Reviewer’s report

Title: ‘Mankind owes to the child the best that it has to give’: Prison conditions and the health situation and rights of children incarcerated with their mothers in sub-Saharan African prisons.

Version: 1 Date: 22 Nov 2018

Reviewer: Helen Ayles

Reviewer’s report:

This is an important contribution to the literature, as the authors state, little is written or known about this situation.

The methodology of a scoping review is entirely appropriate for this reason. The paper is generally well written and compelling but there are a few revisions which I feel would be warranted to improve the quality of the paper:

1. Figure 1 flow chart is really not clear. It is usual to have more clarity about which papers are excluded and which are included and added. The flow could be improved by arrows only showing those papers that continue in the process and how others were added. For example To show the 181 excluded in the main flow is unhelpful as only 16 continued through the process.

2. Tables. Table 2 needs a better legend to explain that countries in bold had studies included. Whilst this is eluded to in the text it is not clear when looking at the table. Furthermore it would be useful to include the number of studies/reports per county in brackets after each country.

3. The supplemental table is very useful and so, whilst I understand this entire table may not fit into the main paper, it would be very helpful to have it as part of the main paper. If the editors consider it too long a summary of this table should be included which lists the 41 references included, the type of document ( peer reviewed paper, report, news report etc) and the country and year. I think this information is vital in the main paper.

4. The conclusions and recommendations could be strengthened a little. I feel that the recommendation could be that documentation of children in prisons should be mandated for all countries so that their presence is recorded and therefore the conditions of their incarceration could be reviewed. It may be that the authors feel that they cannot state this but should maybe recommend that some UN agency or African body could mandate this? I do not feel that the last sentence of the conclusions is warranted as the paper is not about the conditions of children who are being cared for outside of prisons whilst their mothers are incarcerated.

5. Minor typographical issues. there are a few minor issues where a methodology is referred to by the reference e.g p8 line 184 and line 191 but because of the numbered references this is not readable. Please insert the name of the author or the name of the methodology before the reference. Similarly please proof read p 4 line 78 - I am not sure why "in particular" is relevant
here. p4 line 90 "in SSA" is unnecessary, p 16 line 371 missing "such", p18 line 423 "anti-retroviral", p 20 line 471 insert "unwell".

**Are the methods appropriate and well described?**
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

**Does the work include the necessary controls?**
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Unable to assess

**Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?**
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

Yes

**Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?**
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

Not relevant to this manuscript

**Quality of written English**
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Needs some language corrections before being published

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