

**VERBAL AUTOPSIES:
INTERVIEWER'S COMMENTS**

Typed by Henry Doctor
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BALAKA CAUSES OF DEATH

QUESTION D4a—THE ILLNESS/DISEASE THAT LED TO THE RESPONDENT’S DEATH.

The following 13 descriptions are meant to be detailed accounts from relatives and neighbors about the deceased deaths. The information given is supposed to be consistent with the prompted accounts from the main questions. However, in most cases the information was not as detailed as expected. Only few informants gave detailed accounts.

1. FEMALE RESPONDENT ID # 11057 / INFORMANT MALE

Refused

2. MALE RESPONDENT ID # 17006 / INFORMANT FEMALE

He was vomiting regularly and was not diagnosed with any disease at the hospital. Initially he was complaining of chest pains and he was feeling as if his chest was on fire. When given food or porridge he vomited instantly, grew thin and died. H

He was admitted to Liwonde hospital and was then referred to Zomba Central Hospital where after being given treatment for 3 months was told to try some traditional medicine. The deceased sought herbs from some African healers but there was no change. He died in Mangochi at a traditional doctor. He was sick for one whole year.

3. MALE RESPONDENT ID # 11064 / INFORMANT FEMALE

He was coughing and he had sores and once had malaria. He died while fit/strong.

4. FEMALE RESPONDENT ID # 11012 / INFORMANT FEMALE

He was suffering from sore throat and he was unable to eat and speak.

5. MALE RESPONDENT ID # 11021 / INFORMANT FEMALE

He drowned in the lake while fishing.

6. MALE RESPONDENT ID # 92009 / INFORMANT FEMALE

At first he had a boil and he was operated then he had diarrhea after some months he started swelling the face, legs, and arms and he was failing to pass urine until the time he died. He also said that he had malaria.

7. MALE RESPONDENT ID # 6011 / INFORMANT FEMALE

The informant said that his uncle was poisoned with termic by his sister. His sister quarreled with her mother so she took termic and took it in maize flour which the mother and the deceased

brother used to eat. The poison victims took almost 6 hours struggling with life and they started opening their bowels. Later they were treated with salty water but did not help and they were taken to the hospital where they died.

8. FEMALE RESPONDENT ID # 9020 / INFORMANT FEMALE

She started experiencing rashes that were mostly on the legs. After one year of seeking medication she felt better. After some time she developed a swollen abdomen and was taken to the hospital. She also had pneumonia and problems such as difficulty breathing.

9. MALE RESPONDENT ID # 91047 / INFORMANT FEMALE

The informant said that the deceased was not sick but he went to visit his relatives in the same village but across a river which is in the same village so by the way back to his home at night he fell into the river and he was swept away by the strong floods. He went missing for 3 days then he was found dead some 5 kilometers away in the other village in the same river.

10. MALE RESPONDENT ID # 92211 / INFORMANT MALE

The informant said that his brother started with swelling of legs and then they took him to the government hospital where doctors found that he had Tuberculosis and anemia. After six months he recovered. He got sick again and he suffered for almost 2 years and the swelling of legs continued together with continuous cough and then he started opening bowels (diarrhea) and then died.

11. FEMALE RESPONDENT ID # 9010 / INFORMANT FEMALE

At first it was fever followed by malaria. Then later she developed diarrhea which was on and off but continued up to her death. During the same period she developed a cough which started as a flu but was serious in the end. She never lost appetite during the course of her illness.

12. FEMALE RESPONDENT ID # 8005 / INFORMANT MALE

My mother-in-law had recurring disease. She started suffering from the disease in 1977 and when she went to the hospital in Balaka, Malosa, and Queens Elizabeth where she was diagnosed with malaria. She went to different hospitals and also traditional healers. She had problems with eating and she was being fed through tubes. When she was feeling a little better sometimes she took orange juices only. She was also found to be anemic, had a stiff neck, and coughing.

13. MALE RESPONDENT ID # 8505 / INFORMANT MALE

He started feeling pain in his limbs and then swelling making him unable to walk. He had diarrhea and later stopped eating. His body was dark in color and sometimes pale and diarrhea was eventually severe that he died of it.

MCHINJI CAUSES OF DEATH

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1. MALE RESPONDENT ID # 95509 / INFORMANT FEMALE

He went to Zambia at his brother’s place for about 3 months as soon as he came back he was complaining of body pains. He was getting very thin. His hair was curled and was coughing too much. He had diarrhea and eventually died. When they referred him to Mkanda Health Center they also referred him to Mchinji District Hospital and they (relatives) were told that he was HIV positive.

2. MALE RESPONDENT ID # 95510 / INFORMANT MALE

At first he was complaining about headache but it was not serious, then later on after suffering headache for one year he started complaining about pain in the eyes for almost another year. Then he lost his sight but by the time he started to complain about the eyes, he was also still complaining about headache. Later on he was taken to the hospital for treatment but at the hospital the doctors did not find any disease. This is the time he started getting weaker and weaker but he did not get thin. He suffered for two years then passed away at home.

3. MALE RESPONDENT ID # 60503 / INFORMANT MALE

The main disease he died with was abdominal pains. He also suffered from coughing, fever, and malaria. He had diarrhea for a long time and he became thin before his death.

4. FEMALE RESPONDENT ID # 88000 / INFORMANT MALE

She died of an accident. A house collapsed and she died on the spot.

5. MALE RESPONDENT ID # 31504 / INFORMANT FEMALE

The disease started with diarrhea. He was passing out stools with blood stains and he did this for a period of one week and then he was taken to the nearest hospital which is at Mkanda Health Center. When the doctors discovered that the problem of diarrhea was still continuing it is when they transferred him to Mchinji hospital and upon reaching the hospital he started vomiting blood together with mucus. The doctors tried their best to serve him but diarrhea and vomiting still continued then it is when the respondent died. He died after spending only three days at the hospital.

6. FEMALE RESPONDENT ID # 31003 / INFORMANT MALE

She died of Tuberculosis and diarrhea.

7. FEMALE RESPONDENT ID # 28002 / INFORMANT FEMALE

She started with headache then she was taken to Mchinji District Hospital. After staying for some weeks she recovered. Then she also suffered from wounds which appeared in her breasts and stomach. She was taken to Mchinji District Hospital where she stayed for one month. Nothing changed again and she was taken to Namitondo Health Center where she stayed for two weeks without any improvement. She was then taken to Kamwendo Private Hospital and while there some wounds also appeared in her lungs and also in the mouth. Then she was taken again back to Mchinji District Hospital where she died.

8. FEMALE RESPONDENT ID # 85006 / INFORMANT FEMALE

At first it looked like malaria and she was having fever each and every day for about two months. Later she developed diarrhea and this did not stop until her death. She was a little bit weak because of this. She started going to the primary health clinic a month later because she was taking medicine on her own from the shop. After about three months she started coughing. This was the time when she went to the government hospital. The problem was that she was not tested for anything either TB or any blood test for any disease. She was just given pain killers and she started getting thin little by little. The illness that she was complaining each and every day was fever. The worst thing was that she lost her appetite hence she was not eating enough. She also had some skin rashes and after one month she started complaining about backache. She had difficulties when bending and it was a serious case. She was also vomiting some days. She also had difficulties with breathing.

9. FEMALE RESPONDENT ID # 71002 / INFORMANT FEMALE

At first she showed signs of malaria and was vomiting. She had no appetite and was also feeling colds and went to Mchinji District Hospital where she died.

10. FEMALE RESPONDENT ID # 38002 / INFORMANT MALE

She was pregnant and went to Mchinji District Hospital for delivery. She had complications in giving birth so she was operated on. After giving birth her stomach started to swell. The doctors told them (relatives) that there was nothing they could do to help her so they were discharged from the hospital. The relatives of the deceased thought that her husband was going out with other women and that was the reason for her problem. They thought of going to traditional doctors who told them that the deceased had been bewitched by her relatives. He said that something was put in her stomach and the stomach was swelling. The husband thought that it was something to do with the operation so that went back to the hospital unfortunately the doctors said that she was okay. They returned to the witch doctor and the conditions for the deceased got worse. She stopped visiting the toilet. The doctor said that it was *kamatira* (swollen stomach with cessation in bowel movement). She started getting thinner and thinner, coughing, and pneumonia. Then she died.

11. FEMALE RESPONDENT ID # 53000 / INFORMANT FEMALE

She was coughing, losing weight and the face was swelling. Also the hands were swelling. She said she died of Tuberculosis. She had pneumonia before then Tuberculosis. Also she had problems or difficulties in breathing.

12. FEMALE RESPONDENT ID # 56010 / INFORMANT FEMALE

She was complaining of pneumonia and malaria. She was suffering from malaria almost each and every month. When she went to the hospital at Mchinji District Hospital where she was referred they told her that she was anemic. She was also thin due to the long illness.

13. FEMALE RESPONDENT ID # 79000 / INFORMANT FEMALE

She died of severe malaria accompanied by serious headache. According to the informant the deceased died because she did not follow what their ancestors/deceased relative said. She is Christian but still believes in spirits. Before her death she was shivering a lot and she could hardly speak. When this happened the relatives believed that it was not the malaria alone but something else in connection with the spirits. When they consulted the spirit man she started feeling better but later on ignored all the instructions from the spirit man. She was told that if she does not obey what he does it will be difficult for her to get better. And she eventually died because she did not follow what she was told.

14. MALE RESPONDENT ID # 39500 / INFORMANT FEMALE

The deceased had a wound on his leg. Later he had some diarrhea and all his ailments were recurring. He suffered from the same ailments for more than a year. While he was young it has been reported that he had epilepsy. At the time of his death he was very thin.

15. MALE RESPONDENT ID # 39503 / INFORMANT MALE

He had a cough and he went to the hospital at Mkanda for treatment but things did not get any better. Then he went to the same health center at Mkanda and he was asked to bring sputum. When he got back home his whole body started swelling. The swelling got worse and he failed to go to the hospital with his swollen body. He developed pneumonia and got thin until his death.

16. FEMALE RESPONDENT ID # 39511 / INFORMANT MALE

The deceased had whooping cough for about four years. He also was suffering from boils and blisters on his arms and legs especially on his lower arms and lower legs. He later on developed pneumonia and died.

17. FEMALE RESPONDENT ID # 81005 / INFORMANT MALE

She complained about coughing and then took her to the hospital. She was given TB treatment but did not finish the drugs. She started getting thin and developed pneumonia. She stopped eating the day before her death.

18. MALE RESPONDENT ID # 61500 / INFORMANT MALE

He was suffering from malaria at first. The relatives took him to the hospital and he was treated. He was feeling better for almost one week and got sick again. He was taken to a herbalist. He developed pneumonia and was shivering. He was feeling very cold and we took him to the hospital where he was admitted for two weeks. While at the hospital he started coughing and was later diagnosed with Tuberculosis. He was admitted for two months without any change—he died.

19. FEMALE RESPONDENT ID # 76009 / INFORMANT MALE

She accidentally swallowed a two tsetse flies and was taken to Guillime hospital by her husband. She was not cured and was brought back to another hospital, Kambadekha. She vomited one tsetsefly but the other never came out. Then she started feeling headache and from Guillime she was taken to Mchinji District Hospital. After staying there for few months she died.

20. MALE RESPONDENT ID # 38500 / INFORMANT MALE

He started coughing. In the beginning it was just coughing then things got worse. He coughed more and more and went to the hospital but still it did not help. He started having trouble with coughing, loss of appetite, and fever. In the last days before his death he complained about body pains and malaria. He then started to faint and remained in coma for almost 10 hours daily. He died of malaria.

21. MALE RESPONDENT ID # 67502 / INFORMANT FEMALE

He got sick and went to the hospital on 22nd April, 2001. After coming from the hospital he started complaining about his health. He slept and was awakened by the wife still complaining of no change. He was taken to Kaigwazanga clinic where they took specimen for a TB test. On a Sunday he went to a private hospital in Mchinji where he was found suffering from pneumonia. He stayed there for and was later taken home where she died on 2nd May.

22. MALE RESPONDENT ID # 71500 / INFORMANT MALE

He committed suicide. He hanged himself in his garden and no one knows why he killed himself. He was found three days later.

23. FEMALE RESPONDENT ID # 27003 / INFORMANT FEMALE

She started coughing and went to Mkanda hospital where she was told she had TB. She was not admitted she was just given medication as an outpatient. Things started changing as she was receiving the treatment. She became weak almost each and every day. She complained about

pneumonia and was still coughing. She also had fever most of the time. After eleven months she said that she had malaria which she eventually died of.

24. FEMALE RESPONDENT ID # 42007 / INFORMANT MALE

She died of Songeya (a sexually transmitted disease). But she also had coughing, diarrhea and also malaria. But it took 2 years while she was still suffering from these diseases. She got thin and eventually died.

25. MALE RESPONDENT ID # 56504 / INFORMANT FEMALE

He had body aches and pains for a week and later complained of heart attack during the same week. Then the wife cooked porridge on the morning of his death. She used white flour to cook the porridge and when he ate he vomited blood and mucus for a few minutes and died. Other people believed that his death was a result of drunkenness of *kachasu* (local beer) which affected his liver.

RUMPHI CAUSES OF DEATH

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1. FEMALE RESPONDENT ID # 132009 / INFORMANT MALE

Well, it all started with relapsing fever combined with headache. Later on she started coughing. After diagnosis at Rumphi District Hospital she was found to have Tuberculosis. A month before he death she was in problems with purging. There after she was very weak and later died.

2. MALE RESPONDENT ID # 132520 / INFORMANT MALE

The victim was sick because he was beaten to death during the 1999 political riots.

3. MALE RESPONDENT ID # 135500 / INFORMANT FEMALE

The deceased suffered mostly from coughing, diarrhea, persistent fever, general body weakness and loss of appetite. Before his death he became very thin.

4. MALE RESPONDENT ID # 113512 / INFORMANT MALE

At first they did not know the disease he suffered. So they went to Lilongwe Central Hospital where they told him that he had cancer. He was admitted for almost one month and then sent back home still suffering. Later on they went to Livingstonia Mission Hospital and also admitted for a month. At Livingstonia it is where he died.

5. MALE RESPONDENT ID # 144504 / INFORMANT FEMALE

He had something which was swollen in the stomach. He was supposed to go to the hospital so they could remove it but it took long without having the swollen thing taken. He died thereafter without having the thing taken.

6. MALE RESPONDENT ID # 106509 / INFORMANT MALE

He was involved in a car accident. The car overturned and he died at Rumphi District Hospital.

7. MALE RESPONDENT ID # 112514 / INFORMANT MALE

At first he had a stroke when he went to Mzuzu Hospital. The leg and hand were paralyzed and the mouth changed direction. He was feeling a little fine. Then he was attacked by blood pressure in the end. It was at night and when we tried to speak to him and he could not speak.

We took him to Mhujuru Health Center and they did not have medicine. They told us to take him to Rumpi District Hospital but we went to Ekwendeni Hospital because we thought that Rumpi Hospital had no hospital. He died at Ekwendeni Hospital in Mzimba District.

8. FEMALE RESPONDENT ID # 132019 / INFORMANT MALE

It was in 1998 when her body started to show some weakness, that is, diarrhea, non-stop coughing, difficult breathing and skin rashes around the neck. As a result she became very thin and always she felt fever.

9. MALE RESPONDENT ID # 101512 / INFORMANT FEMALE

He was complaining of leg pains that later became swollen. He had also ulcers that lead him to death.

10. FEMALE RESPONDENT ID # 121008 / INFORMANT FEMALE

After she was divorced she found a new sexual partner and later she developed shingles all over her body. She was taken to Rumpi hospital as an out-patient. She stayed there for almost a year since she was found to have Tuberculosis. She came home and she was doing her maize selling business. Then she later started diarrhea and frequent malaria attacks. Almost at the same time she was like a mad person and she could not respect her parents and even her secret parts. She also became very thin and since she was not eating anything she was given. Her elder sister later found that she had wounds and swellings in her genital parts. She was also complaining of pneumonia.

11. FEMALE RESPONDENT ID # 142006 / INFORMANT FEMALE

The deceased had a swelling under her foot. She suddenly collapsed after two days and was taken to Rumpi hospital. She was admitted for three days and got discharged upon reaching homes. She recovered for two days and the swelling came back. They went to the hospital for the second time and was admitted for three weeks. She was discharged again but she was not fully recovered. She just stayed at home for three days before she died.

12. FEMALE RESPONDENT ID # 102015 / INFORMANT MALE

The informant says that after the deceased started suffering they went with her to the hospital where after the doctor's examination the result was that they found no infection in the deceased body. So they came back home and consulted different herbalists who gave herbs to the deceased but no change was seen. After a few months the respondent died.

13. MALE RESPONDENT ID # 145501 / INFORMANT FEMALE

The person died of stroke. When he was coming from his mother's funeral it's when he started showing out that he is not okay. He did not even take an hour. He was not at all that sick when he was coming from the graveyard. When his wife wanted to see him where he stayed with his

friends only to find out that he was lying down. They took him to the hospital where he was pronounced dead. The clinical officer also said that he had high blood pressure. He said that his vein that carries blood to the brain was broken so the blood could not go to the brain.

14. FEMALE RESPONDENT ID # 118007 / INFORMANT MALE

She suffered from Meningitis and some people said it was stroke. She just started from nowhere that she is feeling headache around 1pm. So she was taken to hospital around 3 pm. Because of transport problem they took her in an ox cart to Mhujju clinic. From there they called an ambulance from Rumphu Boma to pick them at Mhujju. She died around 3am. The informant also said that the respondent quarreled with a friend so may be some kind of witchcraft was involved.

15. FEMALE RESPONDENT ID # 134036 / INFORMANT MALE

What started was headache and then diarrhea, body weakness, and lastly she had a cough and died. These diseases were on and off and they made her very thin before death. The relatives said that the deceased complained that her husband was the one who gave her AIDS.

16. FEMALE RESPONDENT ID # 136006 / INFORMANT FEMALE

Pneumonia and this led to swelling of the whole leg. Within one month the deceased went to Karinga district hospital where she was receiving medical assistance. She was discharged within one week and went home where she was also getting help from a herbalist. She was later taken to Karonga hospital again where she died. It took one month from the time she got sick until her death.

17. FEMALE RESPONDENT ID # 100014 / INFORMANT MALE

The deceased was complaining of headache. After that she had diarrhea. She was later diagnosed with Tuberculosis and then she got very thin.

18. MALE RESPONDENT ID # 109506 / INFORMANT FEMALE

The man had swollen face, feet, and arms. We looked for medicine to treat it but it did not work. We went to a magician and we were told that he was bewitched. He gave us charms which he also sued. But later we discovered that there was no change. We went to a clinic (Kasambala Medical Center) and they did not find any disease. Since there was no change we went to Mhujju Clinic where they collected sputum to diagnose and later we were told it is anemia. They sent him to Rumphu hospital and we stayed for only two days and he died. But there he was just receiving medicine and no blood transfusion.

19. MALE RESPONDENT ID # 122506 / INFORMANT FEMALE

He had pneumonia and fever for one month. He then had malaria for one week. He also was passing out bloody urine for two months and he was taken to the hospital where he was found to

be anemic. He was given blood and started feeling better until he started having difficulties with his breathing. He was diagnosed with asthma and was undernourished. He started getting thin and lost body fluids and later on he had pains when urinating. He was failing to walk and one day he was in coma and was discharged though he was very weak. He died after 2 days.

20. MALE RESPONDENT ID # 102513 / INFORMANT FEMALE

He was suffering from Meningitis but at first he was feeling headache and stiffness of the neck and he was failing to look sideways of the head.

21. MALE RESPONDENT ID # 117503 / INFORMANT MALE

Before he died he had diarrhea, headache and he had sores in his body. He was vomiting every time he took some food. He had a cough and was feeling very cold most of the times.

22. FEMALE RESPONDENT ID # 132026 / INFORMANT FEMALE

She started fever and then malaria. After she recovered from a month she had some signs of herpes zoster (shingles) for about a week and they disappeared. Later on skin rashes and excessive diarrhea accompanied with blood and vomiting. But most of the time she felt headache and stomachache. When they went with her to the hospital they discovered that she had Tuberculosis. She grew thin and later died.

23. MALE RESPONDENT ID # 134502 / INFORMANT FEMALE

He only suffered from pneumonia for about a week and then he died. He had pneumonia from the left leg up to the heart. The wife believes that this was due to witchcraft. She said he could not breathe normally and after two days he died.

24. MALE RESPONDENT ID # 140502 / INFORMANT FEMALE

He was complaining of chest pains which was mistaken to be pneumonia until the medical personnel diagnosed it to be Tuberculosis which he eventually died of. In addition, he also had continuous diarrhea.

25. FEMALE RESPONDENT ID # 141011 / INFORMANT FEMALE

She was complaining about headache and she was not eating. She could not walk or stand a week before she died. She was too shy when you looked at her. People have been saying it was AIDS. She lost her husband some months ago before her death. People have been saying the husband too died of AIDS. She was very thin when she died.