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The issue that many people nowadays are in need and very eager to know about their blood status is as far as HIV virus is concerned.

Its just very true and I think now people are free with the disease and they are not afraid about it as it was in the first time whereby many people were very afraid to have their blood tested for HIV virus since they were thinking that once tested and found with the virus it was the end of their life which was not true at all.

I am saying this due to a certain incident which I come across just very recently in one of the villages around my area Mphula.

On this day I left home to see a certain friend of mine in Nowazumale village at around 1400 hrs.

I went there with an intention to buy sweet potatoes for the breast fast [breakfast].

As I was going to this friend of mine I saw three girls almost in their early twenty's sitting somewhere on the veranda of a certain house.

However as I approached where there girls sat I noticed that there was a certain issue which they were talking concerning me since they were looking at me directly and they were speaking in down of their voice that I could not hear what they were talking but for sure I knew that they were talking something concerning me hence I decided to call one of the girls to ask her the direction which it will lead me to the house of my friend.

However this was only a trick for I already knew the house but I wanted her to be flexible with me so that if they were indeed talking something concerning she should feel free and relaxed.

Not knowing that the girls knew me better and the saw me once time doing a certain kind of job related to what they were talking about meaning the *Let's Chat* team.

Indeed my trick worked since after I asked her about the direction to lead me to my friends house she directed me but to my surprise I noticed that the girl was just standing still looking back to her two friends who remained on the veranda

and looked back to me and start smiling thing which I concluded that she had something in her mind which she wanted to talk to me but she had no starting point.

To ease the situation I asked her too where she stays and she started explaining to me very briefly and now I noticed that she was now more flexible and at the end of her explanation she tried to develop me and asked "Are you the son of Mr. Balalika whom we saw you sometime working with those people who talk of Edzi issues with people in most villages here?"

She asked me, and before I answered anything concerning her question I asked her again that when was that and which of the villages did you see these people and myself among them talking to people about Edzi issues?

She silenced for a while and I knew that she was trying to recall the event.

Later she said it should be a year ago they were in villages like Dasiyo, Phiri, Chatambalala and some others which I can not remember and continued saying that even this year have heard that they have come again and that is why I and my friend over there (pointing to her friends on the veranda) wanted to find out more about these people from you so that we can know the truth of the matter.

I stayed for a while without responding to them and later I answer her that may be it should be the one but I am not sure since the three are a lot of people if not organization which they talk of Edzi issues with people in different villages nowadays.

However this girl seemed to be so sure of what she was talking for she continued explaining that they indeed saw me among the people in the villages she mentioned earlier on a thing which made me just to let her talk what it was in her mind for I knew for sure that there might be something so unique which she wanted to talk.

After the other two girls they remained on the veranda saw that the conversation was still going on between me and the girl, them too were restless and decided to join us before the other girl mentioned to me the aim behind their minds to the group of people she claimed that they talk to people in some of the villages about Edzi.

After I asked them what they really wanted to know about the group all the there girls were just looking to each other and start laughing while facing each other nobody wanted to answer to my question a thing which made me to think that it might be a unique issue, then later the other girl who started talking with me before the other two joined us and also she is this girl which seemed to have better education than the rest two of at least a higher primary school grade.

She started explaining that the place where I found them they were discussing about the issue of HIV / AIDS in as far as to know ones blood status through

voluntary counseling and testing since our friend pointing the other girl who was in the middle of them was in very much in need to have her blood tested and we were agreeing the three of us that once we find chance in terms of transport costs we should all go to have our blood tested.

On this note I knew that their might be something else which have made them to think about that and I wanted to know about this thing since the issue has already started but I guess that may be it will be hard for them to mention their reasons which have made them to think about the issue of voluntary counseling and testing.

Hence I asked them and in opposite to know I was thinking that it might be somehow difficult for them to reveal the reasons one of the girls who was mostly dominating the other two in most of answers started explaining that as to herself.

She wants to go for voluntary counseling and testing (VCT) just because she had a certain boy friend who used to sell second hand clothes in local markets in a lot of markets during market days.

She continued explaining that this relationship lasted for almost a year before she realized that once her partner goes to these markets he do always have one night stand lovers and these were in almost each and even market he goes to sell the clothes and the worst thing was that I heard the rumours that one of her lovers which he was going with died in recent days of AIDS related diseases.

Hence these made me more fear and developed in my mind an idea that I should go for HIV virus test so that I should know my blood status and then take another step from there basing, on the results I am going to hear after testing only that since I decided this I have had no chance of this and that is why when we saw you coming we were talking about to ask you as we said already so that you can may be tell us when those people are coming back again though there are some rumours that they are already around so that we can meet them and ask them if they can assist us to test our blood.

That's the issue to my side and I hope each one of us can talk to her side on the reasons she want to have her blood tested. And thinking that it was important thing for me to know how one come to suggest for blood test I decided not to interrupt the other two girls but them too to explain how they come to suggest for the voluntary counseling and testing.

Then it was a turn for the other girl who seemed to be older than the two though all of them looked almost in the same range of ages.

After she starts explaining the reasons behind going for voluntary counseling and testing, I noticed that it was a different issues altogether to the reasons the others first girl was just explaining.

This one started explaining that she once go attended a certain funeral which her friend was very much concerned since it was he relative in one of the villages around Vingula trading centre called Mbechete.

However she had been knowing the sickness of the deceased child for a quite a long time since she had be going their chatting with that friend of her. She continued saying that a cousin to her friend has been sick for a quite long period and she had been on and off.

Then later she made up her mind to go for HIV / Virus in her blood since things was not good for her and after the results of her blood test she was found that she was HIV positive and people would not wonder since ever since she had never been on marriage but just been moving up and down with different men to get necessities she wanted to keep her going.

Several times she had been impregnated by different men but she kept on aborting since she could never waste time caring for the child to be born instead of moving out with men.

Its only twice when she got impregnated and keep the pregnant until time of delivery in the past more than five years ago.

However as I said earlier on that people could not wonder that she was found HIV positive they also referred to how this child which I said.

I went and attended his funeral was staying in the two years which he had been alive him too was on and off with different kind of diseases and once one saw him before he died, you could feel pity that why as young as she was but being in trouble of different diseases beyond his age.

Even I myself I was feeling pity every time I saw him before his death and sometimes, wished not to see him during other visits I went to see my friend not because of any reason behind his illness but just not to feel pity about him since at one time I could nearly drop a tear after how the child was surviving she continued.

This too made everyone not to doubt that the child too contracted the disease form her mother meaning that the time she was falling pregnant for that child she was already HIV positive but she could not know now putting the child in trouble now just because of her past behaviour and though the parent was ill but people could feel much pity to the child since it was not his wish to have the disease until up to his death.

However his parent is still alive meaning the cousin to her friend but not in good mood.

Now after seeing and learnt all this especially I thought it is good for those girls or women who are not yet married to go for the HIV test before getting married so

that they should know their blood status in as for as HIV / AIDS is concerned to avoid putting trouble to the child to be born if getting pregnant while HIV positive that is according to the experiences I have had.

And before asked her any question concerning to her speech he continued explaining that as to my part / wish to get married before the end of this year and I want to make a good future for my child to be born in my family rather than to see what I have seen to happening to my friends cousin.

At this point in time I asked her a simple question that what if she was to be found HIV positive you mean you are not going to get married or not having a child?

Without even wasting much time, she answered me back that exactly once I found that I am HIV positive after the test I will not get married and that means I will not have children to avoid making them victims in future since if I bore a child while HIV positive that means the child has got no future.

And as my friend have already said earlier on I am also in need to have my blood tested so that I should know my blood status and make plans for my future that is why we wanted to ask you about these people so that we can have our blood tested by them.

However, I had a question in my mind to ask them that who actually told them that those people they were referring to tests people blood but I was tongue tied since I thought I will minimize their moral of having their blood tested but still I was wondering that how come the girls or women in the typical village like that having good ideas like that in as far as HIV test and AIDS issues are concerned and indeed I was so happy hearing these views from them.

Though I noticed that more time was wanted by listening to their views since I was only on transit going to my friend, I forced myself to hold my patience and let the other girl / woman who left to explain too what prompted her or motivated her to with her blood tested too for HIV / AIDS.

But after this second girl finished explaining her views this other third girl was just [quiet] without showing any signs that she was going to explain something on her suggestions to have her blood tested.

There was a small silence and then she started laughing a little, the other girls to started laughing a thing which made me to think that she had no any reasons for suggestion may be just be motivated by her fellow friends.

But just before I was about to talk to them my last words and then proceeding to where / was going to by sweet potatoes she seemed to have something to mention then I waited for her and indeed she started explaining something.

Initially, I had no any idea to have my blood tested since I was so afraid that once I got found to be HIV positive that means people will not be chatting with me they will start segregating me and more especially I was afraid that I will be having much worries that I can die so easily because of those worries and I made up my mind that no matter what I will never go for HIV test in my life.

However as time went by while chatting with friends and also hearing much of plays concerning HIV issues on the radio I started understand what HIV / AIDS is all about and I heard that once one realizes, that he / she is HIV positive can live more than ten years while with the disease and even hearing these people with the disease speaking on their own that some were found with the disease for more than ten years ago.

But still alive that is when I realized that to go for the test is not all that a serious issue and it is far much better to know if one is HIV positive or not and moreover I heard in the radio that also nowadays there is some drugs which are given to people with AIDS so that that they should live longer but once you have tested without tested you can not have chance.

To have the medicine only that I have forgotten the name of the drugs and there you can even see that there is no any fear for someone to go and have his / her blood tested hence all of us we are so eager to have our blood tested for HIV / AIDS disease and the other factors are what my friends have already mentioned in their views.

Surely I knew that these women were serious with what they were talking and that they meant and to decide to go for HIV test was indeed suggestions coming from deep down their hearts and possibly just to give them an encouraging word and maybe to assist them with good direction and also the truth about the team which they claimed that they are going to have an assistance to have their blood tested.

So firstly I congratulated them for having a courage of explaining those views to me having on the fact that they saw me working with the team which talk to people about AIDS in some villages here in our area that is according to the opinion.

Hence answered them that if at all the group which they tried to mean that I sometimes work with its indeed a *Let's Chat* group then they wont be assisted to have their blood since the group only targeted for only few people in the villages this people targets too and these people are the ones whom they started chatting with long time ago and I also continued telling them that not that they are here to test peoples blood but there are specific questions which the people I said already are being asked and these questions tackles different areas not only HIV / AIDS hence as I said earlier on you can not have your blood tested by these people even though I referred you to them but the only thing we can assist each other is to give each other the right direction and good procedure how you can get your blood tested for HIV.

Indeed they asked me the specific places where they can get their blood tested. I told them that they are free to go to any government hospitals like Machinga District Hospital, Balaka District Hospital and many others which they have got the facilities to test blood and you will indeed have your blood tested.

Again one thing which they seemed not to be aware of is that whether the test is paid or its of charge since the other woman who I said was almost looked at least older than the rest two asked me the questions that how much is to paid for one to e tested?

Then the other girl I said was with at least a higher primary school grade according to my faint guess smiled after the question was asked and looked at me which showed to me that she might know something about that.

However I took the question and answered them all that HIV test is free everywhere and nobody paid for that and may be the only money used can be for transportation to go to the hospital.

This time everybody seemed to be convinced with what I explained to them and finally I asked them if someone can have any question if there was any which was not clear to what I explained to them about the group which they claimed.

I sometimes work which I concluded that they were referring to *Let's Chat* group.

However everybody seemed to be convinced they were just looking each other.

Then the first girl I first chatting with apologized me for taking much of my time but I told them that they should not worry about that since they have now know the truth of the group I sometimes work under.

After that I left the place leaving the girls going back to where I found them and me too to the house of my friend to buy sweet potatoes for my breakfast the next day.

There ends what I captured on this day on the wish of these girls to go for voluntary counseling and testing (VCT)

Thursday 22 / 06 / 2006

Nowadays the issue concerning the orphans is almost everywhere and this orphanage is coming due to several factors which happens to the parents of these orphans.

Some parents do die due to road accidents some being poisoned by other people, some being robbed but mostly due to this recent disease HIV / AIDS and indeed most orphans are falling in this category that their parent have died with the disease HIV / AIDS.

However once the parents of these orphans dies they are being kept by other related or non related well wishing people so that the parental residence should at least be there and to avoid these orphan grow up miserably which might contribute bad manners to the orphans.

However the living with these orphans depends on the behaviour of the guardians, some guardians took orphans with indeed a well wishing mind not to use the orphans in any way they want or not to use the orphans as the means to get something out of them but there are some guardians which took these orphans only to get something out of them and this is very true.

I am saying this due to the incident I come across a certain day as I was moving around in a certain village called Nyongani just to pass the hours away.

As I was approaching certain houses I was hearing something like a chaos happening within a certain compound and there was also people taking some beers within the compound.

Hearing carefully about the chaos I was partially hearing that the child belongs to me and the other woman was also saying that the child belongs to me indeed it was a chaos nearly to fight each other and is topped to find out what fishy it was going on between the two women.

But I could not really get what it was going on between the two women since I found them already shouting to each other hence I decided to call one of the person who was also watching the scene at least to ask him the background of the whole scene.

The man came in almost thirty's of age, wearing a blue long sleeved shirt and a black jean trouser.

Upon arriving to where I stopped he was laughing. Without waiting much time I greeted him and asked him what it was going between the two women instantly he started explaining the issue saying the two women are relatives living in the compound and there is a ten year old orphan in the compound.

This orphanage to this child came almost more than five years ago while the child was just four years old and she was the only child in the family of the deceased couple.

After her parents died of diseases which people were saying AIDS related ones the child has been living with her grand parent since for the past years nobody was showing willingness to take the child and care for her yet her late mother had sister elder to her who are still alive and strong but could not take the child and the other elder sister to her late mother is one of the people quarrelling to take the child yet all the past years the child has been living with her grandmother though old and having little resources.

Since she was also widowed I was indeed following the whole issue but I was wondering to what the man was going to say to be the reason of the quarrel and I had to wait and hear.

He continued saying that now in the last year introduced a certain organization if not aid from other well wishing countries through the government of Malawi is assisting the orphans with food stuffs like a 50Kg bag of maize, 5Kg beans and a five litres bottle of cooking oil and these things are given to the household which is taking care of the particular orphan and these things are received every month.

Now this other aunt of the orphan who happened to be the elder sister to her late mother after seeing that something good has been introduced only to the orphans, started not to feel happy in her mind for she thought of the aid her mother was receiving just because of keeping the orphan but she forget that her mother has been with the orphans since the death of her parents more than five years ago and she was not thinking of not having something through the orphans in future but things have just happened from nowhere but this could not be understandable to this other women that she started staying in bad terms with this mother of hers and start insisting that she is the one supposed to live with the orphan since her late mother was her younger sister.

But the orphan has been there since the death of her parents without showing any interest of taking her.

Now as of this today's quarrel it has happened that today is the day which the orphan received her aid and before they went to receive the aid she warned that the aid arrives at the compound it should be in her household for starting as of this day the orphan will living with her so that her too should see the benefits of keeping the orphans otherwise she was going to grab all the aid to her home since the child belongs to her not to her mother who happened to be the orphans grandmother.

This time other authorities at the compound like the head of compound was called to settle the issue and the message has already gone to call the head of the compound who stays away from the compound but he is not yet in and here is now when you can hear that the other woman is shouting at her mother that she should surrender the child to her and her mother also is insisting that she won't do that since she has been with the orphan for many years without anybody came to assist her caring for the orphan or not even giving any help in form of kind or money to the family to help caring for the orphan but now you are claiming that the orphan is supposed to be living with you just because of the food aid which she is receiving too bad.

While we were still standing at the place with the man he pointed to me a certain man who he said was the head of the compound coming to the compound on a bicycle.

Just as they saw their head of compound they all stayed quite in respect to their head.

He was welcomed and they all entered into a certain small house within the compound for discussions but it was a given fact that the other woman will be found guilty for her claim was just no sense to everybody who had a chance to hear what was going on between the two women.

Since now it was a family discussions and moreover in a private place, I felt that there was nothing for me now to do at the place and decided to continue with my journey home and I parted with the man leaving the man at the same place for the reasons known better to himself.

However I felt very sorry with the scene I found at that particular place and wished many people should not have such mentality on orphans as it was to this woman and definitely there kind of women can not keep orphans with good wishing.

There ends what I get on this day and I was on my way home to do other activities

THE END

Thursday 29 / 06 / 06

It is a fact that money is a major problem here in our country Malawi and for someone to get money for the use at his or her home, one needs to sweat you either need to be a employed person or you need to work as a piece work somewhere to get money or do some sort of businesses.

But somehow there are some restrictions on what kind of business one should do to earn money to be used at that persons particular house especially to women but some women just do their business regardless of those restrictions provided they will earn something to be used in their respective homes.

Mostly women who are divorced or widowed are the ones who does not most of the times mind about there restrictions as to what people will say about them considering the status of their businesses provided they get money.

I understand that most women in my area they rely on brewing local beers called kachaso in order to get their daily needs but under this business there are a lot of things which people talk about them but they still keep on doing their businesses and mostly they are their fellow women who talk bad things about this kind of business most women do in my area.

I agree with this due to a certain conversation I captured being talked by a group of women at a certain house back biting [backbiting ?] those women who does

such kind of business forgetting that their friend are making money out of that rather than just staying idle like most women do in my area which is very bad.

On this day I was helping a certain friend of mine maintaining this bathing room outside his house and just very close to where we were working sat a group of five women shelling maize and as usual where there are two or more people they do discuss different issue to make their chat a nice one.

A lot of stories were talked there but I was only interested in one story which they were mentioning that those women who brew and sale local beers are bitches and they do go with other women's husbands when they came in their respective houses for a drink a thing which is not true in as far as I am also a resident in the same area and know several women which brew and sale there [sell their] local beers.

They continued saying that no matter how big the poverty strikes them they can not even brew and sale local beers as this is also a thing which is promoting extra marital affairs for many men since they said most of there women who brew beer are widowed or divorced to some extent a thing which I can partially agree with that but being a widow or get divorced does not mean to be a bitch as these women were saying to agree with that my friend also commented on that since he does live [live?] amongst those people brewing and sale beer.

He started with the comment if not a question if I have heard what the women were discussing and I answered him that yes I have heard.

He continued asking me if I know the reasons why those women were taking like that then I said I do not know and then he started explaining according to his experience since he does live amongst them.

He said most women in the area are very jealousy with their fellow women who are doing well in their life and they do not feel happy seeing her fellow women doing better.

He continued telling me things which I did not know about these local beers brewers women.

He said that those women gets a lot of money by selling the beers even more than some people who are employed since a local beer brew can raise money of up to K15,000 a month that is very enough for her to eat good food, to buy good clothes that women who does not do this on their own reasons can not find such kind of money in a month only waiting for their husbands to provide for them.

And seeing that these people are doing better in life they do not feel good in life as a result they start envying her and starts saying all sorts of things about them so that they should be underrated and may be stop doing such kind of businesses.

And with that I agree that these women could raise such kind of an amount in a month since most women I know doing this kind of businesses they do indeed lead a life more than their fellow women who does only rely on their husbands in afraid to be called bitches and in such a case they can never get developed.

Despite the all information's given by a lot of organizations concerning family planning and even sexual reproductive through the community based distribution agents still some of the people seem not to really understand about this and still they have got negative altitude towards family planning.

I am saying this due to a certain community based distribution agent (CBDA) who works in villages around Noria trading centre.

I met this community based distribution agent at a certain function organized by Banja La Mtsogolo a non governmental organization which mainly deals with family planning and sexual reproductive health.

After hearing that I forced myself to spend a little time at the apple to hear what the function was all about but firstly I had to ask the CBDA if he is aware of what the function was all about on this day and he told me that they have come to sensitize people about different methods of family planning since some of the people in the area have very bad altitude towards some other methods of family like what they call Depo provera and contraceptive pills women take each day when they want to child space.

He even continued telling me that the functions was very important for him and that is why he called the function to be conducted in his catchments area since at one time he was nearly being beaten at a certain village when he went to counsel people about family planning not knowing that in that village most people are against this family planning issue since they said in that village in there recent days before this community based distribution agent entered the village was a funeral of a certain woman of about thirty years who was taking contraceptive pills for about half a year before she starts getting sick and after people seeing that the sickness was getting worse people in the village started associating her sickness with the contraceptive pills she was taking since her belly was swelling and she was coughing too much and due to the belly swelling people were saying the pills she was taking and has been taking for a half a year are making her belly to swollen since the pills were not getting dissolved in the stomach and that there is a pile of pills in her stomach hence the belly swelling up.

And this mentally is almost in minds of most people in the village that contraceptive pills does not dissolve in the stomach when one takes them and this makes a lot of women in the village to hate any family planning method.

However, upon arriving at my first house in the village I was asked what I was in need of the CBDA continued explaining then without knowing the intension they were asking me I wanted to start introducing myself.

However I was wondering why asking me since they know me better in all villages in my catchments area not knowing that it was my fate.

From nowhere I saw the husband to the woman I was talking to coming from a northern direction from where I was standing and to my surprise the husband started shouting before he even reached where I was standing saying should leave the premises before he reached there otherwise he was to do anything to me and he continued saying that I should not tempt to go to any house in the village.

In no time I left the premises and rushes home.

After a day I investigated why chased like that on that day yet in the village their alter [thereafter?] I was told the incident that is why I requested for the function so that people can hear themselves about contraceptive pills that they do dissolve in the stomach otherwise the woman died of a certain disease not due to pills hence that's the function.

And I even think that the function was indeed helpful and due to the long distance I had to travel I left for home.

THE END