

Mchinji VCT Qualitative Interviews  
24500  
21-07-06  
Joel Nkhonya

I: This is an interview by Joel Nkhonya with the client \_\_\_\_ ID Number 24500 on the date of 21<sup>st</sup> July 2006, in [VILLAGE]. As I have already said that I am here to chat with you to find out how it was with the VCT people who visited you recently. My first question therefore would be when people discuss issues concerning VCT where exactly do people discuss these issues?

R: You mean places where people discuss?

I: Yes.

R: Here its in all villages of Traditional Authority Mkanda such as [VILLAGE], [VILLAGE], [VILLAGE], [VILLAGE], and [VILLAGE].

I: Okay. Thank you.

R: Indeed.

I: But when people discuss these issues of VCT in the places you have mentioned are they open enough in their discussions?

R: Yes, people are very open when sharing stories of VCT.

I: Is that so?

R: Yes.

I: Have you ever been involved in issues of VCT yourself?

R: Yes am involved and we do discuss with friends.

I: What do you really discuss in the issues of VCT?

R: We discuss blood testing and worries which others attach to VCT.

I: What worries do people have here at [VILLAGE] when people hear about VCT?

R: Of course here at [VILLAGE] we don't see any big worry because the individual wants to know what is in his body.

I: Okay, thank you.

R: Indeed.

I: When the VCT people came this year did you receive any counseling?

R: Yes, I was counseled.

I: Okay, did the VCT people counsel you together with your wife?

R: No, I was counseled alone.

I: Okay.

R: Indeed.

I: Upon being counseled did you accept to be tested?

R: I accepted and I was tested.

I: Okay, so after being tested how were the results?

R: The results were that they found the kachilombo (HIV).

I: Okay.

R: Indeed.

I: Were you given the post counseling after being told that you are with kachilombo?

R: Yes, I was counseled.

I: Was the post counseling helpful to you?

R: Yes the counseling was helpful.

I: How helpful?

R: I was advised on many issues such as using a condom when I want to have sex with my wife and go to the hospital to access ARVs.

I: Were you given the pre-counseling before taking your blood for testing?

R: Yes I was counseled first before they pricked my finger for blood taking.

I: Okay. Are people especially married couples open to discuss issues pertaining to kachilombo and VCT with their adolescent children?

R: Yes, married couples are very open to talk about VCT and kachilombo to their adolescent children.

I: Do parents not feel guilty or as being obscene to openly talk about VCT or kachilombo to their adolescent children?

R: Not at all, these are not the days when one should feel shy to talk to their adolescent children on sexual matters especially kachilombo and VCT. This is a different generation because the world has changed.

I: Is that so?

R: Yes it is, so if you just leave your chaps like that it means they will all perish.

I: DO you have brothers or sisters who also discuss issues of VCT?

R: Yes, I have brothers and sisters who discuss such issues.

I: Okay. Are they open enough to discuss these VCT issues?

R: Yes, especially when they are playing bawo that's for my brothers and sisters when drawing water in the well.

I: Okay.

R: Indeed.

I: Between rapid test VCT which they follow clients door by door and the one of asking the client to go to the hospital which one would you prefer?

R: I think the good was is the rapid test, because others are lazy to go to the hospital.

I: How did you receive the results?

R: I received the results well and there was nothing I did.

I: Okay. Didn't your heart beat faster?

R: Not at all.

I: After such results are you still a happy man?

R: Yes.

I: Do you still associate well with your friends or chat with them as it used in the past?

R: I still chat with my friends and am still happy with them.

I: Not even a single change?

R: No change at all.

I: What about in your everyday jobs?

R: I still do my jobs here at home just like I used to do in the past before being tested.

I: Before research people, do you know anybody who went for VCT in your village?

R: Yes, they are many.

I: Right here in your village or elsewhere?

R: Yes, right here in my village.

I: Did you hear of other people?

R: Not other villages, let me talk of people of my village.

I: Can you talk please?

R: There are many people in my village who are not included in this project who are complaining saying why can't the research people include us as well. They are very much willing to join in the research. And we tried to give our request to the VCT people to include other more people in this village, but we were told that the number is already enough. But people become relieved when the government declared a VCT week which allowed most people who are not in the research to go and have their blood tested. And so many people had to go to Mkanda to test their blood.

I: Was that so here?

R: Yes, so many people here in my village are willing to undergo blood test.

I: Then it is really interesting in your village as compared to other villages where we have been before.

R: You are right, in other villages I have heard people run away from VCT but that is ignorance, running away has no profit [Chichewa: phindu]. And if you run away it means you won't know how you are in your body.

I: Yes yes yes, you are right.

R: Indeed, you live in an ignorant state [Chichewa: chimbulimbili]

I: So you mean people in the VCT week were going to Mkanda on their own without being forced by anyone?

R: Yes, especially in my village even today six people have already gone this morning. These are people who are not in this survey but have been longing to have their blood tested.

I: Okay, that's interesting.

R: Really.

I: Do you go to any church?

R: Yes.

I: Which church?

R: Church of Christ.

I: What role does your church play when it comes to VCT or HIV?

R: Preachers do preach about kachilombo and VCT.

I: Do they?

R: Very much, they preach on the dangers of kachilombo and it only remains to an individual to take it or not.

I: Who exactly preaches about VCT or kachilombo?

R: In our church it does not wait for the pastor alone, anybody who is officiating prayers on that Sunday can talk about VCT and kachilombo. And anybody who preaches on every Sunday non forgets to talk about VCT.

I: Okay. But now you as a village head in spite that you are one of the clients do you take part as well in disseminating the information about VCT?

R: Yes I do tell my people, especially when I am chatting with people even here at my house! I should say everyday whenever am seated chatting with people I usually target my people who are scared with blood testing.

I: Okay, do you do that?

R: Yes, and many people now especially in my village here have come to understand the importance of blood testing. And many have had their blood tested as am saying.

I: That's encouraging isn't it.

R: Very much.

I: But are your people not surprised when you play such a role of enlightening them of VCT issues?

R: Not at all, because even on the radio it's the same story, or even if they attend a drama, music and dances, it's all over they find messages about VCT. So when they hear also from me as their village head my people are not amazed.

I: Was your wife equally receptive to receive counseling?

R: I may not speak on her behalf, but it's my hope that she accepted without problems.

I: Okay, was she around when the VCT people were counseling you?

R: Yes, but they counseled us separately.

I: Okay.

R: And upon being counseled my wife received a message to go to Mchinji hospital to attend to our daughter-in-law's pregnancy.

I: Does it mean that you did not even share the results news?

R: We did not, because my wife immediately after the VCT people were over, she left for Mchinji hospital to escort the daughter-in-law.

I: Okay. Now will you be in a position to disclose your positive results to your wife as she comes back from the hospital?

R: Yes, I will tell her.

I: Will you be open to disclose?

R: Yes I will be.

I: Are people using condoms as married couples here in your village including yourself?

R: But this is true maybe to adolescents.

I: Why not married couples?

R: I don't know.

I: So why adolescents?

R: Adolescents do hear this on the radio, in meetings and therefore if they can't resist from sex they opt to use a condom.

I: Okay, thank you. How many children do you have?

R: I have nine children.

I: Okay, how old are they?

R: Others are old enough married and I even have grand children.

I: Even grandchildren?

[Respondent and interviewer laugh]

I: What plans do you have now as your wife comes from the hospital especially that you have known your status?

R: My plans are that when my wife comes, we want to go to the hospital at the Boma and see if we can start receiving ARVs.

I: Thank you. Were you give any documents?

R: Not necessarily, but I was given something like a consent form document.

I: Okay.

R: And I asked them on the same issue. I said if we go to the hospital at the Boma, how shall they receive us? SO the VCT people answered that if they want to believe, they too can conduct another blood testing.

I: Okay. Be assured they do help, of course they may re-test you to confirm.

R: Okay.

I: But on ARVs, it's not automatic upon arrival they have stages. It comes a time that you shall be recommended to start ARVs according to the experts on ARVs.

R: Thank you for the explanation.

I: Do you have any hospital around here where VCT is done?

R: We have at Mkanda where people go.

I: Do people in this village share their VCT experiences upon coming from the hospital?

R: Why not? The VCT is no longer an shaming story in this village.

[Respondent and interviewer laugh]

I: I thought it's a tradition to most Malawians to hide such secret information.

R: Not in this village. Many people here are coming in open explaining their experiences.

I: Is that so?

R: Yes, and bearing in mind that the ways of getting the kachilombo is numerous.

I: You say the ways are numerous?

R: Yes, and I hope if people had known this from the very beginning, this disease would not have spread like this!

I: What ways of spreading are you talking about?

R: Because what happens for example here in the village when washing a dead body before burial, we don't wear gloves, and imagine the dead body has wounds and you too had wounds, you can easily in that way contract the virus.

I: I see.

R: Therefore had it been this was known as one way in which people in the village contract kachilombo, they would have been giving us the gloves.

I: But also as you said if you go to an African doctor, using a single razor blade as you put it is dangerous (...) Do people especially those who are found positive segregated in any way here in your village?

R: Not as such, there is no segregation.

I: You mean not at all.

R: Not at all, we stay together as all days before being tested.

I: Do you greet them?

R: Yes why not?

**End of Book 1**  
**Start Book 2**

I: Where do you mostly discuss VCT issues here in the village?

R: We discuss almost everywhere but mostly when we are playing bawo and when we are carving hoe handles in a place called Mphala. (Mphala is a place where males alone chat different stories of their everyday life).

I: Okay, thank you.

R: Indeed.

I: Are married couples open enough to each other to use condoms especially when one is found with the virus here in the village?

R: As of this village I have never heard of any married couples where one partner is positive and another negative.

I: But imagine its you who are positive and your wife is not, can you use a condom?

R: Yes, I can use.

I: Thank you very much. But the way you know your wife, shall she welcome the news of you being positive?

R: Yes.

I: Shall she be calm as you have received it yourself?

R: Yes, no doubt at all.

I: Am saying this because people react differently.

R: But not my wife, she is different.

I: Are you open enough to discuss VCT issues with your wife even before the VCT people visited you?

R: Yes, we have been talking.

I: Why do you think people are afraid of undergoing VCT?

R: Some are afraid because they think if they are positive it means they will die at any time. This is mainly because of ignorance of such people, but little by little they are understanding. I further advise such people to go for VCT, because even those who are not HIV positive do not know their actual day when they shall die. As such I insist in my advice to them that you guys need to go for VCT, so that you know the truth. And to those who are found with kachilombo, I advise them to go to the hospital to access ARVs to prolong their lives, instead of dying today one may die the following day. Or even die the other week, and you rejoice that at least I reached that other week.

I: Okay. Don't you think discrimination is also rampant here for those known as kachilombo victims?

R: Yes it is one of the reasons, but not common in my village yet.

I: What do you think the research people should be doing to have more people accepting VCT?

R: These research people should increase their frequency of visiting us, and teaching us. If they increase the frequency to the villages teaching people on dangers of HIV and going for VCT many people will be willing to be tested. And those who are doubting to go for VCT will start going for VCT. This frequency of visiting people in the village in itself acts as an encouragement.

I: Thank you.

R: Indeed, they should try to increase the frequency.

I: What did you think of the VCT people when they first visited you here at [village]?

R: For me myself, I was very glad, I hoped that the coming of VCT people will make come of us live for some years. This is mainly to us who have been found with kachilombo.

I: Okay.

R: That's it, and that's why I was very open and glad to welcome them.

I: You can also ask any question or comment of VCT and counseling if you have any before we end our chatting.

R: My question though was already asked to the VCT people, but I will ask again. Are you saying when we go to the hospital to look for ARVs, do we just arrive and explain to them our HIV status?

I: Yes you can do so or you can show them the documents you were given. The documents will guide them that you are in a survey and you were tested already. But

anyway they may retest you as I earlier said. Retesting shall help them to place you in the right category of ARVs..... So if you don't have any further questions I still have one more. Are you saying people are open enough to discuss the VCT issue in this village?

R: Yes, people are very open.

I: Do your wife also take part in advising the chaps on VCT.

R: Yes.

I: Does it not wait for you as a man, since some families believe its only a man who makes decisions in the family?

R: No with my families I equally give powers to my wife to play her role as a mother in advising the children on VCT she does do her role very well. It does not have to wait for me as a father.

I: Okay.

R: It does happen in most cases that the mother is more open to her female children when it comes to advising them on HIV and VCT. And it also follows with me as a dad I may be more open to my male children in advising them on VCT and HIV.

I: Okay is that so?

R: Indeed that's how it is.

I: Let me finally thank you very much if you don't have a question. Especially that its you open enough clients who give us the needed information on the ground pertaining to VCT. Thank you very much.

R: Thank you too.

I: This marks the end of our interview with \_\_\_\_ on the date of 21 July 2006 ID number 24500 in the village.

**Interviewer Notes:**

The client expressed willingness to the whole process of VCT and asked if possible that more people should be included in the survey. Mind that the client is the village head and people have been asking him when are some families in his village are going to be considered in the survey.

The client seemed to be very understanding even before knowing of any incentive. He saw the whole process of research as being helpful not only to him but even to the

generations to come.

He was my first client to attach the research process as being helpful even to the generations to come. Had nice interview with him.