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13-06-2006 Nsomba Village

Nsomba village meeting 13-06-06

People who attended the meeting 35, 12 males, 14 females and 9 children.

After we introduced ourselves and the project and what we are going to be doing, we gave them a chance of asking us questions. So these are some of the questions that were asked.

- Why is it that we are targeting the same people that have been visited in the past years?
- How do you select people to get into this study?
- How are you going to assist those people who are not in the study but they want to be tested?
- Some people who were in the study but died, those places, who is taking that place?
- How are you going to assist those who are positive, are you going to give the ARV's?

14-06-2006 Chipazi village

It was in Chiwawa village where I met this respondent, a female, approximate age 40. It was just after noon she was busy cooking lunch for the husband who was at the field cultivating ground nuts. She was happy to see me, it was on the 14th of June 2006. The respondent asked if I could come while the husband is around, I also gave her info about what we the counselors are doing.

Then she asked me a question that "What have you brought this time? If you haven't brought the bottle tops around this time, then count me out, I will not participate."

I had to inform her about what we the VCT group will be doing and that the lotto thing is not there.*

*The previous round of MDICP had a lottery system offering cash rewards to respondents who came back for their test results.

15-06-2006

Chiwawa village where I meet a couple, man approximately 40yrs-45 yrs, the woman in late 30's. It was in the afternoon the place looked poor. It showed that they don't have money. I noted that my respondent was crippled she could move but with difficulty, then there was the husband who was also crippled.

We talked first of all the introduction of the study on the VCT part. Then I was asked why don't I do like what those who visited them in 2004. He told me like this. "We are very happy with your story. But why don't you just ask the question without testing blood and go. Because we were told that you are giving options on whether one wants to get tested and receive money. So as for us, we choose to receive the money. But about HIV/AIDS, then that is another different story."

Then we proceeded with our session. They felt so good to know their status by looking at their actions. The woman moved and sat close to me and asked me this way, "Are you telling me the truth that I am HIV negative?" Then the husband repeated what I told them during the post-test counseling on how the results will be.

16-06-2006

It was in Uyinge village where I met my respondent. It was just after twelve o'clock and he was just coming from helping some guys who were building someone's house. Must be around 25 yrs old. He informed me that he had a test and would like to have it today. "I want you to test my blood because yesterday at the meeting you said that one would learn the results of the test at the same time. This is why I want to have my blood tested. But you should also tell me properly of what we should be telling other people concerning this HIV testing so that they should also know about their health status."

It was in Uyinge village where I met a man whose age estimate may be in the early 40's. He has been married for almost 4 times. He grew up in town, went to school and he had good knowledge on HIV and Edzi issues. We discussed about how one can protect himself and his family. Respondent wanted to know [about] our test kit. He asked me the Question in this way, "What are these test kits testing - is it the virus or the antibodies?"

When I informed him that we test the anti bodies he said had you failed this, I would have said you guys are cheating us. Then he said: "How many people have you tested HIV positive in this village? Because there are a lot of people in this village who are HIV positive."

21 June 2006

It was in Nyasulu village on the 21 June 2006 where I met my respondent, she was very happy to see us and she stated that she and the husband had already discussed about the test. Respondent is around 42 years.

She told me how people who have Aids look like. She says that all the time we come, there is a new test and new things. On your testing materials, are you testing for the virus or you are testing the immune testing? If you could not explain properly, I could say that you are liars because there is not a machine in our country that tests the HIV/AIDS virus. Why are you always bringing new test kits every time you come? They can give us diseases. What about those we were inserting in our private parts?* Where are they? Why

are they not found in hospitals? I told her why these things are not available in hospitals, because some are found in hospitals while some are not.

**In the previous MDICP round in 2004, vaginal swabs were taken from female respondents to test for sexually transmitted infections.*

3 July 2005

Positani Village meeting

54 people attended the meeting of which 27 were children below the ages of 12 years to 2 years, 18 women attended the village meeting and men who could sit, listen then go. We introduced ourselves, then the research including what we intend to be doing. After informing the people all about HIV/AIDS and testing process we informed them to ask all the questions that they have.

Here is a summary of some of the questions that were being asked:

- When did AIDS begin/start?
- And where did it come from?
- Agogo anza akuti edzi kale kun alibe koma masiku ano chifukwa chari?
<CHICHEWA: Grandmother tells me that AIDS has not there in the past, but these days why?>
- Kodi nanga munthu nzako atapanga ngozu ndiye akutuluka magazi ndiye ulike mapepara kodi unza twa...<CHICHEWA: if your friend has made an accident and is bleeding how can you assist your friend?>

These were some of the questions that were being asked, but also the outcome of the people it was not all that good because most of the people didn't attend the meeting. It seems that most people were not told that there was a meeting. The chief also didn't show interest in the meeting. This also contributed to the poor turn up of the respondents.

5 July 2006. Mkono Village.

I met my respondent around 8am. He was waiting for me as I had booked an appointment with him. I greeted him and informed him that I was one of those doing the research and also that I was there to give him information about our research and that we are also providing VCT.

He then informed me that I was welcome to do all that I have with me. I started with the consent form which he said he was understood all the details in the consent form and that he is going to take part in the research study. I asked my respondent what it means when we say living with hope. He then signed the consent.

I then informed him what we will be covering in our session starting from introduction, pre-test, testing and post-test counseling. He answered me that he was ready to take part.

I proceeded by asking him what he already knows about HIV/AIDS.

He answered me this way: Living with hope means that a person who has known how his/her sero status (health status) is meaning that a person who has known that he/she has AIDS virus or not. That is how one can protect him or herself from further multiplying the virus or further spreading the virus. I should not waste your time but I was found HIV + in the year 2004 when Let's Chat [MDICP] tested me using oral swab. He told me this while he was smiling.

He continued to narrate his story by informing me when he was tested for the second time at Balaka Hospital after he had some sores over his body (he showed me the scars and the remaining sores.)

Then he said, when a person has been found with the HIV, he or she must make sure that he/she should eat a balanced diet meal; should also not live in anxiety or fear and engage in physical exercises. I am taking the ARV drugs, that's why you have found me.

He then told me that the main ways of contracting the virus is through unprotected sex, by using instruments that get [in] contact with blood, and mother to child transmission.

I asked him on how he gets rid of his anxiety or fears?

I get rid of my anxiety by chatting with my friends and also by talking even with my wife.

Now, how can a person who is HIV negative supposed to live?

A person who is HIV negative is supposed to avoid careless sexual behaviors and if he/she fails to endure from sexual pleasures, he/she should use condoms. I want to know how does the HIV virus enter our body? I want to know.

I informed him that the virus gets in our body through blood, body fluids, and puss. While we are having unprotected sex with an infected person, contact blood that is infected, if we have got cuts or sores that are open. If you have never used a condom, there is need for the health personnel to explain to you on how you can use a condom. We proceeded with our session. He gave me information of all the details of testing positive living up to the time.

I asked him if he was ready to get tested which he said yes. I went on conduct the test and proceeded with the questionnaire. Then I gave him the results which were positive. He received the results with no shock. He was still smiling. I asked him how he was feeling. He answered that he was okay.

We talked about positive living and where does he get support. He informed me that after every two months he goes to Mtambo hospital where he gets his ARVs, and that when he

is feeling OK he goes and buys tomatoes which he sells in order to help himself and his family. He also told me that he uses condoms with his wife as one way of preventing further infection.

We talked on personal issues and when I was about to leave, he called his wife and informed her about my departure. This was part of what I heard and experienced with my respondent.

6 July 2006. Mkono Village.

Student age 21 male. My respondent welcomed me, then he selected a place where he could sit. I introduced myself and told him my role, then we proceeded with the consent form. After reading the consent form, he asked me this (translated from Chichewa): Your letter states that a person can take part in this research project, however the same letter also gives liberty to a person not to take part in this research. Why is the letter saying this? I explained to him that every person has the right to participate or not to participate in this research. But this applies to those who are on the list of this research project.

We then proceeded with our session, when I asked him why he wanted to get tested he said that (translated from Chichewa): I would like to know how the inside body is, this is so because I have been moving with two girls without the use of any kind of protection. I asked what these girls do for a living. One of them is a school girl, but the one whom I got so suspicious with is the one whose work was just to move around. (*This expression in Chichewa simply means a commercial sex worker*).

I probed on "Ntchito yake ndi yoyenda yenda"<CHICHEWA: her work is just to move around> and he wanted to say that the girl mentioned is a commercial sex worker.

We discussed more on HIV/AIDS issues. This is where he told me that his teachers at school talked about HIV/AIDS in their social studies class where he learned about VCT. He told me that he knows that one can go to a health center where he/she can get tested for HIV, but not that one can get VCT at his/her home (translation from Chichewa): I know that a person can receive advice on VCT at the hospital but I never knew that a person can receive counsel right at his home.

I then informed him that door to door VCT is part of the research. He asked me how many have you tested in your homes and how many have you done at your tent? I told him that since we started door to door VCT only one respondent has had VCT at our tent with one of our counselors but myself I have not done it.

I then asked him why he asked me that. He informed me that it is good to have it at home. That is okay from your home because you don't feel comfortable when you are going to the VCT room; everyone who sees you thinks that you are HIV + or you are looking for condoms.

I asked him if he has ever been at VCT clinic. He says that he has never been there but from what his fellow friends told him, he was afraid to go there. But now he knows what really happens at VCT clinic he will go there to confirm his status after 3 months.

10 July Mdoka Village

Respondent female, aged 42 years. She was very cheerful because she asked me, how was my house and where was I staying. Then we proceeded with our session. I read her the consent and then she signed. I introduced her to VCT and informed her of my role.

Then I asked her if she had any concerns of getting infected with HIV.

She said: I have fear because my husband travels a lot so I don't know what happens whenever he goes, as you know men.

I probed more by asking, what does your husband do? He sells cotton and he goes and sells cotton in town where he spends three of four days and still more- he drinks beer. So you know people who drink beer, they don't know what they do.

I asked her if she has ever talked of the risk behavior that the husband is in.

He doesn't want to talk about sex. He says that whenever he may want to have another wife, he will say it.

Have you and your husband talked about having a test? Yes, but he said yesterday that if I should have the test when you come and that he will after I have done the test.

I asked her why not to do it together. She responded this way, He's the husband who says it all. Who am I to refuse?

I tried to probe more to see if she was ready to have the test on her own will, but she still said that the husband is the one; he has told her to do it.

I asked her another question about family planning to see if I could get positive answers to my questions. Have you ever gone for family planning? And what do they say about HIV/AIDS? She failed to answer.

Then I knew that the husband just insisted that she should have the test. I continued with asking questions although I could not get good answers up to the time we conducted the test.

Then when the results were out she took a good look at the testing kits then she laughed and shouted some words that I didn't get because they were in Yao. She had a big smile on her face. She asked me: Are you telling the truth that I don't have? If he comes, we will not sleep together unless he goes for a blood test. If he refuses, then there is nothing for him here. This she said it with a concerned look on her face.

Then I asked her what time does she think that I should visit the husband because they were to be counseled as a couple. She informed me that I should be there the next day around 13-14 hours; he will be around.

11 July 2006 Mdoka village

A man aged 54, he is tall and slim. He welcomed me to his house and brought out two chairs. We found a place where we sat and started to talk about some general talk to build rapport.

Then I introduced myself and where I come from. He told me that I was very welcome and he was ready to hear what I have. I read him the consent and he told me that he understood what I was reading. At the end, as I started asking the questions on the consent, he said [no] to being tested and doesn't want the results. Then he signed the consent. I asked him if we could talk more about HIV/AIDS issue. He gave me the go ahead.

What do you know about the HIV virus?

He answered me this: It's a virus that causes AIDS.

What is AIDS? AIDS is a disease.

I then gave him the meaning of HIV/AIDS. HIV is a virus that destroys the body's immune system of the body, a person starts suffering from different disease. So because of the syndrome that comes, the result of all the diseases is called AIDS.

He repeated what I told him and said now he understood.

Then I asked him what he knows about AIDS.

He said that he knows that AIDS is a disease that kills people. These days he told me that he is married to three wives and that his third wife is the one who is our respondent.

(translated from Chichewa) But you know that this issue of AIDS that you are talking about, I don't want to hear anything about it because even the Quran (Muslim's holy book) says that a person has the right to marry many wives. And that the Lord God is the one who created everything. If God wrote that I shall die of AIDS, who am I to oppose him. I have already explained that I have three wives so this one (wife who has participated) is the one who would like to have me tested, but I, myself, do not want to have blood test. This is so because my other wife has not participated and moreover this wife is the most recent (last). I don't want to hear again anything concerning AIDS because I do not want to disappoint my wives who haven't taken any part in the HIV test. If there is anything else you can talk but if it is about AIDS, don't dare to say.

Because he told me not to talk anymore about HIV/AIDS, I asked him if he was going to take part in the questionnaire. Happily he said I can proceed with the questionnaire. After I have done the questionnaire, he asked me if I was through. I said yes.

Then he said (Chichewa translated) Don't you work til late evening just like the other friends do? I thought that you are lying when you said that we will only chat for one hour.

We chat about this at the end he said this (Chichewa translated): I cannot have my blood tested unless all my wives tell me to have my blood tested. On that case, then I can have my blood tested. I asked him, have you ever asked them (wives) about testing. No I have never asked my wives about this and I don't want to talk about it to them. But if they can.

From the way I saw this man and heard his concerns, he was just a refusal who didn't want the test, but made excuses about his wives. He even escorted me a bit and gave me some oranges and he joked as he was doing so.

13 July Positani Village

Around 10am, [house with] sun baked bricks, a man aged 88 years. I introduced myself to the respondent who said that he was too old to have HIV/AIDS but wanted to take part because his name was on the list. We talked of how many children he has, then we went on to consenting. After this my respondent signed the consent and accepted to be tested.

I first of all asked him a general question about HIV/AIDS. What do you know about HIV/AIDS. (translated) HIV is a virus that causes a disease that is called AIDS. And this disease is spread through careless sexual behavior. All of this was said in Yao.

We proceeded by sharing basic information about HIV/AIDS. He knew that I could understand Yao but I couldn't speak, so he sometimes talked in Chichewa for me to understand very clearly.

I wanted to know his risk behavior by asking him this question. If you are tested today and your results are positive, where do you think you got the virus from?

(translated) From what we have discussed between you and me, I may get infected with the virus because of the use of sharp pointed things and blades which are mostly in contact with blood. This is so because I stopped having sex a long time back. I have two wives, however our marriages fell apart. So I cannot get this virus through sexual intercourse, neither did I get it through mother to child transmission and this one is most unlikely. But probably through blood.

I asked him why he said that.

(translated) This is so because I use razor blades when cutting off finger nails and when shaving off my beard. We continued.

On risk reduction, I wanted to know how he is going to act on this. He said, (translated) from today onwards, I will be using my own razor blade for shaving and my own needle.

[During] test preparation he said to me that he was ready and that he can easily tell me when the results are out either positive/negative. I asked him to explain (translated) when only one line appears from the testing devices that will mean that you don't have the virus that causes AIDS.

I reminded him that we only test antibodies for HIV (translated) we only test the soldiers (antibodies) of HIV and AIDS is a disease. He answered me "elo! Elo!" meaning Yes! Yes!

After doing the questionnaire he read the results and told me that he was nonreactive (translated) only one single line appears on the two places, and the line is red. This means that I do not have the virus that causes AIDS. He shouted in Yao to his children and grandsons who were sitting under a mango tree. They laughed and said (grandson translated) Is it true that the big man has been tested HIV negative? I too just laughed.

It was during the post-test counseling where I found out something strange. After we have discussed how he is going to take care for himself and the information he is going to give his grandsons and daughters, he said this to me, give me those condoms. I asked him why he wanted the condoms since he is sexually inactive. (translated) Give me the condoms. Why do you ask so many questions? I gave him the condoms. He started laughing and bid me a farewell.

17 July 2006 Playe Village

A man aged 22 years, tall, with funny haircut, with a sun baked brick house.

The respondent found me at his house because he was coming from the fishing lake Mkhalipe. I asked him if he was comfortable to talk to me. He said yes and he found a place where we went and sat there.

I introduced myself to my respondent and told him why I was there. He told me that he knew that one of the days I will visit him because he said that the wife told him about us since he has just joined the research this year because of his marriage to his wife who was already in the sample.

I read him the consent form which he said he understood clearly. At the end I asked him the two questions and he refused to get tested. I wanted just to know why he refused to get tested and I asked (Chichewa translation) "Why have you refused to have your blood tested? Can we share? (Chichewa translation) "Thank you, as for me, since my adolescence, I only had one woman who is my wife and on top of that, my late father told me that a man should have one wife."(Chichewa translation) "One should not get out of

his house and sleep with other women because that type of marriage does not last." Then we proceeded with the questionnaire.

24th July 2006 Mkhowe village

Respondent aged 48 but looking to be in his late 30s. Hee was busy working on the sawing machine. We greeted each other then I introduced myself to him, my role in the research and the purpose of my visit. He said that whatsoever I brought he will receive it. We continued our chat after I have seen that he was relaxed I introduced him to the consent form. He paid attention and asked:

In the consent form, you have said that when a person has been tested HIV positive, he/she will not be assisted with medicine. Why is it like that?

I explained to him the reason why we are not giving drugs to those found positive. I informed him that not all those found positive should start getting ARV drugs because of the stages one has to undergo before starting ARV treatment. He signed the consent. We proceeded with our session. He asked me one question which he said troubles his mind. Why is it that you find that in other families one is positive and the other is not? How is it possible that one person out of a couple can HIV positive while the other can be HIV negative, yet they are a family?

Not all people have the same type of blood, so it may happen that the other one who is negative is on window period. But if it's after a year or more still the other partner is non reactive, then the blood type may be resistant to the virus, not many cases in our country. Researchers are still trying to find out why. We continued our session until the end of everything. He told me about his daughters and that he will encourage them to have HIV test.

26th July 2006 Ogasi villge

A young man aged 21 form one student short in height but muscled. We talked of how school is going these days, and what he wants to be doing in future and what his hobbies are. Then I introduced the consent, to which he said that:

I have really understood the facts that have been stated in the consent form.

We talked about how one gets infected ways of preventing, then on the topic of risk assessment he said:

I have never slept with a woman but if I have the HIV virus, then may be I got it from the materials that were used in the initiation camp.

I wanted to hear more from him, but he told me that:

I cannot tell you what happens at the initiation camps. Just do your job here. Test my blood and ask me questions about initiation.

I didn't ask much. I continued with the session. After questionnaire and the results are ready I [saw] his face looked so sweaty and his breath was high. I asked him if he was comfortable to see the results, this time he didn't talk, he just nodded his head saying yes. Then he jumped when he saw that he was negative. Then he talked a bit more then he said he was very happy to see the results and will encourage his friends at school to go for HIV test.