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I heard other men speaking to each other about sexual intercourse. They were saying that when they went to Milaiyo District to sell their fish, they slept in a rest house. There, they met with two prostitutes. And these two men decided to have sex with them. But the prostitutes were demanding K200 each and this was last year 2001.

These men were speaking at the rally that was made by President Balali Muluzi when they were waiting for the president to arrive at that place. They were speaking many issues about sexual partners and AIDS. So, they prolonged by saying that at first they were not satisfied with the demand of K200. To them as fish mongers/sellers K200 was a lot of money so they said that they tried to negotiate with those prostitutes but their negotiation was in vain. And they decided to go and sleep.

They talked to each other again for them to go and renegotiate about the demand and when they found those prostitutes they demanded now K150 and these men agreed to pay K150 each. And they took with them the prostitutes to their respective rooms.

So, what interested me was about the story concerning a condom. They said that before they removed their clothes ready for sexual contact, every one of them in their respective rooms had got a similar problem. Each prostitute told her sexual partner to use a condom.

So these men were speaking to each other that they disliked using a condom during sexual intercourse because a person, especially a man, doesn't feel comfortable. It takes time for a man to start ejaculation. And the other man agreed with what his friend was speaking.

They prolonged by saying that if one uses a condom every day for about a week, then small sores develop on the very tip of the penis and if one prolongs using while there are sores, then the sores become septic.

They also said that to them it's nonsense to use a condom while he has paid money to the prostitute and it's better to leave without having sex with them. They said once again that if you put on a condom, the sperm are thrown away instead of entering the woman's body so due to this the woman doesn't feel comfortable either.

They also talked that they heard from other people that a condom can't protect one from getting AIDS or any other sexually transmitted disease because it's not reliable. They said that it has got some microscopic holes at the very tip of the condom and if one pours water in it then it leaks which means that it has some holes.

So they were asking each other that if water leaks what about an HIV virus? It can penetrate easily and enter in the man's urinary tract up to the whole body. So, using a condom does not necessarily mean that you are protected.

So, because the prostitutes were troubling themselves about putting on a condom, so they rejected putting on a condom and they wanted to have bare sexual intercourse with them, but the prostitutes strongly rejected bare sex and the men told the prostitutes to pay back K150 each that they had been given by these men before they were preparing to have sex.

Disappointingly, the men were told that these prostitutes can't pay back the money because it's not their fault. If they saw that they have paid money for nothing, then they should accept to put on a condom and long at last, the men decided to accept putting on a condom because the prostitutes had rejected paying back the money.

Some people were saying that because of high rate of AIDS in this world, it's better to go for an HIV test before they enter marriage because this will help to determine whether the partner is free from HIV whom one wants to get married to. But some were against this decision. They were saying that it's not good to

take a woman or a man whom you have loved to marry for an HIV test. Because if one does this then it really shows that he/she doesn't believe/trust him/her. So it's a disappointing thing to your partner. And they prolonged by saying that if you suspect him/her about having HIV then just leave her/him rather than going to the hospital for an HIV test.

With this issue, Susan let me tell you what happened to a certain family...

There were a man and a woman. Both of them were at Chancellor College for tertiary education. So they promised to marry each other after they graduate.

So, after their graduation, they also arranged with their both parents for engagement ceremony. But, before their engagement, the man decided to take the woman to MACRO for an HIV test.

When they went there, unfortunately, the woman was found positive while the man was found negative. This troubled the man what to do. He decided to hide this to either of their parents. The man decided not to let the woman down but to marry her though she was HIV positive.

After this they did their engagement ceremony, but neither of their parents had known about their HIV status. The man then disclosed this to both parents after two years. He disclosed this because the parents were asking them why they are having no baby in the home since they married each other for about two years by then. And the man told the parents that they will never have a child because his wife is HIV positive.

The parents were shocked and the man's parents said that though they will never have a child but they all of them going to die.

The man said, "I am HIV negative, and since we enter marriage, I have never slept with my wife without a condom. WE are just living like brother and sister while caring for each other. I couldn't have done otherwise because I really love my wife and I will never let her down until she dies. But to tell you the truth, this family is staying, happily and one couldn't believe that one of the couple has got HIV."

The man is teaching at Balaka Secondary School, while the woman is an administrator at Concern Universal Organization.

I also heard other women speaking that the best way of protecting one from getting AIDS is by being faithful to your husband. But the other woman was opposing by saying that suppose you become faithful to the husband but the husband himself is not faithful to the woman. Could we say that you can't get AIDS because you alone are faithful to your husband?

This woman made it clear that you should say that we can protect ourselves by being faithful to each other. The man should be faithful to his wife and the woman should also be faithful to her husband. This is matching.

So, the other woman said, "Do you mean that we shouldn't be faithful to our husbands because we don't know whether our husbands are not faithful to us, or they are faithful?"

The opposer said, "I mean all of us meaning the husband and the wife should be faithful to one another."

They said, "But there are other people, especially those who belong to Jehova's witness, that AIDS can be prevented by hard praising the Lord because for one to be infected with AIDS it's God himself who has wanted that person to be infected. Everything that happens upon one individual comes from God Himself. So, for one to avoid getting AIDS he must praise the Lord very hard with true commitment and as God Himself that He should not deliver him/her to an evil thing and He should not put him/her into temptations. That's all, not putting on a condom."

Other people were speaking that nowadays, we must be faithful to our wives because there is this deadly disease by the name of AIDS. So, if they don't become faithful, they might contract the disease and later on dies and leave their families and children suffering. That is troubling, their children. They also said that in the past there were no deadly diseases that were contracted through sexual intercourse. They were giving examples like gonorrhoea, syphilis, chancrisio, buboes, etc. were present that time but once a person contracted it, he was not dying. While nowadays, once a person has contracted one of the above-mentioned diseases, then he/she is not question mark about having HIV/AIDS. They were saying that nowadays, it's rare to have any one of the above diseases without having HIV/AIDS. These diseases are associated with HIV/AIDS.

They prolonged by saying that in the past, if one has got gonorrhoea, syphilis, buboes, etc., he was not dying because there were treatments for the above diseases. But nowadays, if one has got AIDS, he/she must eat all the chickens he/she has or must spend all the money he/she has because there is no life and is going to die anytime when his time to die is enough. There is no any other means of running away from AIDS, other than being faithful to one another in the marriage and for those without marriage, they can run away from AIDS by not having sex with any lady until he/she enters marriage. And if she/she cannot stay without having sexual intercourse, he/she can use a condom always when he/she would like to have sex with a partner. This is what these people were saying.

There was also a woman who was about thirty-two years of age in my catchment area. This woman was not feeling right. She fell sick. When she had fallen sick many people in my catchment area were speaking various issues about her. The lady firstly reported to have the following signs:

- High temperature
- Chest pains
- Pneumonia
- Rapid breathing
- Severe coughing
- Became thinner than normal
- Sweating during the night

So, people after they had seen her and heard her speaking to them about what she was feeling, when they went to see her they were speaking that this woman has got AIDS. They were concluding this because at first the woman was married to another man who died two years ago. So, people were saying that her husband dies two years ago due to AIDS and now this woman is also suffering from AIDS that killed her husband.

Some people were speaking that it's not AIDS but she had been bewitched by witchcraft because had it been that it is AIDS, she could have been having severe diarrhoea. Others were saying that she was given poisonous medicine through the month during the night while she was asleep by witchcraft. Indeed, many things were spoken upon her illness.

One day, her grandmother came to my house and asked me to go to this patient's house to see what was troubling her. When I went there, I suspected her of having tuberculosis by the name TB pericardial that attacks the spine.

I referred her to Mbela Health Centre for sputum checkup. After she gave sputum specimen for TB test, the results came true with what I was suspecting. The laboratory technician found that the woman was suffering from TB pericardial. She was then admitted for two weeks and later on discharged and given drugs to take while she is at home.

After she had completed her treatment schedule, then the woman is now feeling right and she has become fatter than before and is doing all household work without any problem.

So, those people who were saying that she had got AIDS, they started saying that it wasn't AIDS but TB look now she is right and has become fatter than before. So, one day I heard this woman who was suffering from TB speaking with her friends, that people were pointing fingers upon her saying that she had AIDS, but nowadays they have changed their statement. During that time, many people were not allowing shaking hands with her because they were afraid of contracting AIDS from her. But nowadays, they are shaking hands.

I also heard other men speaking that if a man would like to protect himself from getting AIDS, he should be having sex with young girls about twelve to fifteen years old. They were saying that within this age, these girls are HIV free because at that age, they seem not to have slept with men. They also said that a man cannot get AIDS even if he has sex with these teenagers without putting on a condom.

Another man joined them and said that they were cheating each other. Nowadays teenagers are those who tend to have HIV/AIDS because sugar daddies prefer sleeping with teenagers because they say that they have got tight vulvas. So, many sugar daddies run for these girls, so sugar daddies are the ones who transmit AIDS to the teenagers said the third person.

He prolonged by saying that a wise man should put on a condom whenever she is sleeping with a woman, regardless of age. In so doing a man cannot get AIDS. But if they are cheated by the age of the girls, then they can be caught in the jaws of a crocodile, said the third person.

The other man was speaking when I went to Balaka for a one-week workshop on cholera preparedness. This man was saying that he doesn't believe that there is AIDS in this world. He was speaking when we were having out lunch in a certain motel.

He said that had it been that there is AIDS in this world, he could have been in the grave because he started having sexual intercourse with prostitutes in the bars since 1987. This time he was a smuggler. He was going to Zambia and Mozambique to sell Indian hemp, and when he was coming back to Malawi, he was always stopping at Mchingi Boma and spent a night there with prostitutes.

He said that since his birth, he has never used a condom but he has slept with man prostitutes without using a condom and his body is fit and he doesn't become ill anyhow.

He said that had it been that there is really AIDS, he could have been the host as of now. He prolonged by saying that he got married in 1990 and has got five children and out of five children nobody died. To him, he said that it is a clear testimony that he has got no AIDS.

He also said that out of the prostitutes he had slept with, he remembers twelve and out of twelve, four died in each year consecutively. And he has been hearing that these four had dies due to AIDS and to him he is not believing that because had it been that they died of AIDS, he could have been also died because he said that he had had sex with them for more than four times each, and without any preventive measure.

He said that to him, he knows that they died due to other diseases, not AIDS.

My workmate asked him if he had gone for HIV test and he said he had never gone to the hospital for an HIV test and he will never do that. My workmate told him that maybe he has the virus but it is not yet out to show its signs and symptoms and that man denied strongly that "had it been that I have it, then I could have been falling sick every time," and then said that he is still bearing children and no child has died. So, he is HIV-free.

He said that it will be a wastage of time for him to go to the hospital for HIV test because he doesn't suspect himself for being HIV positive. He said that those who go for HIV test do suspect themselves, that maybe they have got it or else they become sick frequently. And finally, he told us that believe him or not, but there is no AIDS in this world. He associates AIDS with KALIWONDEWONDE. He said that AIDS is just a new name for KALIWONDEWONDE because if we take a person who is called to be an AIDS patients and also take a person who suffers from KALIWONDEWONDE, we will see that they will be the same without any difference, even their signs and symptoms. He said that people of overseas are the ones who call it AIDS to their countries, so when they come here in Africa, they just call it AIDS while we Africans, we call it KALIWONDEWONDE.

Other people do speak that AIDS is spread mostly by the Yao people due to their customs. They said that they do spread AIDS to young boys during the initiation ceremony called JANDO whereby young boys are circumcised.

They said that during circumcising the male initiator (Ngaliba) uses one instrument to circumcise the boys. In so doing if one boy has got HIV, then it can be transmitted to other boys who get circumcised after him.

I also heard other women complaining that people do speak that Yao women also do practice ways that can lead to the transmission of AIDS. They were complaining that people say that they tell the young girls in the initiation ceremony called Msondo that they should go and find a boy or a man to sleep with in order to shake the dust they have come with it from Msondo.

So, these women were against those people who do speak that they tell the girls to shake the dust. They said that they don't tell the young girls to shake the dust. It's not true. They prolonged by saying that at Msondo girls ranging from six to twelve years are those who go so, can they tell a six or seven-year-old girl to have sex with a man? It's impossible.

They said that what they know is that the practice of shaking the dust was practiced in olden days, and not at Msondo, but at the initiation ceremony called Chiputu. They said that at Msondo they just tell the girls

to respect the parents and elderly people and to behave well. Not what people do speak about shaking dust. So, they don't take part in the spread of HIV/AIDS.

I also heard another case at Village Headman Makwana about a certain family. So, here was the case. There was a certain man who married a certain woman. So, a man (husband) was doing business. He was going to the lake around 5 pm to buy some fish for sale. And for him to buy at cheaper prices, he had to spend a night there and come back in the next morning.

So, due to this the wife was sleeping alone in the house. Because the man was going daily to the lake without sleeping in the house, the wife decided to have a sexual partner that had no wife. So, when the man leaves for the lake, the wife had to go and tell her sexual partner that he should come to her house and sleep as her husband be away. So, the sexual partner got used to sleeping with this married woman at her house.

So, other neighbors realized what was going on and they told the husband of this wife that in his house used to sleep a hyena. They called this man a hyena. They called this man a hyena because he was acting as a thief who steals someone's property.

When the husband got that information, he didn't ask his wife, he pretended going to the lake as usual. Around past 10 pm he returned home and he knocked the door and his wife asked about who was knocking the door and the husband replied that it was him. The wife took some minutes without opening the door, then the husband hit the door with his fist while shouting and the wife opened the door.

When the man entered the house he went straight to the bedroom and he found the other man (thief) hiding under the bed.

The husband called other people while shouting and the thief was caught and badly beaten. Then the husband told the wife to take everything that belonged to her and pack and go to her home. The man told his wife that he will not allow her to come again and also told her to go and get married with her sexual partner.

Three days passed and the wife went to the village headman to summon her husband why she was chased during the night. And the husband defended himself by saying that his wife is poisonous. He said, "She wanted to kill me because what was she doing was something inconsiderable. She knew that I was going to the lake and sleep there while I was being bitten by mosquitoes so that she shouldn't starve and suffer from different household problems, and yet she started having sex with other man. That's putting my life on ants (???). So, I don't know, maybe the man whom she was sleeping with is HIV-free or not and I am promising that we will never reconcile because I am afraid of getting the disease."

Then the village headman asked the man if he can forgive his wife, because if their marriage ends, then the wife will suffer both socially and economically. The husband swore that he can't accept that because nowadays the world is dangerous due to this deadly disease AIDS.

The man prolonged that he can't do that because his wife saw that the man is unable to support her. That's why she was having sex with another man. Had it been that she realizes how the husband was supporting her, she couldn't have done that.

Finally, the wife wept and asked her husband to forgive her while tears were coming out of her eyes. But the husband still rejected to forgive her and the marriage ended there.