides, what the police do in these "swoops", and what the impact is on HIV prevention. There is a little more of this in the discussion of the international legal frameworks, but even that could benefit from more specific discussion. As another example, in the recommendations, there is a mention of Drop in Center (line 297), but they are not described. I wanted to know what they are and why they may be helpful.

I also thought that, structurally, it would help to establish first the human rights and the sources of those rights that are implicated by the criminal laws discussed before describing the rights violations. This would help in making the case for the importance of the human rights concepts for health and provide a framework for explaining how current law is inconsistent with those rights. This could easily be accomplished by moving some of the material in the discussion section earlier in the paper.

At the very end of the recommendations (lines 304-307), there is a brief mention of an interim measure that the government could take. I would encourage the authors to consider expanding on the discussion of what could be done short of changing the legal codes, as there are often interim steps and barriers to actually making those changes.

In sum, I think that the paper has an important message to convey, but it needs more details to support the arguments being made to persuade a reader.
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