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Safety in the midst of stigma: Experiencing HIV/AIDS in two Ghanaian communities

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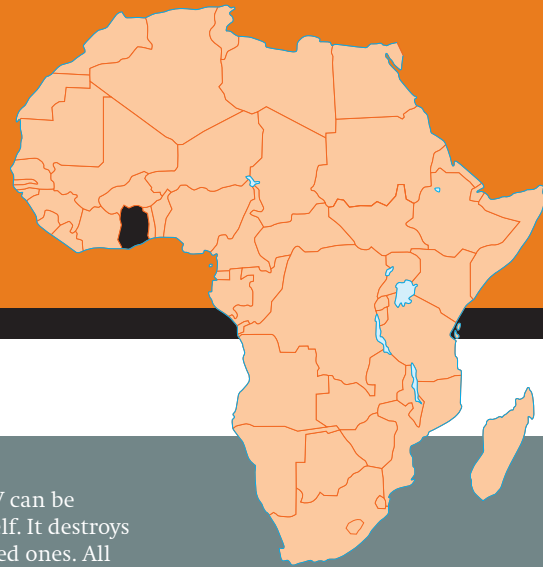
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Stigmatization of people associated with HIV can be devastating, even more so than the virus itself. It destroys the lives of HIV positive people and their loved ones. All too often in Ghana, those with no direct HIV experience do not see the depth of the impact of stigma on individuals, households and communities. This monograph, the result of fifteen months of ethnographic fieldwork in two communities in Ghana, brings to the fore the lived experiences of people infected with and affected by HIV from their own perspectives. In particular, their negotiations between resignation to fate and the struggle for survival as they cope with stigma are presented. Significantly, this book shows that being infected with or affected by HIV is as much a social issue as a medical one, and those associated with HIV/AIDS require more than medical care and support. Concerted efforts by all stakeholders – social and political leadership, the untested, the uninfected, the infected, the affected, service providers and policy makers – would go a long way to reduce the main problem that persists with regard to HIV prevention and treatment in Ghana: stigma.

Benjamin Kobina Kwansa obtained his Master of Philosophy in African Studies from the Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, Legon. He currently teaches part-time at the same institution.

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