

Focus group 1

Interviewer: How do you perceive HIV/AIDS?

Respondent 1: Oh: It is very painful. I don't know what to say about this dangerous disease that is killing a lot of people especially those who are not faithful to their partners. The main problem is that it can pass from one person to another. It is said, once you are having the virus you are going to die because your body will be attacked by illness.

Respondent 2: I think HIV/AIDS is a disease suffered by those who do not believe in God or those who are non-Christians. Those who believe in God cannot suffer the disease because they are having one sexual partner. HIV/AIDS is a disease suffered by those who are having multiple partners. People are passing the virus to others because they do not tell others that they are having the virus.

Respondent 3: Do you no why? We blacks are full of jealous. They feel angry when someone had something they don't have. I believe there is no such a thing like HIV virus. People are dying because others are jealous of them. If we can look at this correctly we can see that only those who cannot witch others are the victims of the disease. Those who are witching others are free of the disease.

Interviewer: I would like to know more about being faithful to one's partner.

Respondent 4: Yes, Traditionally men are allowed to marry more than one wife. But God created man and gave him a suitable wife. Having more than one sexual partner is against God's Will. HIV is God's punishment. A person living with HIV/AIDS has sinned or is dirty. If one engages in sexual intercourse with someone who is not his/her life partner, he/she has sinned and can be punished by God with HIV/AIDS. It is clear that those who practice sex for gain are at risk of getting HIV/AIDS because they are sinners.

Respondent 5: I think we can not run away from our traditional way of living. According to our culture a man is allowed to marry as many wives as he can. I don't think the virus can have a chance of entering the marriages if all the partners are faithful. There are many

marriages with many wives but not having an HIV virus. If the man is faithful to the wives and wives faithful to the man, they cannot suffer from HIV/AIDS.

Respondent 1: There is no way we can run away from HIV/AIDS. It is there and killing our relatives. It is a very dangerous disease that can pass from one person to others. It is very bad because there is no cure for the disease. I think the best way is to pray God to heal our land as the scripture says “nothing impossible with God”.

Interviewer: It seems this is a very serious disease. What do you think about it?

Respondent 5: The best thing is to make sure that one prevents himself/herself from infection. A person who is HIV positive is very dangerous because he/she can transmit the virus to someone else. It is not good to be in contact with a person who is HIV positive until he/she is cured. There is a chance that one can get HIV through body fluids. If one is presenting symptoms like diarrhea and loss of weight it is suggestive of HIV/AIDS.

Respondent 2: Men are divorcing their wives due to the illness. I heard we can be tested here at the clinic. If I can know my status I think my life will be in danger. Testing for HIV/AIDS can put your life in danger because you will have to tell your partner. Divorce may result from HIV testing especially if a woman is tested. It is better not to be tested because a lot of problems may result after the test.

Interviewer: Especially if a woman is tested. What more can you tell on this statement?

Respondent 5: Traditionally man is the head of the family with all the powers. Some men are reluctant to visit the hospitals and clinic when they have sexually transmitted infections. Many also blame their woman for STI. The violence that many follow also discourages women from telling partners they have a STI.

Respondent 2: Even at work, women can be discriminated for being HIV positive. Some employers believe that people with HIV are sick, unproductive and will burden their companies. Colleagues may refuse to share office facilities with someone living with HIV for fear of getting the virus.

Respondent 4: Men run away from home when their wives are sick. Women who are sick are treated with indignity. People acts differently to sick people. Sometimes women also run away when their husbands are sick. I think this is because HIV is a sexually transmitted infection with stigma attached to it. People cannot seek help they need because they are afraid they can be blamed.

Respondent 3: It is a shame people do not want to mix with somebody known to be having AIDS. They are afraid they can get HIV because it can pass from one person to another. We can not get care and treatment or even turned away from health centers.

It is very difficult to accept when you are told about positive results. It is also problematic to discuss the results with family and friends. Knowing that you have a deadly disease is very stressful. Failing to accept the results may speed up the onset of AIDS.

Respondent 5: I heard if an HIV positive person have sex with a young child or a virgin, he/she can be cured, but I don't know whether it is true or not.

Respondent 1: I think sex with a young child is a rape and it is against the law. Once a person is tested and found to be positive, if he/she can be prayed for, he can be cured.

Interviewer: Is there any thing more to add about HIV/AIDS?

Respondent 1: Some believe they can get HIV through casual contact. Children living with or affected by HIV are prohibited from attending school due to fear that they will pass on HIV to other children. People who are HIV positive are living on stress with regard to the issue of disclosing status and this can speed up the onset of AIDS.

Interviewer: We can stop here. Thank you for participating.