

Mchinji VCT Qualitative Interviews  
40501  
19-07-06  
Joel Nkhonya

I: This is an interview by Joel Nkhonya for the client \_\_\_\_ ID Number 40501 on the date of 19<sup>th</sup> July 2006. As I have already said \_\_\_\_, we have found you here in your village, we people may have started visiting you from the past years, but for today I want to hear your experiences and thoughts on these VCT people who have been visiting you. Maybe my first question would be, when it comes to issues of VCT or blood testing, what stories do people talk about in line with what VCT is all about?

[Noise of beating drum in the background]

R: You mean stories about blood testing?

I: Eeeh!

R: Many people seem not to like their blood to be tested because to them, they see no profit in having their blood tested, or if they have their blood tested there is nothing helpful they find in that. As such most people would prefer just to stay without knowing their status.

I: Is that so?

R: Yaah!

[Noise continues beating drums in the background]

I: So which places do people usually talk about these stories of VCT of the stories about not seeing any profit about blood testing?

R: Places where people have sat chatting like in places of playing bawo or when people have sat on the road or when people have just met at any place.

I: Okay.

R: Yaah!

I: But you as \_\_\_\_ have you ever sat down with such people talking about VCT in places the ones you have mentioned earlier on? Or as we have found you here buying maize, but also as you have said that many people do not see any profit in blood testing, but to you, do you see any profit? In knowing what is in your body pertaining to HIV status?

R: To me I see that there is profit, imagine if they test you and you are found positive, the VCT people are supposed to give you counseling, and if you follow what they have

counseled you on, you can live a long life. And when I chat with people I do tell them just as I am talking with you.

I: Thank you.

[Someone interrupts and talks to the respondent asking the respondent of the whereabouts of \_\_\_\_\_]

I: But in the past it would happen that when the VCT people came, they could collect your blood and go with it to the hospital either in Mchinji or Lilongwe and the results could come after a considerable amount of time has elapsed, but I can imagine that is it last month or this month at the beginning or the two past months the VCT people came to test your blood and I hope the results were told to you on the same day. What is the difference between hearing the results on the same day or hearing the results after some days, which one is good according to you?

R: Aae! To me it's the same as far as they tell you what is in your body.

I: Indeed?

R: Indeed.

[Child interrupts the respondent and the respondent responds "I am busy with the VCT people"]

I: So you say there is no difference between knowing your results instantly or later?

R: No there is no difference.

I: Okay! Now when you see people talking of either being tested or not testing their blood, can you give or suggest some of the reasons why they feel blood testing has no use or it's a wastage of time?

R: The reasons they give according to them, they say the type of counseling which they can get upon being tested positive cannot help them, as such they can be living in that worrisome situation, and so to avoid living in that worrisome situation they avoid blood testing and just stay. Secondly, as you know in a family you are two people, husband and wife, and it can happen that as a husband I adhere to the counseling given. But imagine my wife is found positive she will go to her home to her parents. And in most cases here, people believe it's a man who contracts the virus. This belief is mainly due to unwise thinking of many people that the only person who contracts the disease in a family is a man and not a woman. It also follows that as my wife goes to her home and tells her parents that she is positive, they too cannot believe that their daughter is equally responsible when it comes to contracting the HIV virus in a family. This can bring separation between the parents from the male side and the female side. And the parents of my wife can facilitate chaos in our family and even divorce. So this kind of

understanding makes many people not to go for blood test as the end results is chaos in a family leading to unpeaceful marriage life or even divorce in some cases. Not only that, there are some wives who are not courageous enough, especially when they have been tested and they have been found positive, they talk of drinking poison to kill themselves.

I: Just because they have been found with the disease?

R: Eya-a! Because they have been found with the kachilombo [Chichewa for HIV]. This is mainly as they recall and figure out some people who were diagnosed HIV positive and looking at the suffering they underwent and so resort to taking termic so that they avoid undergoing such kind of sufferings. And am saying this from what my wife says, am telling you my wife says all this that once she is tested positive she can exactly take poison and die. Now because of being afraid of such things like what my wife says to take poison upon being tested positive, that's why many people are afraid of going for HIV testing.

I: I can now understand now why people may not go for HIV test.

R: Eya-a.

I: Now when these VCT people came in 2004, I don't know whether you got tested.

R: No I did not.

I: But when they came for the second time, did you try to get tested?

R: Yes I accepted to be tested and I was found positive.

I: Okay! (.....) Now did your wife accept to be counseled together upon you as a husband being found with kachilombo?

R: She did not accept, and am the one who even told the counselors not to counsel us together. I did this because I know the temper of my wife and as I care for her life.

I: Okay! Is your wife one of such women who can opt for poison when she hears of her results being positive?

R: Yes, she is one of such women. She is gets carried with such news and with her temper she can take termic.

I: But when people usually think that it's a man only who can bring the kachilombo in a family, I think in my opinion that maybe that its not very true, because if we can ask, is it true that its only a man who desires to have sex or sexual intercourse in a family?

R: That is what am saying that this is what people say, but it is not true that things are always like that that the man is the one always responsible for the virus in a family. But

you should understand that village wisdom people think it's mostly a man who contracts the virus in a family and gives it to his wife. Another example is when people marry and are not bearing children, the big part of the story of the blame for not bearing children is heaped on the man, that he is the one who is infertile.

I: Is that so?

R: So it is, just as they may blame a man that he is the one who is infertile, so it is true to also blame him that he is the one responsible for bringing the virus in the house. But this again is not true but as I have already said, that this is because of little wisdom by village people that's why they conclude of a man being responsible always.

I: Now when these VCT people came for the second time and when you told your wife that they have found you so and so what was her reaction or response?

R: I did not share the results with my wife because I know her thoughts as I told you earlier on that she can ready do that.

I: Okay, so you did that because you care for her life, that if I tell her she may take poison.

R: Yes I know her that's it.

I: Okay thank you. But when you heard the results that you are positive, and that especially many people are afraid of hearing that they are positive, or even some of us who are working just as am interviewing you, I have gone twice but it was not easy to decide to go for testing. Especially that moment when you are waiting for the results

[Sound of a cow in the background]

I: Yes you might have been counseled in the first place, such as want to you accept the results either if they are positive or negative? But when now they tell you, how did you in your case feel in the heart when you heard you are positive?

(Respondent goes to attend to some customers as we found him buying maize during the interview)

R: But as for me when I heard the results, there was nothing which surprised me. Or even the one who was testing my blood, I told him that am brave, I have a heart of a man. And as far as I'm born then am ready to meet anything. So the time when I was asked whether am ready to hear my results, I responded vigorously and courageously that I am ready to hear the results. This is because I had no worries and that the VCT people will counsel me and thereafter just follow what I have been counseled.

I: Yes, yes okay!

R: Secondly, I that if they find me positive, I may have that chance of being given a document to access drugs. And that letter shall assist me when I go to the hospital when I become sick and doctors shall not have problems to recognize me and help me accordingly as doctors shall know my HIV status.

I: Yah!

R: As such I had no any worry to tell them that am ready to hear the results.

I: Okay, so if I may ask whether the counseling before you were tested and after being tested, were these counseling helpful to you?

R: Yees the counseling was helpful, but I see it that the counseling was here and there [Chichewa: patalipatah] not deep enough. They did not counsel me the way counseling should be done. For example a person wants to be counseled, but instead the counselors were posing a lot of questions demanding me again to answer.

I: Was that so?

R: Yes, as such if they keep on asking me questions like what do you think should be done? It means am not being counseled by them, but rather counseling myself. Especially when the VCT people posed questions like, what ways do you think will you be following after knowing your status of HIV positive?

I: Indeed?

R: Now can you call that counseling if they keep on asking you questions? Is that giving counseling or questioning?

I: Okay!

R: So I saw that they were asking me and not counseling me. As such although later they did counsel me but I was not very much touched.

I: Okay!

[Noise of drum in the background continues]

R: Me myself I believe that people who give counseling should not pose a lot of questions in the process of counseling.

I: Ya ya ya!

R: So they should try to minimize the questions.

I: So let me take you back. In your case for the very first time when you were not used or when you heard of the VCT people for the first time that they are coming, how did you chat with them especially in 19- (...) or 2004 when you heard that these people have come from boma.

R: I chatted with them in very open terms, there is not even a day I can remember when I failed to chat with them. I could really talk to them openly.

I: Okay.

R: Eeh!

I: Thank you!

R: Indeed!

I: But now when you compare in the year 2004 up to date 2006. What are the sayings of people about blood testing? Are you seeing any change in their stories when they chat about VCT? Especially the conceptions people had about AIDS or VCT in 2004 up to now 2006 with reference to your village here.

R: It is all the same. No change at all.

I: Okay. As you have said already many people do not go for HIV test for many reasons, for instance here at [Village], you have said people usually are afraid of knowing their status because of what they saw to their friends who were diagnosed positive especially the sufferings they underwent as a result of having the kachilombo. What signs or symptoms do people here in your village see to conclude that someone has AIDS even if she/he has not publicly declared his status, especially this is taken as a private issue?

R: Many signs and symptoms are shown especially getting thin and pulling out of hair.

I: Okay.

R: Eeh!

I: But nowadays when you go in hospitals or in wards of hospitals TB is also having the same or similar signs and symptoms to some extent. So how do you differentiate between AIDS signs and TB signs in this case?

R: You can't differentiate by just looking with your eyes.

I: But when it comes to the issue of discrimination on condition that someone has AIDS or HIV since TB can also have similar signs, what happens here in this village?

R: Can you ask again there I have not understood your question.

I: Am saying some people may see signs like coughing or getting thin as you have said.

R: Yes. Eeh!

I: But there are other diseases –

R: Which may have similar signs and symptoms.

I: But here now in spite of other disease having similar symptoms, what signs do people attribute to AIDS alone and not TB or other diseases?

R: But it's not common for people from a big cough [TB] who go to the hospital.

I: So you are saying it's not common?

R: As such since it's not common for people to suffer from TB here, that's why if we see such signs as becoming thin or pulling of hair we conclude that he/she has the disease.

I: Okay.

R: Eee!

I: People, I mean we get encouragement or courage in different ways. So let me ask you whether you do pray or not?

R: No, I don't pray.

I: But now for those who pray here in your village has pastors in addition to the government people what do they say about the disease AIDS or what type of advice do people get from such churches or religious gatherings?

R: On that I can't say anything just because I don't go to the church.

I: Okay.

R: Yes, otherwise I will be lying.

I: But for you as a village head, but also as someone who has friends, brothers and sisters. Have you ever shared your experiences of the VCT people that they found you positive to the above mentioned people? Or any best friend that for me my status is so so?

R: Okay, what happens is that I can tell people that I was found positive but they refuse thinking I am just saying.

I: Okay.

R: And as I have already told you that am a courageous man am open to everyone whom I meet to tell him/her of my HIV positive status.

I: So its people whom you tell your HIV positive status who refuse and take it a joke.

R: Eya-a-ah.

I: Okay. I think from your story it's a long time that we Malawians should learn to be opened public to talk about these issues so that when one is open enough to talk to the public about his/her status we should be able to listen to him.

R: Eya-a-ah.

(Respondent goes out to attend to some other customers giving change and apologizes that we going to be stopping here and there in the interview)

[Noise of someone like a tin smith continues in the background as the respondent continues to attend to the customer. One man asks the respondent as to how he too wants to be interviewed? Respondent replies today it's my day to be interviewed wait for your day when these interviewers gonna come to your house]

I: So do you know anybody don't mention a name in this village whose results are like yours.

R: No I don't know.

I: There is no one?

[Someone laughs in the background outside the house I was with the respondent for the interview took place inside the house but with an open door, people passing outside and people coming to sell their maize]

R: There is no one as far as I can remember.

I: But do you know anybody whom you are together in this VCT study especially their lifestyle. How were their lifestyle before meeting the VCT people and how are their life after meeting the VCT people. Do you see any change in terms of their sexual behavior?

R: No there is no any change.

I: Not at all?

R: Not.

[Someone laughs in the background outside the house]

I: As I can remember in the beginning you said, your wife is not very open to discuss the issues pertaining to VCT or AIDS do you think this applies also in some families to other people's wives or families?

R: Yes, I have said such experiences are there in other families and am saying what I discuss with other people. So if other people also discuss such issues like this, it means they too face same problems with their spouses.

I: It means these problems are there in other families.

R: Yes, it means they are there.

I: But does it happen also that in other families, a man being scared of VCT while the wife being courageous to go for VCT? Or maybe its always women who are not courageous to undergo VCT and thereafter hear the results.

R: To say the truth I have never heard someone saying my wife is courageous when it comes to deciding about going for VCT. And usually when its men discuss these issues it's like we have the same knowledge that wives do not like to go for VCT because wives are not courageous enough to withstand the results.

I: Okay!

R: So it seem it's only us men so far who are courageous when it comes to decision making on going for VCT.

I: Okay! Can you suggest any reason why maybe women do not have powers to make decisions in families?

R: It goes back again to the belief of many people which advocates that a man has more powers in a family than a woman. And to me I see that this belief is the one which is still in people's minds working at its best, and many do not even understand that there is gender this time.

I: Okay! So the gender issue are not yet root in people's minds and thinking.

R: Not at all, not rooted.

I: Do they still take gender issues as jokes or someone not applicable to them?

R: Mmm! Yaa!

I: So they still believe that a man has more powers than a woman in spite of gender.

R: Eya-ah!

I: I can see, okay! I understand these stories about VCT or AIDS have been talked over and over. But maybe some people are not free to talk about HIV when there are some children around in a family maybe because of the age of their children. In your case do you have children of any age whom you are able to discuss the VCT and kachilombo issues in their presence?

R: No, my chaps are all young.

I: But now I will ask you not as a client but as a village head because it is being announced on the radio that it is the responsibility of anybody to spread the news on HIV/AIDS prevention. Even hospital personnel also advise the same, that it is everybody's responsibility to spread the news about VCT and AIDS prevention. So what role do you play whether calling for an informal meeting or any other and inform people about VCT or AIDS prevention? Have you ever given your thoughts openly on the disease of kachilombo?

R: I have already told you that I am a courageous man and that I am open to everybody –

I: Open to everybody?

R: Yes I do tell everybody at anytime I feel I like telling someone.

I: Not waiting to call for a meeting?

R: Not at all, but anywhere I see that people have gathered or have met, I do tell people what is needed to be done, that they need to be tested.

I: Okay!

R: Because I do tell them of my part that I already underwent for VCT and am so and so. But as I have already told you that each time I tell people about my HIV positive status nobody believes, they usually take it as a joke.

I: So you mean you even publicly say it openly when you are at a meeting with a multitude of people? Indeed so open and tell them all this??

R: Do you think when I say I do say it publicly I tell to two people?

I: Eee! I thought only to few let's say people playing bawo.

R: No even when there are twenty people or even more.

I: It's really my first time to find a person like you who are so open especially if you take the closed culture of most Malawians who cannot reveal publicly about their serostatus especially as most of us would opt to hide than to tell people of our serostatus.

R: To me I see no reason of hiding my HIV positive status here in the village because as people hear it tomorrow from other sources not me the owner, it shall be like gossiping, especially when I start getting sick.

I: Aah okay.

R: I do tell the people in advance of my sero-status, so that no one gossips when I become sick.

I: I think you are setting a very good example in spite of people taking it for jokes when you reveal to them that you are HIV positive. But I think those who are wise enough are able to pick two or three things that this man is saying something sensible and true, but also helpful to us who are not infected. On the same note of VCT do people understand the condom issue, especially when one can not abstain to use a condom during sexual intercourse? Or maybe people do not know what a condom is or its use?

R: Everybody knows about a condom, and everybody also knows that a condom is used to protect oneself from contracting the disease.

I: But when you ask people who own shops whether people are able to buy condoms during the day as compared to the night. Does it also happen here as well that people are afraid of being promiscuous if they buy condoms during the day and most people see them?

R: Yes it does happen, people are not comfortable to buy condoms during the broad daylight. Only that here we are lucky, we do access condoms from family planning leaders located in our nearest clinic or right here in the village. So people just opt to go to these family planning counselors and collect condoms at their convenient time.

I: Okay.

R: That's why maybe people do not go to the grocery and ask for a condom to buy.

I: Okay I can understand. But now when it comes to collecting condoms from these family planning people and imagine the family planning personnel is a man are women open enough to go and ask for a condom?

R: No. Women can't go and collect.

I: Is that so?

R: Yes, women can't go and take.

I: Is it because of the same belief that men are more powerful than women in a family?

R: Eyah-a-ah.

I: But on the same issue of VCT, many people talk of abstinence as the best way of avoiding to contract the virus, but at the same time it's not easy for people to abstain. Have you ever heard of some couples who strongly advocate for abstinence as the sole way to avoid HIV?

R: Eya-a-a. All those ways people advocate for them. Others may follow the way of not having sex with other people apart from a spouse or others we gonna be using condoms. And there is nobody who refuses we all talk about these methods.

I: Okay.

R: Indeed!

I: Okay. But now as you have said that you know your sero-status, is it true that your wife still refuses to believe that you are positive, probably as you publicly tell people I hope she has already heard from people that your husband is HIV positive? How does she feel when she hears that your husband was here swearing sternly that he has the virus?

R: As I have already told you, my wife is in the same group of people who are refusing that I can't have the virus.

I: So even your wife takes it as joke?

R: Eee, she takes it as kidding, she does not believe or accept. And I tell you once more that there is no one who believes when I share with him/her that I am HIV positive.

I: Eee. [Interviewer laughs together with respondent] Echoing that we really have problems as Malawians to take some of these serious matters as mere jokes. But are you not wishing that one day your wife should understand you and she too should go for HIV test? Especially in the future as it might be gradual for her to come to understand.

R: But she refuses.

I: Is that so?

R: Because others are refusing even if the doctors come home, they still refuse that we don't want to be tested.

I: Okay.

R: Eeeh.

I: You can imagine now if someone fails to have his/her body test when doctors follow home, what if you tell him to follow to the hospital in future?

R: She can't dare to go definitely.

I: Okay. I hope there VCT people started long time ago following you their clients since late 90s, and its good to hear your views on their performance and how they can improve some of the things that the project achieves the goal. For example in the first place you have said if the type of counseling. You mentioned that the first group of counselors was full of questions to the client than counseling the client.

R: Yes it was full of questions.

I: So it will be good for us to know what you need so that we improve as we come in the near future. Feel free to say anything which you feel we can improve in delivering our counseling services? Anything please, feel free. This is especially because paper work planned in office is different from what you may want when we come to you here!

R: The thing is when you guys come give us many questions. But now there are problems which you should expect to meet where you are going in the future. People think you are just wasting their time.

I: Eee!

R: You guys who come to interview us are making money, when you only give lifebuoy [soap] but not people have known that these people are using us. And in other village some clients are already running away, we do discuss where all this is revealed. Just as you came now, you may even ask me that who is Mr. \_\_\_\_, I may choose deliberately to say we don't know him, but am the one you are looking for. Why, because people have known that your study is going to yield a lot of money for those who are doing it. But you are just wasting precious time of us your clients. The research started some time back but there is no day a client form the village like me gained something or had profit from the research.

I: Okay. Is that the thinking?

R: Yes, there is need that a client too should be benefiting from the research. And clients see that giving them a bar of soap is nothing, because most of us clients are able to buy soap on our own. Further to that, the time these research people take to interview us is longer so much that we can find more money if we do piece work during these hours they interviewed us than the thirty kwacha which is equivalent to a bar of soap.

I: So you can earn more during these hours than sugar and soap?

R: Yes yes.

I: Is that so?

R: And know that many people will not be answering you the truth from now onwards the reasons being what I have explained.

I: Okay.

R: But also when it comes to counseling. It needs a counselor to explain in details to the client so that the client understands the whole concept of being counseled. No posing a lot of questions like what do you think you should be doing in case you are found positive? What can a client answer? Nothing. And the client does not take such counselors as people who know their job, so he just thinks that these people wanted me to find my own solutions to my problems and further sees no real reason why these counselors came to counsel her/him.

I: Eee he!

R: By asking a client it seems they take the client to know answers, so I ask this question! Why did I allow to be counseled if I already knew the answers. These are some of the things making people to think the whole thing is not profitable to the clients but to the owners of the research.

I: Mmm. Okay.

R: Its only profitable to the owners of the research.

I: Mmm okay.

R: It's only profitable to the owners of the research because they are making money.

I: It's true especially on the issue of gifts the soap and sugar, I hope [think] you are not the first one, you should second or fourth to talk about soap and sugar are not enough. It's really good to hear your news on this. So what do you think we should be bringing as gifts to you our clients?

R: But what I believe of the people, let me give you an example. When they came last time I hope [think] in 2004, these people could do this. People need money. And that time, they brought the system of bottle tops where an amount of money was written for a person to raffle draw.

I: Okay, was that the way they did it?

R: Yes, they did so and for them they could say before you get tested select on bottle top from the plastic bag.

I: Okay.

R: So the person could pick one at random and see the amount which is on the bottle top. So people were told that the amount of money written on that bottle top you have picked is yours.

I: So they could

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

I: write either 200 kwacha or 800 kwacha.

R: Yes, yes, yes.

I: Okay.

R: So the person could see that am being interviewed by these people but they will give me something so the individual could be open enough.

I: Okay.

R: And confirm this, that money giving motivated people to answer compare how many people refused to be interviewed in 2004 and how many people have refused to be interviewed in 2006, you will see that in 2006 there are many who have refused.

I: Okay.

R: So this only shows that with poverty here in the village people need money in a thing they are undertaking. Not buying them something, no no. Just imagine the sugar you are buying us is ninety kwacha or ninety-five kwacha but if you can give the same person one hundred kwacha, he/she can be very happy than giving sugar.

I: Okay. It's really understood as money given can be used to buy your present need of the time.

R: Eya- aa yes, yes.

I: Rather than giving you sugar which is not your immediate need of the time.

R: Eya-a-a-a.

I: Okay. So when did the system change of money to soap and sugar? Did it change in 2004 or this time in 2006 when the came?

R: Things have changed this 2006.

I: Okay. You mean the soap and sugar has changed this 2006?

R: Yes.

I: Okay.

R: But I also see that in the same group of you guys there is no transparency. And now you have come with [Chichewa: mzungu] white supervisor (meaning Lauren).

I: Okay.

R: Me Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ as a village head. The VCT of your team has come twice to interview my people including myself, but me as a village head I have not been given anything for entering my village. It is expected to give certain gifts to me as a village head, but none was given. In the first place they came nothing was given now I gathered my people explaining to them that the VCT group will come but nothing has been given.

I: Okay.

R: They also came telling me we are here Mr. Village head we want such such a person in your village, but no any gift was given for showing them the particulars of the people they were looking for in my village. This surprises me that what really happens not to be thankful to a person who is so kind like me? I have sent two people so far in your group to ask your bosses of what they think on this issue. Why are things like this? But there is no reply I get! And so, I have also reached that extent that I should be running away from you, or deny to interview me when you come again. Because all this is a wastage of time, nothing else.

I: Thank you for being open enough to air out your concerns, this is the day that such issues should be responded to.

R: This has happened this year and I can point at such people in your team that these are the guys who interviewed me but did not give me anything.

I: I think this will help us to know rather than telling us that the John you are looking for is not here when the one responding is John himself but because he is not willing he hides from us the interviewers.

R: Really people will be shunning away telling you we don't know so and so when such people are around and well known.

I: I need to thank you for being so open to respond to my many questions.

R: Indeed.

I: And especially tipping us research people on what we should improve so that many people accept us when we visit you in your respect villages.

R: The other thing which also happens which renders your research not to go on well is this! When you find people chatting like you have found us here on the road, you just drop from your cars, not even greeting us, but go straight into the village.

I: Okay.

R: Without even bothering to ask the people you have found on the road. You straight go into my village without my knowledge is that so?

I: Mmm is it so?

R: But you are supposed to talk to me first as a village head and ask that we want to meet the following people. It is there that I will now direct you to say the house of so and so is that one and so on and so forth. Not just coming into the village going direct without the village heads knowledge.

I: Okay.

R: Now if you come back to us after you have failed to find the people in your study you were looking for, it will be difficult for us to help you scout them.

I: Okay –

R: So this ever happened and we told some of your group that never come again to this village. Because you don't have respect for the village.

I: What did they ask you?

R: They asked me who is the village head here after failing to trace their clients.

I: Okay, was it so?

R: If they had asked, the people they were looking for were right there at the group where I was. This is really something which makes your research not to go on well. Like the case of a person whom you just pass him and only to ask him later, he can hardly tell you the truth. He only can say go to where you think you will find those you are looking for.

I: Okay.

R: Ya-aa-ah.

I: Okay. Thank you for revealing all this.

[Some noise in the background]

I: But when it comes to counseling your only problem is that the counselors should not put many questions? But rather counseling proper? What do you say?

R: Yes, not too many questions.

[Some noise of children calling one another in the background]

I: Of course it's unfortunate that it happened that way, on people who counseled you that they had more questions than counseling. But I believe people who are sent here for VCT are well trained to do their job of counseling perfectly, but why did it happen that way I don't know.

R: Mmm.

I: But you also said to you it's good that one tests or undergoes VCT to know what is there in his body. So that you know how to handle yourself. But also people do receive some medicine if they know their sero-status when they go to the hospital. In your case, have you had the chance of receiving some medicine?

R: Not yet.

I: So you have any document which was given to you explaining your condition?

R: Yes I have the document.

I: Have you reached that stage of benefiting from the drugs?

R: Not yet, I was explained to that you can only go to the hospital when you are not feeling well.

I: Okay.

R: So since the time I was told of my status I have never been sick.

I: Okay.

R: Indeed.

I: Now having had the chance of being entitled to drugs as you have the document which you can show to the hospital in case of sickness, haven't you shared with your friends as that being advantageous to people who were tested? Especially as you have the letter confirming your status you are different from the one staying in that state of happiness.

R: Yes, yes.

I: Because whenever you are sick you are always conscious to go and have your blood tested if you can start ARVs so have you ever shared this experience? And especially that people who are positive with documents are entitled to free drugs. Have you ever shared with your friends?

R: No, I have never done so.

I: Okay.

R: I have not done so because people think I am kidding when I tell them.

[Interviewer and respondent laugh]

I: Okay.

(Respondent goes away for a while as to attend to some customers)

R: When I tell people to come and see my letter which I have been given confirming my sero-status people refuse, do not believe.

I: Okay.

R: Maybe their problem not to believe is because I talk of my positive status in public parallel to their expectation of hiding such sensitive issues.

I: Okay.

R: Especially that I talk of my positive status almost everyday and now people have just reached that extent of taking me for granted that am talking.

I: Is that so always?

R: No, there are others who learn a lesson from my stories, saying may this guy is saying the truth and maybe lets get tested as well. And other choose to go to the hospital as they are not part of this research. It's still different to find out at your own home and you walking a long distance to the hospital.

I: Okay, mmm!

R: I think many will be lazy to go to the hospital walking long distance as compared to following you at home.

I: Okay. So do you have any near hospital here at Mkanda or its only Mchinji boma?

R: It's only Mchinji boma basi.

I: Okay.

R: Mmm. We have a clinic at Mkanda.

I: Do they do VCT?

R: Yes people say they do, but I can point anybody who has ever gone there to have his blood tested.

I: Is that so?

R: Yes.

I: Can we say that some people are not comfortable because they prick when doing blood test?

R: No people are not afraid to undergo blood testing because of mere pricking but the reasons are the one I gave you in the beginning.

I: Okay I remember. Do you have any questions or comments on whatever we have chatted in this interview before we part?

R: To me I don't have a question even a comment. But my only complaint is when they chatted with me almost two journeys they came without giving me anything. For this reason I really wish I had know who is the boss of this project you are doing.

I: Okay.

R: If I can know him/her I would be glad to ask why didn't you give me anything as a village head for coming twice into my village interviewing me as a client but also entering in my village as a village head? I would wish to ask him/her to say is it your policy or was I just overlooked or oppressed? And if I was oppressed what was due for me?

I: Okay, I will deliver all this to the responsible people.

R: Because this in the end even today I wanted to openly tell you that today don't interview me because am not seeing any profit in being interviewed by you guys.

I: Is that so? Sorry.

R: Indeed I really wanted to refuse today.

I: I should thank you for being so open to speak your mind, but also that you being a village you are the mouthpiece of your people's thoughts.

R: Very much so.

I: I such today all this will be explained to our boss who is outside there so that she knows how you think as our clients.

R: Mmm do so!

I: Yes, at times these problems may not be well communicated because of changing office of people in this research project as others may not make proper handovers to let the continuing people know where they had left. But now this will all be communicated exactly like you have said that the real problems of these people are these and these. This will in turn improve the project operations.

R: But I also heard that you do give some medicine of other diseases like ulcers.

I: Okay.

R: But then they said we just need to prescribe the ulcer drugs for you but when I saw the bill...

I: How much was the bill?

R: It was two thousand something, too expensive for me.

I: You mean abdominal ulcers?

R: Yes. And this has been my long time disease.

I: I have taken note of your problem. When did ulcers attack you?

R: Long time ago, I can recall exactly. If I had my health passport book you would have seen I have received drugs but no change.

I: Mmm sorry very much.

R: It's mainly problematic at night.

I: If no further questions I thank you very much for allowing us to interview you. Thank you. So this marks the end of our interview with \_\_\_\_ ID Number 40501 on the date of 19<sup>th</sup> July 2006.